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A Letter from the Editor

HAKON CASPERSEN

Volume 5, Issues 1-2

Humans and the Environment / Walking Threads

The environment, or 'nature', in anthropology today, is no longer seen as something detached and separate from human life. Instead, what is emphasised is its relational nature, and the inseparability of life with the surrounding environments in which life is lived. It is for this reason that the chosen wording of this volume's themed title, namely 'the environment', might, in retrospect, be criticised for being 'old fashioned'. While we all live in and perceive different environments, the title of this issue emphasises the existence of a wider commonality and brings forth the realisation that we all also share and live in the same world.

The individual contributions to this double-issue of *The Unfamiliar* all explore the different and intricate relationships that exist between people and environments. The environment is here understood in its broadest sense, to also include social, economic, cultural, and political aspects, all co-constitutive elements influencing how one comes to perceive and relate to the surrounding world.

In continuation with the theme of Humans and the Environment, the final part of this volume is dedicated to a special section on the ongoing collaborative initiative Walking Threads. While interdisciplinary collaborations and workshops abound, the reflections and results of these interactions are often intangible and site-specific, they tend to remain in the sphere of discussion and experience. The different reflections, essays and creative interventions represented by these pieces offer a glimpse into an ongoing conversation that originated in the context of one such collaboration, between performance and anthropology, and after an unplanned communal walk with a thread in Seaton Park, Aberdeen.

Taking the form of different reflections on and responses to this walk, together with an exploration of some of the practical and theoretical implications, the different texts explore, and illustrate, how the walkers tentatively have come to understand this experience. As a result, the contributions exemplify the value of experimentation and play, while also offering us reflections on the walk's potential methodological implications and relevance for anthropological research – and how we come to know and connect with our surroundings in the world.

We have learned a lot from our different contributors when putting together this issue, and we hope you will find this issue of *The Unfamiliar* an equally interesting and enjoyable read.

Hakon



01

Humans and the Environment

ESSAYS

ESSAYS

A Windswept Archipelago:
Stories of Perception, Time and Landscape in the Orkney Islands

SARA BOWMAN FRIEND



Photo © Nicola Smith
Posted on the 'Orkney Seas' Facebook page January 14th 2015
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A Windswept Archipelago: Stories of Perception, Time and Landscape in the Orkney Islands

SARA BOWMAN FRIEND

In this article I examine three different people's perceptions of wind turbines in the Orkney Islands, an archipelago of approximately 20,000 residents off the north coast of the Scottish mainland. The turbines are a recent introduction, and provide an crucial opening into how the various residents perceive both the landscape and this landscape's position in time. Combining a phenomenological approach to landscape with a symbolic analysis, I demonstrate the myriad temporal perceptions and experiences that people in Orkney have of a singular place and explore how the turbines can be seen as symbols that are constituted and reconstituted throughout time. Although one singular location, the variety in experiences allows for a plurality of this place, which itself is intimately tied to a plurality of both time and meaning. These pluralities, which I frequently refer to as different 'Orkney imaginations,' allude to a range of values associated with the turbines, themselves intimately tied into differing notions of the relationship between nature and sociality.

“Life is always a dense fabric of concurrent tensions, and as each of them is a measurement of time, the measurements themselves do not always coincide...”

Langer 1953: 113 in Ingold 2011: 197

Introduction

The Orkney imagination is haunted by time... these words scrolled across a film clip of strong waves crashing against the Yesnaby sea cliffs and rugged coastline, projected onto a screen in the small dark theatre of the Skara Brae Visitors Centre. It was my first day in Orkney and I had decided to take a tour bus to get from Stromness (where I had arrived by ferry that morning) to Kirkwall (where my hostel was).¹ Skara Brae, a 5,000-year-old settlement, is one of many Neolithic sites strewn across this archipelago and the words were that of George Mackay Brown, arguably Orkney's most famous author. However, while undoubtedly an underlying presence in overall daily life, I was not initially motivated to come to this northerly Scottish archipelago because of its past, Neolithic or otherwise. Rather, I had been motivated to go there because of the current and various renewable energy related activities. From the outset, I was interested in the connection between human's perception of the environment and an engagement with 'renewable,' and therefore, more 'environmentally friendly' energy sources. What motivates the perception of renewable energy devices as a favourable addition to any landscape?

