

ARTICLES

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WHAT BECOMES A BRIDE THE MOST: THE YEMENITE JEWISH HENNA

ABSTRACT

The Yemenite Jewish henna bride is widely admired and envied in Israel. Her iconic image is reified and exhibited in shops, on billboards, and in museums for political and economic purposes. Simultaneously, the local folk culture reveres the Yemenite henna ceremony as a joyous living custom that affirms their ethnic identity.

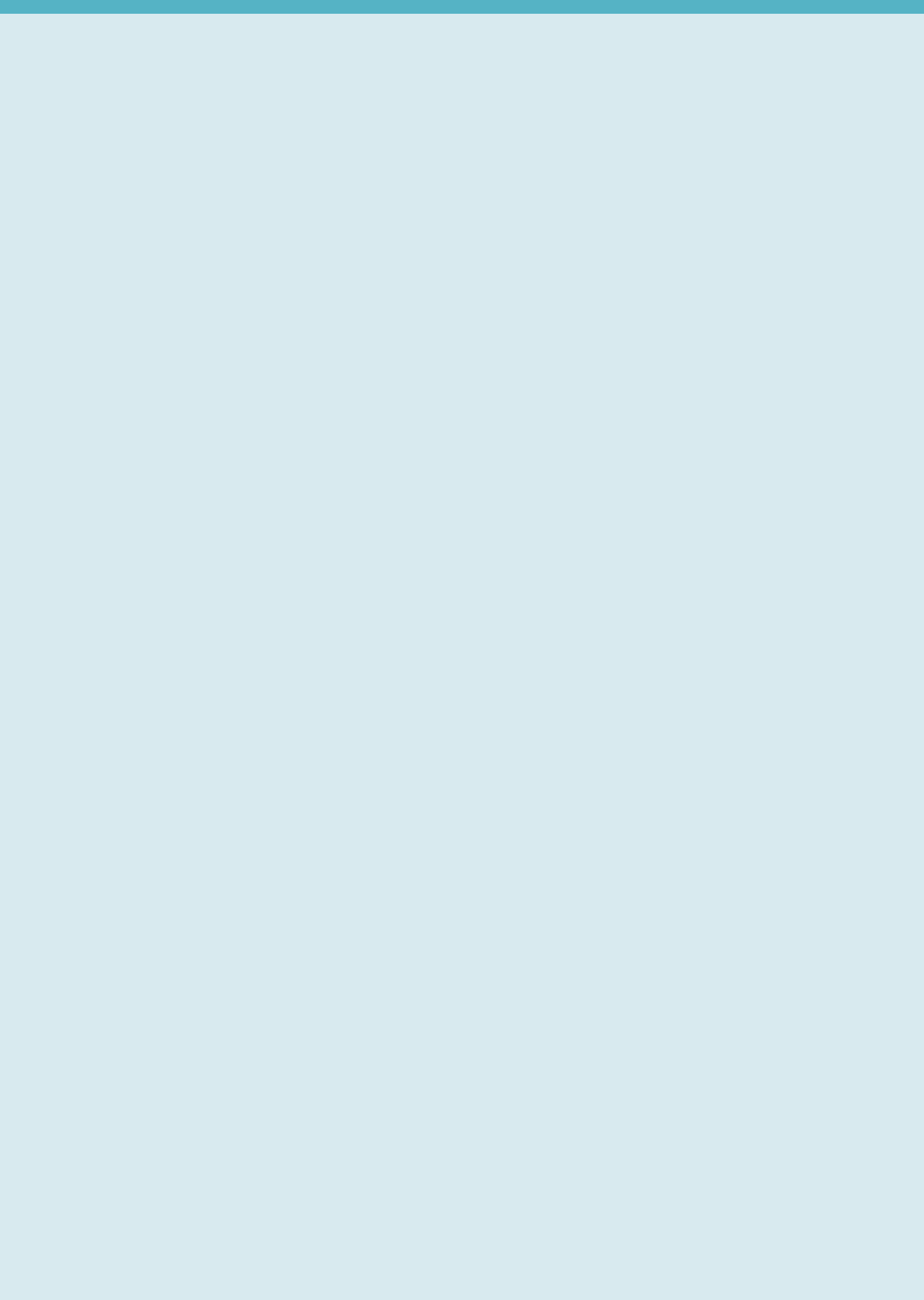
This embellished ethnographic report traces the fate of the henna ceremony in Israel through the conflict between curators, who offer museologically preserved effigies of the Yemenite bride, and a local dresser dedicated to constructing actual living brides for the henna ceremony. The report's narrative borrows from the language of psychoanalysis as the author exploits the affinity between dreams and ceremonies and, following the dresser, attempts to construct a textual bricolage that is representative of her work.

KEYWORDS

Israel; henna ceremony; ethnography; museum; Yemenite Jews; dream; psychoanalysis.

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Just over sixty five years ago several thousand Jews were airlifted *en masse* out of Yemen and relocated in Israel. The majority of this migrant population was placed together in an abandoned British military outpost in the center of Israel known as Rosh Ha'Ayin. The town's Hebrew appellation translates alternatively as The Head of the Eye or The Fountain, each of which speak to a distinctive material resource that has been the basis of the town's political and economic exploitation through recorded history. However, there is a less tangible third meaning produced by the combination of both translations, that is, The Fountain of the Eye. This type of eye, or fountain, suggests another history, another type of exploitation; and it is with special consideration for this less obvious feature of Rosh Ha'Ayin life that I approach an ethnographic understanding of its Yemenite Jewish residents today.

METHODOLOGY

The town of Rosh Ha'Ayin in central Israel was chosen as the site of inquiry for the precise reason that Lewis (1989) rejected it for his research – its ethnic homogeneity on account of its reputation for being “virtually all-Yemenite”. Through this choice, I hoped to optimize my opportunities for interviewing cross-generationally as well as observing the henna itself. My entry into the field and access to the town's residents were facilitated by the affinal ties I had previously established with a family in Rosh Ha'Ayin. This enabled easier and more rapidly intimate interaction than would normally have been the case for non-Yemenite researchers attempting to study at this site.

Data for the current research was collected between 1991 and 2005, before and during the tremendous surge in housing and industry in the hills surrounding the older, largely Yemenite ‘inner-city’. The population of Rosh Ha'Ayin as of the summer of 1992 was reported by the municipal council as consisting of 15.000 residents. As of 2003 the municipal council reported that the town's population, increasingly ethnically diverse, had grown to 40.000 residents. The present research reflects a period when Rosh Ha'Ayin was still considered a ‘Yemenite town’, before the realization of the mayor's social and economic “enhancement” program to change the image of the town through “planned integration” (quotes from the public relations assistant to the mayor of Rosh Ha'Ayin). These changes were a response to the general Israeli attitude Lewis (1989) encountered in his ethnographic research: “These places have unsavory reputations as backward places, with crime, poverty, alienation, and hot-blooded youths at odds with their religious parents and with society at large, ready to lash out with riots and other attacks (p. 189)”.

I first arrived in Rosh Ha'Ayin in 1991 during the three-week period preceding Tishah B'Av. This is considered “the saddest and most tragic day in the year” for the Jewish people as it marks the destruction of the First and Second Temples in Jerusalem (Donin 1972). Weddings are prohibited during this period and

the 'wedding season' begins immediately thereafter. Thus, my initial stay in the field consisted of several preliminary informal interviews of Rosh Ha'Ayin residents, archival research in and outside Rosh Ha'Ayin, an interview with the mayor of Rosh Ha'Ayin, and interviews with curators of museums featuring the henna ceremony in Rosh Ha'Ayin and throughout Israel.

The content of this preliminary work, in conjunction with consulting Goitein's (1983) guidelines on constructing questionnaires for research among Yemenite Jews, led me to develop an in-depth participant-observation and interview strategy for subsequent visits to the field. This strategy consisted of:

- 1) the development of a 61 item open-ended formal interview schedule designed to elicit data related to the henna's functional relevance over time as regards the social institutions of marriage and kinship, economic organization, religious practice, and ritual activity (in addition to basic demographic information). This instrument was utilized throughout Rosh Ha'Ayin with the explicit aim of eliciting data from different age groups – ten (five males, five females) from each of four categories: born in Yemen/married in Yemen; born in Yemen/married in Israel; born in Israel/married in Israel; unmarried. The research among Yemenite Jews by Dahbany (1983) and Gamliel (1984) suggested the importance of this division by approximate age set within this population. However, my research was hindered by the same "memory problems" that impacted upon Tshernovitz' (1984) efforts to collect data from the elderly Jews;
- 2) the development of a series of 10-15 item formal interview schedules designed to elicit data from people I refer to as 'specialists.' These included the merchant who leased stage, chairs, and sound equipment; a professional musician; and a professional henna dresser. The intent of these interviews was to elicit data representing the contemporary significance of the henna from the perspective of those whose livelihood depended upon it; and
- 3) The development of a 10-15 item formal interview schedule to be administered to three couples on the eve of their hennas. The goal of these interviews was to elicit data representing the couples' purpose for choosing (or agreeing) to have a henna, the form and content of the socialization involved behind this choice, and the role of the henna within the context of the entire wedding experience (within the neighborhood community in which it took place).

All of the above interviews were translated into Hebrew before being administered by a life-long resident of Rosh Ha'Ayin. After translating each instrument into Hebrew, they were re-translated back into English to double-check for consistency with the original English meanings. Out of 50 total interviews all but four were conducted (and taped) in Hebrew by both the translator and the author. (The interviews done in English

were with the three marrying couples and the town's primary physician.)

In addition to the archival research and extensive interviewing, I observed several hennas and filmed three (of the three couples interviewed). These couples were chosen simply by virtue of having been the first three hennas of the season known to me by way of my informal network.

During each of my visits to the field I stayed in a large 'family compound' in the northeast corner of Rosh Ha'Ayin. My residence there provided me with an experience illuminating many facets of local social life that I had originally sought to understand only by way of my focus on the henna.

ROSH HA'AYIN

Approximately 4,000 years ago a walled settlement containing castles was established on the mound Rosh Ha'Ayin which was then referred to as Omer. Omer served as a point of inspection on the central routes which passed through the area. Through the ensuing Roman, Turkish, Palestinian, British, and Israeli occupations the "control of this place determined the political destiny of the whole region" (Report from the Department of Education and Culture, Local Council, Rosh Ha'Ayin). In 1935 the British occupational forces exploited the local spring in the area by constructing a water distribution plant and thus controlled this scarce, critical natural resource. Pipes were built as far south as Jerusalem where the water was used for drinking purposes.

Throughout World War II Rosh Ha'Ayin served as the central army quarters for the British on account of both its access to the central transport artery as well as its water supply. The British built several buildings, internal roads, and storage facilities in Rosh Ha'Ayin which continue to be used today. During the period of the Independence War (1947-49) the British left and the Arabs assumed control of the area that is now called Rosh Ha'Ayin. After ensuing battles with the Iraqi army, on July 12, 1948 Israeli forces took possession of Rosh Ha'Ayin which they have held ever since.

The original Israeli population of Rosh Ha'Ayin was 6,000 residents. They found housing in old and neglected army quarters and in specially erected tents. As stated above, the massive 'Wings of Eagles' Aliya (immigration) brought in several thousand Yemenite Jews who were temporarily settled in these tents until some were transferred to different places throughout the new state (e. g. the Negev desert and the Jerusalem mountains). The township of Rosh Ha'Ayin was officially founded in 1950, largely by a segment of this migrant population who established a local council. From the local newspaper *Afikim*, Ha-levi (1988) states:

The immigrants suffered not a little in hard torture from the absorption policy that had been forced on them and they were dependent in an absolute way – economically

and socially – on the messengers of the establishment. They served as cheap available working power for the economic and social factions outside the town.

By the 1990's the local government initiated a plan to develop suburbs around the existing town of Rosh Ha'Ayin with an intent to expand its population to 20,000 residents. The mayor's office initiated an official and directed effort to sell these new homes to non-Yemenite European and American Jews. As part of the program of 'planned integration', the mayor's social and economic 'enhancement' program included the development of tourism; efforts at the preservation of 'culture' through the renovation of the current community center; and the building of a new museum.

THE HENNA

Today in Rosh Ha'Ayin, the migrant population of Yemenite Jews have barely preserved their customs as practiced for centuries in Yemen. Perhaps in no area of Yemenite Jewish folk culture is their ambivalent assimilation more evident than in their performance of the henna celebration, a marital ceremony that is now emblematic of Yemenite Jewish ethnic identity throughout Israel. Historically, the henna ceremony originated more in magical than religious belief as a collection or sequence of practices designed to safeguard the bride against evil during her transition between families, villages, and statuses. According to Morgenstern (1966) the ceremony is found among all "Semitic peoples" of the Middle East; Jews and Muslims alike continue to perform henna ceremonies throughout the Middle and Far East, from Israel to India. However, the Yemenite Jews' version of this ceremony is distinctive in its particular blend of the aesthetic, magical, and political dimensions that underlie their migrant experience.

There is no one in Rosh Ha'Ayin who is not intimately acquainted with the henna ceremony, the very mention of it invariably brought a positive response. Several residents I spoke with informed me that, while the henna is practiced widely throughout the Middle East, the Yemenite Jews have an especially elaborate, even 'regal' way of performing it. Some aspects of their henna ceremony vary less across generations, socio-economic class, and religious attitudes than others. It is to these that I turn in providing an introduction to what is colloquially referred to simply as the henna as it is generally performed in Rosh Ha'Ayin today.

The henna is an areligious ceremony performed among people whose religious identity is fundamental to their daily life. It is a marital ceremony whose focus has predominantly been the bride. In contemporary Israel the bride and groom participate equally in the henna which is usually held a few days prior to the religious wedding.

The ceremony as performed now has four or five key symbolic components. The first is the protracted and detailed

dressing of the bride. The dressing is usually done by a post-menopausal woman for whom this is a profession. During the dressing, the dresser, her assistant(s), and the post-menopausal women of the bride's family might sing to the bride. The content of these dressing songs may be focused on the ensuing separation from the bride's family and the contemplation of married life. Today, the dressing is usually exciting for the bride and her friends who are overwhelmed with the intricateness and exquisiteness of the costume and moved by the traditional connection to the older women of the family who experienced the same ritual. This is entirely consistent with Sharaby's (2006) observation that presently "the henna ritual has been revived mainly as a symbol of Yemenite ethnic identity" (p. 35).

The henna dressing by and for Yemenite Jews today in Rosh Ha'Ayin replicates that of the brides from the city of Sana'a which are quite distinct from the costumes from other more rural parts of Yemen (Muller-Lancet, 1984). Because the Jews of Sana'a were relatively prosperous (and exceptionally skilled artisans at that), their henna costumes are known to be some of the most colorful and exciting throughout the Middle East. Aside from the outstanding robes and headwear, the costume usually included several pounds of silver jewelry containing amulets and fresh green herbs attached for magical protection.¹

After the dressing, the second symbolic component of the henna is the *zavfa* (procession) in which the bride (nowadays with the groom) is led from the mother's house to a stage set up outside. Specific traditional songs are sung to the accompanying percussive banging on tin plates and drums as the bride and groom, surrounded by relatives and neighbors, make their way to the stage. Although the *zavfa* today functions more as a showcase than anything else, this procession, with its trilling screams and songs, was performed to ward off evil, to protect the bride, and protect the community from the bride.²

The third key component of the henna is simply known as the party and consists of singing, dancing, and eating. Currently this party is religiously rationalized as consistent with the Jewish mitzvah (commandment) to entertain the marrying couple: "It is a meritorious act to amuse the bride and groom, to dance before the bride and say that she is a beautiful and gracious bride" (Ganzfried 1989: IV, 13). However, older interpretations describe the loud singing and dancing as necessary for scaring away or distracting the djinn (demons) from the desirable virgin bride.

The fourth key symbolic component is the retreat of the bride back to her home where her mother (or aunt if the bride is an orphan) will mix the henna for painting the bride. The mixture today is usually made of rose water, eggs, cognac, salt, and herb *shadab* (for its aroma and magical powers). While the older women prepare the henna mixture, incense (myrrh) is lit and the bride changes into the less elaborate headwear and robes associated with rural Yemenite populations.

¹ The Oriental jinn are in such deadly terror of iron, that its very name is a charm against them... They are essentially, it seems, creatures belonging to the ancient Stone Age, and the new metal is hateful and hurtful to them" (Tyler, 1874, Vol. 1: 140).

² Referencing the henna ceremony performed in neighboring Morocco, Westermarck (1926: 199-200) states: "There is a very general feeling or idea that bride and bridegroom are in a state of danger, being particularly exposed to persons' magical tricks or evil looks, or to the attacks of evil spirits, or to some impersonal spiritual cause of evil, and therefore stand in need of protection or purification. Moreover, the bride is considered to be not only herself in danger but also a source of danger to others."

Afterwards there will be a second zafva back to the party. Then the final and perhaps most important key symbolic component of the henna ceremony takes place on stage. The dresser will call each relative, beginning with the bride's mother, up to the stage. One at a time, in order of diminishing kinship affiliation, relatives and then friends and neighbors will enter the stage, recite a blessing to the bride and groom, and offer their hand to paint the henna on the palms of the couple.

The painting of the henna generates a plethora of meanings of either a metaphoric or metonymic nature. For some, the stain left on the hand for several days afterwards portends a long marriage. For others, the red stain of the henna represents the blood to be shared by virtue of the newly established affinal ties (as well as the blood of the menstruating bride). Yet others have it that the painting is intended to disguise the bride so as to fool and mislead the malevolent djinn; being that the henna paste contains the magical herb shadab, many believe that the herb is the active ingredient that will repel both the djinn and any bad luck caused by the evil eye of others. Today the bride will usually cover her hand in plastic to prevent the henna stain which might detract from her appearance at the religious wedding to follow.

After the ritual painting of the henna, the ceremony is abruptly concluded; in its entirety it usually spans a period of four to five hours. According to a local entrepreneur who holds a monopoly on stage equipment that he rents out for henna

FIGURE 1 - THE UNIFORMLY
CONSTRUCTED HOMES.



ceremonies, there are over 50 henna ceremonies a year. Most of these occur in August which is the religiously prescribed wedding season.

Just how relevant this protective ceremony remains today may be measured by the Israelis' fascination with the image of the henna bride, an image so beguiling that she quickly became the center of my ethnographic inquiry. Moreover, what began as a general study of the ceremony in its entirety eventually culminated in a concentrated focus on the multivalent dressing of the bride.

TRANSIENT SHELTER

The Yemenite Jewish bride-to-be passively submits to the entire process that culminates in the marital henna ceremony. Her still body is the silent center of the ceremonial dressing that will swirl around her. The dressing activity is itself framed by the same sun-blached concrete walls common to most of the uniformly constructed two-story homes throughout Rosh Ha'Ayin (see Figure 1). Many are the aforementioned decrepit, abandoned military barracks left behind after the British occupation. Their substance is an aggregate of ground-up pieces of shale derived from the strata of the surrounding hills (see Figure 2). In these hills the daily circle of labor and exchange begins with the extraction of shale by local men and ends each morning with its removal in the village below by local women after they awake to find a freshly deposited layer of shale dust. The

FIGURE 2 - THE SURROUNDING HILLS.



³ Freud calls upon the notion of sublimation throughout his work when seeking to account in economic and dynamic terms for certain kinds of activity governed by a desire not visibly directed towards a sexual end; examples would be artistic creation, intellectual pursuits and in a general way those activities to which a particular society assigns great value.

⁴ 'Reification' has dual mutual resonance here: As the social counterpart to the psychoanalytic process of 'fixation' discussed below, I refer to Lukacs' (1971) statement: "Its basis is that a relation between people take on the character of a thing and thus acquires a 'phantom objectivity'" (p. 83).

⁵ See Dominguez (1989) for an in-depth portrait of how this process unfolds in contemporary Israel.

⁶ "Process by means of which analysis implants an interpretation and overcomes the resistances to which it has given rise. Working-through is taken to be a sort of psychical work which allows the subject to accept certain repressed elements and to free himself from the grip of mechanisms of repetition." (Laplanche and Pontalis, 1973: 488).

descending dust mixes with the dust of their deteriorating walls before being swept onto the street out front where it blows back into the hills. This perpetual rhythm of the aggregation/disaggregation of the walls that are alternately solid and soluble suggests an ambivalent aesthetic of transient shelter – a metaphor of sorts for the Israeli experience of Yemenite Jews. For the citizens of Rosh Ha'Ayin, all that is solid and concrete is consciousness reified, is continuously reinforced, and eventually assimilated while all that is soluble in the form of magical belief is relegated to unconsciousness, is both oppressed and repressed, and finally sublimated,³ surviving in disguised form as a dream, the djinn, a symptom, or a ceremony.

ENDANGERED BRIDES

Into this scene on a hot summer night ambles Naomi, the Yemenite Jewish henna dresser. Any appreciation of the henna is attributable to the dresser who not only constructs the bride, but also choreographs the entire event through traditional songs and dances. She is not only very sought after for hennas by her neighbors in Rosh Ha'Ayin, she is in demand throughout much of the country. Her reputation as well as her accessibility made her a logical focus of attention for the purpose of this research.

Too preoccupied with her task to indulge in social amenities she enters the home of the bride. By virtue of her skill she must mediate between the terrifying dangers anticipated by two distinct generations of henna participants. Whereas in Yemen the bride might either be kidnapped by neighbors or devoured by djinn, in Israel the danger is associated with the state apparatus through the museological 'capture' and reification of the bride.⁴ Israel's institutionalized 'celebration' of Diaspora folklore, a type of 'dressing' in its own right, is instrumental to establishing the reality of the modern state. In the case of the Jews from Yemen, acceptance in Israel is contingent on their placing the 'Arabic' elements of their lifestyle firmly in the past.⁵ To this end, the construction of the henna bride occurring in museums throughout Israel is successful if "the technique of reproduction detaches the reproduced object from tradition" (Benjamin 1968: 221). Consequently, witnessing these petrified brides on display is less an occasion for celebrating tradition than mourning. The once transfixing henna bride is now fixated, a statuesque "inscription of certain ideational contents (experience, imagos, phantasies) which persist in the unconscious in unchanging fashion" (Laplanche and Pontalis 1973: 162).

On their treacherous journey Naomi and her bride are destined to confront this landscape of lifeless henna brides. And as would ordinarily be prescribed for any unconscious psychological fixations, Naomi's goal tonight will be to free her bride from history as it is embodied in these memorials. Success is contingent on her reviving – that is, remembering, repeating, and work through⁶ – the magical "aura" of the original henna

bride that has been appropriated for reification as an icon. Until and unless this happens they remain suspended between two generations, between the worlds of Yemen and Israel, in an overheated concrete cubicle lit only by a dangling 75 watt light bulb that shades as much as it illuminates.

Surely the greatest of all dangers for the bride emerges from within the community itself through the terrifying form of Ayn Ha'rah, or the evil eye. Given the religious character specific to this community, it is worth noting that "the rabbis conceived of the possession of the evil eye as an internal disposition or as an externalized power... the evil eye is a concept of power that enabled people to affect their surroundings (Ulmer 1994: 5). A modern sensibility might struggle with both the idea of such a power as well as its universally enduring presence as a rationale for unfortunate events. Writing in the 9th century, Arabic philosopher al-Kindi provides an early explanation for how an eye may possess agency:

The desire, the hope and the fear, when they are properties of an individual are part of his ruling unity for which reason, according as they are present or absent, they cause a difference in the rays which proceed from an individual onto things near or remote, and therefore, the projection of the will in human endeavor adds something to the effect (2000: 44).

This phenomenon is not only universally recorded, in the literature it is nearly always connected with envy. "Every language, both ancient and modern, contains a word or expression which is the equivalent of 'Evil Eye'. Envy, jealousy, and the Evil Eye are inseparably connected; and when joined to words is the origin of the evil spirits which work sickness, disaster, ruin, and

FIGURE 3 - THE IMAGINED
AUTHORITY OF HER IMAGE.





FIGURE 4 - THE IMAGINED
AUTHORITY OF HER IMAGE.

⁷ "Let us not mince words: the marvelous is always beautiful, anything marvelous is beautiful, in fact only the marvelous is beautiful" (Breton, 1972:14-16). Foster (1993) describes "...the project to which the surrealist marvelous is implicitly pledged: the reenchantment of a disenchanted world, of a capitalist society made ruthlessly rational" (pp. 19-20).

⁸ "Beauty will be CONVULSIVE or will not be at all" (Breton, 1960:160). Krauss (1985) states, "If we are to generalize the aesthetic of surrealism, the concept of convulsive beauty is at the core of the aesthetic, a concept that reduces to an experience of reality transformed into representation" (p. 35).

death in the world" (Budge 1992: 356, 358). "Those who were under the influence of anger or envy were most dangerous in this terrible faculty, while those who were in the enjoyment of special happiness or good fortune were the most liable to injury" (Elworthy 1895: 12). "The attractive and the beautiful are, of course, most susceptible, for it gives rise to jealousy and envy" (Brav, 1992: 47).

Local folklore insists that harm or bad luck will befall the bride improperly protected against the curse of the envious gaze of her wanting neighbors (a version of *schadenfreude* that delights in the misfortune of those perceived as privileged). "One might here conjecture on the history of the bridal veil for a shielding against the 'evil eye'" (Shrut 1960: 206). Stein's (1976) psychosocial analysis of the evil eye also attributes it to envy thereby associating this supernatural fear with the material condition of scarcity. Moreover, accounts of the henna ceremony in Yemen often link hunger with the malevolence that surrounds the bride: "The oral quality of the evil eye is evident" (Roheim 1992: 217). Accordingly, the strength of her attraction in Yemen might be best explained by her representation as a magical wish-fulfillment, a bountiful prosperity to an excessive degree. However, if in Yemen the abundance and beauty of the fully dressed henna bride embodied pleasure and good fortune in the form of sexual and reproductive possibilities, in contemporary Israel this same excessive appeal has been harnessed and reproduced to serve as a sign promoting consumption. Such is the peculiar power of the bride that wherever her image is invoked today one is sure to find some form of magic or effort to seduce by embellishing a text with the imagined magical power of her image (see Figures 3 and 4).

Yet such is the power of Naomi that if – I must emphasize *if* – she is successful, her construction alone will emit the strenuously coveted 'aura of the original' referred to by Benjamin or rather, as Andre Breton (1972) put it, "the Marvelous".⁷ To be so enchanted is to shine like a convulsive beauty whose power eludes and exceeds the voracious envy of the admirer.⁸

CURATOR DREAMS

Despite their differences in strategies and tactics, curators function no less as 'dressers' than either Naomi, our traditional figure of that profession; the merchant promoting consumption; or the politician establishing a state. Poised at the intersection of state, market, and historical interests, the curator may be best likened to Nietzsche's (1983) "antiquarian man." "The possession of ancestral goods changes its meanings in such a soul: *they* rather possess *it*. The trivial, circumscribed, decaying and obsolete acquire their own dignity and inviolability through the fact that the preserving and revering soul of the antiquarian man has emigrated into them and there made its



FIGURE 5 - THE FRAGMENTS OF A SHELL, ARTIFACTS LIKE FOSSILS.

home” (p. 73). These possessed souls are another chief obstacle for Naomi as she strives to stay free of their efforts to ‘preserve’ (consume) her and her bride, as though hers was a world on the wane. Naomi’s efforts to avoid becoming a commoditized mnemonic sign of herself, of constructing nothing more than a ghost of a bride, must necessarily elude this growing lineage of dead brides. A tour of some of these haunted museum exhibitions allows us to appreciate the magnitude of her task.

We need only retrace Naomi’s trail less than one kilometer away from where she works tonight to reach our first point of investigation, the most recent memory trace of a henna bride. There, up on the fourth floor of the Rosh Ha’Ayin Secondary School is the Museum of Yemenite Jewry. The curator is a former teacher who has created his own position. “This is Yemenite culture” he says, pointing to his display of henna robes and jewels. There lie the fragments of a shell, artifacts like fossils, each lined up separately inside a glass case with a caption and inventory number attached (see Figure 5). ‘Here lies the bride hacked into a thousand pieces’.⁹

The curator hopes that this dead disintegrated bride will attract masses of tourists with money so he can accumulate the needed capital to support his plans for a new museum. To the extent that he has “emigrated” into his revered collection of artifacts they function for him as ‘day residue’ of a dream he cannot quite recall – the antiquarian dilemma.¹⁰ The notion of an un-recollected dream is apt given the seeming contradiction between curatorial collecting and the evidently strong Yemenite interest in dreams (Ratzaby, personal manuscript). Bott’s (1988) equation of dreams and ceremonies opened up a methodological option ordinarily reserved for psychoanalysts, surrealists, and artists. She states:

In the course of trying to understand and interpret the kava ceremony it has repeatedly occurred to me that a ceremony has much in common with a dream. A dream

⁹ Adorno’s (1967) observation is apt in this connection: “Museum and mausoleum are connected by more than a phonetic association. Museums are the family sepulchres of works of art” (p. 175). Also in this vein Boon (1991: 256) comments: “Museums are a locus of dislocated fragments, displayed in-coincidentally with the motives of their production, revalued along other lines of exchange or schemes of competition, and not necessarily secondarily”-

¹⁰ Referencing the psychoanalytic theory of dreams, Laplanche and Pontalis (1973:96) state: “[Day residue] are connected, more or less distantly, to the unconscious wish that is fulfilled in the dream”.



FIGURE 6 - THE POSTCARD DISPLAYING THE HENNA BRIDE.

is a condensed and disguised representation of unconscious thoughts and wishes. A ceremony is a condensed and partially disguised representation of certain aspects of social life (1972: 206).

I hypothesized a repression of dream material to parallel this curator's museological suppression of the living ceremonial experience.¹¹ Thus I asked him, "Have you ever dreamt of the henna?". "No, no way", he answered, "I don't remember my dreams".

A little further to the north of Rosh Ha'Ayin lies our next stop; a gallery among the Roman ruins of Caesarea where fine art that is classified as Israeli is sold to tourists.

I'm told that the postcard displaying a henna bride is a rare specialty, the first of its kind to be issued by the state of Israel after establishing independence (see Figure 6). Someone mounted the postcard on a piece of cardboard and captioned it, 'A Yemenite Beauty'.

I'm puzzled by the redundancy of this caption, a restatement of the obvious, and am amazed at how quickly this graven image of the bride found its way into the machinery of state formation. The fragmentation of "a beauty" who would find her resting place in a museum case probably began with a little caption separating the magic of the bride from the beauty of the bride.

Since the museum gift shop's saleslady seems much taken by the postcard and the whole idea of the henna itself, I decide to pose the question. "Have you ever dreamt of the henna?". Embarrassed laughter and a negative response. We move on.

Travelling further north still, up in Netanya, lies our third stop. There I'm eagerly invited into the House of the Henna, a business venture sponsored by The Society for the Perpetuation of the Heritage of the Yemenite Jewry and the Tribes of Israel. Here Yemenite Jewish men and women can rent a room with decoration and catering "just like it was done in Yemen." In a small room at the top of the House of the Henna sits a makeshift museum displaying old Torah and Zohar texts written in Yemen and donated or sold in Israel. For 35 shekels and the promise of acknowledging their Society in print with any use I make of their materials I'm given access to the museum, the library, and a free photograph of a bride from the House of the Henna.

The curator proudly announces that they've expanded their operation to include conferences and books about the conferences. He offers to tell me more if I take him out to lunch in the city center below. A long hot expensive lunch drives home the realization that the commodification of the bride has opened the way for all types of exchange linking me to men who are as enamored with and dissociated from her as I am. Moreover, this is another curator who has never dreamt of the henna.

Our fourth stop lies much further south in Jerusalem where a curator of the state-operated Museum of Israel comments tersely on the henna. "This is an Arab custom. I can't tell you more than that. For more information read Westermarck."

¹¹ "It has repeatedly occurred to me that a ceremony has much in common with a dream. A dream is a condensed and disguised representation of unconscious thoughts and wishes - a ceremony is a condensed and partially disguised representation of certain aspects of social life (Bott, 1988: 204)."

Walking out of the museum with Naomi's bride on the eve of her henna ceremony we stop at a glass case enclosing two fully dressed brides. I take my camera out to photograph the exhibition and we are stopped (see Figure 7). The henna bride must be protected, no pictures. This surely marks the absurd finale of the fate of the henna bride in Israel. We are being treated like thieves trying to steal a picture of a counterfeit image - no point even asking about the dreams.

SIGNIFYING UNTO INSIGNIFICANCE

Westermarck (1922) discussed the henna as it was practiced among the Muslims of Morocco. He states that the henna "is not merely a favorite cosmetic among the women, but is also frequently used as a means of protection against evil influences on account of the *baroka*, or holiness, ascribed to it" (Vol. II: 515). In spite of the apparent universal nature of the henna, Westermarck (1926: 195) warns: "We should be on our guard against the assumption, only too common in anthropology, that similar ceremonies necessarily have their roots in similar ideas, even though practiced by different peoples". Moreover, this holds true for comparative assumptions about a universal Yemenite Jewish henna, for as Muller-Lancet (1984: xlviii) argues:

[In Yemen] marriage customs differed from region to region, if not from village to village... Substantial differences, however, were found between urban and rural customs, in matters such as duration and sequence of ceremonies [and] the tinting of the bride and bridegroom.



FIGURE 7 - THE EXHIBITION.

In spite of these cautions, most of the contemporary literature on Yemenite Jewish marriage customs is generated from an essentialized and reified notion of the henna ceremony.

Kaphach (1978), a Yemenite Jewish rabbi, provided what many residents of Rosh Ha'Ayin feel is the definitive study of Yemenite Jewish marriage customs. His religiously oriented work is a compendium of customs with only a passing reference to the henna as a decorative stage of the wedding. On the other hand Mazor (1990) refers to the magical basis of the henna and cites this as the reason for the religious objection to it. Toktali (1980) states that the henna is currently employed as a symbol of wealth and affluence while Badici (1990) focuses on the henna as a preparation for the bride's separation from the family.

Klein (1979: 79) interprets the rationale for the marriage ritual as an exercise of magical power: "During the transition period, which means exit from a situated status to an acceptable social status, the folk belief is that the immunity power of the individual decreases and the body and spirit tend to get harmed."

Dori's (1982) publication, "The Eye Paint and the Henna", focuses on the chemical composition of the henna mixture itself. Dori provides an inventory of folk interpretations focusing mainly on the coloring process using the henna mixture and including its medical function; its magical properties; and its current religious interpretation (as elaborated through the proper observance of mitzvot or commandments for proper ritual behavior).

Kogman's (1991) unpublished thesis is interesting for its focus on the blood symbolism of the henna. As he states, the henna as a symbol of blood represents: the mixing of blood representing the affinal tie; the merging of two families; and the onset of menstruation rendering the female eligible for marriage. Only Enav (1984) specifically attempts to interpret the henna as it relates to the larger Arab sociocultural context of Yemen. Although her work is largely descriptive, these portraits successfully depict how "in the customs of the wedding ceremony there can be seen a tremendous influence of the surroundings of the Yemenite group" (p. 51).

Recent American ethnographic research among Yemenite Jews in Israel (Gilad 1989; Lewis 1989) provides little more than a description of the henna. Only Israeli researcher Sharaby (2008) attempts an in-depth ethnographic description and interpretation of the henna. In view of all the preceding scholarly efforts that are long on description yet widely diverging in interpretation when offered at all, Sharaby's (Ibid: 33) comment on the participants of the henna ceremony she observed is perhaps to be expected:

The magical significance of the henna apparently is not clear to those present, especially the young couple, and some of them hurry to remove the sign of it from their

hands. One bride said: "They did not explain the purpose, only that it was tradition. Everyone laughed, and I removed the henna as fast as possible, so that no sign of it would remain".

THE MOTHER OF THE BRIDE

Outside the museum Naomi's bride tells me that she's getting married because she wants to, but she will have a henna because she has to. She really doesn't want it; it is her mother who insists on this. Her mother can no more imagine a wedding without a henna than she can imagine a life for a woman without marriage. She coerced her daughter with a barrage of rationales: (a) "It's tradition;" (b) "What will the neighbors say?" (c) "This is what it means to be Yemenite;" and (d) "If you don't you'll bring us all bad luck" (i.e. no money, bad health, no offspring, etc.).