The presence of renewables² is not a new phenomenon for these islands. In the 1980s Orkney was chosen as the test site for three different commercial scale wind turbines. Many local residents mention an even longer 'energy history,' often referencing the use of water driven mills and small wind turbines made with cloth 'sails' (M₁-11.12.13, A₁-11.01.14). Today the presence of renewables can be considered in two categories, wind and marine. In this paper I would like to focus on wind turbines in particular and how the various residents of Orkney experience their presence. Currently over 400³ individually, community and commercially owned turbines dot the various areas of islands of this archipelago. These devices have added financial benefits to those invested in them, as well as adding physically to the pre-existing features of the surrounding landscape. A myriad of elements layer, enfold and jostle up against each other. The rolling low-lying hills are scattered with Neolithic monuments and settlements, most active archaeological digs. Pictish fortresses, Runic graffiti, raided tombs and current place names tell of the Viking invaders that followed. In Kirkwall, St Magnus's Cathedral, named after a saint whose story is told in Orkney's own Orkneyinga Saga, stands next to the Earl and Bishops Palaces, all built in the middle of second millennium. World War I and II

¹ Kirkwall and Stromness are the two biggest towns on the mainland, aptly called Mainland.

² In this paper I will use the term 'renewables' to mean renewable energy and renewable energy devices.

³ 'Over 400' is the number of turbines one small-scale turbine installer told exist on Orkney. However, in his Masters thesis on constraints to the electricity grid in Orkney, Ebenezer Ashie (2013) accounted for 652 cumulative approved wind turbine applications in 2013.

battlements dot the coasts, while both British and German war ships lay mostly hidden to all but those who seek them out. The causeways connecting Mainland and the south isles were also built at this time to prevent the German submarines from entering the protected waters of Scapa Flow. Other additions from the World Wars are less identifiable, such as the network of paved roads connecting the towns and villages of Mainland, the Haston Harbour and Industrial Estate. There are also homes; towns; hundreds of farms; an oil terminal; thirteen RSBP nature reserves; a number of protected Sites of Scientific Interest (SSIs); and a World Heritage Site. All of the features of the landscape listed, including the new addition of renewable technologies, are closely linked with both what draws people to these islands and what enables continued residence.

Following the George Mackay Brown quote at the beginning of this paper, I argue that the experience of the turbines and their place in the landscape can be linked to differences in overall understandings of Orkney's place in time. Following the arguments of a number of anthropologists concerning the notion of 'landscape' (Bender 1993, 2002; Flint and Morphy 2000; Ingold 2011; Olwig 2009; Tilly 1994) I build on two propositions. Firstly, that we are materially and conceptually as much a part of our environments as they are a part of us, both continuously being shaped and reshaped by and with each other. Secondly, that our experience and understanding of our worlds (i.e. environments, including others around us) is resoundingly personal. With these positions in mind, it is understandable that "the plurality of place is always in the making, and how it is used and perceived depends on the contours of gender, age, status, ethnicity, and so on, and upon the moment," (Bender 2002: 107). Reflecting and expanding on the Langar quote included before the introduction, I would add that as "human life is a process that involves the passage of time" (Ingold 2011: 189) the plurality of time is also always in the making. In Orkney the plurality of place, as linked to time, becomes increasingly apparent in the variety of very personal opinions and experiences of the landscape, which are further highlighted by the recent, rapid and extensive introduction of wind turbines. What follows is an analysis of three encounters I had with different Orkney residents, each depicting what could be referred to as different temporally situated 'Orkney imaginations.'

Built to Last

Wind battered up against the thin walls of the building where I was interviewing Roger. We had met through the Orkney Renewable Energy Forum (OREF), of which he was a board member. Roger grew up and has continued to live in Orkney. Moreover, Roger is Orcadian; he has 'generations in the kirk yard,' as many would put it. In the early 1980's Roger began his apprenticeship with a local company of trade engineering. It was at this time that two companies, Howden and the Wind Energy Group, were setting up trials for three different wind turbine devices over at Burgar Hill, in northwest Mainland. The company he was apprenticing for was involved in putting the Howden machine together and commissioning it. "I found it intriguing," Roger told me, "And the fact that Orkney was up in the centre of it all, just similar to the wave and tidal every *noo* [now]." Roger is currently the head of Orkney's main supplier for construction materials, as well as a large range of services. The company supplies ready-mix concrete, blocks, precast, quarrying, haulage hire, truck and plant services, plant/container/accommodation sales and hire, waste management, and skip hire; on top of this they are also registered scrap metal merchants. Or, as Roger would describe the company, "we're here to try and give a good service to the community."

Roger's perspective points to the intermingling of his own history with Orkney's 'energy history.' These histories can be seen as providing the base for how and why Roger thinks of the development and generation of renewables in Orkney as a productive and generally positive venture. However, his understanding of and position on this matter is not just influenced by the personal details of his life I have described above. For Roger, the presence of the turbines connects to deeper issues of what it is to be Orcadian.

When I see the bigger [wind turbine] machines... they look... really substantial, really powerful – look like they do a good job.

...

tha smaller machines to me look like... a desperate attempt to do something, they're sorta... flying around very quickly... at high speed and I don't particularly like them.

Quality. There's not the quality about them. And I think the local people like a bit of quality. That's what the culture is about... Ya *ken* [know]? ... When you go to Skara Brae... it's been here for over 5,000 years. So. I think... historically, locally, here things have been built to last... So I like the ones that are built to last. (R₁-28.9.14)

While Roger does not explicitly mention work, he does link the ‘local people,’ both past and present, with the production of strong and durable structures. This durability, I would like to highlight, is expressed as a testament to the ‘quality’ of construction and work in the building process. The link between durability and quality of work is further emphasized by the test of time Roger’s example – the 5,000-year-old Skara Brae – has withstood.

Roger’s temporal focus is on duration and durability, on structures of the past, but also on the continuation of current structures’ presence. His is an experience and perception that is not just of form, but also of process; constantly created and elaborated on by his movements through the enduring structures built by past residents of this same archipelago. From these movements, permanence has come to be perceived as a virtue. This permanence is one that allows for change and additions to the landscape, as long as they comply with the standards of work and construction of the structures that have come before them. It is through such durability that, for Roger, the landscape is as alive with the past as it is with the present.

There is another element to Roger’s comments, one that situates the legitimacy of his statements within the rights and wishes of a specific group of people, to which he belongs. Roger does not just speak for himself on this matter, but for the ‘local people’ in general: “the local people like a bit of quality. That’s what the culture is about.” What ‘the local people like’ is fundamental to Roger’s particular experience of the landscape. When Roger sees and thinks of the large turbines, he doesn’t just see the physical machines or just think about his own past experiences working with building materials and at the Burgar Hill testing site. He sees and thinks of them as representing a long history of ‘quality,’ of which he is a part. In this sense, the turbines are a symbol, but not just of one concept or notion. Nor do they stand-alone. For Roger, the turbines intertwine with the structures of the landscape to represent the continuation of elements of the past in the presence. These elements are fundamental to both his and a larger Orcadian understanding and experience of the landscape as within the continuation and progression of time.