With mother's recollection of her own henna we are brought back to Sana'a, Yemen, 1943, for our last stop. Her henna in Sana'a went on for at least a week, closer to a month. Her dressing was a protracted affair by today's standards: a communal mikva (or bathing) for all the women of her family and village; burning and scarification of her arms and legs to thoroughly cleanse her; and the elaborate painting of her body with henna-coloring over a period of several days accompanied by post-menopausal women singing songs relating local gossip and prescribing correct sexual behavior with the groom. She was a 15 year old virgin, had never met her husband before, and she brought a substantial dowry in exchange for a brideprice all negotiated in advance by the men of the families.

The Jews and Muslims of Sana'a attended each other's hennas, all of which shared one common goal--to protect the bride from the djinn. Closely related to the ubiquitous danger of the evil eye was the fear of demons – "Evil spirits and the Evil Eye have from time immemorial been regarded as one and the same, and it is for this reason that among primitive peoples, both in the East and in the West, the Evil Eye has been regarded as a being with a form and a personality" (Budge 1992: 356). And as with the evil eye, "it is the demons who are irritated by human luck and prosperity, who inflict calamity, pain, and loss, at the height of good luck" (Sumner 1940: 433).

According to the bride's mother, in Yemen the djinn were demons that lived in natural abodes and stalked their victims at night. They hungered for freshly cut meat and especially craved the meat of the Marvelous virgin bride. The rule of the djinn is as follows: If one person walks alone he/she will hear and see the djinn who are immediately recognizable in the dark by their fiery eyes ["In Moslem belief the Jinn [are] made of smokeless fire" (Clodd 1921: 62)]; if two people walk together they will only hear the djinn; and if three or more people walk together the djinn will be silent and invisible to them ["The invisibility of the demons was their most terrible attribute, but yet, as the Talmud sagely observed, it is fortunate that we are blind to



FIGURE 8 - OUTSIDE THE DRESSING ROOM.

their presence, for if we should see them swarming around us, we must collapse from sheer terror" (Trachtenberg 2004: 44-5); "According to the Talmud, demons had their home in the middle air, and were invisible...They haunt lonely spots, often assume the shape of beasts, and it is their presence in the bodies of men and women which is the cause of madness and other diseases" (Clodd 1921: 61-2)].¹²

They can be all around us. They travel alone or in groups. They adapt to any environment and can sit among a group of people undetected, malevolent and voracious, waiting for meat, especially the meat of the virgin bride.

THE EXPLOSION

From outside the dressing room the shrill cries of gathering women filter into the quiet room where Naomi works, an intense reminder of what waits, like a signal of warning (see Figures 8 and 9). Around her lie the varied tools of her trade collected over the years and hauled to every ceremony. How will this bricoleur pull it off? From where derives her authority to perform such a feat?

Twenty years ago Naomi's head exploded under the cumulative strain of meeting her family and neighbors' expectations of her following a permanently disabling accident suffered by her husband. She was admitted to a psychiatric hospital in nearby Petah Tiqvah. In the hospital her social worker proceeded with his own clinical version of 'dressing'.

¹² "States of rapture or ecstasy 'are also attributed to the djinns, who suddenly make themselves master of a person, change his clothes or ride him and speak and act through him'" (Oesterreich, 1966: 233).



FIGURE 9 - OUTSIDE THE DRESSING ROOM.

Charged with a mandate to facilitate assimilation through the transition from Diaspora to modern Israeli life he asked Naomi about her dreams. Naomi said, "I dream of henna celebrations!" Naomi took her social worker to an old dresser who also lived in Rosh Ha'Ayin. The old dresser was from Yemen and came from five generations of dressers. Upon discharge from the hospital it was decided that Naomi would work with this experienced local dresser dressing brides. She knew immediately that she was doing what was meant for her: "I always wanted to do this. I remember my husband asked me after my henna if I wanted him to buy me the dress. I always loved this, even in Yemen. But we came to Israel and I lost touch with this".

After a five year apprenticeship the Rosh Ha'Ayin welfare office supplemented Naomi's meager savings from her work with a loan enabling her to purchase her own dressing materials. She collected piece by piece until she reached the point where her teacher proudly told her, "Now you're even better than me!" Naomi often creatively innovates from fantasy and always works alone. She continues to be reputable in a profession that has become intensely competitive – she says that she is known from Tiberius to Beersheba – but she acknowledges working less than in the past (down from 100 to 40 hennas in the course of a year).

While Naomi bemoans the loss of the original ways of the henna in Yemen where she lived until she was twelve, she is still passionately committed to her dressing and singing: "I sing the original words, for each part there's a different song, the henna, the zavfa [procession]... Everyone knows how to sing but you have to know when to sing the right songs".

How does she handle the expectations of others now? "When I go out to do that work my head gets clean but then I'm coming back to the same head. Never mind, it still helps and I'm hanging in there".

Naomi intends to leave all her equipment and materials to her only daughter in the hope that she will carry on the tradition. However, her daughter lives far away and her future is very uncertain. For now Naomi continues the dressing that cleanses her head and tries to release the magic of the bride who will convulse the waiting crowd beyond interpretation, iconization, or exploitation, beyond any type of reification through the sheer beauty of her construction (see Figure 10). Robe upon robe, amulet upon amulet containing parchments of Torah and Zohar scripts, stem upon stem of the magical herb shadab – all are placed upon the bride's shoulders, 15 kilograms in all.

Is there a formula that she follows? "What makes me successful is the hands-on application of my imagination" (see Figure 11).

THE ETHNOGRAPHER'S DREAM

One night during my first summer of attending henna ceremonies in Rosh Ha'Ayin, I arrived back in my room at around 3:30AM following another celebration. The excitement in my head plus the ordinary but unfamiliar sounds conspired to keep me awake. A dog barked disturbing some roosters who woke up babies in turn disrupting whole families.

I imagined I was up on the roof looking out on the Ashkenazi kibbutz on the western side of the village between Rosh Ha'Ayin and Tel Aviv. In the night the relatively lush farms cul-

FIGURE 10 - NAOMI CONTINUES THE DRESSING.





FIGURE 11 - THE HANDS-ON APPLICATION OF MY IMAGINATION.

tivated exclusively by non-local workers looked very dark. I noticed a small yellowish orange ball, then two. I realized they were two eyes. They stared at me until I fell asleep. Then they grew larger and larger until they merged. It became a big, rapidly spreading fire. It grew so large and brilliant that all the nearby kibbutz residents woke up thinking it was daylight. When they left their homes the sun rose to reveal that the fire had consumed everything – the crops, topsoil, everything but the layers and layers of grayish-white shale underneath.

When I awoke I contacted my informant, Naomi's bride and reported, "I've got it! I dreamt it! The forest of sounds was consumed by a blaze of signification laying bare the daily permeable substance of exchange which frames the henna!".

The bride spoke, "What? I thought you said you were going to write about the dressing of the bride!".

With a flash, her eyes illuminated the affinity between interpretation and intervention, between my ethnographic inquiry and the State of Israel's 50 year old 'rescue' of the Jews in Yemen. Ultimately these efforts reify rather than liberate. Yet for now, through the "hands-on application of imagination", the bride evades capture as she steps out in the warm night air somewhere in Rosh Ha'Ayin, generating an excess of signifiers while eluding signification, shining under the starlit sky like a fixed-explosive amidst a dark crowd of anthropologists, curators, social workers, merchants, and the djinn (see Figure 12).¹³

¹³ "Convulsive beauty will be veiled-erotic, fixed-explosive, magic-circumstantial, or it will not be" (Breton, 1987:19).

FIGURE 12 - A FIXED-
EXPLOSIVE.



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PHOTOGRAPHS

All photographs taken by author.

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FILMED “NOT DURING THE SABBATH”: THE ISRAELI HAREDI MINORITY THROUGH THE CAMERA’S LENS

ABSTRACT

The Haredi (Jewish Ultra Orthodox) minority in Israel has an increased visibility in Israeli media in recent years. Many of its representations are negative and stereotypical. This article is an analysis of a documentary series about this minority group that the author co-directed also in an attempt to challenge these stereotypes. The article analyses the process of production of the series and the many decisions that had to be taken during it. It explores the difficulties in challenging the key stereotypes, especially in the context of Israeli commercial television.

KEYWORDS

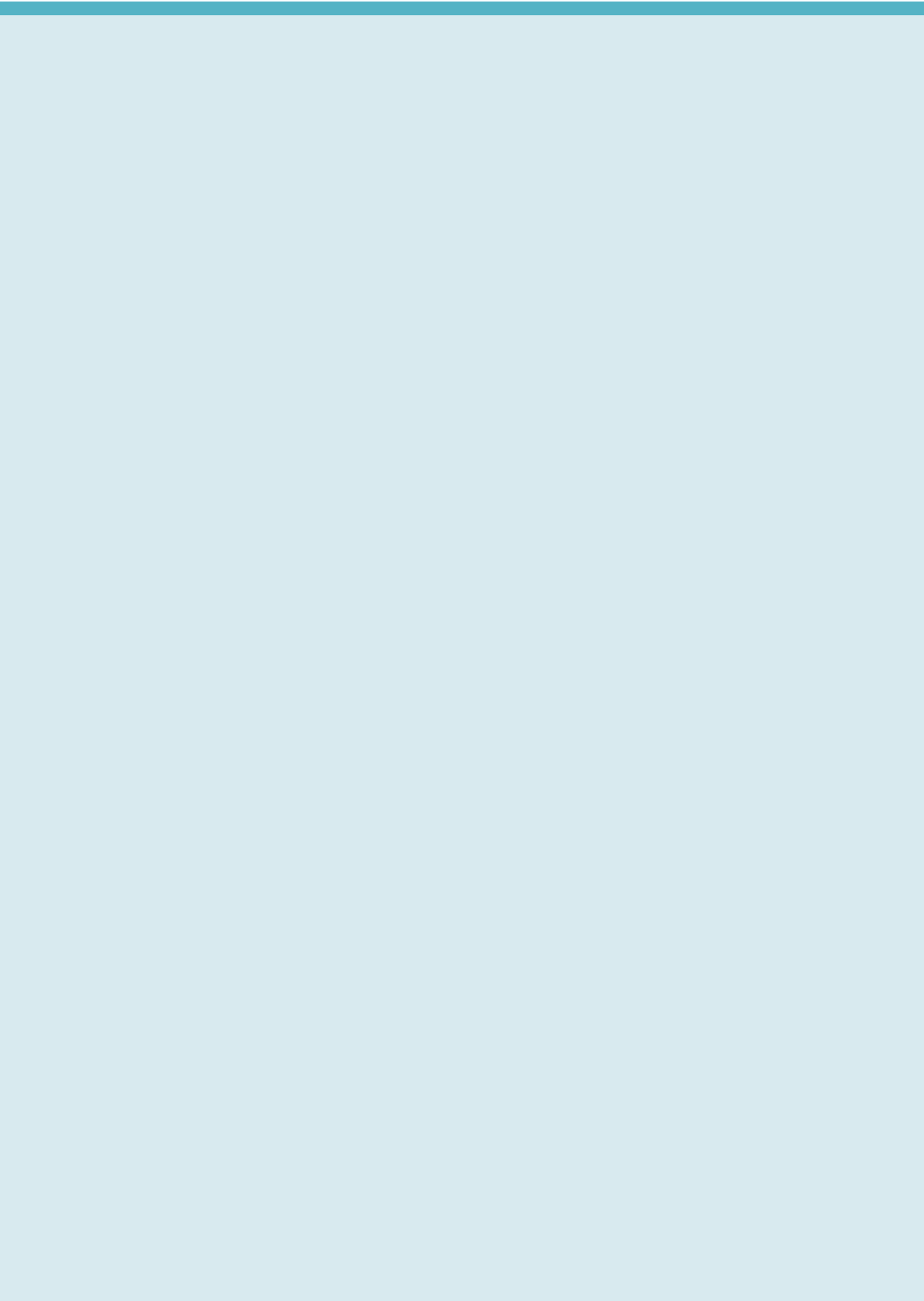
Haredy; Israel; documentary film; stereotype; religion.

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In the last ten years, images of Haredim (Ultra Orthodox Jews) have come to occupy a prime position in Israeli media.

The demographic growth and political power of the Haredi minority, as well as the fact that many of its members are moving outside of the boundaries of the segregated Haredi space, and are entering the Israeli public space, are some of the causes for this increased interest. For quite some time now, Haredi spokesmen have become regular guests on talk shows, while Haredi journalists host radio and television shows. Cinema as well as theater and literature have also recently 'discovered' this minority. However, very little has been written so far about the representations of the Haredi minority, even less about the changes in these representations.

This article is an attempt to start filling these gaps; I will be looking at the stages in the production of a documentary series on the Haredi minority in Israel ("Filmed on a Weekday"), which I directed, together with Ron Ofer.¹ In this article, I will try to describe the decision-making process during the work on the series and the different forces that were involved in the process. I will show how the compromises between the affinities, considerations, needs and skills of the creators, the participants, and the representatives of the funding bodies shaped the final product. I will start with a short review of the relevant literature.

RELIGIONS AND THEIR REPRESENTATION IN THE MEDIA

Since the events of September 11, 2001 in New York and of July 7, 2005 in London, there has been a sharp rise in the media's interest across the world and in the West in particular, in topics related to religion and religious people. Most of this media attention has been directed towards Islam, which is perceived as a serious threat to Western way of life.

Following this growing public and media attention, there has also been a sharp rise in the number of studies that look at the various ways religion and religious people are represented in the press. There are a number of journals that specialize in the interface between media and religion, including the *Journal of Media and Religion* and *The Journal of Religion and Film*. Since 1994, there has also been a bi-annual conference on the issue - The International Conferences on Media, Religion and Culture.

Particularly relevant for this article are studies that examine the representations of Muslims in popular media, the press and cinema (Abdel-Hafiz 2002; Moore, Mason and Lewish 2008; Poole 2002; Ramji 2003, 2007). These studies have helped uncover the stereotypes that are often found in these representations, and the overall tendency to present Islam and Muslims in limited and negative connotations. In an attempt to interpret these tendencies, various writers, such as Poole (2002), analyzed the global processes, including the collapse of the Communist Block, which reinforced the need to portray Islam as the new enemy of the West.

¹ Ron Ofer is an independent screenwriter and director. Many of the cinematographic projects he has been involved in deal with the Haredi minority, including the documentary film *Mithazkim* (2001). Recently, he produced the film *Pursued* which follows a person who has left religion and is trying to contact the man who raped him while he was in a Hassidic boarding school.

The creation of negative images in relation to Islam in the media - as a tool in the hands of the hegemony - justified subjugating large populations (Muslims living in the West but also in many other places), thereby maintaining the hegemony of the West. These images portrayed Muslims as a homogeneous group which is mentally backward, irrational, unchanging, fundamentalist, misogynist and manipulative in its use of religion and faith towards gathering political power. This is how, for example, the aggressive stance of the West and the conquest of Iraq and Afghanistan, were justified. Within the framework of this cultural essentialism, the reason for the range of negative features is not biology, but the specific culture, which is portrayed as permanent and unchanging (Barker 2002; Donald and Rattansi 1992; Grillo 2003).

Following Poole's study (2002), additional studies were conducted in various Western countries, in relation to the representation of Islam and Muslims; some of them attempted to describe the attitude of the media in a specific country, avoiding describing Western media as a single and identical entity. Writers such as Baderoon (2003) focused on news coverage in relation to Islam and Muslims and showed how the news is perceived as being committed to a description of objective reality. However, in order for an event to be worth reporting on, it must be turned into a story and translated into journalistic language. The decision as to which story is worthy of being translated and how best to do this is, of course, tainted with ideology and values. She also adds (p. 5):

"By disseminating such storied truths in a complex and powerful circuit of production and readership, the media creates communities out of audiences. Because of this, theorists argue that the media is crucial to generating a sense of national belonging. Hartley (1996) concludes that citizenship and communal identity are not possible these days without journalism. The media provide a 'national, political fantasy' in which a sense of community is generated".

As part of examining the role of the media in creating a national identity, the findings of Khatib (2006) are particularly interesting. Khatib examines the ways in which Islamic fundamentalism is portrayed in Egyptian cinema. She shows how the representations of this fundamentalism serve to strengthen the Egyptian national identity, and how it is presented as an artificial product, while Egyptian nationalism is constructed as a natural essence. According to Khatib, the representation of fundamentalism in Egyptian cinema recreates the classic point of view about the other, a point of view which teaches us more about "us" than about "them".

The role of Haredim in Israeli cinema and media seems to be similar. To a large extent, they are the "other", the "irrational", in relation to which Israeliness constructs itself as modern, advanced, rational and enlightened.

REPRESENTATION OF RELIGION, RELIGIOUS PEOPLE AND HAREDIM IN ISRAELI MEDIA

A comprehensive review of the changes in the representations of the Haredi minority in the media since the establishment of the State of Israel has yet to be conducted, although various authors have related to the issue (Chyutin 2003; Vinig 2011).

Israeli cinema, for example, reflects the processes undergone by Israeli society along the years; the attempts to do away with the burden of Diaspora and with tradition seem to be the main explanation for the fact that Israeli cinema in its early days avoided religious topics.² Parchek (1998) discusses in this context the tensions in the early days of the State due to the Orthodox monopoly on religion. As a result, secular Israelis distanced themselves from religion and its related issues. On the other hand, Parchek reminds us the complex relations of Judaism with art, and with the creation of representations. The identification of cinema with Western culture further pushed religious people away from film-making. Since film-makers were secular, their topics were mostly secular too. When religious or Haredi characters did appear on screen, the attitude towards them is negative and hostile. As part of the Zionist-ideological cinema, between the 1930s and the 1960s, the tackling of religious issues is very limited, and religious figures are presented in a negative light (Zimmerman 2003). This cinema was often funded by ideological groups with clear political motives, which the directors and scriptwriters adapted to. The Zionist pioneer and the Israeli Sabra³ were the main heroes of the story in those days.

Towards the end of the 1960s, a number of films appeared, which Kurzfeld (2003) calls “small town movies”, the most famous one being “Kunilemel”. Their innovation lies in the fact that they focus on religious figures and themes from the East European Shtetl, but they are based on old stereotypes. The *Burekas* genre, which blossomed during the years 1965-1980, stretches the treatment of religious topics by looking at Mizrahi⁴ characters. In these films, in addition to the stereotypical representations of religion and religious people, Mizrahi characters are orientalised. The European Zionist pioneer strived to do away with his diasporic past, but not with his European past. He was secular and European in his behaviour and education and perceived and represented the oriental Jew as the opposite: traditional, uneducated and irrational (Almog 2000).

New representations of religion and religiousness started appearing with the weakening of the Zionist-ideological cinema, and with the appearance of the personal cinema which was breaking away from ideological commitments. This personal cinema originated already in the 1960s, but blossomed only in the 1970s and 80s (Shohat 1991).⁵ In these films, there is a strong criticism of the Sabra and Zionist ideology, as well as of the other main cultural institutions which characterized it, such as the kibbutz and the army.

As argued by Shohat:

² According to Schnitzer (1994), out of the 410 feature films that were produced in the years 1960-1995, only 20 of them touched in any way on religious issues and feelings.

³ Sabra is an informal slang term that refers to Israeli Jews born in Israel.

⁴ The term Mizrahi is most commonly used in Israel to refer to Jews who trace their roots back to Muslim-majority countries.

⁵ Utin (2008), who wrote some ten years after Parchek, describes the continuation of the trend in which Israeli film makers focus more and more on the characters' personal story, while the political context moves from the front to the background of the story, as a kind of a hint or as the 'tip of the iceberg' of the political experience.

While the national-heroic films elevated and praised the 'new Zionist man', personal films mourn its downfall and disappearance. None of the genres imagines a broader historical approach to Judaism as it is lived in Israel, be it from a dialectic point of view, or even deeper from an 'anthropological' point of view. Film makers take Zionism's rejection of exile for granted, without suggesting a deeper analysis of the Israeli Jew as a multi-layered deposit of thousands of years of a syncretic, complex and rich history, spanning across a dozen countries. Israeli cinema is surprising in its cultural superficiality, in its not dealing with issues that have bothered Jews for hundreds of years. (Shohat 1991: 269).

A transformation in the representation of religious and Haredi Jews on the big screen occurred in the 1990s, as part of the weakening of the major ideologies – Zionism and Socialism. The void that appeared created a need for a renewed definition of Israeli identity, and Jewish religion and tradition slowly became a topic in itself. At the same time, in most of these films, the representations of religion include many negative stereotypes. The establishment of Ma'ale Film School⁶ had a positive impact. It enabled the training and development of a new generation of filmmakers who are more connected to Jewish religion and tradition, as reflected in their work (Friedman & Hakak 2015).

These processes are gradually changing Israeli television as well. In their study from 2006, Laor, Alpent-Leffler, and Inbar-Lankri found that there was a certain improvement in the representation of minority groups, and in the air-time they received in commercial TV channels. Moreover, a qualitative analysis of soap operas, such as "The Court" (*Hahatzer*), which dealt with the Haredi minority, also points to the appearance of more positive representations of this minority which, among others, challenge the stereotypes concerning the marginalised and voiceless Haredi woman (Ben Shahar 2006).

A number of recent studies reveal the problems that still characterise contemporary representations of different minority groups within Israeli society, including the Haredi minority. Studies that examined the way minority groups are represented in news reports in Israeli commercial media – Channel 2 & Channel 10 (Laor, Alpent-Leffler, and Inbar-Lankri 2006; Avraham, First and Alpent-Leffler 2004) – and on Channel 1 (Bar-Lev 2007), found that the number of news items related to these groups was very limited compared to their share in the population, and that their representation is flawed. These groups are mainly mentioned in connection with crime, violence, tragedies, social deprivation and unrest. As with other minority groups, Haredi figures make their way into these channels mainly 'through the back door', and are often connected to violent, provocative or particularly emotional conduct. Studies conducted by Cohen (2005) and Evans (2011) found that the media coverage of religious issues focuses on the Haredi

⁶ The Ma'ale Film, Television and Arts School in Jerusalem was founded in 1989, in order to cater to the growing need within the national-religious minority for professional training and academic qualifications in this area.

minority, generates stereotypes, and contributes to the strengthening of intra-religious tensions. Totally absent from the representations of the Haredi minority on the big and the small screen is its dynamic nature and the sharp changes it has been undergoing, particularly in the last decade.

GENDER REPRESENTATIONS AND RELIGION

Among the researchers who looked at the way religious groups were represented in the media, some also related more specifically to the issue of gender. Baderoon (2003: 5), for example, writes as follows:

By disseminating such storied truths in a complex and powerful circuit of production and readership, the media creates communities out of audiences. Because of this, theorists argue that the media is crucial to generating a sense of national belonging. Hartley concludes that 'citizenship and communal identity are not possible these days without journalism'. The media provide a 'national, political fantasy' in which a sense of community is generated.

Until recently, Haredi men, when appearing in Israeli cinema, were for the most part anti-heroes, and were represented with an emphasis on their femininity and their unsuitability to the requirements of the ideal Western model of muscular and assertive masculinity. Zabel (2001) also related to the issue of gender. He analysed the representations of Iranian and Muslim women in the Western press, where they are often pictured wearing black dresses and walking in throngs as part of various processions. In his view, these women represent for Western viewers a threatening combination of a fatal belief in the divine and unchanging order of things, religious fanaticism, and a total passiveness regarding changing their own situation. These women are not represented as individuals but as soldiers in the Islamic revolutionary army.

In this context, it is important to point out the contribution made by Saba Mahmood (2005), who uncovered the liberal-individualist assumptions that underlie the feminist project. Mahmood indicates that in Western consciousness, social, religious and other commitments are perceived as binding, and only when the individual manages to oppose himself to them is he able to achieve genuine freedom and express his "true self". Contrary to this, in the religious consciousness, as Mahmood (2005) describes, social demands are perceived as a kind of scaffolding, which are the only thing that enables the true self to appear. In other words, we are looking at two cultural approaches that understand and interpret the social demands placed upon individuals, their place and importance, in quasi-opposite terms. In this context, several studies are devoted to the work of Shirin Neshat, an Iranian artist living in New York who often relates to Muslim women in her art. The critics and commentators of Neshat's work disagreed as to her position with regards

to the status of women in Islam; however, Rounthwaite (2008) shows that most of them are entrapped within the feminist perception, which expects women to come out against the social order, and that they fail to take into consideration the possibility that for Muslim women, fulfilling social requirements is what enables them to fulfill their true self.

Within the Haredi minority, both the female and the male body are under strict supervision; men more than women, however, are forced to wear certain clothes, somewhat similar to a uniform. Those exposed to the Israeli media are familiar with pictures taken at demonstrations or funerals showing thousands of Haredi men wearing the black and white “uniform”. This image is both frightening and fascinating, for the exact same reasons: for the average secular person, the mass of Haredi men taking part in large demonstrations or funerals are faithful soldiers in the army of God and of the rabbis, and are devoid of any ability to think for themselves. They are captive of an extreme ideology, which they can’t criticise or undermine.

However, focusing on individual members of this minority can also be problematic as its purpose is often to stress the exotic or the different. As an example, I will look at three relatively recent photography exhibitions that focused on the Haredi minority. The first two are by Israeli photographers Menachem Cahana (2009)⁷ and Gill Cohen-Magen (2010),⁸ and the third one is by the British photographer Andrew Aitchinson (2009)⁹ and focuses on the Haredi minority living in Stamford Hill, London. Surprisingly, the three photographers focused on very similar images, which recur in other pictures often found in the media.

All three photographers were particularly interested in religious ceremonies. In addition to the pictures where Haredi men appear en masse, there are also pictures where they do not appear in a large group; in most of these pictures, Haredi men appear in two situations: when they are actively involved in a religious ceremony, in which they are caught engaged in a religious practice whose meaning remains unknown to the viewer; or when they lose control and concentration. Thus, the exotic is what is emphasised: the Haredi men we see in the pictures are nearly always people doing “strange” things, using exotic tools, and wearing unusual clothes.¹⁰ When they lose control a little – this is particularly the case in Cahana’s pictures – the pictures present them as slightly ridiculous or as eliciting a smile from the viewers: here is a Haredi man dressed up for Purim as an IDF soldier; here is a Haredi man who got drunk at Purim; and here is a Haredi man who got undressed to dip into the purifying bath. These pictures exert a certain degree of reproach: “Here you go, we got you. You’re not such tzadikkim/modest/opposed to military service as you pretend to be”.

Both Cahana and Aitchinson’s exhibitions are devoid of any pictures representing daily life, or of Haredi people acting outside the ceremonial framework, while Cohen’s exhibition contains a few pictures dealing with daily life. Indeed, Haredi peo-

⁷ To hear Cahana talking about his photos: www.youtube.com/watch?v=4b6Dqt7Om60

⁸ Some of Cohen-Magen’s photos can be seen here: www.gilmagen.com/gallery.aspx?id=4

⁹ To see Aitchinson’s photos, go to: www.andrewaitchinson.com/gallery-list

¹⁰ These have been discussed in Ron Ofer’s film *Haredim betaarucha* (“Haredim Exhibited”), which was screened at the opening of the exhibition at Beit Avi Chai, in 2009.

ple also speak on the phone, go to work and to the grocery shop, carry their children, feed them, blow their noses, go travelling, and have dinner (other than on Seder night, for example).

In all three exhibitions, Haredi women are represented in a quasi-opposite way. They sit, their head covered with a veil, waiting for the groom, or stand in the women's section at synagogue, looking at the rabbi through the slits. They play no active part in the religious ceremony they are looking at - they wait. These images also serve first and foremost the needs of secular viewers and readers and help construct their own identity in relation to that of the Haredi people they are looking at. In these pictures as in many other cases,¹¹ Haredi women are presented as the passive victims of a patriarchal and oppressive society. They agree to bear the burden of raising children and earning a living because they have been instilled a "false consciousness" and they have been deprived of the ability to stand up against it; they have neither voice nor agency. It may well be that since women are not obliged to wear clothes of a single colour – and in many cases, their clothes are quite similar to those of non-Haredi women – they are also less appealing to photographers. This may be why they are rarely filmed as they go about their daily life.

Among the studies that examined the representation of Haredi people within the Israeli context, no attention has been given to the process of developing or producing these representations, which is where this article intends to make its contribution. I will be analysing the process of making the series, in order to examine the decisions that were made throughout the process, as well as the range of economic, political, artistic and other forces at play, which shaped the final product, and of which the viewers are mostly unaware. These decisions, forces and factors can give us an insight into the politics of the creation of a documentary film.

FROM ANTHROPOLOGY TO DOCUMENTARY CINEMA

As a journalist who focused on covering the Haredi minority, but particularly once I started studying it academically, I became more and more interested in the way this minority is represented in the media and in the arts. These representations are particularly important in light of contemporary wider processes in Israeli society. As part of these processes, many young Haredi men are stepping out of the Haredi sphere and are trying to get a job and join other areas of activity (Hakak 2003, 2004, 2006). I am interested in the role played by these representations within Israeli society, as well as their effects on the Haredi minority itself. Indeed, the attitude towards the Haredim, and the latter's ability to be successfully integrated outside the Haredi enclave, depends also on the openness and tolerance they will encounter. This openness and tolerance, in turn, is heavily influenced by the representations of this minority in the media, and the public discourse they create.

¹¹ The motif of the Haredi woman as repressed by the patriarchal male establishment is also found in Amos Gitai's film "Kadosh" from 1998, as well as in the series of films on Haredi and religious women, directed by Anat Zuria, particularly in "Purity" (2002) and "Rebellious Woman" (2009).

In this case, however, I wanted to do more than simply point out the stereotypes found in the representations of the Haredi minority. I wanted to take a more active part in the creation of alternative representations that would challenge existing ones, and examine the actual process through which such representations are created. Quite early on I discovered visual anthropology and started collaborating with documentary film makers.

Many anthropologists tend to document the participants in their studies with the help of a camera, and visual anthropology is an established sub-discipline. The nature of the anthropological research, which exposes the researcher to the world and lives of the participants in his research, in their natural habitat, brings him/her closer to documentary film making, which relies on the same kind of materials and access.

The reasons that have led many anthropologists to document society visually are that this allows them to present and illustrate more successfully certain aspects of the societies they are studying; a desire to also convey sensory qualities such as colors, images, movement and also tastes and smells, which are part of the societies under study; a desire to communicate the findings to a wider audience, and to do so in a way that will also impact on the viewers' emotional and sensual world, rather than only intellectually. Similar motives also underlie my attraction to the field. It enabled me to acquire new work tools but required continued adjustment to a new way of working and thinking.

Since the beginning of the work with Ron Ofer on this series, we shared the various tasks and both of us took on part of the research, screenplay and directing, each one according to his affinities and talents. The partnership was successful, however in September 2007, when we were still deep into filming I left for the UK with my family, on a post-doctorate program. Ron continued driving the project forward and we were in close phone and email contact. Out of the six participants in the series, I was involved in most of the filming with four of them. I was also involved in the discussions that arose in relation to the two other participants. During editing, I saw different versions at various stages, which I commented on. I will only be relating here to those events which I am deeply familiar with.

In analysing the process, I chose to focus on the characteristics that in my view are unique to cinema that deals with the Haredi minority and religion more broadly, and to minimise the discussion on the characteristic and more general features of documentary film making.

Thus, for example, I hardly dealt with the pressures we faced to turn the film into a more accessible and commercial film, which forced us to carry out a few essential changes, such as strengthening the dramatic conflict between the characters. Although these interventions did shape our series, they are commonly found in many other films unrelated to religion in any way.

BETWEEN A COMMITMENT TO THE HAREDI
VIEWPOINT AND COMMERCIAL CONSIDERATIONS:
THE CONTEXT IN WHICH THE SERIES WAS
CREATED

The project I will describe and analyse here was made possible due to a set of special circumstances. In 2005, the concessionaires of Israel's Channel 2 stood before a tender that was to determine which one of them would be granted broadcasting rights in the upcoming concession period.

The Second Television and Radio Authority, as a government regulator, was responsible for choosing the best proposal. Each concessionaire tried to recruit to its ranks the best stars and to prepare a pool of quality television projects, which it would fund and broadcast - projects which involved a commitment to society and which did not necessarily turn to the broadest and lowest common denominator. The concessionaires were graded based on how they related to peripheral sectors and Jewish contents. This was our opportunity. Since we had already worked together on a number of projects, we quickly came up with a proposal for a documentary series entitled "The Haredi Pillar of Fire", playing on the title of the series "Pillar of Fire".¹² Its goal was to bring to Israeli viewers for the first time the Haredi narrative on Jewish history of the last 200 years. We did not want to explore a limited topic, issues or event from the Haredi perspective, but a very broad one, and we believed that this was a good opportunity to do so.

Television viewers are familiar with the Zionist narrative but only a few know how the Haredi minority, in its entire complexity, understands recent Jewish history. We thought that getting to know the Haredi perspective/s and the ability to make it known would be a first step in finding a common narrative shared by this public and other parts of Israeli society, and which would challenge the commonly found representations of Haredi people and their world. The idea was submitted to the production company Keshet, which was competing over the concession, and it was accepted. This meant that Keshet was committing itself to purchasing, with the help of its development budget, the right to use the proposal as part of its tender for Channel 2. People at Keshet put us in contact with the Belfilms production company,¹³ whose people were happy to take on the project.

Initially, our proposal was for a film that would document the efforts of Haredi film makers to create a series that would tell this historical tale, as we realized that it would be best to let members of the Haredi minority determine the contents by themselves. This story would also have dictated the structure of the series and, in that sense, would have reflected Haredi viewpoint to a greater degree. However, this idea was rejected very early on by the producers and by staff at Keshet's documentary department. The Keshet representative explained that the post-modern aspects of the idea, i.e. creating a film within a film, or a film that would follow the making of a film, were

¹² "Pillar of Fire" is a documentary television series from Israel's Channel One, on the history of Zionism. The creator, researcher, screenwriter and main editor was Yigal Lussin, and it was produced by Yaakov Eisenman. The series was broadcast for five months, during the winter and spring of 1981, and got very high ratings, though it was the only channel at the time. "Pillar of Fire" was written from a Zionist perspective, and included practically no criticism of Zionism and its agents.

¹³ Belfilms which was set up by Katriel and Noemi Schory is a leading documentary production companies in Israel. At the beginning of our work on the project, the manager of the company was Liran Atzmor, however he left two years later and was replaced by Itai Ken-Tor.

out of the question for him. We realised that the staff at Keshet were interested in a more conventional, and therefore more commercial, film. Thus, we modified our proposal. In our new proposal, we, the secular makers of the film, would tell its story. After a few weeks of intense work, we submitted a proposal to Keshet, who accepted it with a great deal of interest. We were soon invited to sign a contract. We learned from the media that, as part of the tender, Keshet had presented our series as one of its top projects.

The new proposal also aroused a few fears in us; in the film we had worked on earlier, we followed a young Hassidic divorced man in his attempts to find a new partner. We accompanied him over the period of approximately one year, and wanted to document his search for love. In that sense, the film was meant to follow a well-known narrative, one of the cornerstones of Western culture. We took for granted that we would find strong feelings, expectations, passions and disappointments, but to our disappointment (and our naiveté), the young man we focused on related to the entire issue in a pragmatic and technical way. Most of his efforts focused on a methodical collection of information through his contacts about the women whom the matchmakers suggested to him. Despite our efforts, in what we filmed there is no trace of the powerful feelings we hoped to capture. Finally, we decided for those reasons that the character we were focusing on did not have a strong enough presence on screen, i.e. was neither convincing nor interesting enough to watch.

According to the Haredi perception, as it emerges from the internal debate that is taking place within this minority group, love between two people grows after marriage, if they agree on a common path and shared goals. Thus, both partners need to be very clear about their own worldview, and whether they share goals for the future with the other. Experiencing the strong romantic feelings expected in Western culture is not accepted or allowed here. It is certainly not allowed for a couple to live together before deciding on their future. If we take into consideration the fact that the Haredi matchmaking system functions along the same lines as the young man we filmed, and with a critical view of the idea of romantic love, our decision – based on the absence of the strong feeling we had been expecting – arouses certain question marks. It mainly teaches us about our own world, about our expectations and value scale, as well as about the complexity involved in filming minority groups whose culture differs from that of the person holding the camera. How can we make sure we will not repeat the same mistake, and not impose our values and expectations? How will we be able to make a film that will teach us something real about the Haredi minority, and not reflect our and our partners' prejudices? These and many other considerations weighed upon the project until the end.