Anthony Cohen’s (1986) ethnography about the constitution of local identity in the Shetland island of Whalsay is quite pertinent here and is helpful to elucidate Roger’s own association with a particular group of local people. One of Cohen’s major arguments is that this distinctiveness, and the associated boundaries of belonging and difference, can be located in symbolic representations. It is the joint recognition of interpretations of symbols that lead to an understanding of cohesion, primarily established in opposition to an external difference. However, such symbolic representations do not necessarily mean the exact same thing to people within the same group. Hence they are re-constituted and elaborated on throughout time, allowing for and understanding development, change and variety that exists beneath the surface of ‘sameness’ often attributed to ‘locally distinct’ categories of people. The following example may seem to contradict this last point as it presents juxtaposition between local support for the turbines and incomers rejection of them. However, it does serve as an example of how different perceptions of the landscape and its temporality can be in Orkney. Therefore, it is important to bear in mind that these examples are just a few of the many characters and opinions in Orkney, a point I will return to throughout this paper.

Industrialization of the Landscape

In their own ways both Ingold (2011) and Bender (1993, 2002), along with Flint and Morphy (2000) and Tilly (1994), critically situate their approach to landscape against an historical understanding of landscape in Western and colonial discourses and practices. All argue that these discourses and practices perpetuate a nature/culture dichotomy, in which landscape, as nature, is often seen as a timeless backdrop of human activity. The above example aligns with their arguments for landscapes and environments to be considered as both processual and deeply intertwined with human activity and consciousness. Together these arguments have formed what is known as the phenomenological approach to landscape. Roger’s statements exemplify the link to the intimate and historical knowledge each person builds up through his or her lived experiences, which Bender (2002) and Ingold (2011) most notably make. However, the following example challenges the encompassing ubiquity of this view. In doing so, this example begs the questions: If the phenomenological approach to landscape is reaction to the understanding and representation of nature and culture as dichotomous, can lived experiences of this dichotomy as ‘true’ factor into a phenomenological analysis?

One day at yarn spinning class I was chatting with an English woman, Julia. Now in her sixties, she had lived in Orkney for almost thirty years. While chatting I decided to ask Julia why she moved up. She

replied by telling me of how crowded it was down there, in the south of England, how it took forever to get anywhere and how you always had to drive, often through traffic. She had wanted to move away, not only from the number of people, but also from what she felt was the stifling nature of miles and miles of cement roads, the twisting network of row houses and shops, big-business; the speed and 'drive'. In short, Julia wanted to 'get away from it all,' as she put it. I was interested to see what Julia's thoughts were on the presence of renewables. When I found her alone fixing one of the wheels during the tea and coffee break I struck up our conversation again by telling her a bit about my research.

"Well, this is sure the right place for that," she replied.

"What are your thoughts on it all? ...I mean, renewables here..." I asked.

"They're terrible, the [wind] turbines, that is," Julia responded.

"Oh really? Why so?" I probed a bit further.

"They're a blight on the landscape. This is exactly the kind of thing I moved up here to get away from.

This sort of... industrialization of the landscape."

(J₃-16.3.14)

Unlike Roger, who sees the wind turbines as adding to and reinforcing what he considers to be part of the Orcadian 'culture,' Julia has a much harsher reaction, one that relates inversely to the reason why she moved up to Orkney in the first place. Her expectation and understating of what Orkney *is*, what the landscape *should be*, can be located in this reason, one that is fundamentally about the negativity of population density. In Julia's experience people make it harder to get places, slow things down, cover things (land) up. When in a dense concentration, people dominate. For many others like her, Orkney was and still is the place to 'get away from it all.' While often an unrecognized undercurrent, in this 'Orkney imagination' the landscape is often considered 'unspoilt,' by the effects of human domination.

The issues of time, human presence, and one's surrounding environment are deeply intertwined in Julia's statements. Although there are clear connections between movement and time, I propose that these comments say more for how Orkney is perceived *within* time than how time is experience in Orkney. Julia's expectations of Orkney set it up as outside of time, a place that should be preserved the way it is, or at least the way it is in her imagination. Such an understanding of Orkney resists the introduction of wind turbines, as they disturb the preservation of the place as it was imagined to be. On the other hand, Roger sees Orkney as he has throughout his life, a place that changes and develops with the passage of time. Orkney is even one with an 'energy history,' justifying and situating the current presence of wind turbines as congruent with an ever expanding past. Julia and Roger's understanding and experience of the turbines as part of the landscape represent two contrasting 'Orkney Imaginations.'