A few months after we signed the contract with Keshet, it won the bid at Channel 2, and we started working on the series.

The support of Channel 2 enabled us to obtain funds relatively easily from two other sources: the Gesher Multicultural Film Fund and the AVI CHAI Foundation. We now had four strong and highly experienced partners, by comparison, our own relative lack of experience clearly stood out.

RECRUITING PARTICIPANTS IN A SEGREGATED MINORITY GROUP

One of the main tasks we had to deal with at the start was to locate and select participants whose filmed testimony about their life would be sufficiently interesting from a dramatic perspective, and that would at the same time enable us to learn about the topic of the film. In closed minorities, which look upon the media of the surrounding society with suspicion and diffidence, as in the case of the Haredi minority, this is a real challenge. As a result, the participants who eventually acceded to the documentary filmmaker's request are often found on the margins of their community; therefore, they are not compelled to adapt to all its rules,¹⁴ nor are they its faithful representatives. In an attempt to avoid this situation, we chose to not include marginal characters, and to focus on participants who are deeply rooted in this minority group, even if their "recruitment" would be far more complex. Those who agreed to cooperate with us, despite the threat, had already married off all their children, or were involved in activities which were perceived by the community as necessitating the cooperation with the secular media.

Beyond the desire to avoid creating a twisted representation by focusing on marginal figures, it was important for us to do away with the stereotype of the Haredi minority as a black and homogeneous mass of people, and to present its parts in a balanced way as much as possible. We also looked for people who would avoid playing the part of the "spokesperson" defending his community, and who would also be prepared to criticise it, as well as wider Israeli society. Finally, among the six key participants in the series, there are four men and two women; two Sephardi Haredim, one Hassid and three Lithuanians.¹⁵ Some of the participants requested and were given the right to veto parts of the filmed material after they viewed its final version. The changes we were requested to make following these private screenings were for the most part minor, but offering this possibility contributed significantly to our relations with the participants and to their trust in us.

HISTORY, MEMORY AND RATING

At the beginning of the process, we already knew that Channel 2, a commercial channel in the first decade of the 21st century, would not broadcast a "heavy" historical series such as "Pillar of Fire".

We were striving for a more dynamic product. Therefore, we devoted much time to examining the possibilities of telling the historical tale through participants who were alive and active at

¹⁴ For example, one can mention the participants in two BBC documentaries on the Haredi community in London: "A Hasidic Guide to Love, Marriage and Finding a Bride," directed by Paddy Wivell (2011) and the first episode in a series entitled 'Jews', directed by Vanessa Engle (2008). At the centre of both are former inmates who were accused of money laundering of drug money or drug trafficking, and who are on the margins of the community.

¹⁵ The Sephardic, Hasidic and Lithuanians are the three main Haredi sub-groups.

the time, while incorporating archival material. We started by holding a series of meetings with Haredi historians and writers, and with academics who wrote about their work. We also met with people who taught history and were involved in its commemoration within Haredi minority,¹⁶ and we started looking for archival footage, in Israel and abroad. As we had funding, we hired three researchers,¹⁷ who were mainly involved in locating potential participants.

After a few months and tens of meetings, we came up with a draft of the script for the series, which we submitted to Channel 2. The reactions were cold. The participants we chose were described as unconvincing. They were unable to propose a sufficiently interesting life that could be filmed and that would guarantee dramatic development. The script was perceived as “old fashioned” and unsuitable for a commercial channel. Our proposal to incorporate expensive archival material was also problematic. Our partners were unhappy.

In the early stage, the “socially committed” component of our proposal – the intention to give voice to the Haredi historical narrative – was perceived as serving the goals of the concessionaires (Keshet) in competing with other concessionaires.

But since the bid had come through, the rules of the game had changed. The ratings of the series became the dominant element in the discussion. Letting the Haredi point of view be known became marginal. Since we also had our qualms about the participants we had located, and given our limited experience, we did not oppose them. We also aspired for our series to reach many people and to enjoy high ratings.

In an attempt to remain faithful to the original topic, we decided to focus on the way the Haredi minority constructs, transmits and commemorates its past.¹⁸ A partial solution to our difficulty was found when we realised that a significant part of the Haredi narrative of the last two hundred years focused on the attitudes towards the Zionist movement and the state of Israel. While sociologists who deal with the Haredi minority tend to describe it as a “counter culture/society” (Friedman 1991; Sivan, Almond and Appleby 2004), the Haredi historical narrative is also a “counter-narrative”.

How does one film this type of narrative other than by holding a series of interviews that deal with past events? This is where the 2006 election campaign played in our favour. We knew that within the Haredi minority election periods bring back to life the question of the relationship with the State. It also sharpens the division into camps, whether it is about political identification, or the actual participation in the elections. Since from the start, we wanted to show the various shades that make up the community, the election campaign seemed like a perfect opportunity. All we had to do was to locate the participants we would focus on. They were meant to represent a range of opinions within the Haredi minority, in relation to the State.

¹⁶ Such as, for example, Rabbi Tzvi Weinman and Rebbetzin Esther Farbstein who both wrote about the Holocaust, people from the Ganzach Kiddush Hashem organization in Bnei Brak, and from the Holocaust Museum in Washington.

¹⁷ One of the researchers was Haredi, one used to be Haredi, and the third had been national-religious.

¹⁸ We had in mind films like “Yizkor – the Slaves of Memory”, by Eyal Sivan (1990). This film examines the construction of collective memory within Israeli society, by looking at ceremonies taking place in the Israeli education system, starting in kindergarten until high school.



SHMUEL POPENHEIM, EDITOR
OF 'HA'EIDA'.

The first participant we selected was Shmuel Pappenheim, editor of 'Ha'Eida', the press mouthpiece of the Eida Ha'Hare-dit, a body that unites a number of anti-Zionist small Hassidic and Lithuanian communities. As we estimated, following Pappenheim's work as a journalist throughout the elections period was fascinating. It gave rise to acute historical tensions between different factions of the Haredi minority regarding the establishment of the State and participation in the elections.

To counterbalance Pappenheim, and as someone who represents the line of integration and attempts to change things "from within", we chose the late parliamentary member, Avraham Ravitz,¹⁹ from the United Torah Judaism party.²⁰ In his youth, Ravitz had been a member of the Lehi movement and had taken part in the celebrations following the establishment of the state. In that sense, Ravitz's life story has gone through many historical events that are important in order to understand the Haredi minority and its changing attitude towards the State.

Our filming during the election campaign went well, and after that, we reverted to writing. In order to receive the approval and funds to continue filming, we had to submit to Channel 2 a document describing the structure of the series and its division into episodes. In addition to the attitude towards the state of Israel, which we were hoping to look at with the help of our first two participants, we were also hoping to deal with issues such as the formation of Haredi identity in Eastern Europe at the time of the Hatam Sofer, the establishment of Agudath Israel, the Zionist movement, the Holocaust, the immigration to Israel, the establishment of the State, and the demonstrations against recruiting women into the IDF. However, the scripts we submitted were once again received coldly, both by people in our production company and by the people at Keshet. The participants we had located were perceived as being unconvincing and the possibility of accompanying them in their life and business did not show any promise of significant dramatic developments.

¹⁹ Rabbi Avraham Ravitz passed away a few months after the first screening of the episode in which he appears.

²⁰ United Torah Judaism is an Ashkenazy Haredi party resulting from the union of the Hassidic Agudath Israel and the Lithuanian Degel Ha'Torah. These two parties united in 1992, in view of the elections for the 13th Knesset, and have since run for seats as a unified list.

MEMBER OF THE KNESSET,
AVRAHAM RAVITZ (LEFT
MIDDLE).



The nature of historical topics is that the possibility of dealing with them by filming in the present is limited, and when it is possible, the present that is filmed is, in most cases, far from containing real dramatic development. After a few attempts, Channel 2 told us clearly: "Move on from your focus on Haredi memory and give us a series about the Haredi minority today, here and now." The people at our production company felt likewise.

We started to think things over once again. Although we feared that letting go of the construction of Haredi memory meant letting go of the focus on the Haredi point of view, we felt we had no choice. At that point, we had already been conducting research for over a year. We met tens of potential participants and interviewed many more over the phone. We had also written a number of scripts that had been rejected. What were we to do with all the footage we accumulated and about the money we had spent? When we started thinking once again about the series we wanted to prepare, in accordance with the requirements of Channel 2, we realised that fortunately, the issue of the attitude towards the State remained central, and that the two participants we had filmed were still relevant. Although at the editing stage, the focus switched from the past to the present, beyond this, a significant part of the footage was still usable. As with the construction of memory, in order to understand the Haredi minority in the present, its attitude towards the state remains central. We conducted some complementary filming with the two participants from the first episode, in order to get better acquainted with their families and other aspects of their life, and went back to Channel 2 for yet another discussion.

According to the new proposal we formulated with our partners, the series would deal with the present challenges the Haredi minority is currently facing, as a segregated and conservative minority. In addition to its relations with the state, the following episodes were supposed to deal with the impact of economy and employment, and of popular Western-secular

culture. The new proposal focused on the areas where Haredi and Israeli societies interact. We hoped that this would allow exploration of the powerful changes taking place under the cover of conservatism, leading to unusual combinations between “old” and “new”, tradition and modernity.

COUNTER-CULTURE, RELIGIOUS EXTREMISM OR EXOTICA

Although we had given up the idea of focusing on the historical narrative or on the construction of Haredi memory, we remained firm in our intention to avoid recreating common representations of the Haredi minority. We wanted to avoid stereotyping and exoticising it; therefore, we avoided emphasising the various religious ceremonies, unless they were directly linked to the issue we were looking at. We preferred to focus, as much as possible, on daily life and routine, on the family, and on the work and studies of the participants.

The title “Filmed on a Weekday” – in addition to the fact that it echoes the caption that appears on the television screen when a Haredi person appears, particularly when broadcast on Shabbat or on a holy day²¹ – is appropriate in that sense. We tried to examine the points where Haredi world and Israeli society meet.

Within the framework of our perception of the Haredi minority as an enclave group that is striving to protect itself from the influence of the surrounding society, it was important for us to examine, for example, the Haredi interpretation of and its interaction with the spheres surrounding it or shared by it; such spheres were the political sphere, the justice system, the labour market and Israeli popular culture.

The new proposal was greeted far more positively, although Channel 2 emphasised that the series should also contain scenes and situations that would “draw in” the viewers. The material we filmed with Pappenheim and Ravitz, was described as weak, lacking sufficient dramatic tension, and mainly, that it was devoid of any Haredi exotica. Some of the participants at the meeting suggested that we film religious ceremonies and events, such as the *kapparot* ceremonies, the *Asseret Haminim* markets, kosherising the dishes, and other aspects of the Haredi religious practice.²² We rejected this and claimed that presenting the Haredi outlook on secularism was powerful enough. Channel 2 rejected our claims. We spoke of the series entitled “Eastern Desert Wind – A Moroccan Chronicle”, directed by David Ben Shetrit, which presented the narrative of Moroccan immigrants and was a kind of accusatory document against the Zionist establishment.

We estimated that our material had, at least in part, the same potential. We claimed that the Haredi minority offered a full and more comprehensive cultural alternative to secularism than Mizrahi culture did, for example, as it comprises an entire scale of values that is for the most part opposed to Western-secular values. This meeting ended with no decision.

²¹ The caption’s role is to clarify that the interviewee didn’t desecrate the Sabbath.

²² Many films represent the Haredi minority through its many ceremonies, thereby reinforcing the exotica and ‘otherness’ of this community.

We decided that the way to guarantee sufficient ratings without emphasising the exotic was to highlight the cultural challenge which the Haredi world pose to secularism, and the various ways the former perceives secularism and criticises it. Carrying out this critical alternative, however, turned out to be more difficult than we had anticipated. In an attempt to follow this path, we constructed the first episode's concluding scene. In this scene, Shmuel Pappenheim is on a private guided tour of the High Court of Justice in Jerusalem, and is given detailed information about the architecture of the building, particularly of the attempt to incorporate motifs from Jewish scriptures. Although this scene and Pappenheim's criticism of the secular justice system does not set any real challenge to the secular justice system, it does testify to the way it is perceived from the Haredi perspective. The tour arouses some strong feelings in Pappenheim, and leads him to ponder on whether he should bring his children there, in order to show them to what extent secular Jews deny their past. Channel 2 liked these sections of footage. In another excerpt, Pappenheim presents an illustrated booklet for children prepared by one of his associates in view of the elections. The booklet covers "the Zionists' misdeeds" since the establishment of the State to this day, in a series of drawings. The founders of the State are described in it as people who stood by while European Jews were being exterminated, since it "served their purpose". These excerpts do not contain a real challenge to secularism or Zionism, either. As the booklet is designed for children it presents a simplified version of views which are common within Haredi minority. New historical evidence or more sophisticated arguments may have given rise to certain question marks in relation to the Zionist narrative about the Holocaust, but the simplistic formulation only presents Pappenheim and his group's outlook as fanatic and infuriating. But like the previous scene in the Supreme Court, it highlights the divide between Pappenheim and his group, and other Israelis.

This episode, the first in the series, also includes a few sections of narration in which the creators of the series speak of the film as a journey they embarked on in order to get to know the Haredi minority and to dismantle some of their own stereotypes about it. The fact of "admitting" to the secular perspective does away with the pretense of presenting an objective representation of reality, and clarifies that the film reflects the perspective of two secular film directors. These bits of narration enhance the strength of our encounter with Shmuel Pappenheim, a member of the Toledoth Aharon Hassidic group, for whom the encounter with us is no simple matter. Indeed, he speaks of his hesitations and reservations.

Pappenheim and Ravitz's personalities emerge gradually, but while Ravitz appears as someone who strives to combine religious ideals with the reality of life in Israel and is prepared to make certain compromises, Pappenheim for his part, appears as more of a zealot. Pappenheim's honesty and the fact that

it was the first time that he expressed himself on camera turned his interview into something unusual. Ravitz on the other hand, was already well known to secular viewers, and was very used to the presence of cameras. Our footage of him becomes more interesting when he is joined by his wife, Avigail, who was unfamiliar to our viewers. Pappenheim's great ambivalence in relation to the camera and to taking part in a film were especially intriguing, and he had a stronger presence on screen. This is also why he was given more screen time.

Journalists and film makers are drawn to this "zealot" and this closed world precisely because it attempts to hide from them. For these reasons, the media coverage of Haredi marginal groups is far greater than their share in the population. Thus, certain extremist groups, such as the *Neturei Karta*, who total no more than a few hundred families, make ample use of the media attention they are given, and their views are known throughout the world.²³

HOW ABOUT AN EPISODE ABOUT WOMEN?

A series on the Haredi minority must also look at the role of women. It was clear to us that we would have to challenge the prevalent stereotypes of Haredi women as depressed, passive, voiceless and choiceless. At the same time, although we easily found Haredi women who challenged this stereotype, getting them to take part in the series was more complicated. They rejected the very possibility of being filmed, mostly fearing they would jeopardise their children's chances of finding a good match, or that their children or their partners would be thrown out of the educational frameworks they attended.

Were we to reproduce the representation of the Haredi woman in spite of ourselves? Maybe our difficulty was a proof of the truth of the representations? For many years researchers on the Haredi minority thought that Haredi women, who are exposed to Western culture to a greater degree, would be those who would bring about changes from within. Later on they became far more skeptical about this possibility (Friedman 1999). In many religious groups, the women do not challenge religious conventions; in fact they act towards maintaining them, while at the same time searching for ways to expand their freedom within them. This is why we did not think about devoting an episode to women as a social issue. In fact, the episodes were meant to take a close look at the forces of change that are at work within the Haredi enclave. - Nor did we want to create a 'ghetto' for women. We hoped for equal representation of men and women in each episode, as much as possible; however, the head of our production company, a secular woman herself, thought otherwise and in the end, it was decided to devote a separate episode to women in the Haredi minority.

This decision can be interpreted as based on the secular Western approach, according to which the status of Haredi women – and of women in fundamentalist groups in general – is a 'social problem', given that they are 'repressed', and 'enslaved' by

²³ For example, the meeting between some members of Neturei Karta and the Iranian President in 2006 was covered by the media worldwide. While the Neturei Karta people do not take national insurance money and any state funds, and try to avoid unnecessary exposure to Western culture as much as possible, in their links with journalists they are surprisingly unrestrained.

ADINA BAR-SHALOM,
DAUGHTER OF RABBI OVADIA
YOSEF AND HEAD OF THE
HAREDI ACADEMIC COLLEGE.



the male religious establishment. Liberal secular cinema has taken upon itself to liberate them or at least to lend them a voice. For us it was important that the women who would be the focus of this episode would not confirm this stereotype but rather, challenge it.

The first female participant we agreed on was Adina Bar Shalom, daughter of Rabbi Ovadia Yosef.²⁴ Adina founded and leads the Haredi academic college where Haredi men and women study separately. The subjects taught include social work, educational counseling, communication disorders, economics, computer science, and graphic design. We realised that by following her work, we would be able to look at issues such as poverty, social distress, the economy, professional training, and employment – all of them issues faced by the Haredi minority. We realised that given her position, Adina was leading significant social change. We wanted to focus on the tension between those leading the change, trying to speed up the process of professional training and establishing higher education frameworks, and the conservative forces striving to slow these processes down or to stop them altogether. Although Adina's relationship with her father involves tremendous respect and admiration, she is a smart and energetic woman who is able to forge her own way in a world of men and of Jewish religious laws. She does not act in opposition to this world but finds creative ways to act within it.

The second woman we chose was Rachel Shalkovsky, best known as "Bambi". She is head midwife at the Bikur Holim Hospital in Jerusalem and has delivered over 30,000 babies. She also heads a *Gemach* (a non-profit loaning system in the Haredi minority) to help families in distress. These two tasks she is involved with were particularly suited for the series, since we wanted to deal with childbirth and economic distress. Her energetic and entrepreneurial nature also challenges the stereotype of the Haredi woman as submissive and obedient.

²⁴ Rabbi Ovadia Yosef was the first Sephardic Chief Rabbi during the years 1973-1983, and served as spiritual leader of the SHAS political party, until his death on October 7, 2013. He was considered by many as the greatest Sephardic rabbi of our time.



In the course of a meeting with Keshet, during which we showed them some footage we shot of Adina, we were once again told it was weak. “What’s missing here is a young woman. Who’s going to want to see a film about two old women?”, as it was put by one of the people at Channel 2.

What kind of materials would answer their expectations? What they were imagining was that we could bring along footage of one of Rabbi Ovadia Yosef’s grandchildren who became secular, if we found such a grandchild, or maybe some footage of one of his granddaughter’s forbidden affairs, if there was such. “It will be much easier to broadcast this”, we were promised. The story we wanted to tell was different, and involved Adina’s attempts to develop the Haredi college she headed. As we met up with her regularly our relationship grew stronger. She opened up and shared with us the links between her activity and her desire to expand the range of possibilities available to Haredi women, also in reparation for the limits that were set to her in the past by her parents and husband. Her life story included experiences that were clear examples of the submission of Haredi women to the male order in this religious minority; however, today she is a testimony to the possibility of mending things, and of the ability of Haredi women to gain power and freedom of action and enterprise. In many respects, only few people – whether men or women, living inside or outside the Haredi minority – achieve similar freedom to that which Adina enjoys in shaping a new social reality. Moreover, Adina is not “just a Haredi woman”, but the daughter of one of the most important rabbis in Israel, and the fact that she had never appeared in the media prior to that was a promotion tool which Channel 2 was very much aware of.

The film shows Adina and Bambi criticising their own society and thus can be interpreted as supporting the external criticism about the Haredi minority and its gendered division of labour. In this sense, by focusing on these women and the internal criticism they were voicing, the film turned into a call for

the emancipation of Haredi women, which can account for the reason why it was so enthusiastically received, particularly by secular viewers.

THE DEPTH OF STEREOTYPES

In addition to being broadcasted on television and screened in cinemas across the country, the series was screened at a number of festivals throughout the world, and won a number of prizes. We believe that we succeeded, albeit not always to the same extent, to draw a human profile of the range of characters found in the various parts of the Haredi minority. In addition to the focus on daily life and on the meeting points with secularism and Israeli society, we also conducted "life story" interviews, which were intended to enable the interviewees to share significant parts of their life, such as childhood, adolescence and married life, with minimal intervention on our part. We tried to avoid emphasising the otherness and the exotic aspects of the Haredi minority. Instead we stressed other aspects in the life of the interviewees which at least some of the viewers would be able to identify with. The focus was on the participants' perspective, and even when we did not agree with their point of view, we made a point of not confronting them or rebuking them. The music we used in the series also emphasizes their cultural world. The participants' singing – Shmuel Pappenheim, in the first episode, and Yigal Raveh in the third episode – is integrated into it. According to some of the critics, our efforts were fruitful²⁵ and the participants we worked with liked the series. Some of them attended many of the screenings, and spoke afterwards.

On the other hand, we were forced to make a few painful compromises throughout the process, and renounce our desire to deal with the Haredi historical narrative and the construction of Haredi memory. Our intention to use the Haredi perspective in order to challenge the secular perspective did not really come about either. Although the participants we selected are very eloquent, they do not emerge as interpreters or critics of Israeli society. It may be that we were unable to lead them in that direction, or maybe they were unable to fulfill this role in the first place. In a few instances, we also slipped into stereotypes. For example, in two narration bits we used the general term 'Haredim', as though we were dealing with a single black mass of people – an image we were actually trying to deconstruct. We also overlooked a few embarrassing mistakes in the English translation, which reveal the assumptions of the translator.²⁶

Once the editing of the series was completed, in 2010, the production company signed a contract with ARTE, the prestigious Franco-German television channel, to broadcast the series. The contract stipulated that the three episodes would be edited into a single one and a half hour film. An editor working for our production company edited it into this new version and wrote some new narration, which were adapted for a public that is not familiar with the Israeli Haredi minority and needs some background information. We conducted some improve-

²⁵ See, for example, Maya Sela's article ("Her Own Haider (nursery, YH)", *Haaretz*, 19.9.10, p. 14), or Alon Hadar's article ("Go Outside", *Ma'ariv*, 19.9.10, p. 18).

²⁶ In the first episode, for example, the Eida Haredit activists describe a gathering that was dispersed by the police. They called the policewoman "shikse" (a disparaging Yiddish term for a "non-Jewish woman"). In the translation, the word "whore" appears.

ments on this narration, although some of our improvements were erased, probably due to time constraints, and the German translation of this narration remained problematic. The narration and the new version of the film are a fascinating example of how filmed and ‘objective’ events, in any documentary, undergo a process of subjective interpretation before turning into a film. Thus, for example, the opening scene of the new version is totally identical to the opening scene of the first episode in the series, but the two narrations in this scene are entirely different. In the opening scene, we see a demonstration organised by the *Neturei Karta* in Jerusalem, on the day of the elections, being forcefully dispersed by the police. In the original version, the narration was as follows:

“Some 800,000 Haredi people live in the State of Israel. I have often related to them as a single black and threatening block. In my eyes, like in the media, the Haredim appeared to be faceless, nameless, and with no biographies. I want to take a look inside, to see the shades and more than that – to see how we appear to them”.

These words enable us to place ourselves as film directors who come from a different world – secular and distant from the Haredi minority. This way, we clarify that we do not pretend to reflect a single reality ‘as it is’; we admit that the film will reflect our perspective as non-Haredim. There is also a declaration of our desire to see the various shades and to dismantle the single black bulk into its parts; however at the same time, a dichotomy is created here between ‘us’ and ‘them’ (“the Haredim”, “how we appear to them”), as though we were dealing with two clear and distinct groups whereas the borders between the two communities are much more fluid and fuzzy.

The narration in the new version is more problematic:

About 800,000 Haredi Jews live in Israel – the Haredim. Their often violent struggle for Israel’s Jewish religious identity lets them appear as a big, menacing, dark mass in the eyes of the secular population.²⁷

The place of the creators of the film as secular or non-Haredi people is absent from this bit or from any the other part of the film, and the viewer receives a narration that is far more authoritative and which tries to give the feeling that what appears on the screen is the embodiment of reality. According to the new narration, the responsibility for the attitude towards the Haredi public lies entirely with them – the violent struggles of the Haredim to ensure the Jewishness of the State are the reason for the attitude of the secular public. A complex and multifaceted issue is summed up in a simplistic way, placing responsibility and blame on one side only. A few minutes later, the narrator is heard once again:

“In the tradition of Polish and Ukrainian Jews, many of them wear long coats and black fur hats, speak Yiddish. They do everything possible to distance themselves from their envi-

²⁷ The translation from German into English was done by Isolde Sommer.

ronment. Many of them live in the Jerusalem neighbourhood of Mea Shearim”.

This excerpt is also problematic and reinforces the stereotype: the long coat, the fur hat and the Yiddish language turn into the signs of the Haredim, who are presented as a single stereotyped and exotic mass. In fact, only the Hassidim wear fur hats, and only on Shabbat and Jewish holy days, while Hebrew is in fact much more common than Yiddish in most Haredi circles. The description of the Haredi attempt to separate themselves from their surroundings is also partial, devoid of any nuance, and very problematic. Turning Haredi people into a single and exotic entity is, of course, totally opposite to our original intention to show the various shades, sub-groups and differences which, of course, are also reflected in their external appearance.

Unfortunately, these distortions have remained in the German version of the film.²⁸ This was a good reminder of the fact that what is presented as the “truth” in documentary cinema is relative, processed and subjective. Two editors can use the same material to create different films with quasi-opposite tones and statements.

THE PRESS AND THE CRITICS

We did not study the films’ reception systematically. However, I will briefly relate to the newspaper articles and reviews that were written about it. In Israel, the episodes were screened in cinemas for months, and it seems that many people, particularly those with some degree of interest in religion, found them interesting. All the main newspapers wrote about the series at least once, and some of them devoted more than one article or critique. Some of the critiques were very positive.²⁹ Some writers were attentive to our attempt to challenge common representations of the Haredi minority in the media; it does seem, however, that the familiar patterns of representation of the Haredi minority imposed themselves on the writers. For example, Adina Bar-Shalom’s story about her parents locking her up at home so that she would not take the ability tests (*meitzag* tests) at school, in order to prevent her pursuing a course of studies that interested her at the time, was particularly emphasised.³⁰ Not that the details mentioned by the journalist were unimportant – indeed, we chose this as our final scene of the second episode. But the journalists and their editors did not always bother to mention an equally important fact: that today, as a grownup, Adina enjoys tremendous freedom.

This freedom enables her to open a whole range of possibilities for young Haredi women, including those who would have been off limits for her in her youth. In her very positive review, Netta Ziv writes:

“The daughter, Adina Bar-Shalom, is a brilliant and impressive woman who decided to fight against the ignorance and poverty which the religious establishment is promoting, and to encourage Haredi women to join the labour market. However,

²⁸ Despite these limitations the film was nominated for the Grimme Award (one of the highest German awards for television) for the best TV documentary in 2012.

²⁹ For example, Alon Hadar’s critique in *Maariv* (19.9.10), in which he writes that the series is “the first honest attempt to look at and understand the Haredi individual.” He also writes that it succeeds in dismantling most of the common stereotypes about the Haredi minority, “far better than Haredi people have done so far.”

³⁰ For example, the news item that appeared in *Achbar Ha’ir* (the equivalent of *Time Out*) on 3.2.09 entitled “It’s Hard Being the Daughter of Rabbi Ovadia” (Netta Ziv, *Achbar Ha’ir*, *Haarets*, Feb 3, 2009).

when she stands face to face with her father, she suddenly turns into this weak and obedient girl who was not allowed to study psychology, fearing it would 'arouse doubts in her'".

Although Ziv's portrayal is more balanced, she interprets Adina's choice not to go against her father and the religious establishment as a proof of her weakness and childish behaviour. In line with Mahmood's analysis (2005), this can be explained as stemming from the feminist-Western worldview, according to which only an open rebellion against the male and religious establishment will enable Adina to achieve self-fulfilment. The possibility that for Adina, self-fulfillment can only be achieved with the help of and within the boundaries of religion and its commandments is not even considered.

In another article, the creators of the series are described as having succeeded to "break the locked door open" onto the Haredi world (Levy, Kol Hazman, 12.12.08). This description emphasises the importance of the series and the challenges in its making. Haredi community is portrayed as a monolithic group, locked up behind heavy gates that protect it from its surroundings; a magical and exotic world sheltered from the eyes of all, which has been revealed thanks to the creators of the series. Flattering as it is, the terminology once again depicts the Haredi minority as passive, weak, and exotic. Reality is far more complex, however, and the Haredi minority is anything but a single mass of people. There is no element of everyday life in this minority which does not involve some meeting, partnership, and relations with its non-Haredi and even its non-Jewish surroundings. Moreover, the participants in the series chose to be involved in the series of their own free will, each one of them based on their own considerations.

THE VIEWERS

The episode that seems to have drawn the most positive reactions from our viewers was the one dealing with women, "The Rabbi's Daughter and the Midwife", and many reported that they identified with the women participants. Shmuel Pappenheim and Michael Rothschild also drew a lot of interest. At the time, Pappenheim was editor of "*Ha'Eida*". The film follows him in his work, and in the background we see his modest and neglected office. It is clear to the viewers that we are dealing with a man leading a very modest life, and motivated by a strong ideological passion and strong religious fervor. This is all the more so with Rothschild, who invites us into his small, not to say ascetic home, comprising two tiny bedrooms and a living room, where he raises nine children with much pride, faith and joy.

The reactions to Yigal Revach were very different. In his youth, Yigal dreamed of becoming a Torah scholar but he gave this up and opened a successful advertising company that markets the products of leading firms to the Haredi sector. The episode follows him in his efforts, together with people from the Bezeq phone company, to come up with a 'kosher' internet service. It also follows him on a trip to the tombs of Hassidic Tsa-

dikkim in the Ukraine, a journey he undertakes regularly, in order to fill himself up with “spiritual energy”. His frequent trips (up to eight times a year, as he reveals in the film) are made possible thanks to his financial success. The sharp switches between his crying on the tombs of Tzadikkim to conversations on his cell phone one moment later about new advertising contract aroused reservations among many viewers. The viewers also hear that during one of his trips to Uman, Yigal is asked how he manages to switch so quickly between lamenting himself on the tomb of the Hafetz Hayim and a business phone conversation. One of his friends replies in his place and says that the entire world is built of both body and soul, but the interviewer quiets him down, as though looking for another answer.

From the secular perspective, these opposites do not go hand in hand. How can one cry over the tomb of a rabbi who died some eighty years ago, one minute, and rejoice over some material gain, a minute later? The fact that Revach’s parents emigrated from Morocco but in spite of this, he adopted the hegemonic Ashkenazi rabbinical establishment, add to his lack of credibility in the eyes of many viewers. The situation merely hints at the large gaps between the Haredi and the secular perceptions in this regard. In the course of the editing, a conscious attempt was made to soften these tensions. Excerpts in which Revach’s transitions from deep religious emotions to earthly dealings related to his business, which were likely to seem somewhat comical, were not included. Our secular audience didn’t appreciate Revach’s investment in both the spiritual and the earthly world, which for many seems to exclude one another.

A closer examination teaches us that such tensions underlie the Haredi worldview. Haredi education is characterised by the aspiration towards achieving highly spiritual goals. Haredi rabbis understand that not all the members of their flock are able to reach these lofty spheres. But, they choose to lead a life that aspires towards divine ideals, even if many are far from achieving them, rather than a life geared towards human and achievable goals that from the start imply compromising and accepting mediocrity.

To distinguish between those who sin out of weakness and those who sin out of principle, Halachic literature distinguishes between the “heretic by appetite” and the “heretic out of spite”. Although it is clear that many will not be able to fulfill all the religious ideals, it is expected that they will keep their failures to themselves (viewing them as weaknesses due to human “appetite”), and will certainly not display them; consequently, hypocrisy and concealment become part of the routine (Rose 2006).

This hypocrisy – a direct outcome of the aspiration towards spiritual ideals despite the earthly limitations of human life – is to a large extent contrary to the conventions commonly found in Western culture. Particularly due to the influence of Western psychology, these tensions between desires or aspirations and reality are perceived as problematic and as drawing a heavy price in psychological terms; thus, Western psychology is inve-

sting tremendous efforts in helping people “come to terms with themselves”, and “accept themselves” with all their urges and drives. Doing away with the religious dimension and the aspiration to the sublime help reduce these tensions.

Towards the end of the first episode, during Pappenheim’s tour of the Supreme Court, which I described earlier, he reaches a new understanding: secular Jews are aware of their religious “origin” and of the religious commandments, but consciously decide not to act according to them. For Pappenheim, this understanding is painful. He had an easier time with secular people when he perceived them as ‘captured infants’³¹ and their actions as stemming from ignorance rather than a conscious decision to act in opposition to the religious commandments. Now he has to account for the reason why secular people choose to act this way, despite having knowledge. In a similar vein, in the course of the research for the film, one of the sons of the late Rabbi Ravitz, expressed doubts as to our motives to understand Haredi perspective. “If you really listen to what is being said to you”, he said, “you will most certainly become religious, so there’s no chance that you’ll listen.” In other words, even for Rabbi Ravitz’s son, he who really listens and understands Haredi worldview can only be convinced; thus, if we listen we will certainly “return to the fold”.

In the context of our series, however, we should ask whether this kind of expectation is mutual. In other words, is it possible that secular Israelis expect that when a Haredi individual comes out of the ‘ghetto’ – the protected Haredi space of the yeshiva and the kollel – and ‘listens’ and is exposed to the secular worldview through higher education, when he acquires a profession and joins the labour market, he will become more Israeli and behave like them in many other respects? Or is it just that once Haredi individuals join higher education and the labour market they become our equals and competitors and we employ a more critical perspective towards them? Isn’t this just another example where the different habitus (Bourdieu 1977) will make integration easier for those Haredi individuals who are culturally more similar to the group they are trying to join? Will success in integrating into wider Israeli society be dependent on cultural assimilation?

It seems that our viewers and we were able to identify far more easily with those who filled the slot of the Haredi who is closed off, the zealot, the one who lives a humble life and who, in many ways, is more ‘exotic’, whose way of life is perceived as being more ‘traditional’, focusing on the ‘spiritual’ or the ‘ideological’. On the other hand, the ‘new Haredi’, who combines different worlds, the ‘old’ and the ‘new’, the spiritual and the earthly, gave rise to doubts and suspicion in the viewers and in ourselves. Do we expect those who have come out of the Haredi enclave and have been exposed to higher education, for example, to be more like us, to change certain aspects of their religiousness? Are we disappointed when they ‘insist’ on maintaining this same religiousness, even after having been exposed

³¹ A Talmudic term referring to a Jew who sins as a result of being raised without knowledge and understanding of Judaism.

to 'our' world? Do we reject their attempt to combine spiritual and earthly aspirations?

Conclusion

An examination of the process of the creation of the series has revealed its complexities and the various pressures, demands and intentions of the participants. A film involves a team with differing views. Even less crucial partners, such as the person translating the captions, are able to alter the meaning of the work. The analysis of the process has revealed the gaps between our original intention, as the creators, and the final product. Each stage in the process and each decision we made opened a whole range of possibilities for us to make mistakes.

The process meant we had to constantly reexamine our views and feelings in relation to the participants and to ensure that our preconceived ideas and stereotypes did not stand in our way and cast a shadow over what we were able to show to the viewers. In that sense, the reflexivity which the anthropologist is committed to should also be applied to the documentary film maker. I have shown the outcome of the work on the series, its achievements and flaws, from my own perspective, along the process of its creation; the places where we managed to challenge the stereotypical representation, and the places where we perpetuated it, whether willingly or unwillingly. As I tried to show, once the process of creation is completed, the process of interpretation by viewers and critics begins – and they also choose the parts which serve their preconceived ideas and ignore what is less useful to them.

Real change in people's perceptions and views is hard to create and internalise. The representation of the Haredi minority seems to be 'locked up' around a small number of images – first and foremost the 'exotic' and the 'zealot' – and any attempt to challenge these images or to suggest some alternative is not easily accepted. To judge based on our film, when Haredi people do join secular spaces, without giving up on their Haredi lifestyle, they arouse suspicion and there seems to be some expectation that they change their positions and their behaviour and that they become more like 'us', the seculars.

One-dimensional and superficial stereotypical representations are likely, in many cases, to serve the needs of commercial television, which strives to avoid complex messages that call upon the viewers to exert some effort. Does the solution imply transferring the camera into Haredi hands, so that only Haredi people will come up with representations of their own society and life? It is certainly right for Haredi people to take part in creating such representations, although it does not guarantee a fair representation either. Our starting point and the desire to do away with stereotypes and to 'humanise' the Haredi minority is in all likelihood very far from the interest of most leaders of the community, particularly those who fear that if the sides come closer Haredi minority members will assimilate. For these Haredi leaders, a certain degree of tension that stems from prejudice

and stereotypes can actually function as an ideal barrier against 'too much closeness'. Shmuel Pappenheim spoke in such terms in the episode in which he took part. It is worth noting that he himself underwent a tremendous change – according to him, to a large extent, due to his participation in the series.

Pappenheim is still part of the Toledot Aharon Hassidic community, but he is now in charge of job placements, for the Joint Distribution Committee's "Mafteah" ("Key") organization; in this role, he is responsible for integrating Haredi people in the labour market, and for recruiting them to the IDF's SHA-HAR program. As someone who stood at the forefront of the Haredi isolationist struggle, in his new position he is working towards quasi-opposite goals, including the integration of Haredi people in places of work, professional training frameworks and academic studies, which are often of a secular nature. Pappenheim, who is also about to complete a BA in communications and political science, intends to pursue his studies until he earns a PhD. He sums up the process he has undergone by saying: "I have matured".³²

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³² From "Under Badatz Supervision", Tali Farkash, Ynet, 2.3.11. A follow-up film about Pappenheim, directed by Ron Ofer, is presently being shot.

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IL COMPADRAZGO ANTROPOLOGICO NELL'ARTE INDIGENA PERUVIANA

ABSTRACT

The present-day representation of Andean indigenous culture, expressed through Peruvian folk art, is the product of the historical collaboration between anthropologists and artists. This long-lasting relationship, marked by the overlapping of the mutual identities of the subjects involved, is based on the asymmetrical relationship of the compadrazgo.

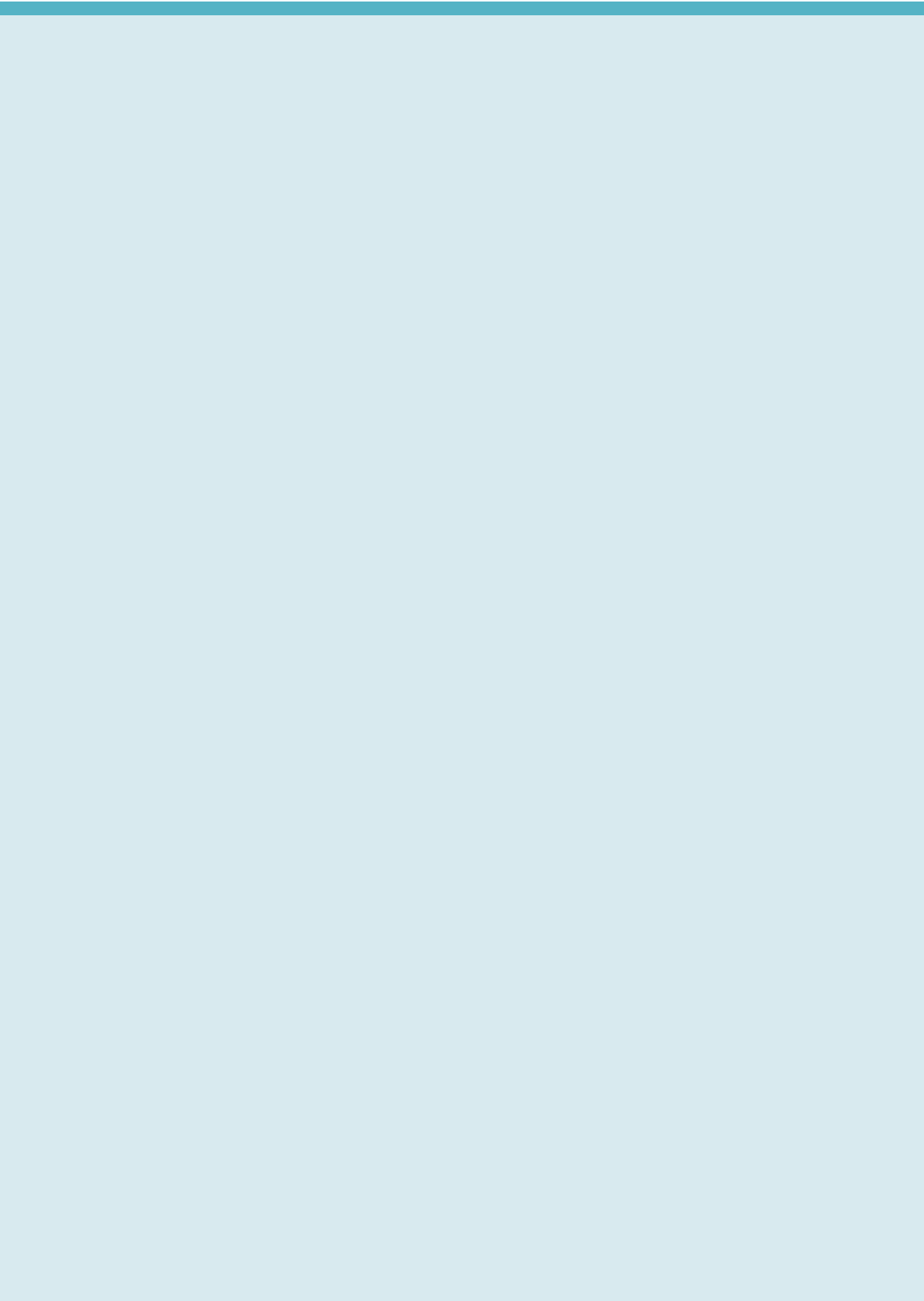
By retracing the history that has linked indigenous artists to anthropological research since the indianist period, one cannot help but notice how research plays a crucial role not only in creating the value and the authenticity of the objects within a market, but also in their own conception.

KEYWORDS

Andean Indigenous Culture ; Peruvian Folk Art;
Compadrazgo; Anthropological Patronage; Ayacucho

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“Si la antropología se convirtiera
en una disciplina mundial, en lugar
de ser sólo una disciplina occidental,
debería definir a sus “otros” de
una manera distinta, como sujetos
que también hablan, piensan y saben”
(Salmond 1995: 45).

Questo lavoro prende le mosse da un articolo di Mary Strong che mostra come alcuni celebri artisti “popolari” peruviani abbiano ricevuto «l'aiuto esperto di antropologi ed altri intellettuali, promotori acculturati ed internazionalmente orientati, o di manager che li hanno aiutati a presentarsi al grande pubblico» (Strong 2003: 117-118).

Sotto la spinta delle pressioni del mercato, questi artisti avrebbero intenzionalmente scelto, insieme ai loro promotori, il tipo di produzione e l'immagine pubblica con cui presentarsi: in alcuni casi quella del retablista ayacuchano “puramente tradizionalista”, in altri casi una produzione “ibrida”, oppure ancora una produzione indistinguibile dai lavori di altri artisti *global oriented*. Per esempio, nel caso di Carmelón Berrocal Evanán, pittore di *tablas* di Sarhua (Ayacucho), i promotori, Pablo ed Macera e Rosaura Andazabal, hanno aiutato l'artista a scegliere cosa preservare della tradizione, incoraggiandolo a ritornare spesso nelle sue montagne “per rinfrescare la fonte la sua ispirazione”, e contribuendo a farne un moderno Felipe Guamán Poma de Ayala. Il pittore ha così scelto di preservare la tradizionale iconografia di origine incaica, ritraendo nelle opere animali e piante sacri e scene che rappresentano le antiche divinità e le loro relazioni con gli esseri umani, corredate da didascalie in *quechuañol* (Strong 2003: 148). Questa e altre collaborazioni descritte dalla Strong avrebbero contribuito, nel tempo, a “codificare un corpus di immagini che per noi oggi rappresentano la cultura andina” (Strong 2003: 154).

In quanto *luogo* di elaborazione e produzione di significati culturali, l'espressione artistica offre dunque una prospettiva d'indagine sulle implicazioni che presenta la relazione etnografica, in quanto “rapporto ineguale che si instaura tra colui che indaga e gli indagati” (Fassin 2008: 9).

Per quella che è la nostra esperienza sul campo e le dichiarazioni raccolte tra gli artisti indigeni di Ayacucho (Perù), l'interazione che si stabilisce tra l'etnografo e i suoi informatori, lungi dall'interrompersi con l'uscita di scena dell'etnografo, continua spesso ad alimentarsi nel tempo. I contatti possono essere soltanto sporadici, ma talvolta si instaurano delle relazioni durevoli, in particolare quando, come nel nostro caso, tra i due soggetti si stabilisce una parentela rituale, il *compadrazgo*. In questi contesti avviene uno scambio di suggestioni: l'antropologo dispensa consigli e qualche volta suggerisce ri-

FIGURA 1 - FLORENTINO JIMÉNEZ TOMA, MÁRTIRES DE UCHURACCAY (1984). COLLEZIONE PRIVATA (FOTOGRAFIA DI S. SEBASTIANIS).



mandi ai propri scritti, aprendo la questione del ritorno degli scritti antropologici e dei loro effetti sul terreno.

Questo saggio si incentra dunque sull'influenza che gli antropologi, tra i primi e principali collezionisti del *retablo* nelle sue versioni definite "artistiche", continuano ad esercitare sull'immagine dell'indigeno di cui si fa ad esempio portatore il *retablo* di Ayacucho (Fig. 1), oggetto emblematico su cui torneremo, che attraverso *narrative visuali* condensa molteplici discorsi identitari (Sebastianis 2007). In particolare, si intende mostrare come tale processo sia supportato dall'istituzione sociale del *compadrazgo*: una relazione spirituale che nel mondo andino implica diritti e doveri, scambi di lealtà, favori, ma soprattutto un "rispetto" in cui si esprime la gerarchia sociale e razziale che lo sottende.

Sul piano metodologico, per affrontare la questione abbiamo adottato un approccio storico, facendo ricorso alle fonti

d'archivio al fine di ricostruire le relazioni che hanno determinato, nel tempo, l'evoluzione del retablo e le vicissitudini storiche che legano i suoi creatori alla cerchia degli antropologi. Al contempo, abbiamo utilizzato i dati raccolti nel corso di un'indagine etnografica condotta tra gli artisti residenti ad Ayacucho e a Lima, nelle *barriadas di Canto Grande, Zárate, San Juan de Luringancho, Puente Pietra, Ate Vitata e Lurin* (Sebastianis 2002; 2006).

Alcune recenti raccolte di saggi, dibattendo la questione di come i “saperi periferici” prodotti dagli antropologi peruviani e, più in generale, latino-americani siano stati largamente sottostimati e trattati come prodotti localistici dagli accademici euroamericani (Degregori e Sandoval 2008), mettono in luce il fatto che “le stesse relazioni nazionali di dominazione e subordinazione di diverse forme locali di conoscenza – incluse le forme non occidentali – sono parte delle condizioni che hanno reso possibile quest’egemonia intellettuale” (De la Cadena 2006: 242). A fondamento di questa “colonialità del potere”, intesa come condizione storica e geopolitica che delegittima le forme non occidentali di interpretazione il mondo, c’è un rapporto disciplinare tuttora irrisolto con l’indigeno, l’Altro paradigmatico che nella società peruviana si trova “letteralmente all’angolo della strada o anche all’interno dello stesso antropologo” (Degregori 2000: 23). Questa situazione è complicata dal fatto che l’antropologia peruviana, fin dalle sue origini negli anni Quaranta, è stata coinvolta nella creazione del Perù come Nazione, connotandosi per la sua interrelazione con le politiche ufficiali che ponevano il passato e il presente delle culture indigene andine a fondamento della *comunità immaginata nazionale* (De la Cadena 2006: 249). Il fatto di concentrare gli studi sulle *comunidades della Sierra Sud, considerate le depositarie dell’autentica identità andina* (Orlove 1993: 325), *ha orientato l’evoluzione disciplinare rispetto ai temi di indagine e all’approccio agli stessi, “autolimitandone la comprensione globale di un paese che già allora stava vivendo un processo accelerato di trasformazione”* (Degregori 2000: 43).

Così, mentre si costruivano discorsi essenzializzanti che promuovevano un’immagine astorica della cultura andina, gli “oggetti” stessi del discorso

abbandonavano in contingenti sempre maggiori la campagna per installarsi in città, centri minerari, aree di colonizzazione, cercando di fuggire dai rigori di una campagna in crisi e dalla violenza conseguente. In questo processo, le culture, le identità e le reti sociali si deterritorializzavano, transcendendo le frontiere nazionali, rompendo le antiche frontiere esistenti tra occidentale/andino, urbano/rurale, moderno/tradizionale, globale/locale, etc. In altre parole, la realtà stessa finì per “travalicare” i parametri sociali dentro i quali si era costruito l’antico paradigma antropologico andinista (Degregori 2000: 17).

Questa ridotta capacità interpretativa dell'antropologia peruviana ha assunto una valenza politica negli anni Settanta, quando gli antropologi, concentrati nella ricerca della continuità culturale, "si persero la rivoluzione", rivelandosi incapaci di cogliere i segnali di un malcontento sociale che di lì a poco sarebbe esploso, e capitalizzato dal movimento insurrezionale di Sendero Luminoso (Starn 1991).

Proprio un episodio emblematico dell'epoca della violenza segna tuttavia un momento di svolta nell'antropologia peruviana.

Il 26 gennaio del 1983 un gruppo di otto giornalisti e la loro guida indigena furono assassinati presso la *comunidad* di Uchuraccay¹ nella provincia di Huanta (dipartimento di Ayacucho). L'evento esacerbò l'ambiente politico a tal punto che il presidente, Fernando Belaúnde Terry (1980-1985), nominò una commissione d'indagine per accertare i fatti. La Commissione, presieduta dallo scrittore Mario Vargas Llosa, elaborò un *Informe* (noto come l'*Informe Vargas*) che suscitò un intenso dibattito pubblico sull'etnicità come barriera culturale, sostenendo che la causa dell'uccisione era da attribuire al mancato dialogo tra *comuneros* e giornalisti, risultato di un fraintendimento generato da paure ancestrali e dalle differenze culturali esistenti tra il cosiddetto "Perù profondo", rappresentato dal mondo indigeno, e il "Perù ufficiale".²

Per sostenere questa interpretazione, gli antropologi della commissione spiegavano che le modalità di esecuzione e il trattamento dei corpi dei giornalisti uccisi dimostravano che i *comuneros* avevano sepolto i cadaveri contravvenendo ai rituali tradizionali, considerando quindi gli uccisi alla stregua di "diavoli". L'indagine condotta parallelamente dalla stampa, in particolare da *El Diario de Marka*, impiegava a sua volta la tesi dell'inautenticità delle modalità di seppellimento per sostenere invece la presenza di agenti esterni sulla scena del crimine. In entrambi i casi la popolazione indigena, nella sua atemporale alterità, appare coinvolta in una guerra che non comprende, ed è considerata incapace di agire come un soggetto attivo (Mayer 1992).

I "comuneros di Uchuraccay furono tuttavia gli unici artefici dell'assassinio, come ha successivamente dimostrato la seconda commissione d'inchiesta la Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación", autrice dell'*Informe final*.³ In un clima terrore e ansietà, preoccupati di non essere accusati di collusione con i senderisti da parte dei militari di stanza nella zona, i *comuneros* perpetrarono, paradossalmente, un crimine nei confronti di chi intendeva documentarne la condizione (del Pino 2003). A differenza di quanto sostenevano gli antropologi della Commissione Vargas, altri antropologi, come Rodrigo Montoya (1983), mostrarono che i *comuneros* erano parte integrante del moderno Perù: dagli anni Cinquanta conoscevano lunghe esperienze di viaggio spingendosi, in cerca di lavoro, fino alla selva, mentre i rapporti con quei familiari emigrati nella capitale venivano mantenuti (De la Cadena 2006: 269, n.33).

¹ Nei mesi seguenti gli abitanti di Uchuraccay subirono una serie di attacchi che portarono alla morte di 160 comuneros e all'abbandono della comunidad da parte dei superstiti.

² L'argomentazione fu di fatto smentita, nel corso della seconda inchiesta, dal ritrovamento di rullini scattati dal giornalista Willy Retto, che mostravano i giornalisti intenti a parlare con i comuneros (*Informe final*, 2003, vol. V, cap. 2: 150).

³ *Informe final*, 2003, vol. V, cap. 2.: 123-161.

Con il massacro di Uchuraccay e le contraddizioni socio-culturali che mise in luce ha dunque fine, come ha scritto Carlos Ivan Degregori (2000: 49), “un modo essenzialista di intendere le *comunidades* e la popolazione indigena, come prodotti congelati di una tradizionalità ubicata fuori dal tempo e ai margini del paese”.

In seguito a questo accadimento, attenendosi alle informazioni diffuse dalla stampa, il retablista Florentino Jiménez decise di realizzare, assistito dai figli Claudio ed Edilberto, un retablo in omaggio alle vittime intitolato *Los Mártires de Uchuraccay* (Fig. 1). Ispirandosi alla Passione di Cristo, Don Florentino realizzò un'opera su quattro piani, sormontata da una corona. Mentre a Lima si inaspriva il dibattito tra giornalisti e intellettuali su cause e colpevoli, e si cercavano spiegazioni e capri espiatori, questo artista rappresentava i fatti mettendosi dalla parte dei *comuneros*. Il ricorso all'iconografia religiosa suggeriva l'idea che il sacrificio di Cristo conduce alla redenzione e al perdono di tutti, anche di quelli che in un clima generale di violenza avevano causato, a loro volta, sofferenza.

L'ambiguità semantica e il ricorso a referenze simboliche condivise dai responsabili della censura, consentiva all'opera di passare indenne al vaglio della censura, rendendo comprensibile l'evento alla popolazione indigena (Sebastianis 2007). Con quest'opera Don Florentino mette in discussione le posizioni essenzialiste della *Comisión*, riconoscendo ai *comuneros* “oltre che una propria individualità, la capacità di comprensione e partecipazione ai processi politici”. Preservando la polifonia delle voci provenienti dal Perù profondo, non più “separato nello spazio e nel tempo” (Mayer 1992: 93), questo retablo apporta dei significativi elementi di riflessione sull'articolazione tra memorie “manipolate” e “interdette”, durante e al termine dei conflitti (Theidon 2003).

L'antropologia peruviana che, in larga parte, aveva dato sostegno scientifico alle discutibili conclusioni dell'*Informe Vargas*, coinvolgendosi nel dibattito pubblico riguardante la cultura indigena, tardivamente intraprenderà il cammino dalla campagna alla città inseguendo il suo oggetto di studio, la popolazione indigena, per buona parte della quale la migrazione urbana si era trasformata in un passaggio di vita obbligato. Ma l'indigeno per l'antropologia non rappresentava soltanto un oggetto di discussione accademica: gli scienziati sociali erano infatti attivamente impegnati al servizio della politica integrazionista dei diversi governi nazionali, fino a quel momento impegnati a ‘preservare’ la popolazione indigena nella sua idealizzata indianità per poi ‘assimilarla’ all'interno della cultura nazionale, nel segno di un meticcio omogeneizzante. Gli stessi antropologi che parteciparono ad dibattito su Uchuraccay stanno attualmente dirigendo gli sforzi che vedono il Governo impegnato a trasformare il Perù in una nazione multiculturale, costruendo comunità omogenee, nitidamente delimitate e chiuse in se stesse.

L'esame di questi processi integrativi è rilevante ai fini della nostra discussione, perché essi si sono sostanziati, tra l'altro, in interventi di "eterodirezione" della produzione artistica indigena.

Dagli anni Quaranta studiosi di matrice indigenista, con l'intento di riscattare l'indio storico ignorando tuttavia l'indio moderno (Méndez 1993), percorrevano la Sierra alla ricerca dell' "autentica" arte andina per conto dell'*Instituto de Arte Peruano* (1931) (Razzetto 1982: 11). Sotto la guida di Luis Varcárcel si realizzò una raccolta di oggetti da esporre presso il *Museo Nacional de la Cultura Peruana* (1946) (Zervallós de Vasi 1974: 8, 11). Gli Indigenisti, animati dall'intento di definire un corpus organico dell'espressione culturale indigena da "preservare", di fatto innescarono la trasformazione e la "folklorizzazione" di quest'ultima.

Nell'ambito di questa ricerca indigenista, la pittrice e collezionista Alicia Bustamente – che nel 1939 aveva organizzato a Lima la prima esposizione di arte popolare – conobbe nel 1941, ad Ayacucho, l'*imaginero* Joaquín López Antay e portò i primi *sanmarcos* nella capitale (Fig. 2).

Si trattava di tabernacoli di fattura popolare, utilizzati nei rituali di marchiatura del bestiame (*herranza*). Gli oggetti presentavano una cassa lignea, suddivisa in due piani e chiusa da portelle, che conteneva figure modellate con una pasta di patate, gesso e succo di cactus. Nella parte superiore era rappresentato il mondo celeste (*Hanan Pacha*) con i santi patroni del

FIGURE 2 – SANMARCOS, SEC. XIX. LIMA, MUSEO RIVA AGÜERO, (FOTOGRAFIA DI S. SEBASTIANIS).



bestiame (*Llamayoc*) e in quella inferiore scene rurali denominate *Reunión* e *Pasion en el campo* (Sebastianis 2002: 75-93). Nel loro viaggio dalla *sierra* a Lima i *sanmarcos* assunsero il nome di *retablos* e, classificati come “arte popolare” (Sabogal 1979: 42), entrano nel circuito commerciale urbano che di fatto ne garantirà la sopravvivenza.⁴ Oltre alla nuova denominazione e al consiglio di apporre la firma per fissare l'autorialità, gli Indigenisti suggerirono nuove tematiche.⁵ Nel retablo fa così la sua comparsa l'indigeno, ritratto mentre celebra i suoi costumi (danzando nelle feste patronali, assistendo ai combattimenti tra galli o a una corrida di tori, etc.). Collocato in un paesaggio *costumbrista* (da *costumbre*, “costume”), l'indigeno è presentato in maniera essenzialista, come parte integrante di una “tradizione” dalla quale non può sottrarsi, come si trattasse del suo ambiente naturale.

Se la relazione degli artisti con l'intellettualità peruviana, principalmente *limeña*, è determinante per l'evoluzione di quest'arte indigena, è parimenti fondamentale il contesto sociale e politico che caratterizza Ayacucho, città natale delle più importanti famiglie di retablisti. Fino a metà degli anni Settanta, infatti, le principali botteghe di *imaginería*,⁶ ceramica e tappeti si trovano in questa città della *sierra* meridionale, dove gli interessi commerciali ed accademici relativi all'*artesanía* – l'arte popolare destinata al consumo urbano e turistico – si intrecciano e risultano intimamente connessi.

Dalla metà degli anni Cinquanta Ayacucho e, in generale, il dipartimento omonimo, sono coinvolti in un susseguirsi di “progetti di sviluppo” sostenuti da istituzioni private straniere: è in questo contesto che la relazione tra gli artisti popolari e i “professionisti della cultura” si approfondisce. Le iniziative, ispirate dall'idea di una dimensione culturale indigena statica e di ostacolo alla modernizzazione, consistevano in interventi rivolti ad promuovere la produzione artigianale come occasione di sviluppo economico. In quest'ottica, gli antropologi si impegnarono a censire la produzione artigianale e a verificarne le potenzialità produttive. Progetti come il *Plan Nacional para la integración de la población indígena* (1959) motivarono i produttori ad adeguare le creazioni alle aspettative del mercato urbano, che sollecitava soprattutto tematiche *costumbristas*. Al contempo, a Lima si inaugurarono le prime gallerie d'arte indigena, come l'*Art Center* di John Davis e la galleria *Huamanga* di Raúl Apesteguía (Stastny 1981: 88).

Nel decennio successivo, con la crescita del turismo e i profitti che sembrava prospettare il mercato dell'esportazione, l'*artesanía* assume un ruolo economico strategico. Il Ministero dell'industria, del turismo e del commercio internazionale, nel quadro del *Programa Alianza para el Progreso* (1962-1968) diretto dal Corpo di Pace,⁷ coordina ad Ayacucho un progetto di “eterodirezione” artigianale che riguarda la produzione ceramica e tessile, con l'obiettivo di realizzare un'*artisanry light industry* che soddisfi le richieste della domanda nordamericana. Il progetto prevede dei corsi di formazione (*capacitación arte-*

⁴ Dall'inizio della Colonia e fino agli inizi del XX secolo, i *sanmarcos* erano commercializzati dai mulattieri (*arrieros*), che li barattavano con prodotti agricoli. La modernizzazione viaria intrapresa durante il governo Leguía determinò la sparizione dell'*arrieria* e, di conseguenza, il venir meno di tale via di commercializzazione (Macera, 1981; 1982).

⁵ Racconta ad esempio López Antay: «La signorina Bustamante mi ha sempre comprato retablos, ma non le piacevano quelli che facevo. Me ne commissionava altri, come lei voleva. “Voglio il carcere di Huancavelica” mi diceva, e io lo facevo. “Voglio una jarana” (festa chiassosa), diceva, e io lo facevo. Ho fatto diversi retablos per la signorina Bustamante» (Razzetto 1982: 147).

⁶ Le botteghe producevano bambole di legno e pasta (pasta *wawas*) e cavallini (*caballitos de badana*) per la festa di Ognissanti, maschere per Natale e Carnevale e *sanmarcos* per la festa della *herranza* che si celebra tra luglio e agosto. Producevano inoltre croci, bauli di legno foderati con latta o cuoio (Urbano Rojas, Macera 1992: 40).

⁷ I volontari, in qualità di promotori di contratti di esportazione, promossero l'organizzazione di un sistema cooperativo di produzione e di una rete distributiva di vendita gestita dall'impresa Scheerr & Dermot (De la Fuente et al. 1992: 41).

sanal) al fine di “razionalizzare” i processi produttivi, diffondendo l’impiego di tinture chimiche ed implementando nuove iconografie. Ma la reazione degli artisti non si fa attendere: nel quartiere La Libertad, Jesús Urbano Royas, ed il fratello Julio, fondano l’*Escuela Particular de Artesanía Artística* (1966) dove, insieme ad altri otto maestri, insegnano a titolo onorario le tecniche tradizionali a una cinquantina di giovani della zona (Spahni 1968: 165-166).

Durante il Governo Rivoluzionario delle Forze Armate di Juan Velasco Alvarado (1968-1975) l’arte popolare è utilizzata come parte della propaganda politica dello Stato che si erge a «rappresentante totale della cultura peruviana» (Lauer 1982: 135-136). Attraverso l’*Instituto Nacional de Cultura* (1972) si implementa la creazione di botteghe di *artesanías* e si fonda la *Dirección General de Artesanías* per promuovere l’esportazione dei prodotti. Le scienze sociali sono integrate nel programma statale⁸ che propugna un meticcio omogeneizzante, teso a livellare le differenze, anche attraverso la sostituzione, nel vocabolario ufficiale, del termine “indio” con “contadino”, secondo la retorica marxista (De la Cadena 2000: 193). In questo periodo nasce il Premio Nazionale di Cultura, mentre a livello locale si indicano i primi concorsi di *artesanías* che premiano le opere in cui sono rappresentati i temi storici celebrati dal Regime. Anche i retablisti incorporano questi soggetti nei retablos, ritraendo l’indigeno come parte di una scena che ricrea un evento storico e ispirandosi a testi come *Tradiciones de Huamanga* (Mata Peralta 1970) o al *Historia del Perú* (Kauffman Doig 1972).

Dagli anni Ottanta inizia per l’antropologia una nuova fase, che vede la disciplina perdere il suo ruolo ufficiale nelle politiche statali ma, al contempo, stabilire nuove relazioni con il mercato grazie al boom delle ONGs presenti nel paese, molte delle quali specializzate nella commercializzazione di manufatti indigeni destinati al mercato del *fair trade*. L’antropologia e i suoi concetti in quegli anni si diffondono però anche nel tessuto sociale, per il tramite di giovani indigeni con educazione superiore ed universitaria, individui “in cerca di identità”, “collocati in una sorta di terra di nessuno, tra due mondi: quello andino tradizionale dei loro genitori, con i suoi miti, riti e costumi che già non condividono pienamente; e il mondo occidentale o, più precisamente, urbano-creolo, che li discrimina per il fatto di essere *provincianos, serranos y quechuhablantes*” (Degregori 1990: 193). Questi giovani, che spesso intraprendono la strada della militanza politica, animano in quel periodo la vita sociale di Ayacucho. Sono questi gli anni in cui si formano presso l’*Universidad San Cristóbal de Huamanga* i quadri dirigenti di Sendero Luminoso: in questa università di provincia, dove insegna filosofia il fondatore del movimento, Abimael Gúzman, studiano diversi artisti indigeni che vedono nell’educazione un’occasione di riscatto e inserzione sociale (Degregori *et al.* 1996: 190-191). Alcuni di loro sono iscritti a corsi di scienze umane o socia-

⁸ Il Sistema Nacional de Apoyo a la Movilización Social (SINAMOS), attraverso i suo personale, selezionava il folklore, la musica e le arti indigene, promuovendo eventi pubblici ed esposizioni al fine di creare dei «canali permanenti di intercambio culturale» (Feria Artesanal de la Mujer Campesina 1970; GRAL 1983: 217).

li in cui si discute la “teoria della dipendenza”, che introduce nella riflessione antropologica problematiche come quella del conflitto sociale e della dominazione: temi che trovano espressione in opere che preannunciano inquietudini destinate ad esplodere di lì a poco (Degregori 2000: 38-41). In quegli anni, questi giovani prendono altresì coscienza che l’arte popolare può diventare un arma di mobilitazione sociale e politica. L’educazione apre ad artisti come Edilberto e Nicario Jimenez le porte di un mondo di immagini e testi consolidando la tendenza, già manifestata dal padre Florentino nella creazione di *retablos historicos*, a ricorrere al testo scritto nel processo di creazione delle opere. Se l’arte moderna occidentale fornisce spunti estetico-formali, la consultazione di libri riguardanti la cultura e le tradizioni andine diventa un momento ineludibile di ricerca, volta a conoscere la propria identità culturale. Per questa nuova generazione di artisti-etnografi, leggere e investigare costituiscono un complemento imprescindibile alle informazioni trasmesse oralmente in ambito familiare.

Prima della stagione della violenza che, dal 1980 al 1993, insanguinerà il dipartimento di Ayachucho determinando lo spopolamento delle *comunidades*, la Riforma agraria del 1969 aveva prodotto un consistente movimento migratorio diretto verso i centri urbani della costa, in particolare a Lima. La popolazione indigena, mossa dalla speranza di migliorare le proprie condizioni economiche, accedere al sistema sanitario e all’educazione, sperimenta nell’ambiente urbano la realtà della discriminazione e dell’emarginazione, ma, al contempo, la solidarietà che proviene dagli altri *serranos*. Anche la giovane generazione di artisti indigeni vive insieme alle famiglie quest’esperienza, che segna fortemente le loro opere. La maggior parte dei migranti provenienti da Ayacucho si insediano nei *pueblos juvenes* situati nella periferia *limeña*⁹ dove si concentra la maggior parte delle botteghe di *artesanía*.

Il confronto con la società creola, che impone la sua lingua e cultura, sollecita gli artisti a riflettere sulla dominazione culturale subita dalla cultura andina e sulle difficoltà quotidianamente incontrate dall’indigeno nel processo di inserzione sociale. Con la migrazione si attua «una presa di coscienza identitaria» e, al contempo, si rinforza il processo di differenziazione culturale (GRAL 1983: 221-222). Nelle *barriadas* della capitale si produce la *cholificación*¹⁰ del migrante andino, che adotta «strategie di cambiamento e permanenza funzionali al processo di adattamento culturale» (Avila Molero 2003: 248-249). In questo processo, aspetti di un’identità stigmatizzata si affermano come marcatori della condizione culturale (Starn 1992: 30).

Imprimendo un carattere “testimoniale” all’arte del retablo, gli artisti lo trasformano in una sorta di “giornalismo plastico”, che testimonia dei cambiamenti identitari provocati dalla situazione acculturativa e dei nuovi rapporti che la cultura andina sperimenta nel laboratorio culturale della città, dove la tradizione si coniuga con la modernità.¹¹ In queste opere fa la sua comparsa l’indigeno contemporaneo: un individuo “disindianizza-

⁹ Nei dei distretti di Comas, Villa el Salvador, Ate Vitarte, Puente Piedra e Lurin, nella zona della Carretera Central e a San Juan de Lurigancho (Pietri-Levy 1991: 301-304).

¹⁰ L’espressione è impiegata per definire il processo che vede settori della cultura indigena abbandonare alcuni elementi culturali per adottarne altri che contrassegnano la cultura occidentale creola (Weismantel, 2000: 91).

¹¹ Come nel caso del El chichodromo, un locale pubblico dove i migranti si incontrano per ascoltare musica chicha, un miscuglio di ritmi andini e limeñi: un luogo di ritrovo che garantisce le funzioni aggregative, anteriormente rivestite dalle festività tradizionali.

to” nel senso che reinventa la propria cultura, senza lo stigma dell’indianità che le assegnano i gruppi di potere.

La connotazione sociale e politica che l’arte del retablo assume negli anni della migrazione diventa preminente nella stagione della violenza politica, quando, al pari di altre espressioni artistiche ayacuchane, si converte in uno strumento di denuncia e in un agente di opinione che contesta le versioni ufficiali di quanto accade in quel periodo. I retablos che si realizzano durante il conflitto armato rappresentano *vivencias* (esperienze) ed eventi che si convertono in *memorias emblemáticas*, ricordi condivisi da una collettività, che tuttavia rivelano le diverse intenzionalità dei gruppi sociali che la costituiscono. La clientela per queste opere è limitata e circoscritta: “i temi di violenza o di *comentario social* trovarono riscontro tra intellettuali, peruviani e stranieri, politici e collezionisti di arte, attratti dalla loro qualità narrativa e dal fatto che queste trasmettono immagini vive della violenza politica che si viveva in quel momento” (Ulfe 2010: 111).

A questo proposito, rileviamo che così come gli studi sulla violenza sono per la maggior parte appannaggio di antropologi stranieri, nonostante abbiano avuto come scenario principale le comunità native, parimenti le principali collezioni di retablos sul tema della violenza sono state costituite da antropologi stranieri.¹² L’unica collezione raccolta da un antropologo peruviano è quella di Carlos Ivan Degregori, ospitata dal giugno 2012 presso l’*Instituto de Estudios Peruanos di Lima*. In questi retablos il soggetto indigeno smette di essere un elemento inerte e si converte in un attore sociale, riscoperto anche nell’antropologia di quegli anni, insieme alle dimensioni espressive della cultura (Degregori 2000: 50-51). Nel retablo *Huamanguino*, ad esempio, è rappresentato Ranulfo Fuentes, autore dell’omonimo *huayno*, che di ritorno da una celebrazione del Carnevale è testimone di un sequestro annunciato da cattivi presagi, lo scontro tra cani e gatti e il canto del gallo a mezzanotte. Ranulfo, spettatore dei fatti che accadono in questa notte oscura simboleggia, a sua volta, il retablista Edilberto Jiménez: quest’opera trae infatti fondamento dal suo lavoro di etnografo, e dall’essere stato testimone di fatti realmente accaduti (Jiménez 2005): come in etnografia, l’artista usa selettivamente dati etnografici e storici per sostenere le proprie finalità culturali e politiche. Scrive Maria Eugenia Ulfe che nell’arte del retablo “si enfatizzano certi aspetti degli eventi; alcuni restano incorporati nelle narrazioni; altri semplicemente non si prendono in considerazione” (Ulfe 2010: 192); tuttavia, come ci ricorda Edward Said, ogni rappresentazione, in quanto tale, è immersa nel linguaggio, nella cultura, nelle istituzioni e nell’ambiente politico del suo artefice (Said 1999: 269). La rappresentazione etnografica non è dunque più veritiera di quella che si trova plasmata in questi oggetti.