Much like Andrew Whitehouse describes in his (2009) article on the different ways farmers and RSPB workers in the Scottish island of Islay see and experience the same piece of land, Roger and Julia could be said to be seeing and experiencing the same place, but in ways unique to their experience and understanding. Whitehouse's analysis takes a primarily symbolic approach, informed by the works of Anthony Cohen (1996), discussed above. Whitehouse argues that the Loch Gruinart RSBP reserve, the piece of land in question, is a symbol through which both the contestation of difference is located and the differences between the farmers and RSPB employees is constructed. The same could be said for Roger, Julia,⁴ and the wind turbines. For Roger, his current experience and perception of the turbines has been constituted over the course of his life in Orkney, and in conjunction with his own work with similar machines and knowledge of the landscape. For Julia, her experience of the turbines exists in opposition to a life lived elsewhere and an expectation of

⁴ However, it would not be appropriate to label it as a contestation in the case of Roger and Julia, or even in the case of contestations between the opinions on the wind turbines and their place within the landscape of Orkney. For one, there are a variety of opinions, which cannot be dichotomously labeled as 'positive' or 'negative,' as I will discuss later on in this section. Secondly, there is not an overt contestation within the community concerning this issue, or at least there was not during the time of my fieldwork. Finally, for the purpose of the argument, I am placing Roger and Julia's statements against each other. The two, anonymised for their privacy, made no reference of the other or of any other similar opposing viewpoint in their comments.

how Orkney would be an escape from that life. There is not only a difference in how each understands and sees the turbines, but how each understanding and perspective has come to be.

There are major differences in how each example of Roger and Julia's way of seeing does or does not serve to complement the understanding of nature and human sociality as deeply intertwined, which the phenomenological approach to landscape promotes. Despite originating from a different set of experiences, I argue that the phenomenological approach is equally equipped to address the foundations of Julia's more dichotomous understanding of nature and culture. Unlike Roger's her lived experience and knowledge of Orkney is limited to 30 years she has lived there. What's more, this understanding is informed by her expectations of the place, set up in opposition to her lived experience in the south. Considered in such a way, it is the full extent of Julia's experiences of life over time that have influenced and constituted her current understanding of this place just as much as Roger's have. As Bender notes, "The point is simply that it is we, through our embodied understanding, our being-in-the-world, who create the categories and the interpretations," (2002: 104); however, I would change the end of this quote to say, "the categories of *our* interpretations." For Julia, this 'embodied understanding,' this 'being-in-the-world,' is one that has been lived in different places. Therefore, it is informed by those experiences, as was and is her expectation for life and landscape in Orkney.

However, the oppositional representation of Roger and Julia's differences as all coming down to a difference between being local and being an incomer is far from the reality I experienced during my fieldwork. Furthermore, each person's understanding and experience of the turbines cannot be merely fitted into 'negative' and 'positive.' During my time in Orkney those I encountered included incomers who had moved up to Orkney specifically to work in the renewables industry and saw the turbines as a productive part of a transition from fossil fuels; Orcadian farmers who saw the turbines as part of a working landscape; Orcadian business men who saw the turbines as business opportunities; incomers who also saw the turbines as a part of a necessary transition; local and incomer nature enthusiasts who saw the turbines as an obstruction to the 'unspoilt' landscape; as well as Orcadians, primarily a small number of artists, who saw the turbines as unnatural, out of place, and even a blight on the landscape. While markedly present in ethnographies of Scotland, the local/incomer dichotomy is often represented as complex and interactive. Tamara Kohn (2002) considers islander identity in Scotland as along a continuum, regulated by the presence of a specific behaviour and the engagement in particular activities. Sociologists Ross Bond and Michael Rosie (2006) also consider 'Scottishness' in general along a certain continuum, however they complicate this continuum by gauging it's position in association to a number of other criteria. Other anthropologists such as Fiona Mackenzie (2006) and Kimberly Masson (2007) oppose the continuum perspective and instead focus respectively on how identity is employed and how subtleties in identity are negotiated. In his ethnography of Scottish Identity in Orkney, Michael Lange (2007) dissects a variety of notions on identity, heritage and belonging, to reveal the very complex and shifting network of ideas that lies beneath a simplistic surface of stereotypes and generalisations, all of which his informants are very aware of.⁵ In line with regional ethnographies that serve to demonstrate the overwhelming presence and complexity of identity and local/incomer distinctions in Scotland (Cohen 1986; Lange 2007; Nadel Klein 2009) the examples of Roger and Julia must be situated in a whole host of 'Orkney Imaginations' and their related temporalities.