A cominciare da Joaquín López Antay, che strinse amicizia con Alicia Bustamante, José Sabogal e con lo scrittore ed etnologo José María Arguedas (Arguedas 1958; Cortez 2009: 171),

¹² In particolare, i nordamericani Billie Jean Isbell e Steve Stein e il tedesco Rainer Huhle.

molti altri artisti popolari ayacuchani hanno stabilito una relazione personale con diversi intellettuali che, nel tempo, si sono occupati della cultura indigena andina. Questo rapporto ha favorito la presa di coscienza circa il significato di documentazione etnografica della loro opera e ha stimolato gli artisti a riflettere sul proprio ruolo nella società, come dichiara per esempio il retablista Nicario Jiménez.¹³

Il processo è stato sostenuto dal fatto che tra artisti e intellettuali spesso si è instaurato un legame simbolico che li ha vincolati reciprocamente, la relazione di *compadrazco*: parentela rituale, stabilita in occasione di rituali che segnano momenti di transizione (battesimo, primo taglio dei capelli, etc.) o di celebrazioni non religiose (diploma, etc.), che vincola una persona (*ahijado*), i suoi genitori biologici e i padrini (*compadre* e *comadre*). Questa istituzione di origine coloniale assume, nel contesto latinoamericano, caratteristiche peculiari per la sua flessibilità e le sue possibilità di rifunzionalizzazione (Mendoza Ontiveros 2010). In genere il *compadre* è scelto tra individui socialmente superiori che garantiscono maggiore prestigio e vantaggi materiali, con l'effetto di statuire dei legami asimmetrici di tipo clientelare.

Il fenomeno interessa, in particolare, gli antropologi¹⁴ integrati nella cerchia dei parenti rituali in funzione del loro supposto peso sociale e "politico": il fatto che questi esercitano, attraverso i loro studi, un controllo sui saperi che concernono la cultura andina li rende particolarmente ambiti come *compadres*. L'assenza di relazioni di questo tipo con commercianti (intermediari, grossisti, etc.), a dispetto della possibilità di assicurarsi contratti vantaggiosi, fa riflettere sul fatto che la protezione e l'appoggio ricercati non sono tanto di ordine economico, quanto legati al prestigio culturale.

La relazione di *compadrazgo* nel tempo ha assolto a differenti finalità. Nei primi anni Settanta, Florentino e Jesus Urbano ricorrevano ai *compadres* nella loro difficile inserzione nel circuito commerciale urbano, prima ayacuchano e poi limeño, che discriminava i *comuneros* della *sierra*. Nella decade seguente, che vede consolidarsi il prestigio personale degli artisti popolari, il *compadre* si converte in un "consigliere" che dispensa suggerimenti e, all'occorrenza, impresta testi, fornisce immagini, facilita i contatti per l'allestimento delle esposizioni. Attraverso questa relazione il *compadre* antropologo svolge dunque un ruolo decisivo non soltanto nella costruzione del valore e dell'autenticità dell'arte indigena all'interno del mercato urbano, ma anche nella sua creazione, per il fatto che fornisce "interpretazioni della cultura destinate a produrre schemi di autointerpretazione nativa" (Simonicca 2004: 29).

Recentemente il *compadrazgo* è stato rifunzionalizzato come *parrinazgo*: gli antropologi sono diventati dei "patrocinatori" in occasione dell'apertura di gallerie e dell'inaugurazione di mostre, i garanti dell'artista di fronte alla critica e al sistema dell'arte. Essi promuovono, a titolo volontario e non retribuito, le nuove collezioni, collaborano alla redazione dei cataloghi a stampa

¹³ Nicario dichiara che è grazie all'amicizia con Gertrud de Solari che ha preso coscienza della propria cultura. La studiosa e collezionista lo ha incoraggiato a proseguire nel lavoro, ospitandolo dal 1973 nella sua casa di Mangamarca e trattandolo da artista, in un momento in cui era netta la divisione tra arti popolari e "fine art".

¹⁴ Diversi membri della famiglia Jimenez intrattengono relazioni di *compadrazco* con un antropologo: Florentino con Huertas Clemente, Abilio Vergara e Jurge Golpe; Claudio con Juan Ossio; Mabilon con Luis Repetto; Eleudora con Carlos Ivan Degregori.

e dei testi per i siti internet. Come scrive Maria Eugenia Ulfe, «questa relazione spirituale ha aiutato gli artisti a guadagnare spazio all'interno della società peruviana», facendo tuttavia del *retablo* «una forma di arte le cui radici sono legate all'accademia peruviana, con tutte le intenzionalità e conflitti di interesse che questo vincolo implica» (Ulfe 2010: 164). La parentela rituale, in un contesto sociale di dominazione e di dipendenza, accentua infatti il paternalismo esistente e istituzionalizza le relazioni di dipendenza (Christinat 1989: 185), creando le condizioni per la subordinazione degli artisti rispetto ai loro *compadres* antropologi: questi, nella maggioranza dei casi, sollecitano gli artisti a «continuare nel solco della tradizione» con la prospettiva di cogliere le opportunità commerciali che provengono dal mercato dell'arte etnica – un mercato che tuttavia relega il nativo ad essere «assolutamente differente, cioè assolutamente identico a se stesso» (Chow 2004: 31, 42-47).

Pensiamo non sia casuale che, nonostante si tratti di uno dei temi più studiati nel panorama etnografico latinoamericano, non ci siano indagini che riguardano, anche soltanto in maniera inferenziale, il *compadrazgo* tra indigeni ed antropologi, ad esclusione di qualche accenno marginale di sapore autobiografico (Christinat 1989: 209-215).

In tal senso è interessante riportare una considerazione fatta da Mary Strong a proposito del film *Compadre* del documentarista Mikael Wiström, che esplora la relazione tra due uomini che durante le riprese diventano *compadres*: il regista e Daniel, un autista di mototaxi che vive in un *pueblo joven* di Lima. Il film, che racconta della distanza presente tra i due, causata dalle differenze economiche ed culturali, solleva delle importanti questioni rispetto alla relazione etnografica e «costringe i professionisti nel campo del *reporting*, come antropologi, giornalisti e documentaristi visuali, a esaminare con attenzione alcuni degli aspetti più problematici dell'impresa del lavoro sul campo» (Strong 2008: 447). Si comprende allora perché alla domanda: “¿Quien es tu compadre?” i retablisti Nicario ed Edilberto Jimenez, ma anche il tessitore Maximo Laura rispondano che loro non hanno *compadres*, ma soltanto “amici”, tra gli antropologi. L'amicizia implica il sentirsi e rapportarsi come pari, significa rompere con le dinamiche di subordinazione culturale e razziale che continuano a segnare la vita sociale di questo paese.

A Lima Joaquín López Antay stabilì una solida amicizia con lo scrittore ed etnologo José María Arguedas e si guadagnò la fama di “artista” nella cerchia degli Indigenisti, che consideravano i suoi retablos come pezzi di “autentica arte popolare andina”. Nel 1975 al retablista ayacuchano fu attribuito il *Premio Nacional de las Artes*, con il quale si intendeva dare riconoscimento politico alla cultura meticcica celebrando la sua capacità di introdurre, rinnovandoli, i valori della tradizione indigena nella cultura nazionale. Il premio di fatto innescò un acceso dibattito sull'arte colta e popolare, evidenziando la persistenza di strutture coloniali di esclusione sociale

(Castrillón 1976-77: 16-17; Lauer 1982: 136-137). Con questo premio il retablo si converte in un'espressione d'arte nazionale, anche se alla fine viene riaffermata la relazione gerarchica tra differenti forme artistiche: l'artista popolare continua ad essere trattato come il fratello minore di quello colto e acculturato (Rowe, Schelling 1993).

In realtà, le frontiere che separano l'arte popolare da quella colta sono flessibili e costantemente superate, da questa come da altre arti indigene: un *retablo* può ad esempio essere considerato un'*obra maestra* dal suo creatore ed essere valutato come *artesanía* dal compratore. Anche gli studiosi possono dare diverse definizioni di quelle che per loro rappresentano opere d'arte: per alcuni deve trattarsi di retablos frutto di lunghi processi d'indagine; per altri le opere devono dar conto dell'autobiografia dell'artista (Stein 2005); per altri ancora devono nascere dall'*urgencia* di testimoniare una realtà, esprimere un *comentario social* (Sordo 1990). Questi retablos condividono gli stessi attributi materiali e circolano nello stesso mercato: la loro artisticità è dunque una condizione ascritta come parte di una costruzione culturale, caricata di interessi orientati ideologicamente. Un processo al quale gli antropologi non sono certo estranei. Gli artisti, da parte loro, considerano artistiche anche le opere realizzate su commissione di un tema specifico, in quanto l'artista vi trova comunque uno spazio personale di espressione, come nel retablo "*Verdad y Justicia*" (Fig. 3), creato nel 2000 da Florentino Jiménez Toma per l'Asociación Pro Derechos Humanos de Lima.

FIGURE 3 - FLORENTINO JIMÉNEZ TOMA, VERDAD Y JUSTICIA PARA TODOS (2000). LIMA, APRODEH (FOTOGRAFIA DI S. SEBASTIANIS).



L'opera, realizzata sotto la supervisione dei responsabili dell'ONG che hanno fornito all'artista fotografie, testi e alcune interviste a familiari di *desaparecidos*, è in effetti frutto di una negoziazione. Nel primo piano, la popolazione reclama verità e giustizia per le vittime della violenza, individui spesso isolati e stigmatizzati, ingiustamente accusati di affiliazione al movimento rivoluzionario. Nel secondo piano è ritratto un cimitero dove si portano fiori sulle tombe dei familiari, spesso morti a seguito delle torture praticate dalle milizie governative; al lato opposto, le conseguenze del disagio sociale con l'immagine dell'alcolismo e della povertà che costringe i *desplazados* a chiedere l'elemosina per le strade della capitale; al centro, le donne protestano denunciando la violazione dei diritti umani di fronte al Palazzo di Giustizia, con una rappresentazione realistica delle torture inflitte. Nel terzo piano Florentino raffigura, questa volta di propria iniziativa, la conquista dello spazio sociale e culturale *limeño* da parte dei migranti andini: mostra i *desplazados* che costruiscono abitazioni con stuoie, cartone e plastica, ponendo alla sommità la bandiera nazionale per impedirne la demolizione. Al centro, i *retornantes* compiono un viaggio a ritroso che li riporta alle loro *comunidades*, dove donne e bambini li attendono con bevande, musica. Durante il viaggio indossano gli indumenti tradizionali (*kipes*, *gorritas*) ma, al contempo, tengono in mano radio che intonano i nuovi ritmi appresi in città.

Sebbene dall'attribuzione del *Premio Nacional de Arte* a Joaquín López Antay siano passati alcuni decenni, le dinamiche non sono cambiate, e ciò nonostante che alcuni artisti indigeni si siano impegnati a «cercare la connessione tra arte popolare e arte accademica» (Ulfe 2010: 74-75) anche conducendo, come Nicario Jiménez, azioni legali per partecipare come artista professionista alle esposizioni d'arte, da cui viene escluso per l'impiego di materiali «non ortodossi», vedendo relegata la sua opera nella sminuente categoria dei «mixed media».

Nicario è ben consapevole che la categorizzazione delle sue opere dipende dai luoghi dove sono esibite: per questo preferisce i musei, o le gallerie delle università. L'artista sa anche che tra le prerogative dell'arte contemporanea c'è il fatto di travalicare le frontiere culturali e rompere le barriere tra generi artistici: tuttavia, come scrive Natalia Majluf, deve fare i conti con il fatto che tali prerogative non sono tuttora riconosciute ai «cosmopoliti non occidentali», che, per quanto cerchino di scardinare l'apparato tassonomico del sistema mettendo in discussione la fondatezza dei concetti che lo sostengono, vedono la loro opera relegata all'esterno del sistema stesso (Majluf 1997: 888; 893). Attualmente questo artista «cosmopolita non occidentale» vive tra il Perù e gli Stati Uniti, trattando soprattutto il tema della migrazione latinomericana. Nelle ultime opere la sua storia si integra con quella di altri migranti che vivono nei *barrios latinos* di diverse città nordamericane, con i quali si identifica rispetto al proprio vissuto: i soggetti delle ope-

re sono rappresentati, come in *Aeropuerto Internacional de Miami*, mentre attraversano fisicamente frontiere transnazionali ma soprattutto culturali, descrivendo un'indianità "fratturata", disomogenea e contraddittoria. Nicario, come altri artisti indigeni consapevole che «l'accesso alla retorica culturalista planetaria passa per la legittimazione etnografica» (Agier 1997: 75) e dunque informato su quella che è l'immagine dell'indianità considerata "autentica", contesta tale rappresentazione, elaborando delle *auto-etnografie* che Marisol De la Cadena invita a intendere come strade "alternative" di auto-rappresentazione che danno conto di nuove identità indigene (2000: 303).

«Intellettuali non accademici» (De la Cadena 2000: 7), questi artisti travalicano le relazioni di potere – anche quelle relative al "potere di rappresentare" – e, senza bisogno di mediatori accademici, prendono direttamente la parola rispetto alla propria cultura. Rievocando le intuizioni di Jose Maria Arguedas, De la Cadena propone un'apertura epistemologica nell'affermare la necessità di realizzare una produzione inclusiva e decentrata dei saperi antropologici, che includa il pensiero indigeno-popolare e diffonda i saperi periferici nell'arena politico-culturale (De la Cadena 2006: 241-270). Intellettuali indigeni come i retablisti, che dissolvono le gerarchie epistemiche incarnandone i margini, si rendono protagonisti di tale rivoluzione.

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JORGE GRAU REBOLLO

UNIVERSITAT AUTÒNOMA DE BARCELONA (SPAIN)

CONFRONTING SUCCESS: FILM NARRATIVES OF SOCIAL CONTESTATION

ABSTRACT

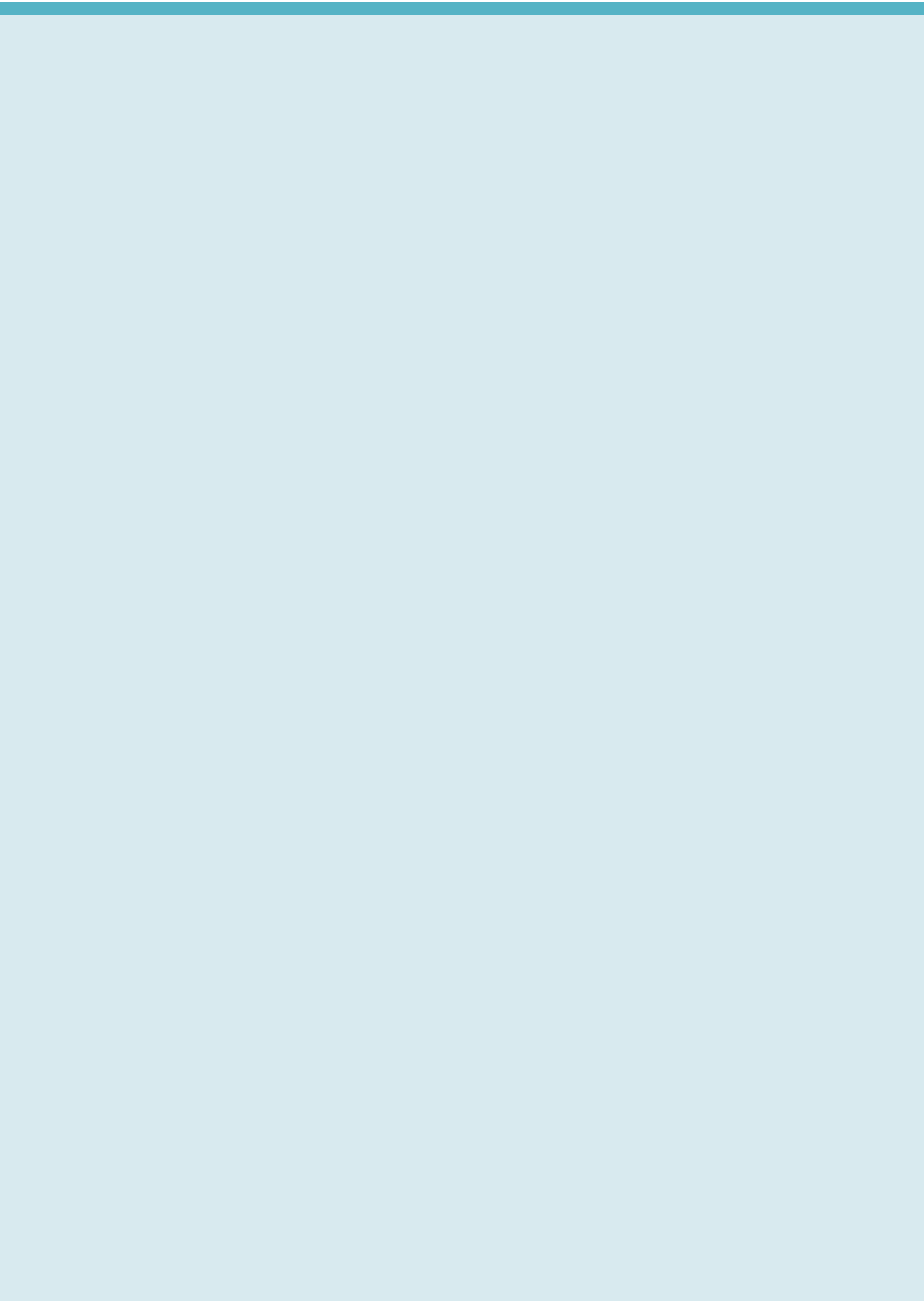
The notion of success appears frequently as the epitome of personal fulfilment and films have been often selected as the preferred vehicle for materializing narratives of prosperity, triumph and good life. Nevertheless, films may also be used as devices for the exposure of uncertainty, disenchantment or broken hopes. In this article, I propose to use some particular examples of Spanish movies as empirical repertoire for considering the relevance of fiction films in confronting uncertainty and both exposing social discontent and promoting active contestation, thus weaving a sense of continuum between different generations and contexts.

KEYWORDS

Anthropology and Cinema, Fiction films, Disenchantment, Film narratives, Social contestation.

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INTRODUCTION

As usual during over 80 years, the annual edition of *Time* newsmagazine in 2011 was devoted to the person of the year, continuing a practice that has brought for decades worldwide attention over a particularly influential person who purportedly deserves the honour of being featured at the cover page. Since Charles Lindbergh achieved such distinction in 1927 thanks to his pioneering non-stop flight from New York to Paris, several famous personalities, as Mahatma Gandhi in 1930, human groups, as the *Apollo 8* astronauts in 1968 or even supportive associations like *Good Samaritans* in 2005 have merited this symbolic credit. However, the 2011 issue honoured a broad, heterogeneous yet worldwide-extended collective, or to be more precise, a broad, certainly heterogeneous yet worldwide-extended *figure*: The protester.¹ In the front cover, upon a reddish background, backdropped with grey and black demonstrator's silhouettes scattered all over the scene, there is a lone ochre-coloured figure outlined with a large raised up neckerchief that fully covers half of his/her face, along with a woollen hat tightly pulled down to the eyebrows. Only part of his/her forehead and eyes are barely visible. In the forefront it is written as follows: "The Protester. From the Arab spring to Athens. From occupy Wall Street to Moscow".

In the magazine's online version, the nomination was introduced in this way:

"No one could have known that when a Tunisian fruit vendor set himself on fire in a public square, it would incite protests that would topple dictators and start a global wave of dissent. In 2011, protesters didn't just voice their complaints; they changed the World" (Time, 2011).

And the foreword already stated that: "History often emerges only in retrospect. *Events become significant only when looked back on*". http://content.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,2101745_2102139_2102380,00.html; emphasis added).

This is indeed an interesting combination: time, history and protest. Who protests, why and in which contexts? How may these protests be read, heard, understood, filmed, edited or broadcasted?

As explicit in the magazine's front page, the whole story is a fascinating amalgam of North African demonstrators, Spanish outraged (*indignados*), Greek rallies or American movements. And a quick looked over other media would show up similar additions.

But trying to analyse similarities and differences of all these – somehow connected – social movements would overtly exceed the aim of this article. Rather, I propose to focus on one particular case – Spain – taking into account the *long durée* of the disenchantment against a dystopic present that has emerged after decades of solemn promises of a brighter future and the embodiment of certain notion of success – i.e. the one achieved by the combination of personal effort, a solid training

¹ www.time.com/time/person-of-the-year/2011

background and a firm will of social amelioration. Hence, My proposal here is to reflect on the historical, diachronic dimension of a particular phenomenon that otherwise might be misinterpreted as the outcome of the disappointment within a particular generation instead of the cumulative effect of a series of partially broken hopes through time and different contexts.² In so doing, I propose to use some particular examples of Spanish films as empirical repertoire for considering the relevance of art, fiction films and material culture in confronting uncertainty and both exposing social discontent and promoting active contestation.

A METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH TO CINEMA AS A CULTURAL OPERATOR.

Philip Rosen (2001) thinks of historiography as a network of particular connections between documents, texts and other historians' productions and the specific types of construction of History they entail. In such relationship films become a crucial cultural production since they may not only recreate a given historical time but also use fiction to purportedly show different viewpoints over that very same time. Thus, cinema and fiction turn out to be active agents in the creation of knowledge for social research (Vickers, 2010). In that sense, Rosenstone (1995) states that History only comes to being after its reconstruction and it is ultimately the consequence of a specific set of underlying ideas and values. If Rosenstone dives into the close interdependence between film and History as an Historian, my purpose here is to approach the interconnection between film and anthropology by considering the potential ethnographic value of cinema and fiction.

Such correspondence assumes the often ambivalent character of cultural representations, as Bhabha exposes in the relationship between nation and narratives: "To study the nation through its narrative address does not merely draw attention to its language and rhetoric; it also attempts to alter the conceptual object itself" (1990: 3). In a sense, film as a source of History faces us with the Saussurian distinction between *langue* and *parole*: if for Bhabha the former was the law and the latter the people, in my proposal the narrative / context dyad would result in the combination of underlying meanings (*langue*) and definite situations with social interactions (*parole*).

In other words, I take fictional films not only as representatives of reality but rather as vital expressions of it, as Ferro claims in considering cinema as a potential "counteranalysis of society" (1988: 29), thus pointing at a fundamental crossroads between cinema and social science: "[...] the historical reading of a film and the cinematographic reading of history" (Id., 19). The question at this point may be how fiction may be effective in conveying certain aspects of lived experience (Rinehart 1998) and render them relevant to the anthropological enquiry. Pasolini asserted that cinema is a language that expresses reality with reality (Piault 2011: 3), and in my opinion the intention-

² Obviously I am not suggesting that the Indignados movement or the multiplicity of civil activist campaigns that arose in Spain in 2011 were not the ultimate result of a specific political and economical milieu. I am merely pointing at a deeper chain of social despondency among certain social sectors that has led to the eclosion of a dystopic social scenario.

al elaboration (or distortion) of this reality may very well pave the way for a more complete comprehension of certain social backgrounds and cultural practices³, as I will try to show hereinafter in the Spanish case.

Despite it is not possible to carry out here an exhaustive examination of similar contributions to the contexts of realization and distribution of cinematographic accounts on recent (and not so recent) contestation movements, I would like to briefly mention some particular examples on the prominence of such contexts to understand the impact and influence they may have upon audiences. By the end of the 1960s, Jorge Sanjinés, a Bolivian filmmaker, plunged into the thorny issue of forced concealed female sterilization in an indigenous community orchestrated by “Progress Corps” American physicians. Instead of choosing other audiovisual strategies (namely documentary), Sanjinés took fiction as a narrative tool to expose a given situation and ultimately connect with indigenous social power. Sometimes considered a brilliant piece of revisionist cinema (Schwartz 1997: 269), this Quechuan-spoken film uses several Andean symbols to pose the fundamental problem under recognizable indigenous terms (i.e. the coca leaf ritual).

On a much less tragic basis, *Tout va bien* [Everything goes well] (Godard 1972) deals with working-class struggle in France from an ideologically-situated point of view. Framing the plot in the aftermath of May 68, Godard uses fiction in a documentary-style filmmaking not only to think about a social fact but, rather, to turn the narration of this event into a quite more explicit persuasive-driven ideological vindication. As in Sanjinés’ film, social distress is at the core of the plot and the fictionalization of certain situations does allow the perception of such dissatisfaction under different narrative (and analytical) parameters.

More recent productions would very well illustrate the potential interdependent nature of both documentary and fiction realms to tackle contestation movements. Take, for example, the current economic crisis that has unleashed traumatic consequences for many countries across the world. Documentary films like *Inside Job* (Ferguson 2010) or *99%: the Occupy Wall Street Collaborative Films* (Aites, Ewell, Krstic and Read 2013) do face different dimensions of those consequences and also deal with some feasible causes of this enormous upheaval. But fiction may serve in this light, as Bhabha (1990) claimed, to explore different (and sometimes ambivalent) cultural representations of the phenomenon. Hence, titles as *The company men* (Wells 2010) or *Too big to fail* (Hanson 2011) do explore more specific, character-focused approaches. Quite the same could be said of documentary insights into recent social movements in Egypt (*The Square*, Noujaim, 2014) or of fictional examinations of late-sixties riots among the gay community in New York (*Stonewall*, Emmerich, 2015).

Let’s now take a closer look at a particular historical example of film narratives of social contestation.

³ As Rose points out: “Visual images do not exist in a vacuum, and looking at them for ‘what they are’ neglects the ways in which they are produced and interpreted through particular social practices” (2001, 37).

THE SPARK THAT SET THE FIRE

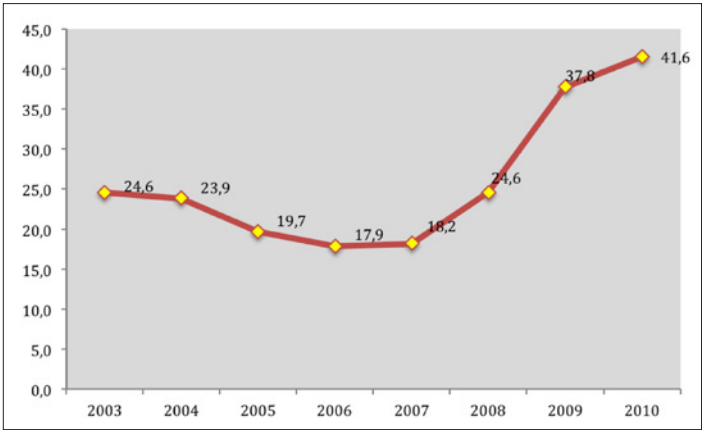
On May 15th 2011, a critical network platform *Democracia Real Ya* (Real Democracy now!)⁴ and other civic associations called for a pacific demonstration in some Spain towns and Cities, including Madrid. Tens of thousands gathered and simultaneously protested against the alleged political submission to the obscure financial forces that have beget the current crisis. This movement soon caught international attention and the so-called Spanish Revolution widely echoed on the international press.

In the early manifestos, uploaded to diverse open Internet websites, their promoters overtly spoke of hope and the need of an ethical revolution. They complained against: “corruption among politicians, businessmen, bankers, leaving us helpless, without a voice”, furthermore stating that: “Instead of placing money above human beings, we shall put it back to our service”. (<http://www.democraciarealya.es/manifiesto-comun/manifiesto-english/>)

Above all, collective voices deplored what they perceived as a moral fraud. The younger branch of this heterogeneous social movement reacted against learned standards of success and “god life” by confronting narratives of prosperity which were mainly based on a material –naming economic– raising which was supposed to be achieved by means of the singular equation of academic merit and personal effort. They felt upset, cheated, overtly disappointed as very few of the promises that guided their training since early age had been fulfilled. Hence, while many detractors pointed at this movement as a dire example of a broader “anti-system” collective, the main claim of their advocates was that it actually was this *system* which has turned against them.

Taking a step back, we can appreciate that, statistically speaking, this generation of young people have certainly reached a critical point. For example, if we consider certain figures concerning unemployment rate for youths under the age of 25 (figure 1) we could plainly see the dramatic dimension of their precariousness in the labour market, which may lead to a

FIGURE 1 - UNEMPLOYMENT RATE, ANNUAL AVERAGE, AGE GROUP <25 (%). SPAIN. 2003-2010. SOURCE: OWN ELABORATION FROM EUROSTAT DATA.



⁴ www.democraciarealya.es

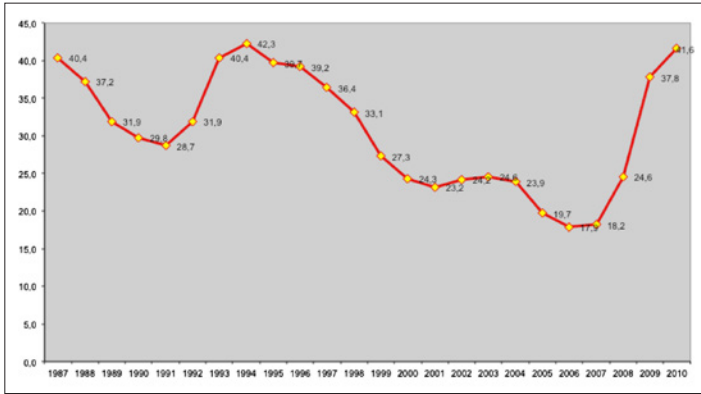


FIGURE 2 - UNEMPLOYMENT RATE, ANNUAL AVERAGE, AGE GROUP <25 (%). SPAIN (1987-2010). SOURCE: OWN ELABORATION FROM EUROSTAT DATA.

seemingly cruel paradox in Spain: the best trained generation ever finds itself facing one of the worst labour scenarios in the country's recent history (leaving the civil war and the terrible post-war years aside).

However, if we take a closer look at the situation over a broader time span (figure 2) we do appreciate that instead of becoming an ephemeral event, this situation seems rather structural and it may approach what Polavieja (2006) has labelled as "the Spanish anomaly", regarding the high rate of temporary employment in the Spanish labour market, in addition to absolute numbers of jobless population within that age range.

Hence, we could trace this "anomaly" back to previous demographic cohorts by analysing how the notion of *good (or better) life* has appeared as the epitome of a brighter future, a path to social success and a way of personal fulfilment – so this unfortunate situation would have never had to happen –, and how certain narratives have hitherto confronted uncertainty, both exposing social disenchantment and promoting active contestation. I will refer here to fiction films since they have been often selected as the preferred vehicle for materializing such expectations and narratives due to their extraordinary capacity of penetrating into the social tissue and of reaching diverse and massive audiences. Therefore, rephrasing Appadurai (1996: 13), fiction becomes a heuristic device to talk about culture, inasmuch as cinema has not only become today a major aesthetic form but it does also shape cultural assumptions under narrative and normative forms that help the anthropologist to better understand everyday social practices (Appadurai and Breckenridge 1991), not to mention the creation of new human knowledge through visual representation⁵ (MacDougall 2005).

Fiction films as potential ethnographic sources.

In his book *Cinema. A Visual Anthropology*, Gordon Gray refers to the academic value of film by making a crucial statement that places it as a potentially paramount source for social research: '[...] the study of cinema can provide insights into areas of a society of a different time or place that otherwise may be difficult, or even impossible, to access' (2010: x), and this

⁵ Especially in cultural environments where such knowledge about the world is increasingly based on the generation of images (Stafford 1991) and on a strong connection between seeing and knowing (Jenks 1995; Rose 2001), despite Berger's warning concerning the unsettled relation between what we see and what we know (1992: 7).

is possible because we can use film to retrieve: '[...] information on the ideas and prejudices of a particular time and place, again particularly of the culture-producing class' (Ibid. x). As an anthropologist who has been using film in my academic research for nearly 20 years, I could not agree more with him. Cinema could become a primary documentary source given its extraordinary ability to penetrate into the social tissue and subsequently to spread embodied abstract principles and ideas – such as certain culturally specific conceptions about how life is, should be or someone would like it to be – over massive audiences. Hence, fiction films should be of outmost relevance for social and cultural research since, as Giroux pointed out:

[they] produce and incorporate ideologies that represent the outcome of struggles marked by the historical realities of power and the deep anxieties of the times; they also deploy power through the important role they play connecting the production of pleasure and meaning with the mechanisms and practices of powerful teaching machines. Put simply, films both entertain and educate (Giroux 2002: 3).

This statement rightly reveals the crucial role of movies in the cultural landscape. As Paget (1998) recalls, the Latin root of fiction is the verb "*fingere*", which could be translated as "to mould" or "to shape". It is, therefore, a term that suggests an imaginative elaboration of reality (not that far from Grier-son's celebrated characterization of documentary as: 'the creative treatment of actuality' – Ellis 2000 –) that '[...] was not necessarily perceived as a lie' (Paget 1998, 105). Then, what he calls the '[...] "mocking up" of the real event' (Idem: 108) would better deserve the term "*faketon*", and by so doing he operates a neat distinction between the narrative and stylistic elaboration of the reality-as-perceived, and the deliberate attempt to fake it out. If we consider fiction in this light, movies may acquire a substantially different nature.

If we think of the best communicative artery to propagate certain ideas during most part of the XXth century (before the generalization of web-based services and other information and communication technologies), we would possibly find that cinema could be the perfect vehicle to achieve this role. Thus, if used purposely, films' intentions may be addressed '[...] so as to authorize certain readings and to discredit others' (Barbash & Tylor 1997: 60). Hence, as Cassetti (1993) and Chaplin (1994) have exposed, we must pay attention to the various roles that ideology and symbolic constructions play in the social patterning of proper and improper attitudes according to the hegemonic mechanisms of power at a given time and in particular contexts.

By the same token, films may also be approached as subversive devices. After all, filmmakers, through the meanings affirmed in their work '[...] may just as easily subdue the status

quo, counteract repression, and empower our subjects, as the opposite' (Barbash & Tylor 1997: 60). That is the realm where fiction becomes a crucial asset.

CINEMA AS DISENCHANTMENT: THE SPANISH CASE

The protesters who took the streets in 2011 were mostly young citizens, but by no means were young generations the only agents in the protest. Medium-age individuals and even older collectives (later on grouped under labels as “yayoflautas”, a slang word to refer to seething senior citizens) were also actively rallying and undertaking specific protest actions. As they claimed:

We are the generation that fought and got a better life for their children. Now they are putting the future of our daughters and granddaughters in danger. We are proud of the social response and the impulse that are showing the new generations in the struggle for democracy worthy of this name and for social justice, against the bankers and complicit politicians. We are at your side, feeling, neighborhood assemblies and also in action. If someone wants to dismiss his bravery by calling them “perroflautas” we can call ourselves “iaioflautas [catalán versión of yayoflautas]. (Excerpt of the manifesto available at www.iaioflautas.org/el-nostre-manifest.

If we consider the Spanish history since the mid 1940s, thus covering most part of these generations' life cycles, we may face singular circumstances. A devastated country tried to emerge and strived to overcome a cruel and bloody civil war, surrounded by countries exhausted and also devastated by the World War II. Part of the Spanish 'anomaly' at that time relied on the political regime present in the country, since it was one of the few European dictatorships that survived the European turmoil of the Great War. Contrary to other consolidated or renewed democracies in European countries, the Spanish government enclosed itself in a political autarchy until the 1950s. Firmly based on national-catholic guidelines, the Regime presented the civil war as a national crusade and overtly spoke of a brighter future based on the moral and physical prosperity of the renewed country. Hence, official discourses soon erased both the unwanted past and the inconvenient present. Misery, dissidence or poverty were absent of the Spanish official reality. And that was the first step to a massive deception: the unrealism in the depiction of reality lead to a constant fuelling of aspiration based on the official reports about truth instead of the real dimension of social living conditions.

Cinema became at that time an ideological –as much as instructive– weapon either to promote the hegemonic view of a renewed country, or to counteract it –inasmuch as the control and surveillance of the hegemonic power deliberately banned the depiction of certain situations, which otherwise would have

been virtually invisible to mass audiences. Nevertheless, discomfort, uncertainty and also veiled dissidence poured out of the alleged seams of reality and cinema was the preferred media to expose them by means of its refractive nature.⁶ Obviously, it had to be done under conventional clothes; otherwise, such films would never have been allowed to be screened. But the reality was somehow contested. Sometimes even firmly (though subtly) challenged.⁷

Hence, for example, depictions of deviant, pitiable, hazardous or criminal behaviours could be screened as long as they got a proper punishment in the end, according to the censorship moral orthodoxy. Beyond this formal observance, such films are one of the few major cultural testimonies we can access to investigate political and social contestation during those years. In the following pages, I will take some particular films as examples of such narrative of discomfort between 1953 and 2002, trying to stress this continuity in the entwining chronicles of disenchantment.

For example, in *That merry couple* (*Esa pareja feliz*, Bardem & Berlanga, 1953), Juan and Carmen, a young newlyweds, overwhelmed by economic difficulties (Juan's wage as electrician is too short), do participate in a radio contest where the prize consists of 24 hours of happiness by getting all sorts of gifts for free. They won, but the combination of Juan's labour difficulties and the artificiality of their temporary social improvement gradually undermined couple's confidence in each other and put their marriage at a stake. Finally, they renounced all gifts and went back to their living from hand to mouth, according to the precariousness of the times. In this film, brief hints of scarcity and allusions to the artificial nature of the happy promised life could be read as metaphorical criticisms to the broad political situation.

By the end of this same decade, *The little apartment* (*El pisito*, Ferreri & Ferry 1959), shows again the daily struggle of young working-class couples to make out their living after marriage. Such constraints forced some couples to look for, so to speak, less normative strategies to earn a living, such as presenting an infatuated love between a man and an elder lady owner, with the connivance of the man's fiancé, in order to inherit the apartment at the lady's death. In this case, subliminal critique could only be apparent if all situations were properly channelled towards a normative resolution. But at the forefront, the spirit for overcoming tough times and the triumph of love and mutual commitment, let us glimpse a blurred background where allusions to misery and the post-war social devastation lead to a daily effort for getting along. In both cases, contestation of success patterns and the frail promise of a better life had to be refracted under the shelter of double entendre dialogues and the complicity of predisposed audiences.

The Stabilization Plan of 1959 opened a half-hearted liberalization, which, among other interests, aimed at the international scene that tried to soften and –if possible– improve the Fran-

⁶ By refraction I mean the intentional distortion of a particular situation in order to suggest something else between lines (Grau Rebollo 2013).

⁷ During all that time the hegemonic power did never underestimate the strategic value of fiction in mainstream films. Quite the opposite: one of the most prominent tasks of different governmental authorities was to stay alert about any improper depiction that could lower the moral and patriotic standards of those who attended the exhibition theatres.

coism image abroad. However, the tight grip upon filmmaking was far from being relaxed. Quite the opposite: the determination of keeping proper representation of Spanish essences under control led the government to promulgate a new set of censorship directions (Normas de Censura Cinematográfica 1963). They blatantly expressed the underlying interest of the hegemonic political instances. According to Gubern et al. (1995), they were the plain expression of the firm will of exerting a total religious, moral and political control. However, at the beginning of the sixties, *Plácido* (Plácido, Berlanga, 1961) tackled with the thorny issue of misery and disenchantment both at the background and at the forefront of the film. As summarized by Pablo Montoya: "In a small Spanish town, a group of old ladies decide to celebrate Christmas Eve with a "Sit a poor man at your table" dinner: each wealthy household of the town will have a homeless person dining with them that night. The celebrations also include a parade, and in it we find Plácido, the humble owner of a three-wheeler, whose family is forced to live in a public lavatory because of the lack of money to pay the rent, and who has to pay the second bill of his vehicle before midnight or else he will lose it" (www.imdb.com/title/tt0055310/).

In this context, the quality of a film was not considered upon artistic or technical criteria. Rather, 'Spanish movies are good, bad or a mixture of both, depending on the extent to which they fit into the structural, technical, and narrative patterns that are consensually accepted as models' (Talens and Zunzunegui 1998: 36). These models were shaped according to hegemonic patterns and later on encapsulated into the film's diegesis. Hence, the higher quality films carried the imprint of excellence as the result of the careful distillation of the scripts that ideally lead the film to be distinguished as 'of national interest'.

In the seventies, after the death of Francisco Franco, much more explicit allusions to disappointment arises. The generation that grew up after the post-war period, hearing constant promises of future good days and a life of fulfilment, face the political, economic and social instability of the early transitional period. Far from considering the past a mere anomaly, this framework is presented as a whole set of lies and fakes. Thus, films as *The disenchantment* (*El desencanto*, Chávarri, 1976) a documentary biopic based on the testimonies of the widow and sons of one of the most renown poets within the Francoism, Leopoldo Panero, brings audience to an blatant discussion about lies, moral decadence and false hope. Being this particular family setting turned into an allegory of a whole political period, Chávarri exposes the broad feeling of uncertainty and disquiet of a young generation that experiences the confusion of living between what it really was and what they were told it was going to be.

But in my opinion *The green prairies* (*Las verdes praderas*, Garci, 1979) is one of the most significant films in this respect (image 1). Jose is a humble middle-aged man who becomes a brilliant high executive in a large insurance company by means

FIGURE 3 - JOSE (ALFREDO LANDA) AND CONCHI (MARÍA CASANOVA). MAIN CHARACTERS OF THE GREEN PRAIRIES. PICTURE COURTESY OF VIDEO MERCURY FILMS.



of a hard work, dedicated life. He is happily married to Conchi and both enjoy a family life with their two children until something in his life seems not to work out properly. Despite he may be taken as the perfect example of a self-made entrepreneur, owning a large house, a luxury car and having the benefits of a generous wage, Jose does all of a sudden realize of his incompleteness. A disastrous weekend in his chalet brings a shadow of self-consciousness upon the entire family: something does not go as it should. His wife perceives that and approaches him in order to find out the reason of his uneasiness.

In the selected excerpt (film clip 1) Jose's attitude shows an unconcealed bitterness towards present time and the forthcoming future. Deeply concerned, Conchi enquires him about his inner feelings as Jose recalls a chain of unaccomplished promises of a better life. Looking straight into her eyes, Jose explains that:

For 42 years I've been thinking that what I experienced was not important since it was like something... something provisional... as if I were waiting for a final post. I thought I was going towards a wonderful life... and while I was queuing I studied and worked hard because it was supposed to be that way because later on my life would finally arrive. My true life...and you know what? It has arrived... [...] And now, I don't like it.

After projecting his envision over the future of his family life, Jose comes to his concluding remarks:

And suddenly you die... and you feel really stupid... And in the last minute you say to yourself: come on... come on... Because they lied to you all the time and you never did what you really wanted to do... [...] That's what happens to me... I was wrong, damn it! I was wrong.

Despite apparently Jose's complaints do not explicitly allude to unemployment or to any sort of income shortage, as he rather refers to the ludicrous consumptions habits of middle-

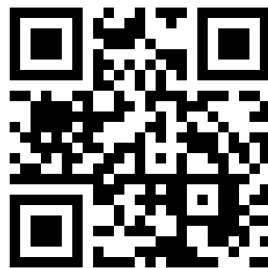
upper classes in the 1970's Spain and the preposterous kind of life they lead to, his deepest reasoning addresses the dissatisfaction of an unfulfilled life due to a succession of failed promises and expectations.

As we may appreciate, this upsetting feeling is gradually spreading over higher social strata, thus trespassing the lower layers of working classes and reaching wide sections of middle and even upper-middle class citizens. Hence, social improvement is no longer shackled to just a higher material income since it does also require emotional comfort. That is the reason why the notion of disenchantment is crucial for the sense of betterment.

During the 1980s the Spanish filmic panorama was plenty of films that presented a critical view on the present and the past in several ways. Firstly, we could find film production associated to the Spanish *Movida*, a broad cultural movement covering different branches of popular art such as music, photography or cinema that broke the boundaries of previously repressed artistic expressions and moral taboos. One of its main exponents was Pedro Almodóvar, whose production soon became the most internationally renowned at that time (*Pepi, Luci, Bom*, 1980; *Labyrinth of Passion* [Laberinto de pasiones], 1982; *What Have I Done to Deserve This?* [¿Qué he hecho yo para merecer esto?], 1988 or *Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown* [Mujeres al borde de un ataque de nervios, 1988, among others). Secondly, there were a clump of films focusing on controversial issues such as drug consumption and crime among certain sectors of Spanish youth (as José Antonio de la Loma started to show in the late seventies and Eloy de la Iglesia developed in the eighties). Thirdly, the Civil War and the long period of subsequent dictatorship came at last under a critical scrutiny (from as different filmmakers as Luis García Berlanga, Fernando Fernán Gómez, Antonio Mercero, Francesc Betriu, Jaime Chávarri, Antonio José Betancor or Jaime Camino).

Therefore, the social and political atmosphere was at that point a combination of artistic exploration,⁸ profound changes in the labour market, active protests in several social groups affected by such transformations and a mixture of expansion on the one hand (from the welfare state system to renovated structural policies oriented to expand the economic growth and the modernization of the country's image⁹), and an increasing sense of deception in those wide social sections that could not fully benefit of the appointed benefits on the other hand.

Needless to say, the confrontation between prosperity narratives and less-optimistic countervisions is not characteristic of a particular historical or political period. Thus, even during the Spanish "miraculous decade" (1997-2007), as Royo (2009) has ironically referred to the seemingly unstoppable economic growth in Spain since the second half of the 1990s, we could find several examples of disillusion, specially among working classes and the less favoured social layers. For example, *Suburb* (*Barrio*, León de Aranoa, 1998) follows three young pals who



JOSE EXPRESSES HIS
DISENCHANTMENT TO
CONCHI. FILM CLIP COURTESY
OF VIDEO MERCURY FILMS.
TRANSLATION ADDED.
PASSWORD TO WATCH THE
CLIP= confronting.

⁸ It must be noticed that the freedom of expression was only recovered with the promulgation of the Spanish constitution in 1978, 3 years after the death of Franco.

⁹ Which, to some views, came to a symbolic conclusion with the Olympic Games in Barcelona, the World fair in Seville and the designation of Madrid as European cultural capital (Sánchez 2004: 10, 21).

loaf around at the outskirts of Madrid talking about live, future, sex and work, as well as their common dreams and problems while coping with a dissatisfying environment. They are all well aware of how far out of reach might prosperity and fulfilment be, according to the hegemonic narratives about success: to own a house, a car, to be happily married and to earn enough money to live a comfortable life.

From the same filmmaker, *Mondays in the sun* (2002) turns the audience attention towards the dark side of that very same success and to the absolute truncation of dreams. León de Aranoa dives into the devastating effects of unemployment among former shipyard workers who lost their job after the closure of the dock company where they were employed. As time goes by and the hope of getting another job gradually vanishes, they find themselves fighting to keep their marriages alive, doing their best to overcome alcoholism or trying to avoid jail after turning their frustration and bitterness into active participation in street protest demonstrations. As the film motto warns: “this film is not based on a real story. It is based on thousands”.

The opening scene shows the confrontation between groups of Shipyards workers demonstrating against the industrial restructuring that would send tens of thousands of them to the unemployment, while police riot squads try to prevent an escalation of the conflict. As Florido, Roca & Gutiérrez Molina (2013) have pointed out, the restructuring of the Shipbuilding Industry –along with the deep changes in the iron and steel production– brought onerous consequences to the Spanish labour market during the 1980s. According to them:

[...] restructuring was not just the dismantling of a sector in crisis, but the disappearance of an organizational model that had been molded for over a century and that affected the way of life of workers and their families. The shipyard was characterized by guild-like kinship, with a built-in social support system, and workers and their families had partial access not only to work but also to housing, training, and even some basic services. This way of life was engrained in the memories of the actors in the conflict of the 1980s (and in those of their ancestors, most of whom also worked for the company) to such a degree that restructuring could be called the dismantling of a community and a lifestyle, a whole world, limited in scope but with a long history (2013: 895).

Certainly, as the authors assert, part of the conflict lied on the refusal of a new structural frame that entailed an entirely new social situation for them (Florido, Roca & Gutiérrez Molina 2013: 916), but it also made visible the final stage of an old misconnection between the appointed fate and social reality. Santa, a former shipyard worker in his forties raises his voice against the current situation they are enforced to live in and its foreseeable consequences. In the midst of an acrimonious discussion about the (in)convenience of having signed the agree-

ment that finally sent his workmates and himself out of work, he utters a painful statement:

What could you do at 49-years-old, early retired, two children and 8 million [pesetas –about 48.000 €–]?... Nothing... That's what you can do [...] you signed the job layoff of your offspring, damn it, it was their jobs we were discussing there... and we lost them.

It is this very sense of loss towards the future due to a deceptive existence that has in different ways pervaded various generations during most part of the 20th century in Spain as well as the first decade of the 21st. Hence, although the arise of protest movements in the spring of 2011 could be considered and investigated as a contemporary expression of distress in connection with previous uprisings in other countries (as the wave of demonstrations known as “the Arab Spring”, for example),¹⁰ a more diachronic approach considering a *long-durée* history of unfulfilment among certain social sections would certainly shed a different – and necessary – light on the matter.

CONCLUSION

As in the *Time* magazine approach to the protesters, it is noticeable in many films how: “History often emerges only in retrospect. Events become significant only when looked back on” (Time 2011). Every context weaves a network of promises and a set of narratives of success that for many reasons do not always fulfil. Actually, many times things do not happen as expected and the frustration for the unaccomplished expectations overlaps with the concern for a disappointing reality.

At the beginning of this article, I referred to the *Times* magazine celebration of the protester and to a lively civil movement that blossomed in Spain in 2011, which came after the so-called “Arab spring” and before other public demonstration in the United States and other parts of the world. Certainly, hope and disenchantment somehow met in many diverse ways in all these movements. But in the particular case that I have tried to expose here –how filmic narratives do play a crucial role in confronting uncertainty, exposing social disenchantment but also in promoting active contestation– there lies a troublesome fact: the characters of *That happy couple* were the civil war children that expose the broken hopes in the 1950s; the main characters of *Plácido* state even more crudely the impossible completion of the so vividly advertised Spanish prosperity at the beginning of the 1960s; *The green prairies* overtly claims against the pernicious effects of success narratives in the late 1970s and *Mondays in the Sun* faces a limit situation for many workers who felt themselves lost in an existential cul-de-sac.

In some way, all these films offer a continuous tale of broken hopes and unaccomplished promises and the audiovisual milieu provides us with precious examples of blatant contes-

¹⁰ A comparison that should however be properly nuanced, both in its inner dimension as a seemingly homogenous movement and in its alleged outer resemblance with other social movements (Anderson, 2011; Howard, Duffy, Freelon et al, 2011; Lotan, Graeff, Anany, et al., 2011, Peña-López, Congosto & Aragón, 2013).

tations of narratives about social success as the main path towards personal attainment.

In this light, fiction may serve as a fundamental ethnographic source. Films dispose different modes of expression (Ferro 1988) that provide the researcher with specific and intentional narratives that convey cultural assumptions through visual representation. Certainly, as Ferro states, it is difficult to measure and evaluate the real influence of cinema upon audiences, but “[...] at least certain sequences of cause and effect can be observed” (1988: 15). And an accurate scrutiny of the volitional disposition of events and situations on the screen can lead to a better understanding of interactions as well as the creation of new human knowledge, as MacDougall (2005) properly emphasizes.

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FILM PRODUCERS

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REPORTS

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ARTISTS' STUDIOS AND THEIR PRACTICES IN KWUN TONG INDUSTRIAL BUILDINGS: A HYPER-VIDEO ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY

ABSTRACT

This is a research-creative project, in which the topic of research, research methods and ways of presenting research findings are essential concern. This project shows ways artists/designers live and work in the vibrant Kwun Tong area. Since the late 1980's, factories have begun to move to Mainland China. Then, various types of small businesses and creative industries and artists have been moving in. Gradually, they turn the town into a creative community/cluster. However, since 2010, the Hong Kong Government introduced the Policy of Revitalization of Factory Buildings. This problematic policy has brought terrible destruction to the area and caused unaffordable property prices. The web site features creative folks in twenty-five studios working on various media (photography, painting, 2D/3 D design, theatre, wearable, etc). There is 330 mins of video in sum on the web site. Regarding research method and form of presentation, visual ethnographic video and academic findings are presented in a hyper-video web-site that works together with edited transcription. There are several layers of interactivity in which audience can view, understand and experience the research findings.

*The hyper-video web site was launched in July 2015.
www.ktfactorystudio.com (please use Chrome in full screen for best viewing), www.facebook.com/ktfactorystudio*

*** This project is selected to be featured on the data-base for interactive documentary of International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam, IDFA, 2015-16.*

This project is supported by General Research Fund of Research Grants Council under the University Grant Committee of Hong Kong

KEYWORDS

Hyper-video; creative community; urban redevelopment policy; visual ethnography

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INTRODUCTION

This research project shows how artists/designers live and work in Kwun Tong area (located in Kowloon east of Hong Kong and was an famous and successful industrial town built by the British in the colonial times back in the 1950's). Since the late 1980's, factories have gradually moved to Mainland China. Since then, various types of small businesses and creative industries and artists have been moving in. Gradually, they turn the town into a mixed commercial/industrial town and a creative community/cluster. However, in 2009, the Hong Kong Government introduced the Policy of Revitalization of Factory Buildings and the East Kowloon Redevelopment Project¹. This problematic policy has brought terrible destruction to the area and caused unreasonable speculations and unaffordable property price. Property price has raised 70% and rent has raised 250% since the policy was announced (Chan Hui Yin

2015). Hence, studying artists' practices and their studios in the Kwun Tong area from the perspective of crisis and change in urban spatial contexts is essential.

This research aims to:

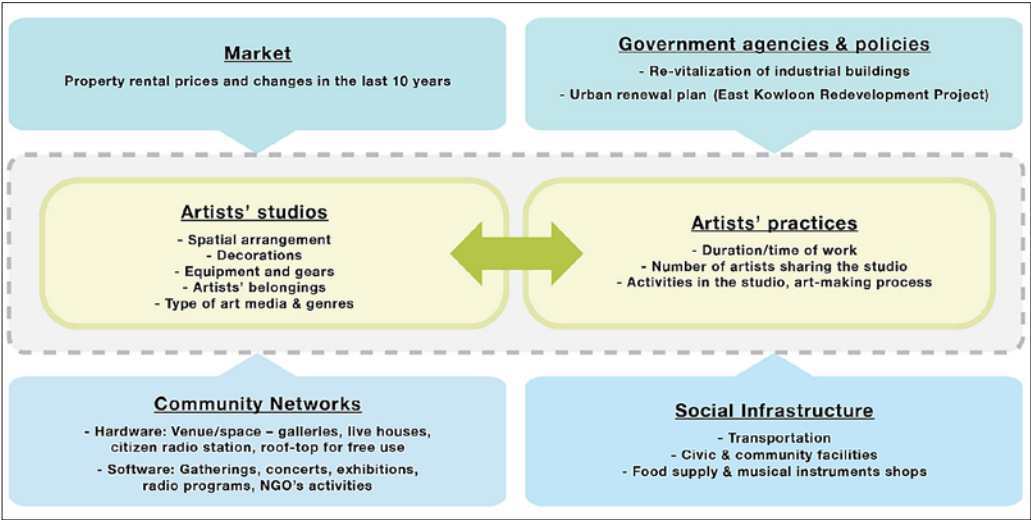
- 1) examine why artists set up studios in Kwun Tong industrial buildings;
- 2) investigate how government policies (re-vitalization of industrial buildings and the East Kowloon Redevelopment Project announced in the Policy Address 2011-12) affects artists and their practices;
- 3) study what artists do in their studios;
- 4) study studio set-ups, including spatial arrangement, equipment for artwork production and artists' belongings;
- 5) explore how artists participate in and benefit from both everyday-life activities and art events in the community;
- 6) supplement existing research on artists' studios and artists' communities, thus generating ideas for better cultural policy and culture-led (re)development strategies.

The research team have visited and interviewed 27 artists and designers, **25 are on the web site and in sum 330 mins of video.** Research subjects work on various media: wood work/design, leather work/design, graphic/2D design, 3D work design and production, music, music live house, fashion design/shop, photography, puppet design/production and theatre, printing, video production, hand-made guitar production, tattoo, street art, wearable and jewelleryes. Some of them do more than one medium in one studio.

RESEARCH METHODS AND FRAMEWORK

Besides, studying artist studio, this research also explores the ways artists' practices are inspired and shaped by social and cultural contexts and everyday life in the community. Hence, two key subjects of the study and four critical factors affecting the subjects of the study are identified as cross-disciplinary research methods. For artists' studio and their practices in the

¹ In 2009, Hong Kong Government announced a series of measures in the name of revitalization hopefully to facilitate urban redevelopment of industrial areas and optimize land use. Wholesale conversion and redevelopment are regarded as potential means to revitalize industrial buildings. However, it has resulted in speculations in the property market. They also set up a special office titled Energizing Kowloon East Office (EKEO) to implement the redevelopment plan (see the web sites in the references at the end of this article).



community, ethnographic studies and also semi-structure interview in video were conducted.

For the observational studies, the research team followed subjects for a full day, to understand the ways they live, their practices in the studio, things they do in the studio, the ways and places they move about in the community, the food they eat, and the ways they interact with other members of the community. In the case of Ahkok Wong (www.ktfactorystudio.com/vid/?studioId=13) he and his band members had to move out of the studio because the landlord raised 50% of the rent. He went to places he used to go and said goodbye to friends and people in the shops. He reviewed the times living in Kwun Tong and his friends building up the community. Also, from the exchange and sharing he had with people in the community, he started to pay attention to civil rights and criticized government policy. The research team also witnessed the time he packed and left the place with heavy emotions.

Regarding form of presentation, researcher chose a hyper-media representation. Audio-visual materials on web do not merely assist the documentation of field notes but offer receivers ample room to experience the complex and dynamic ethnographic knowledge which cannot be fully expressed by writing and linear video alone. Especially a research on artists' studios and their practices together with the community, that needs moving image and sound to render an ethnographic experience for the viewers. In additional, in conventional research, there are tons of transcription considered as backup materials for writing articles or retrieving data for facts and statistics.

This project experiments the use of transcription to go hand in hand with hyper-video thus to build up a platform for an interactive interface aiming at generating new narratives for web-site users (and the community) to understand, experience and analyse the research materials/findings. With various narratives rendered by users' own choices of keywords generated

from the transcription, one can trace and explore the artists' community in novel ways, unlike linear video, or in writings.

The fact that Sarah Pink has revised her book, *Doing Visual Ethnography* for the third edition exactly shows the impending need to discuss the new possibilities that researchers/artists can work on regarding presenting research data and materials on-line digitally. "Producing knowledge" is about finding and producing research materials as well as the ways of presentation. This project aims to render multiple narratives for audiences experience through an interactive platform.

In the third edition, Pink especially revises the chapter regarding hypermedia presentation to "Making Visual Ethnography Public Online/digitally" (Pink 2013: 203-238). She points out not only the essence of hypermedia which is non-linearity and users' own experience of the ethnographic content, but also the ways of distributions, changing from DVDs and on-location screenings to web-based platforms. Actually, Pink could never imagine how web-based content could be possible shared and spread on social media nowadays. For example, I soft-launched my project on the 17th July 2015 and until now, there are over 3000 likes and over 300000 posts reach on Facebook. This is something I could never expect, as a moving image artist who used to present my works in screenings of film/video festivals in which usually 200-300 people at most in one screening.

The notion of digital humanities also inspired the way this research was done. The newly published book this year (2015) also an on-line free book under CC license, *Interdisciplining Digital Humanities, Boundary Work in an emerging Field* (Klein 2015: 37) summarizes several important notions and interpretation of this newly raised term which practices have been experimented for the last 65 years (Klein 2015: Chapter 2). Among the various definitions of digital humanities listed, I am the most interested in the following: "DH is best experienced as both theory and practice." (Elli Mylonas).

To a certain extend, the word "interdisciplinary" is redundant. As an artist-researchers, things we have been doing is doubtlessly inter-disciplinary. We do social and cultural researches in the field of humanities that involve both data research and also ethnographic research. In addition, we also have the concern on and equipped with the knowledge of art forms (moving image and sound), together with the knowledge in computer science and video production. This project is a showcase of such interdisciplinary-ness.

In *Defining Digital Humanities A Reader*, Mark Sample mentions, digital humanities is not about building, but sharing (Sample 2013). The level of sharing he states is to bridge, teaching versus research, universities versus liberal arts colleges, and centre versus networks/communities. "the promise of the digital is not in the way it allows us to ask new questions because of digital tools or because of new methodologies made possible by those tools. The promise is in the way the digital reshapes the

presentation, sharing, and the discussion of knowledge”.

The project attempts to explore the notion of theory and practice -- how medium specificity/ forms/rhetoric can work together and be supplementary to research contents and the representation in a free and public access platform, that brings researches, networks and communities together. This project serves as sharing of data of research findings to the community members, government, mass media, students and scholars, people who want to study the town for various reasons. This project also shares researcher’s analysis of the research data through the format of keywords in the hyper-video platform, I will explain this point in later part of the writing.

HYPER-VIDEO WEB SITE

Hyper-video as a research method as well as a means of presentation: the best way to present the research data and ethnographic video of such a brilliant Kwun Tong creative cluster/ community to the public effectively, intimately and genuinely, is on an interactive web site. It is also the most effective way to share knowledge and research findings hence to create more voices and comments from the audience/public.

INTERACTIVITY AND USERS EXPERIENCE

The structure of the web site is designed in a way to enhance users’ experience as well as to build multiple narratives rendered from the ethnographic video. There are three layers of the web site:

1. Summary of research data

The front page is an interactive visual representation of the factual/general research findings of the project. Users can obtain data and information by categories by clicking their own choices: rent (\$3.75 to \$50 per sq.ft), studio size (120 sq.ft to 6000 sq.ft), medium of art/design works (wood, leather, music, design, photography, etc, and some artists do more than one media in one studio), shared or individual space, open for

FRONT PAGE OF THE PROJECT.
WWW.KTFACTORYSTUDIO.
COM/ (PLEASE USE CHROME
FOR THE BEST VIEWING OF
THE WEB SITE).



ROM the 我們 來自 廈
ACTORIES



Size

Rent

Media

[Select all](#) [Select none](#)

☐ Music

☐ Leather

☐ Sewed

☐ Wearable

☐ New Media Art

☐ Painting

☐ Installation

☐ Bookstore

☐ Publication

☐ 3d design

☐ 3d stuid

☐ Photography

☐ Tattoo

☐ Theatre

☐ VideoFilm

existing/mixed

individual/shared

public/private

CREW LIST

INSTRUCTIONS

USERS CLICK ON THE LEFT
HAND SIDE BOXES TO
VIEW THE INFO THEY ARE
INTERESTED.

ROM the 我們 來自 廈
ACTORIES



LAB by Dimension + 

Address:
九龍新禧龍鳳里10號東匯工業大廈3樓C座
Hours: 週二至五 Tue - Fri 11:00 - 20:00; 週六 Sat
14:00 - 20:00
Phone: 852 3483-6225
Website: dimansorplus.co/lab
Facebook: LAB by Dimension HK

Size

Rent

Media

existing/mixed

individual/shared

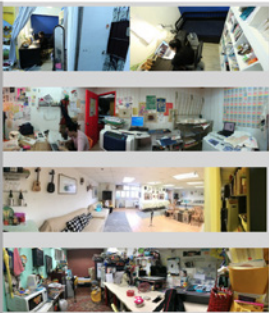
public/private

CREW LIST

INSTRUCTIONS

STUDIO ADDRESS AND
CONTACT.

ROM the 我們 來自 廈
ACTORIES



Lester Lee, Leung Ha 

Address:
觀塘美芝街7號東匯工業大廈8樓838室
Hours: 需預約 By appointment
Phone: 852 93273714
Website: lessshurter.tumblr.com
Email: hihuna@gmail.com
Facebook: Lessshurter

Size

Rent

Media

existing/mixed

individual/shared

public/private

CREW LIST

INSTRUCTIONS

LISTED ACCORDING TO THE
AMOUNT OF RENT.

115

LISTED ACCORDING TO THE SIZE OF THE STUDIO.

STUDIO DESCRIPTION
(WHEN CLICKED ON THE PHOTOGRAPH).



public or private, whether they have moved already or still existing. This serves as the index/main page and is visually characterized by 360 still photographs of the studios with bilingual (Chinese and English) description. As it is a spatial-oriented research, having a 360 still photograph as the key image for each studio is the most suitable. This main page is a general account of the research data about the studios. There is individual fragmented information, yet when gathering together, we can grasp a general understanding/impression about the creative cluster in the Kwun Tong area.

In this part, audience can see how diverse the rents are, from \$3.75 per sq.ft to \$50 per sq.ft.

This shows the various sizes of the studios, ranging from 120sq.ft. to 6000 sq.ft.

For the description of the studio, research team tends not only to write about factual information, but also the designers/artists' style. We also quote some of the interview to summarize the characteristic of the studio and issues they concern of.

2. Hyper-video platform working with transcription

Transcriptions are usually used by researchers for writings in conventional researches. However, in this project, transcriptions are transformed as part of the presentation. It is considered as one of the visual elements on the web site, in which audience can also read it as text/story. Yet, it is no plain text. In



the video page, audience can watch the video (8-24 mins each video for each studio); or, they can choose to read the transcription. When clicking on any line s/he is interested, the video will jump to that particular time code of the chosen line. For example when the artists are talking about their artworks, audience can see/listen the works on video. Moreover, Audience can also understand where these works are located and how they are displaced in the studio, as a data for spatial arrangements and spatial practices of the artist.

Each line in the transcription box is a fragment, but it serves as a link for the audience to enter the video at any point s/he likes. In this way, audience can choose to (re)watch some parts in a click for his/her own particular interests. So, the order of viewing is free. Audiences find their own ways to understand the studios. Although the video is a linear single moving image file originally, it will become fragmented in any way that the audiences want to look at hence enhancing the understanding of the artists and the studio as a whole. The readable transcription is a distraction of viewing linear moving image, and fragmentation, yet also a supplementation and mutual illumination about the artists practices in that studio, and the studio in itself.

3. Keywords that build multiple narratives about artists/designers and the characteristics of the community

This research does not only aim at studying individual artist/designers but the Kwun Tong community as a whole. Hence, several keywords are chosen to link up individual artists/designers point of view and way of life to demonstrate the characteristic of the community.

Also, in conventional research or mainstream single channel documentary, people make arguments about the research findings and research subjects by writing and reorganizing materials to render linear and single narrative. However, in this project, researcher attempts to build various narratives about the artists/designers and their community by using marked keywords on edited transcription. In other words, it is also researcher's analysis of the research data.

Hence, audience do not only understand and analyze artists individually as a part, but also collectively via some interesting threads run through different studios/artists by the keywords interwoven the creative cluster/community as a whole. Moreover, the ways audience understand the community and the relations of artists are from multiple points of entry along various trajectories of narratives which hinted by researcher's objective analysis of the research materials, as well as subjective reflexive responses to the artists' essential moments of sharing feelings and emotions.

In the video page, there are some keywords visually highlighted as red icons in the transcription box. When clicked, these keywords lead the audience to the third layer of the web site. There are three types of keywords:

*A. Everyday-life issue e.g. **food***, in the grass-root based mixed industrial and commercial town, there are some eateries that offer affordable food. Unlike chain stores and standardized food stalls, there are some small eateries that quite some artists/designers love to go. One example is "Ah Jeh" and they are willing to offer off menu food at people's choices.

B. Characteristics of the community which is researcher's objective analysis of the research data:

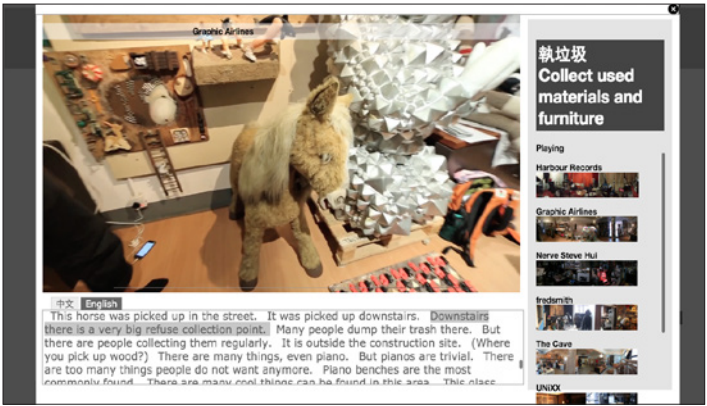
- i. moving*, as artists/designers have to move studio very often because of high rent resulted from the problematic government policies. In the case of tfvsjs (a band), they have experienced 7 times moving within 9 years in the community; Up Publication experienced raising rent for 107% and they also had to move. Basically, all research subjects feel that it is hard to have a stable stay and thus very difficult to obtain sustainable development. It is a waste of time and money to move often. They have to move because of several reasons, landlords want to sell the places to gain big profit; rent raised in unreasonable %; and illegal land use.
- ii. collect used materials and furniture* and pick stuff free in the streets, for regular use, as well as raw materials for artwork production. This common practice in Kwun Tong community goes beyond the cliché recycling myth because it is a linkage to the essence of an industrial town -- easy access to raw materials (free or paid). In the case of Leung-ha, she picks cloth and other small objects to make small items like pen bags. In the case of Fretsmith Guitar Workshop, Ah Chek, the guitarist and guitar maker, made his working table with wood trashed in the street. In the case of Graphic Airlines, there are quite some furniture in the studio that are trash in the streets.
- iii. neighbourhood*, it explains so very well the essence of the Kwun Tong creative community and also reasons why artists like staying and working there. This is also the unique-

ness of this mixed industrial and commerical town. Many of the research subjects mention they like the community a lot because there is a sense of neighbourhood and support, plus interactions in terms of creative work cooperation, and raw materials supply (wood, metal, paper, tools in the industrial town). In the case of Ahkok Wong, he explained his understanding and experience about the sense of community with an example. There was a time he lost his wallet. He then realized he could still survive in the area for a few days without money. He went to eateries that he used to go and told them he did not have money. Boss in the eateries simply asked him to pay later. He noticed that he started to have a strong sense of community about Kwun Tong as a grass-rooted based and mixed industrial/commercial town, because of the fact that a good neighborhood would support one and other.

iv. *Revitalization of industrial building policy*, artists critical comments to the policy and the ways they are affected. Most artists dislike the policy because it speeds up gentrification, fades out the diverse grass-root culture, and of course most importantly, stimulates the raising rent. It also destorys the vibrant mixed industiral/commerical town into mono-direction development – finance, grade A offices and hotels by wholesale conversion.

C. Besides the keywords from objective analysis, researcher also stresses on subjective notion as well, e.g. ‘feelings’, ‘art-works’, ‘fathers’.

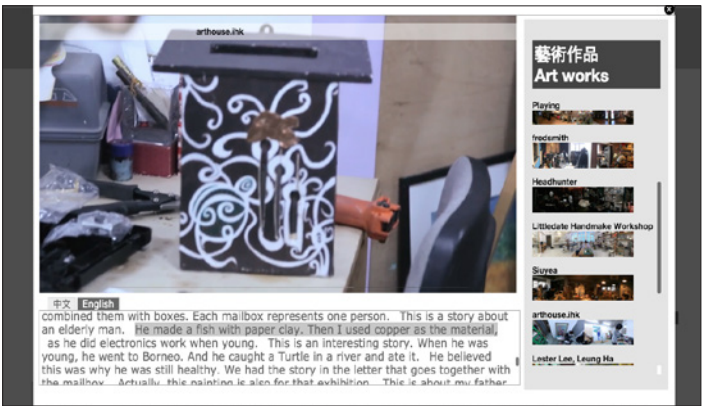
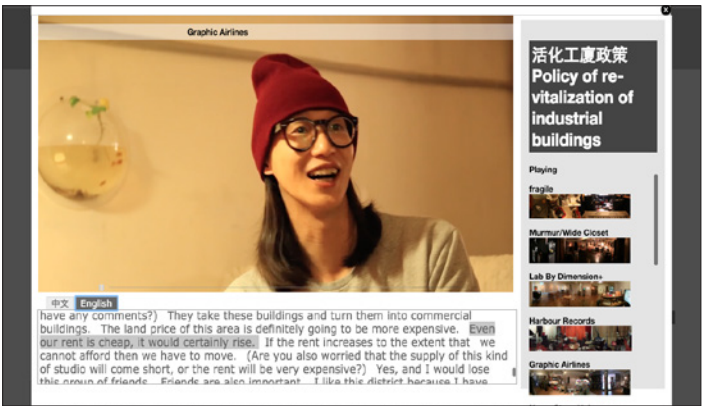
Being an artist-researcher, we have to be reflexive to how we respond to the research materials/subjects, and I want to also present these reflections through the realm of feelings and subjective emotions. For example, in the keyword -- “feelings”, these are the moments I felt the artists are emotionally overwhelmed, or I am emotionally overwhelmed because of what they said and did. So this part is the representation of subjective interpretation of research data. For example, in Littledate Handmade Workshop, the designer Dave Cheng has been living in Kwun Tong since he was a kid. He has strong feelings



THE PAGE SHOWS ALL ARTISTS/DESIGNERS WHO TALK ABOUT AND DID COLLECT USED MATERIALS AND FURNITURE. AUDIENCE CAN CLICK VARIOUS STUDIOS ON THE RIGHT COLUMN TO UNDERSTAND DIFFERENT ARTISTS' POINT OF VIEW ON THE SAME ISSUE.

THE PAGE SHOWS ALL ARTISTS/DESIGNERS WHO TALK ABOUT THE WAY THEY ARE INFLUENCED BY THE REVITALIZATION POLICY AND THEIR CRITICAL COMMENTS TO IT. AUDIENCE CAN CLICK VARIOUS STUDIOS ON THE RIGHT COLUMN TO UNDERSTAND DIFFERENT ARTISTS' POINT OF VIEW ON THE SAME ISSUE.

THE PAGE SHOWS ALL ARTISTS/DESIGNERS WHO TALK ABOUT THE WAY THEY ARE INFLUENCED BY THE REVITALIZATION POLICY AND THEIR CRITICAL COMMENTS TO IT. AUDIENCE CAN CLICK VARIOUS STUDIOS ON THE RIGHT COLUMN TO UNDERSTAND DIFFERENT ARTISTS' POINT OF VIEW ON THE SAME ISSUE.



to the area and has critical comments to the problematic re-development project in the area as a whole. He talked about his childhood memory and his father that also echoes with a lot of people living in the area. www.ktfactorystudio.com/vid/?studioId=15

FOLLOW-UP AND RECENT SITUATION

There are 8 artists/designers already moved out from the studio, either to another studio in Kwun Tong, or to another town due to high rent. This data is indicted in the front page ("moved" category).

The Hong Kong Government announced in August 2015, that the Revitalization Policy would come to an end in April 2016, which is good news. However, continuous work and monitoring are necessary because amendments of laws and regulations regarding land-use and fire safety are urgently needed hence to save artists/designers falling into the illegal traps. Certainly, more needed to be done if the Hong Kong Government genuinely wants to develop creative and cultural industries.

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HONG KONG GOVERNMENT REVITALIZATION POLICY
OF INDUSTRIAL BUILDINGS

www.devb.gov.hk/industrialbuildings/eng/home/

ENERGIZING KOWLOON EAST

www.ekeo.gov.hk/en/home/index.html

PHOTO-ESSAY

MARIA LUISA CIMINELLI
UNIVERSITY CA' FOSCARI - VENEZIA
ITALY

LE KOLONKALANIN: UNE DÉMONSTRATION DU PILON MAGIQUE AU BÉLÉDOUGOU (MALI)

ABSTRACT

This photo-essay documents the functioning of the kolonkalanin, or “pilon magique” (magical pestle), during a demonstration of its power. One of the most important and fearsome fetishes of the Bamana people of Mali, the kolonkalanin is also featured in the film Yeelen by Souleymane Cissé (1987). The analogic photographs of this reportage have been taken in a village of BéléDougou, where I came back in 1999 to meet once again the soma (great initiate), Keifa Diarra. Keifa Diarra himself wanted me to assist at the demonstration, to take pictures of it, and to record his words.

KEYWORDS

Bamana; Mali; Beledugu; Kolonkalanin; Magical pestle.

MARIA LUISA CIMINELLI

is PhD in anthropology, and in 2013 got the Italian National Scientific Habilitation (ASN) as associate professor. She carried out field research among the Bamana of Beledugu (Mali) from 1990 to 2001, thanks to CNR (Italian National Council of Research), WennerGren Foundation and ISIAO (Italian National Institute for Africa and the Far East) funds.

LES PHOTOGRAPHIES SUIVANTES ONT ÉTÉ PRISES AVEC UN FILM 35MM LE 2 AOÛT 1999 AU MALI, DANS UN VILLAGE BAMBARA DU BELEDUGU (BÉLÉDOUGOU, SELON LA DICTION OFFICIELLE) OÙ J'ÉTAIS ALORS RETOURNÉE POUR POURSUIVRE MES RECHERCHES AUPRÈS DU SOMA (GRAND CONNAISSEUR, INITIÉ) ET BOLITIGI (PROPRIÉTAIRE DE BOLI, « FÉTICHES »), KEIFA DIARRA (CIMINELLI 1998). IL FAUT PRÉCISER QUE L'UTILISATION DU NOIR ET BLANC - QUI PRODUIT DES EFFETS D'ÉLOIGNEMENT DANS LE TEMPS, VOIR « EXOTISANTS » - N'A PAS ÉTÉ UN CHOIX INTENTIONNEL : À CE MOMENT-LÀ, J'AVAIS TERMINÉ LES PELLICULES COULEURS ET IL NE ME RESTAIT QU'UN ROULEAU BLANC ET NOIR.

Le reportage est consacré à la démonstration du pouvoir du Kolonkalanin (le pilon magique) que Keifa Diarra voulut me donner. Dans le Beledugu, le kolonkalanin est décrit comme le « fétiche policier », capable de débusquer ou retrouver soit le voleur, soit l'objet volé (ou seulement perdu). Il peut également attraper les traîtres et mettre à nu les délateurs. Il s'agit d'un fétiche des plus connus et redoutés : selon le Chef de la Division du patrimoine culturel de la Région de Koulikoro, le regretté Assimi Bengaly, qui m'assistait dans la recherche, la seule évocation du recours au kolonkalanin suffit pour qu'un voleur restitue le butin. La force et la puissance magique du kolonkalanin sont illustrées dans le film Yeelen de Souleyman Cissé (1987), où il est activé par un personnage qui porte - et pour cause - le nom de « Soma ». L'invocation de « Mari, Dieu de la brousse » (3'41'') y déclenche l'action, voire le pouvoir magique du pilon, qui, porté par deux jeunes hommes, part à la chasse du protagoniste, Nianankoro. Dans la réalité, il s'agit toutefois d'un fétiche qui est propriété du village : Keifa a été donc envoyé par son village chez un kolonkalanintigi (maître du kolonkalanin) pour en apprendre les secrets. Dans le film Yeelen, le dieu de la brousse (Mari) est aussi désigné par « Mawula Duga », le vautour sacré, symbole de la société secrète du **Koré** (Zahan 1960). En effet, d'une manière générale, le vautour, qui d'ailleurs figure sur les armoiries de la République du Mali, revêt un rôle essentiel dans l'épopée, les savoirs et parcours initiatiques en milieu bamanan. Mawula Duga est aussi invoquée dans le cadre de cette démonstration. Puisqu'il s'agit justement d'une cérémonie illustrative, le kolonkalanin a pour tâche de retrouver un objet, précisément une tabatière, précédemment cachée par le soma lui-même.

Le reportage ne reproduit pas intégralement les mots et incantations prononcés par Keifa. Ceux-ci seront présentés *in extenso* avec leur traduction interlinéaire dans un prochain essai, en cours de préparation en collaboration avec le prof. Samou Camara, où il sera également question d'une seconde démonstration, lorsque j'ai joué, moi aussi, le rôle de « porteuse » du kolonkalanin.

BAILLEUL, Charles et al.

2011-2014 Bamadaba : Dictionnaire électronique bambara-français, avec un index français-bambara. 2011-2014

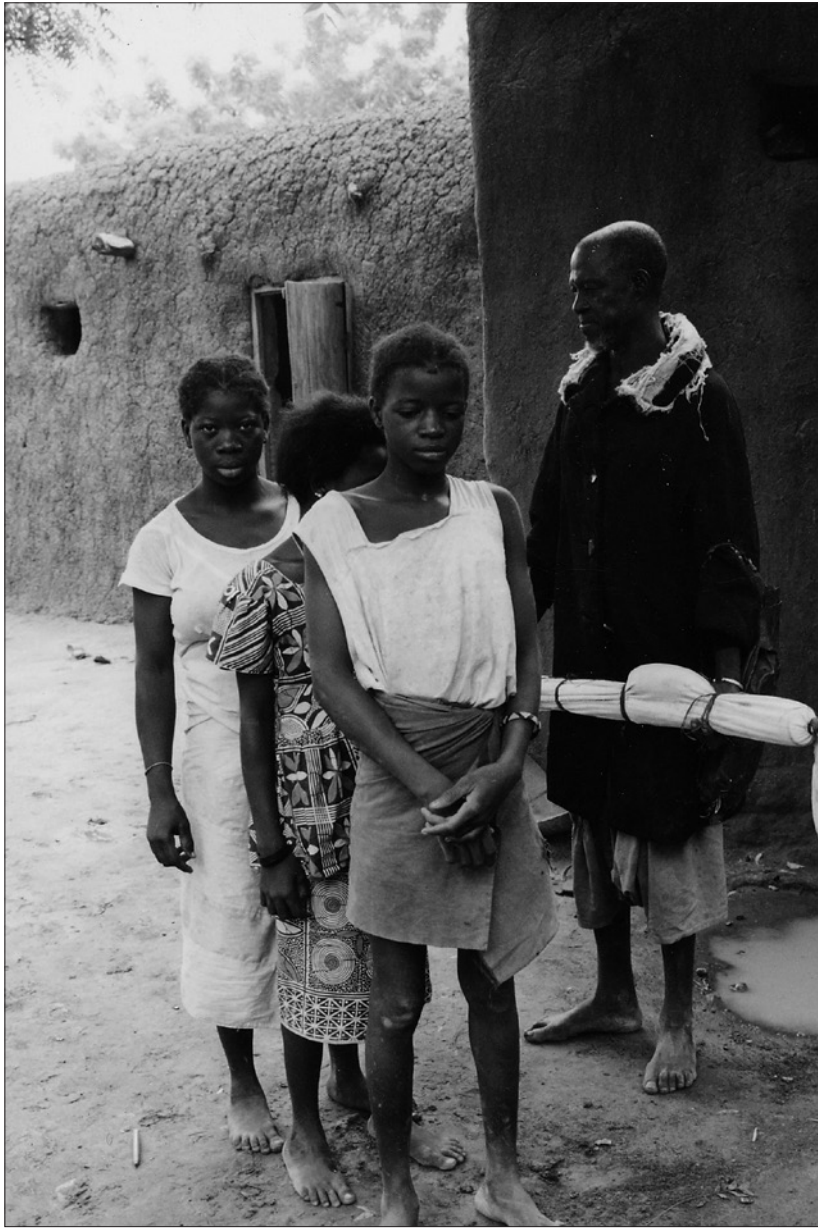
<http://cormand.huma-num.fr/bamadaba.html>, 31/10/2015

CIMINELLI, Maria Luisa

1998 Follia del sapere e saperi della follia. Itinerari etnopsichiatrici in Mali. Milan : F. Angeli.

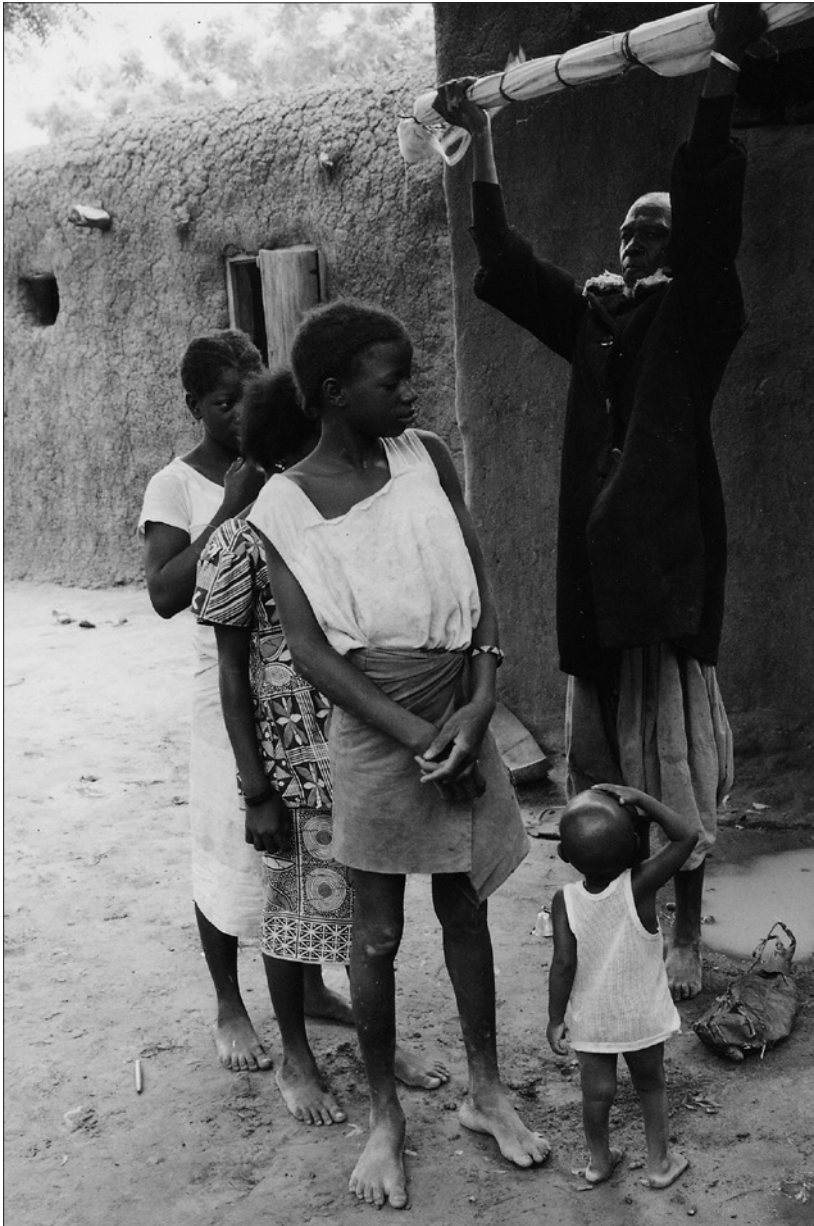
ZAHAN, Dominique

1960 Sociétés d'initiation bambara : Le Ndomo, le **Koré**. Paris : Mouton.



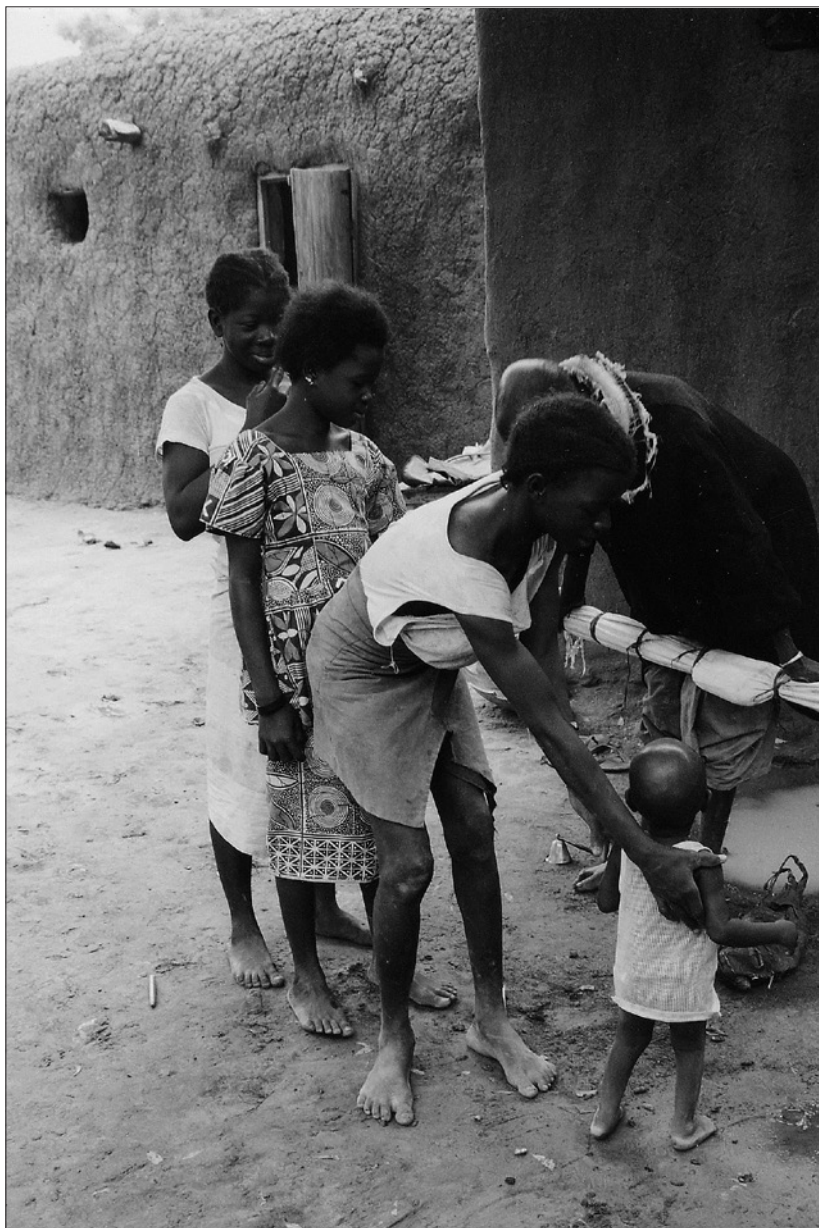
Nous sommes dans la concession du soma (initié) et donsoba (grand chasseur), Keifa Diarra, qui nous a proposé une démonstration sur le fonctionnement du kolonkalanin (kolon, mortier + kala, tige, manche + nin, diminutif) dans la recherche d'un objet perdu ou volé. Durant le rituel, c'est à nous, Assimi Bengaly et moi, qu'il fait référence en disant : « Ils ne veulent pas de mensonges » (voir infra).

Trois jeunes filles de la famille ont été choisies pour participer à la démonstration en qualité de « porteuses », une tâche réservée aux hommes quand il s'agit de poursuivre un coupable. Naturellement, elles ne connaissent pas l'endroit où l'objet à retrouver, une tabatière, a été précédemment caché.

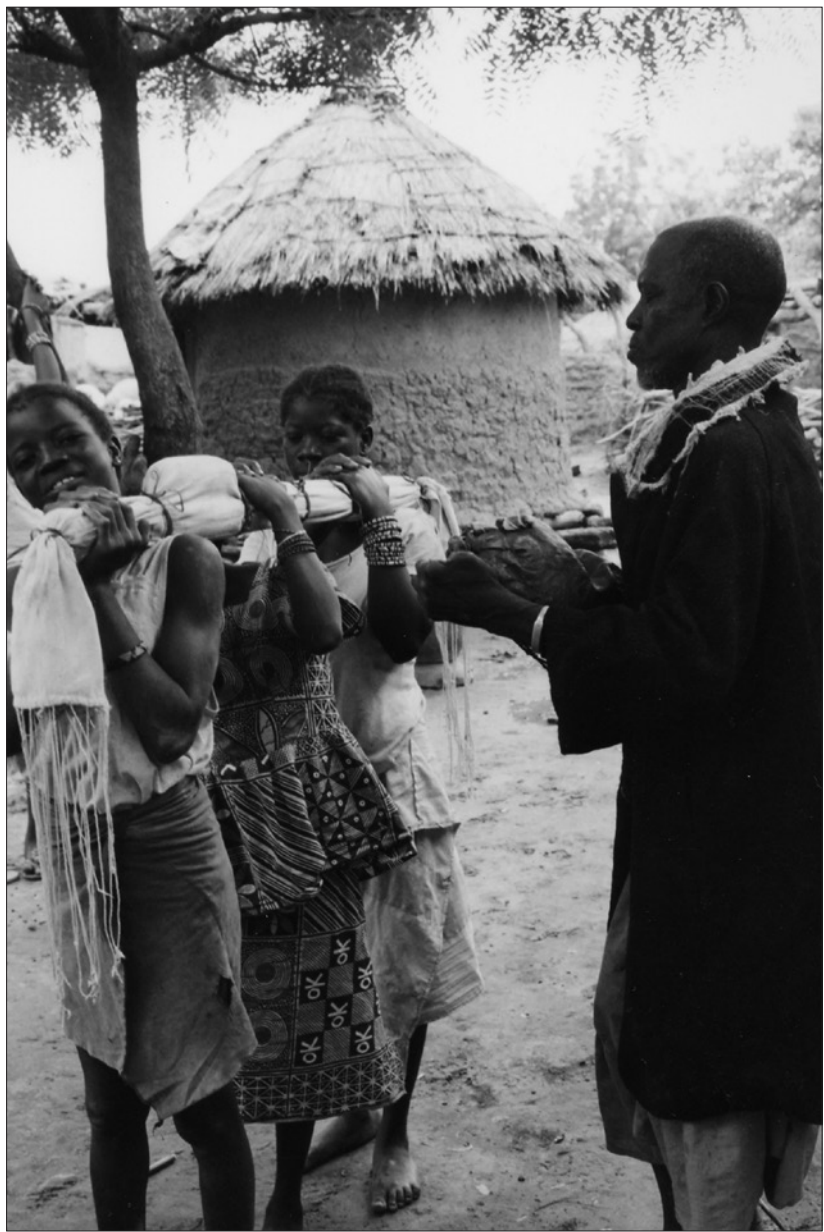


Pour la démonstration, Keifa Diarra ne s'habille pas de manière spéciale ; il est toutefois à souligner qu'il commence avec la tête découverte, tandis qu'une fois terminé la phase préliminaire du rituel il mettra son bonnet de chasseur (voir infra).

Au début du rituel, le soma soulève le kolonkalanin au-dessus de la tête, les bras tendus en « V ». Ici, comme dans le film *Yeelen*, le kolonkalanin est enveloppé d'un tissu blanc, fixé avec une cordelette. Dans d'autres contextes géographiques du Mali, suivant les circonstances des cérémonies, selon qu'il s'agisse de jour ou de nuit, il ne l'est pas.



Après avoir soulevé le kolonkalanin vers le ciel, Keifa s'incline vers la terre.
La première des filles éloigne un enfant qui, intrigué par le kolonkalanin, s'était approché trop près.



Après avoir installé le pilon magique sur l'épaule des filles, Keifa Diarra ouvre le sac contenant des objets inhérents au rituel, qu'il avait posé par terre à ses côtés.



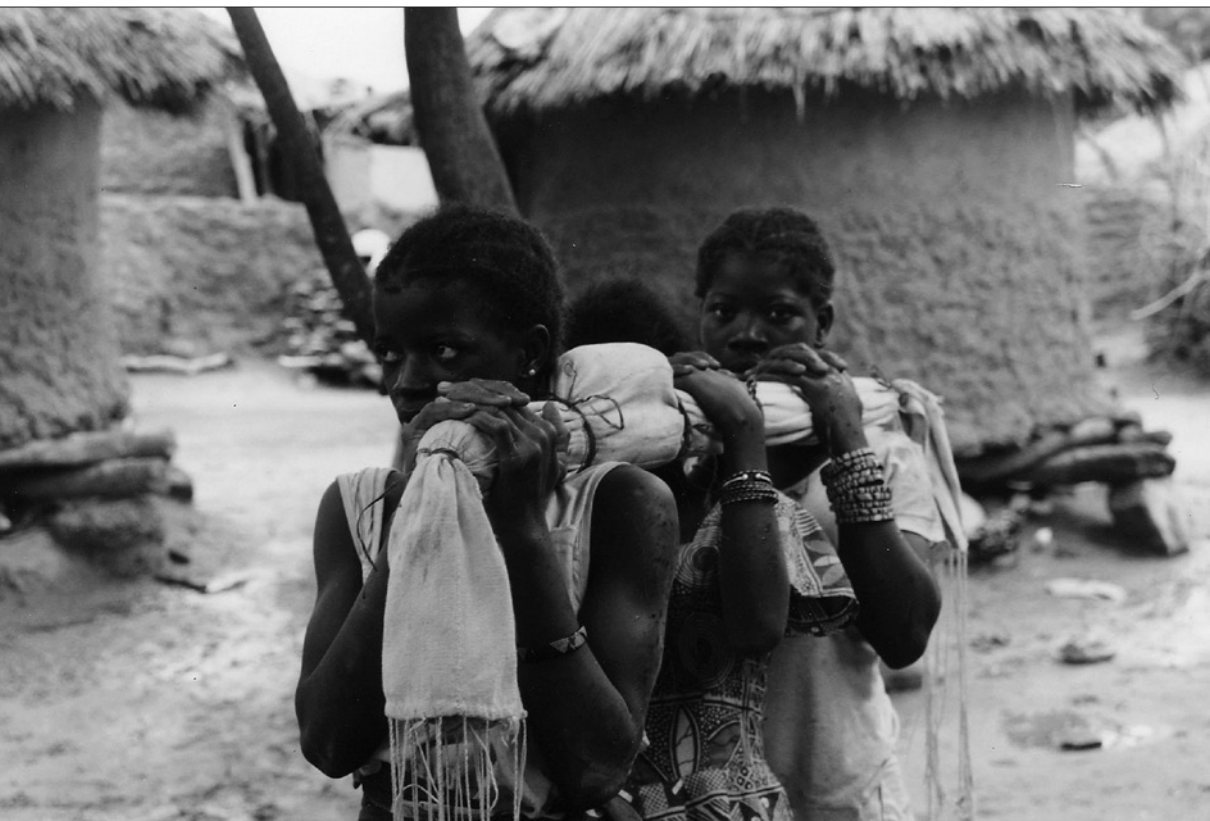
Le soma extrait du sac un flacon et asperge le kolonkalanin du liquide qu'il contient. Après ce bref rituel d'ouverture, Keifa Diarra commence à proférer des invocations adressées au pilon magique :

Il s'agit de toi, père pilon !
 Il s'agit de toi, voutour de la brousse divine !
 Que l'année se fasse,
 Le sunsun fera des fruits,
 Que l'année ne soit pas bonne,
 Le sunsun fera des fruits !

Le « voutour de la brousse divine » est Mawula Duga, le symbole de la société secrète **Korè** (Zahan 1960). De nos jours, de cette société d'initiation, il ne reste que l'une de ses « classes », celle des **Korédugaw** : les voutours du Korè. « La société secrète des Korédugaw, rite de sagesse du Mali » a été inscrite en 2011 dans la Liste de sauvegarde urgente du patrimoine immatériel, tenue par l'Unesco.

« Mawula », parfois transcrit « Mawla », est considéré comme un nom propre, donc il n'est pas traduit (Bailleul et al. 2011-2014). Le dr. Dielimakan Diabaté, avec lequel j'ai effectué la transcription et la traduction interlinéaire des mots de Keifa, a toutefois précisé qu'il s'agit d'un mot composé par Má, Maître, et wula, « brousse », à entendre comme opposée à la « culture », dans les deux sens du terme.

Keifa évoque aussi le sunsun (kaki de brousse : *Diospyros mespiliformis*), un arbre qui dans le cadre du Korè, où il est magnifié comme « l'arbre de la prolifération », « signifie la richesse de la sagesse suprême » (Zahan 1960: 148, *passim*).



Pendant que les tris fillettes commencent à se déplacer avec le pilon, Keifa Diarra poursuit ses invocations, rendant hommage au kolonkalanin :

Mille ans, mille mois,
Tu ne mentiras en aucune manière !
Que ce soit par derrière,
Tu vois tout,
Que ce soit par devant,
Tu vois tout !
La nuit ne se cache pas,
Ne te cache pas !
Le soleil ne se cache pas,
Ne te cache pas !
On peut se cacher des hommes,
On ne peut pas se cacher de Dieu !
La maison peut se fendre,
Toi tu ne te fends pas !
La natte peut se casser,
Tu ne te casses pas !



En premier plan, l'épouse de Keifa Diarra. Un couple heureux, que la sanankuya (« alliance à plaisanterie ») entre Diarra et Traoré contribue à souder.

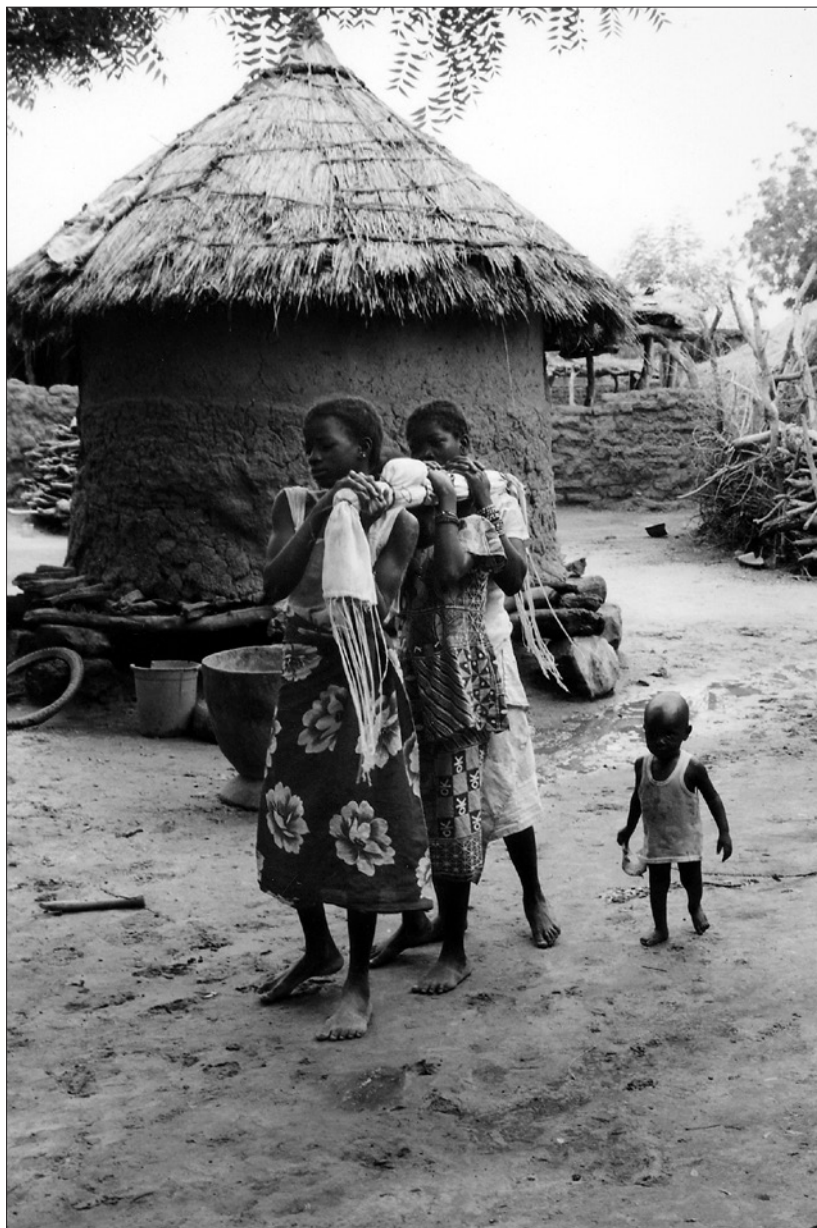
Après avoir terminé le rituel d'ouverture, Keifa a mis son bonnet à pointes, qui fait partie de la tenue traditionnelle (kònkoro) des chasseurs (donsow).

Pendant toute la quête de l'objet caché, le maître soma continue à faire sonner une clochette, qu'il a extraite de son sac. Le rôle de ce son rythmique n'est pas connu et fera l'objet, comme d'autres interrogatifs suscités tant par les images que par les mots, d'une prochaine publication.

Les invocations se poursuivent:

Toujours,
 Il s'agit de toi, Mari [Seigneur] le commandeur !
 Toi, Mari [Seigneur] qui juge !
 Toi, vautour Koloko,
 Mawula duga!

En s'adressant au kolonkalanin, Keifa emploie ici trois appellations ou épithètes remarquables : Mari, Koloko, Mawula Duga. Quelques indications ont été déjà données sur la signification de « Mawula duga » (voir supra). Le nom « Mari » est également prépondérant dans l'épopée chantée par les jeliw (griots). L'historien arabe Ibn Khaldoun (XIV^e siècle) le mentionne dans ses travaux, où le terme « Mari Jata » est attribué à Sunjata, premier empereur du Mali, avec la signification de « Chef du Sang royal ». Le mot « Koloko », avec ses variantes (Koliko, Koliké) est aussi présent dans les chants des donsow (chasseurs), et n'est jamais traduit.



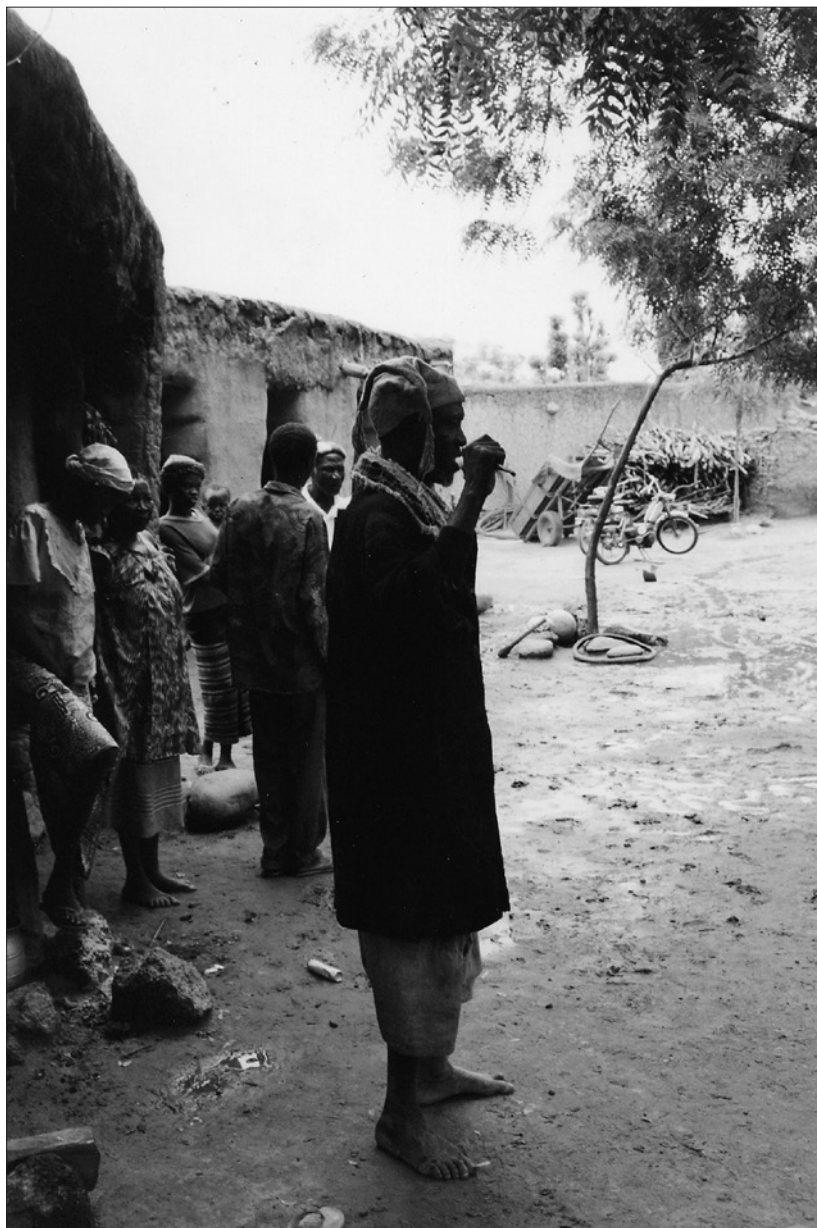
Après ces incantations, qui vont d'ailleurs ensuite rythmer le cours de la cérémonie, le maître soma enjoint des indications précises au Kolonkalanin :

Pousse-les et viens ! Pousse-les et viens !
Fais vite ! Ils ne veulent pas du mensonge !
Fais vite ! Fais vite !
Chauffe ! Chauffe donc !
Chauffe ! Chauffe !



Les filles se dirigent vers une case. Elles y rentrent, mais Keifa Diarra intercepte le pilon magique en lui commandant de les faire sortir:

Fais-les sortir !
Fais-les sortir !
Fais-les sortir !
Fais-les sortir !
Fais-les sortir !
Fais-les sortir !
Fais-les sortir !



Deux mobylettes, qui n'appartiennent à aucun membre de la famille, sont visibles à l'arrière-plan de l'image : il s'agit des cyclomoteurs avec lesquels nous, Assimi Bengaly et moi, sommes venus de Kolokani (Cercle de Koulikoro), en raison du fait que pendant la saison de pluies les mobylettes sont plus pratiques pour traverser les marais.

Keifa continue, toujours d'une manière rythmée:

Résout le cas de ma tabatière ! Retrouve-la !

La tabatière a disparu encore ! La tabatière a disparu encore ! La tabatière a disparu encore !

La tabatière ! La tabatière !

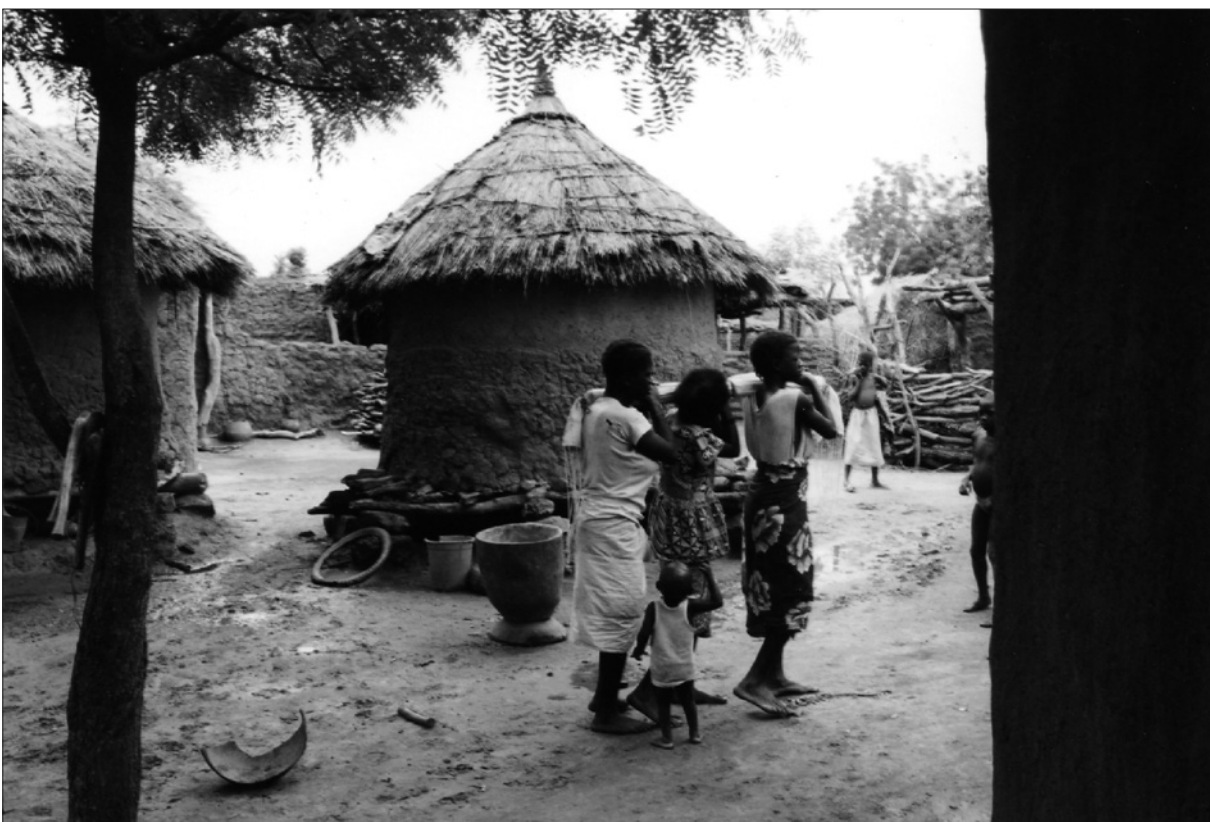
Il ne faut pas être incapable de résoudre l'affaire de ma tabatière !

Il ne faut pas être incapable de résoudre l'affaire de ma tabatière !

Il ne faut pas être incapable de résoudre l'affaire de ma tabatière !

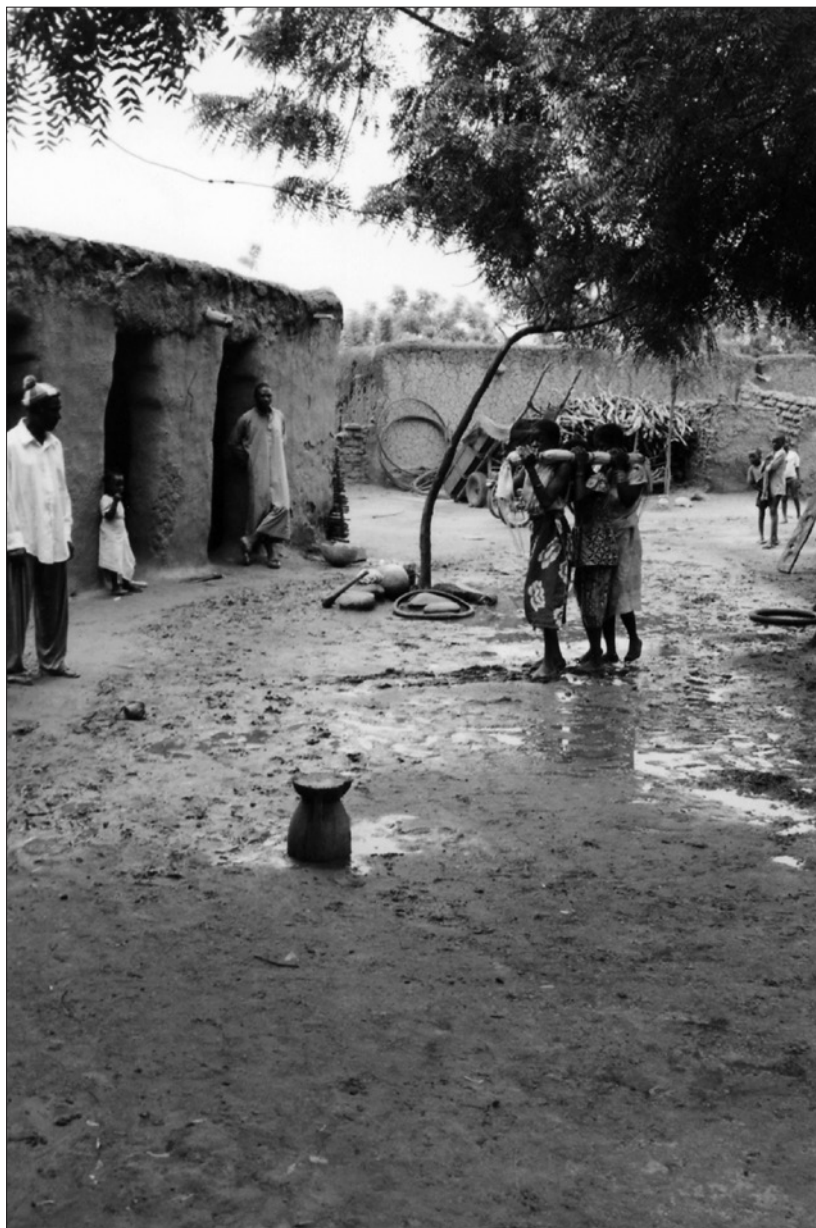
Si tu la vois, ma tabatière, Si tu la vois, projette-la sur moi !

Projette-la sur moi, si tu la vois ! Eh bien, si c'est ici donne-la-moi !



Le soma dirige le pilon :

Amène-les derrière !
Amène-les derrière !
Amène-les derrière !
Pousse-les !
Pousse-les !
Pousse-les !
Pousse-les !
Pousse !



Et encore :

Amène-les devant ! Viens !

Fais vite et viens ! Fais vite et viens ! Fais vite et viens ! Fais vite et viens ! Fais vite et viens !

Il s'agit de toi père pilon !

Les invocations de Keifa se poursuivent suivant une cadence bien soutenue pendant que les trois filles s'approchent d'un mortier renversé au centre de la concession. Ici, il convient de préciser que les mortiers sont souvent renversés pour servir de tabourets ; il s'agit aussi de ne pas permettre aux animaux domestiques de lécher le fond des mortiers qui ont servi à moudre des denrées alimentaires, notamment salées :

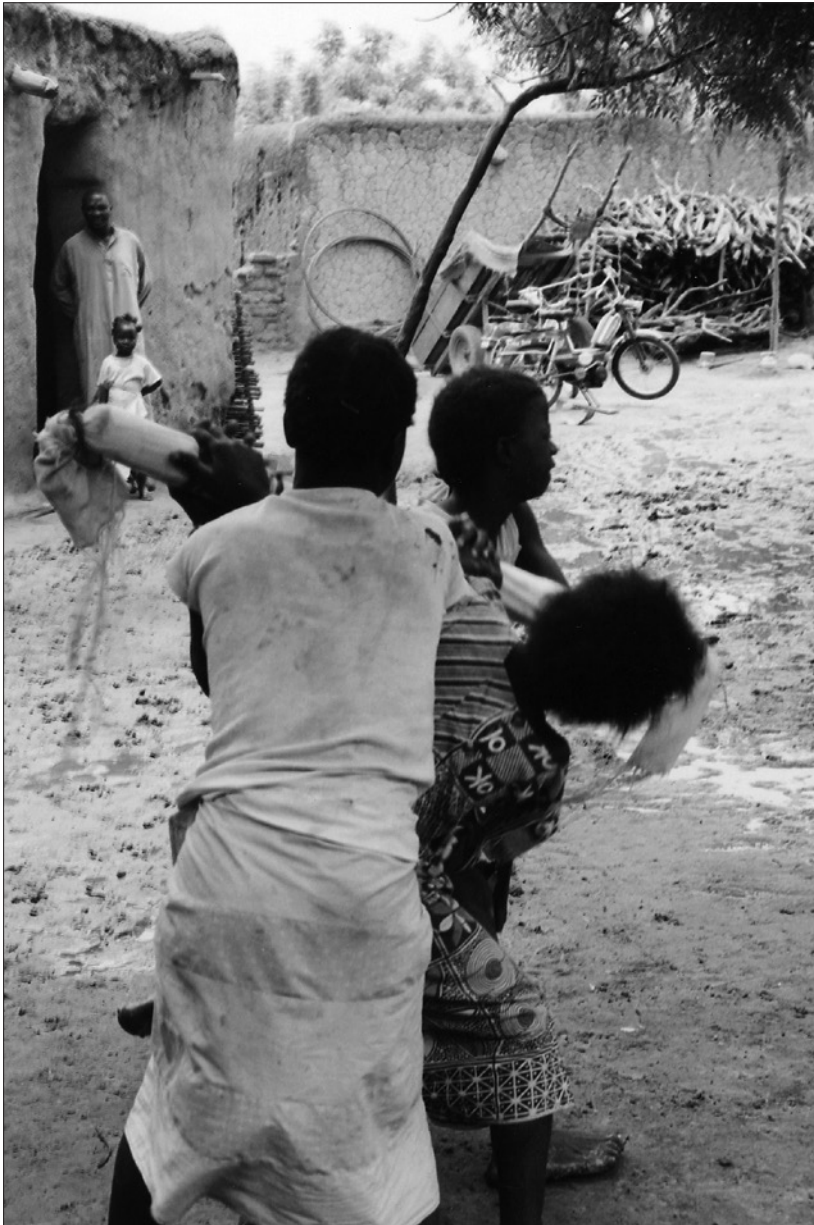
Il s'agit de toi, Mari [Seigneur] le commandeur ! Il s'agit de toi, Mari [Seigneur] qui juge !

Il s'agit de toi, Mari[Seigneur] qui assomme ! Il s'agit de toi, vautour intrépide ! etc. ...



Cette image et les deux qui suivent illustrent le moment tumultueux de la découverte de la tabatière, cachée sous le mortier.

Assimi Bengaly, le fils aîné de Keifa et d'autres membres de la concession suivent attentivement le rituel.



Le maître soma continue dans ses injonctions au pilon magique. Face à la turbulence des mouvements du kolonkalanin, ses invocations sont modulées en ces termes :

Rabaisse par devant !
Eh bien, rabaisse par devant !
Rabaisse par devant ! Rabaisse par devant !
Rabaisse-le !
Rabaisse par devant !



Le kolonkalanin retrouve finalement la tabatière du le maître soma sous le mortier. Keifa, qui n'a pas bougé de sa place pendant la quête, ordonne au kolonkalanin de l'attraper et de retourner chez lui :

Attrape-le et viens ! Attrape-le et viens !
Attrape-le et viens ! Attrape-le et viens !



Dès que les filles courbées sous le kolonkalanin arrivent près du soma, il lui commande de les redresser et de s'arrêter soudainement :

Tires-les à toi et amène-les ! Tires-les à toi et amène-les !
Tires-les à toi et amène-les ! Tires-les à toi et amène-les !
Fais vite ! Fais vite !
Fais vite ! Fais vite !
Redresse-les ! Redresse-les !
Arrête-les, tout à coup !

Ainsi se termine cette première phase de démonstration des pouvoirs du kolonkalanin du village de T. dans le Beledugu. Elle sera poursuivie par une seconde démonstration, toujours sous le patronage du soma et bolitigi Keifa Diarra, où il fut question pour moi de porter à mon tour le pilon magique. Ceci fera aussi l'objet de la prochaine publication.



Le matre soma Keifa Diarra en tenue de chausseur (donso). La photographie a été prise le jour avant la démonstration, à la demande de Keifa.

VIDEOS RECEIVED

DAMIANA KRYGGI

A film by Alejandro Fernández Mouján
2015, 96 mins.

Distribution: www.kinobureau.com

<https://vimeo.com/137463356>



In the dense Paraguayan jungle of 1896, a three year-old girl survives the massacre of her Aché family by white settlers.

The captive girl is

baptized Damiana and becomes an object of scientific interest. Her body is photographed and measured as part of racial studies conducted by Argentine and German anthropologists, and this continues even after her untimely death at the age of 14.

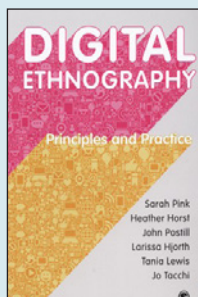
One hundred years later Damiana's people, the Aché, recover her remains, scattered between Argentina's La Plata Museum and a hospital in Berlin. They give her a traditional burial in their ancestral homeland.

For the Aché people of today, Damiana Krygyg has become the embodiment of hope and a symbol of unity in the struggle to recover their lands. Best Film at the Society for Visual Anthropology's 2015 Film and Media Festival.

Alejandro Fernández Mouján was born in 1952 in Buenos Aires, Argentina. He began his career in the film industry in 1980 in the department of photography. In 1989 he produced and directed his first documentary: Banderas de Humo. In 2001 he founded the company Océano Films along with director Pablo Reyero. Since 2006 he is Head of the Film Department at the Public Broadcaster, Channel 7. His filmography as director of over 10 feature films and series includes: Los resistentes (2010), Soy un alma sin ley en el mundo (2008), Pulqui un instante en la patria de la felicidad (2007), Espejo para cuando me pruebe el smoking (2005), Las Palmas, Chaco (2002) and Caminos del Chaco Nam Nqaicu Na Chaco (1998).



BOOKS RECEIVED



Sarah Pink, Heather Horst, John Postill, Larissa Hjorth, Tania Lewis, Jo Tacchi
DIGITAL ETHNOGRAPHY. PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICE
2015, Sage Publications

This sharp, innovative book champions the

rising significance of ethnographic research on the use of digital resources around the world. It contextualises digital and pre-digital ethnographic research and demonstrates how the methodological, practical and theoretical dimensions are increasingly intertwined.

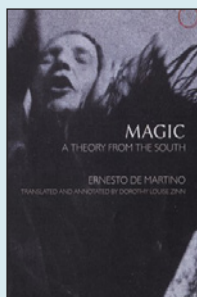
Digital ethnography is central to our understanding of the social world; it can shape methodology and methods, and provides the technological tools needed to research society.

The authoritative team of authors clearly set out how to research localities, objects and events as well as providing insights into exploring individuals' or communities' lived experiences, practices and relationships.

The book:

- 1) Defines a series of central concepts in this new branch of social and cultural research;
- 2) Challenges existing conceptual and analytical categories;
- 3) Showcases new and innovative methods;
- 4) Theorises the digital world in new ways;
- 5) Encourages us to rethink pre-digital practices, media and environments.

This is the ideal introduction for anyone intending to conduct ethnographic research in today's digital society.



Ernesto de Martino
MAGIC. A THEORY FROM THE SOUTH
2015, University of Chicago Press
Translated by Dorothy Louise Zinn

Though his work was little known outside Italian intellectual circles for most of the

twentieth century, anthropologist and historian of religions Ernesto de Martino is now recognized as one of the most original thinkers in the field.

This book is testament to de Martino's innovation and engagement with Hegelian historicism and phenomenology - a work of ethnographic theory way ahead of its time.

This new translation of *Sud e Magia*, his 1959 study of ceremonial magic and witchcraft in southern Italy, shows how De Martino is not interested in the question of whether magic is rational or irrational but rather in why it came to be perceived as a problem of knowledge in the first place.

Setting his exploration within his wider, pathbreaking theorization of ritual, as well as in the context of his politically sensitive analysis of the global south's historical encounters with Western science, he presents the development of magic and ritual in Enlightenment Naples as a paradigmatic example of the complex dynamics between dominant and subaltern cultures.

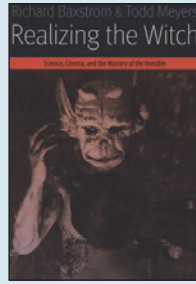
Far ahead of its time, *Magic* is still relevant as anthropologists continue to wrestle with modernity's relationship with magical thinking.



Aline Gubrium,
Krista Harper and
Marty Otanez
**PARTICIPATORY
VISUAL AND DIGITAL
RESEARCH IN ACTION**
Left Coast Press, 2015

This collection of
original articles, a
companion to the

authors' *Participatory Visual and Digital Methods*, illustrates how innovative visual and digital research techniques are being used in various field projects in health care, environmental policy, urban planning, education and youth development, and heritage management settings. These methodologies produce rich visual and narrative data guided by participant interests and priorities, key tools for collaborative work. The 16 chapters include digital storytelling, PhotoVoice, community-based filmmaking, participatory mapping and GIS, and participatory digital archival research; provide a portfolio of model research projects for researchers who wish to collaborate on community-based studies; will appeal to an audience across social science, heritage, health, education, and social service fields.



Richard Baxstrom and
Todd Meyers
**REALIZING THE
WITCH. SCIENCE,
CINEMA AND THE
MYSTERY OF INVISIBLE**
2015, Fordham
University Press

Benjamin Christensen's
Häxan (The Witch,

1922) stands as a singular film within the history of cinema. Deftly weaving contemporary scientific analysis and powerfully staged historical scenes of satanic initiation, confession under torture, possession, and persecution, *Häxan* creatively blends spectacle and argument to provoke a humanist re-evaluation of witchcraft in European history as well as the contemporary treatment of female "hysterics" and the mentally ill.

In *Realizing the Witch*, Baxstrom and Meyers show how *Häxan* opens a window onto wider debates in the 1920s regarding the relationship of film to scientific evidence, the evolving study of religion from historical and anthropological perspectives, and the complex relations between popular culture, artistic expression, and concepts in medicine and psychology. *Häxan* is a film that travels along the winding path of art and science rather than between the narrow division of "documentary" and "fiction." Baxstrom and Meyers reveal how Christensen's attempt to tame the irrationality of "the witch" risked validating the very "nonsense" that such an effort sought to master and dispel. *Häxan* is a notorious, genre-bending, excessive cinematic account of the witch in early modern Europe. *Realizing the Witch* not only illustrates the underrated importance of the film within the canons of classic cinema, it lays bare the relation of the invisible to that which we cannot prove but nevertheless "know" to be there.

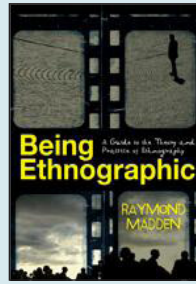


Jo Glanville (ed)
THE ART ISSUE
 2011, Sage Publications

Censorship is alive and well in the art world. Artistic expression is as vulnerable in democracies as it is in authoritarian regimes when it comes to sex,

religion and the limits of tolerance. From international shows in the Gulf and the Far East to leading museums and galleries in the US and London, contemporary artists fall foul of local laws and sensibilities. Index on Censorship examines some of the most recent cases, talks to celebrated sculptor Anish Kapoor about taking a political stand and travels from Iran to China to see how artists are subverting the constraints on creative freedom.

Index on Censorship is an award-winning magazine, devoted to protecting and promoting free expression. International in outlook, outspoken in comment, Index on Censorship reports on free expression violations around the world, publishes banned writing and shines a light on vital free expression issues through original, challenging and intelligent commentary and analysis, publishing some of the world's finest writers.



Raymond Madden
BEING ETHNOGRAPHIC: A GUIDE TO THE THEORY
 2010, Sage Publications

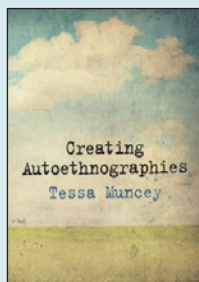
Full of practical 'how to' tips for applying theoretical methods - 'doing ethnography' -

this book also provides anecdotal evidence and advice for new and experienced researchers on how to engage with their own participation in the field - 'being ethnographic'. The book clearly sets out the important definitions, methods and applications of field research whilst reinforcing the infinite variability of the human subject

and addressing the challenges presented by ethnographers' own passions, intellectual interests, biases and ideologies. Classic and personal real-world case studies are used by the author to introduce new researchers to the reality of applying ethnographic theory and practice in the field. Topics include:

- Talking to People: negotiations, conversations & interviews
- Being with People: participation
- Looking at People: observations & images
- Description: writing 'down' field notes
- Analysis to Interpretation: writing 'out' data
- Interpretation to Story: writing 'up' ethnography.

Clear, engaging and original this book provides invaluable advice as well as practical tools and study aids for those engaged in ethnographic research.



Tessa Muncey
**CREATING
 AUTOETHNOGRAPHIES**
 2010, Sage Publications

Creating Autoethnographies is an introduction to autoethnography, a form of autobiographical

personal narrative that explores the writer's experience of life. The first ever practical text on this increasingly popular research method, it provides a background and considers some of the criticisms of the approach. It is suitable for all social science students, both at postgraduate and also upper level undergraduate stage. The book is structured to mirror the process of writing about experience, from establishing an idea through to the process of writing and the development of creative writing skills, and provides detailed worked examples of the whole process. The final two chapters are devoted to exploring two cases in which readers can see the principles discussed in action. There are also a wide range of case studies drawn from a wide a range of social science disciplines and exercises throughout the text. In the book, Tessa Muncey identifies a number of trends in social science research, such as the increasing focus on the individual and giving a voice to service users, that are resulting in an increase of interest in narrative research. Creating Autoethnographies is a timely contribution to the field.



Eric W. Rothenbuhler
 Mihai Coman (eds)
**MEDIA
 ANTHROPOLOGY**
 2005, Sage Publications

This is a state-of-the-art overview of anthropological approaches to the study of media.

An international team of contributors identify the major concepts, methods and bibliography involved and provide examples of current research. Together they introduce the issues, review the field and forge new conceptual syntheses. The book contains a 'Theory into Practice' section that shows how anthropological concepts and methods can improve the teaching and practice of media and journalism studies.

FILM REVIEW

FELICIA HUGHES-FREELAND

DEPARTMENT OF SOUTH EAST ASIA
SCHOOL OF ORIENTAL AND AFRICAN STUDIES (UK)

KALANDA: KNOWLEDGE OF THE BUSH

A film by Lorenzo Ferrarini (2014, 62 mins., Manchester University, U.K.).

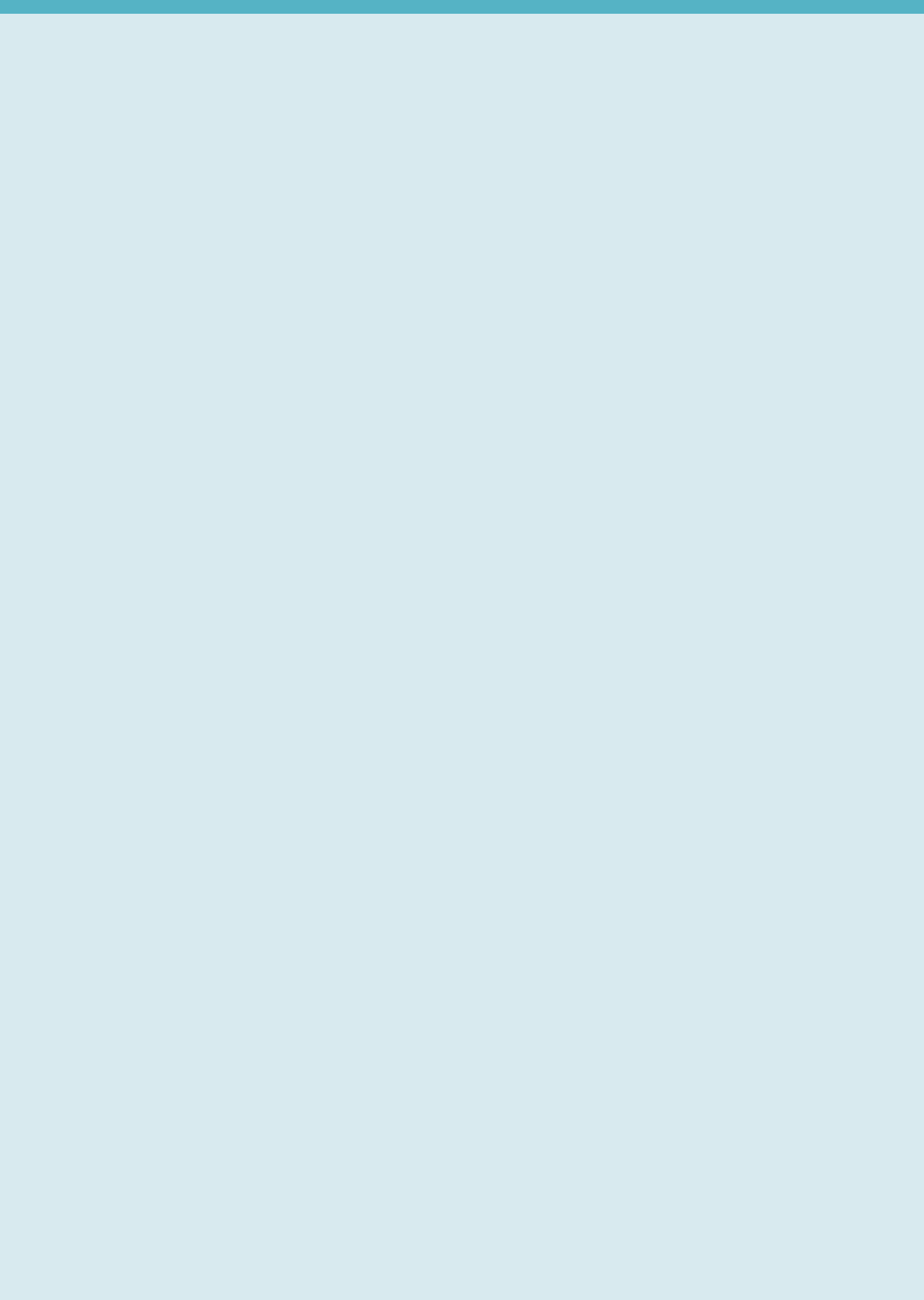
Website resource: www.lorenzoferrarini.com

KEYWORDS

Ferrarini; Ethnographic film; Music; Hunters; Burkina Faso; Review.

FELICIA HUGHES-FREELAND

is an independent scholar and Research Associate in the Department of South East Asia at SOAS. Trained in anthropology and documentary filmmaking, she researches performance, cinema and visual anthropology. Her books and films include *The Dancer and the Dance* (45 mins 1988); *Tayuban: Dancing the Spirit in Java* (30 mins, 1996); *Ritual, Performance, Media* (Routledge 1998) and *Embodied Communities: Dance Traditions and Change in Java* (Berghahn Books 2010). Her latest film is *My Name is Ratu Kidul* (2015) a collaborative project with Indonesian artists Seruni Bodjawati and Wara Anindyah (www.youtube.com/watch?v=pTa6YjSQ900).
Email: fhfreeland@gmail.com



It is night. A dead animal lies on the ground. A white light moves across it as its throat is cut. Hands leaf through photographs as the voice of the filmmaker speaks in Jula about how he thought he knew *donsoya* until he arrived in Burkina Faso and discovered that there were so many things that he didn't know. The subtitle is crucial: *Knowledge of the Bush*. Ferrarini's physical and vocal presence in the opening of the film also establishes a central visual and epistemological theme in the film's position, simultaneously in the present and retrospective. We look back from those photographs to the story of how he acquires 'skilled vision' (Grasseni 2004). Nocturnal hunting is an image of Ferrarini's own search for knowledge and skill in hunting, *donsoya*, and what this means to the *donso* in the Karankassa Sambla district. The film is part of the process of learning itself. It is a true research film.

It doesn't simply document research findings for an Anthropology PhD; it documents the processes through Ferrarini acquires knowledge and enters into the moral world of the hunter, the *donso*. So this is not a film about hunting as such. It is about how Ferrarini learns, with his embodied understanding in its fully phenomenological sense, to be a *donso* hunter, and how in turn he transmits it to us, the viewers. His teacher, Adama Traoré reiterates throughout the film that young men make fun of *donsoya* and think anyone can become a hunter, but it is not a joke. Becoming a hunter means to accept rules about rights and obligations that the hunter must respect for the rest of his life wherever he lives. This is the meaning of 'The Big Hunt' as it is called at the end of the film.

The film is structured like a book: it has an introduction, six chapters, and a conclusion. The introduction, 'Initiation' shows hunters and musicians going from the village to the bush, where the initiation takes place, including the crucial splitting of the kola nut previously mentioned by Ferrarini. The sequence combines film footage, freeze frames and photos, and an ambient sound track rather than the synch sound we might expect in an observational sequence - only at the end of this introduction do we see the musicians playing what we have been hearing as they watch the images play on the computer. This splits the temporal perspective, rather as the kola nut has been split, and answers the question posed by the hallucinatory disjunction of the earlier sound-image. After this the film settles into a more reassuring pattern of chapters, each one titled for a particular kind of knowledge and the person who transmits it.

'The Teacher' is master teacher is Adama Traoré, a famous hunter from a lineage of hunters (fig 1). He adopts Ferrarini as his pupil, 'like a son', and directs his training, constantly emphasising the dangers of hunting and the knowledge needed to protect oneself and kill an animal safely and successfully. Ferrarini sits at his feet, and films Adama imparting the things he has to know: 'Knowledge never ends' he says, teaching the importance of plants for protective medicines; and again later, 'When you learn something, you know it'. Adama drives the film and



FIGURE 1 – ADAMA TRAORE
TEACHING.

FIGURE 2 – ADAMA TRAORE
VIEWED AS TEACHER.

constitutes its narrator. After his own chapter, he always appears at the end of each other chapter to instruct his pupil what he has to learn next, and who he must go to see to achieve this. And so we move to the next chapters and teachers, as Ferrari-ni learns about the shotgun, how to hunt, hunting medicines, amulets (from writing or from plants), and the role of the musician.

These chapters provide ethnographic data framed by their transmission to a committed apprentice. This is situated knowledge. Ferrarini learns to respond to the situations in which he finds himself. His navigation and participation around and within specific social spaces can be understood as 'a more intimate kind of intervention' (MacDougall 2006: 237). The film exemplifies MacDougall's concept of the corporeal image, in so far as it derives from an interactive process that produces emergent knowledge, going beyond a language-based understanding of the world to scholarship that is more analytical and more personally engaged which expresses embodied sensibilities as well as mind (2006:123). Thus the bodies of the filmmaker and his teachers and the objects which they handle are central to both to the experiences and how they are represented.

The camera angle throughout lessons with the elders is low, as from a child's point of view (fig 2). This position of respect frames and delimits what is said. MacDougall argues that film messages are ambiguous, carry an excess of information and yet are also incomplete; the answers they provide are found in 'a performative approach rather than an expository or exegetical one' (2006: 259). No 'information' in *Kalanda* is just factual. It is all implicated in the process of becoming a hunter, and entering a particular world view.

Structurally, the theme is the transmission of knowledge - in this case, of hunting. Visually the focus is on the object being studied and the tactility of the process: how a gun, a plant, a piece of leather, a shot animal is handled. The first four chapters of the film employ different visual devices and techniques that create shifting perspectives and a sense of ambiguity - hunters disappears and reappear across the landscape; the

FIGURE 3 - HUNTERS AT NIGHT.





FIGURE 4 - PREPARING MEDICINE.



FIGURE 5 - WASHING WITH THE MEDICINE.

dusky sky at the call to evening prayer is speeded-up; the visualisation of the hunt at night is especially strange, as the camera pans across a line of suspended white shapes that we later discover were the hunters wearing head-torches (fig 3).

There are also close-up shots of Ferrarini's own body: his feet and legs brushing through plants as he walks behind Las-seni Traoré in his daytime hunting lesson; his hands preparing

the medicine with the plants that Lacole Traoré has taught him to identify (fig 4); his shoulders and arms as he washes himself with the medicine he has made (fig 5).

Although the splitting of the kola nut marks initiation as a *donso*, this unusual self-washing sequence marks a change in the visual style of the film. The visual dislocations and questions of the first chapters are replaced by a more simple observational style of filming, as if to show that the first phase of learning is over, and the filmmaker' vision is sufficiently skilled to see with enough certainty for him to know what the action is that can be followed by the camera. And so we can observe closely how and why amulets are made and worn, and how and why a skilled musician's shirt is hung with dozens of amulet, mirrors, and strings of cowrie shells (fig 6).

The reason for the centrality of music in chapter 1 is explained fully in chapter 6, 'The Musician'. Here Diakalia Traoré explains hunters 'marry' musicians with meat they have gained from the hunt - Diakalia's father 'married' Ferrarini's teacher, Adama. Musicians sing praises of the hunters and needs powerful protection because they are vulnerable to attacks motivat-



FIGURE 6 - THE MUSICIAN
DIAGALIA TRAORE.

ed by envy and disappointment. And intriguingly, hunters lay their guns across the musicians' stringed *n'goni* instruments, 'our shotgun', says Diakalia, adding that these benefit from being spattered by sacrificial blood.

And in this film about men and a threatened form of masculinity, there is a further equivalence. The gun. The *n'goni*. And the camera. This triad of objects lies at the heart of an vividly original film about embodied ideas concerning relationship, knowledge, time, and the inextricable link between them. It goes to the heart of the anthropological project, and why visual anthropology has to be at that heart.

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