Therefore, Roger and Julia's differences should not be considered as rooted in a distinction between being local and being an incomer. Instead we should focus on the very personal experiences and understandings that Roger and Julia have of both the wind turbines and their place within the landscape. Such an approach allows for the existence of variety and of the plurality of time and place. The very personal experiences that influence Roger and Julia's temporal associations of the landscape can also be seen as constituting the particular value, or lack of value, each places on the wind turbines. Such constitution of value can be further illustrated by the articulation of the potential value of the turbines as a future source of income, as is illustrated by the following example.

It's About the Future, Ya Ken?

I was in one of the northern isles, interviewing a woman, Sam, about the islanders decision to buy a commu-

⁵ Also see Jane Nadel-Klein (2009), Joseph Webster (2012), Fiona Gill (2005), John Gray (2000), Peter Mewett (1982), and, of course, Anthony Cohen (1987). For the purpose of this paper, I limit my list of ethnographies on identity and incomer/local distinctions to the area of Scotland. However, this is an issue that is present in places over the globe, to which a much larger list of ethnographies would attest.

nity wind turbine. In our interview Sam told me a particularly interesting story that had to do with changes in one local Orcadian⁶ woman's views about the structure.

There was a woman who was against the turbine at the start and during the vote. But after it was installed she started to see it differently. She saw how it was benefiting the community and would continue to. Afterwards she wanted to take down her dyke so that she could see it turning. She isn't around now, but her children and grandchildren are. That's part of it, ya ken, it's about succession (S-27.2.14).

I heard this woman's story at least twice more during my time in Orkney. This woman's final understanding of the turbine and potential actions seemed to typify what many saw turbines to be: an investment in the future. Sam also elaborated on this point of the story, saying,

The locals have a different mind-set. They want to know the island and community has a future, not just for the next year, or even for the next ten, but also for the next 100 years... Locals have lived through development, they have seen that is what happens and that is what makes your life better (S-27.2.14).

In a way these comments echo Roger's. While his comments focused on structural durability, both comments imply a sense of continuation or stability.⁷ Interestingly enough, the value placed on these qualities of permanence does not contradict the occurrence of development and change. Furthermore, for Sam, the story of 'the woman who changed her mind' is as much about present tensions between various understandings of the landscape – in which *the measurements don't coincide*⁸ – as it is about the future orientation of 'local' residents. However, as the head of that island's Development Trust and a long time resident, Sam was particularly attuned to the future viability of life there, something the presence of the turbine enabled. Therefore, while temporal connections can be drawn between Sam and Roger's comments, each retain their personal specificity.

The change in the woman's perception and experience are also representative of how the plurality of place can depend on time, referencing the Bender passage quoted at the end of the introduction to this paper. In this quote Bender (2002) discusses the various configurations of personhood, identity and the moment. Once again we see how individual experience and perception of our surroundings is constituted through our lived interactions with the world. As life is a process lived through time, so too are our experiences lived throughout time, inherently fraught with change. On the one hand this process may be the further development of a perception as valid or true, the durability of ideas. On the other hand, as the woman in Sam's story also shows, this process can also be transformation or alteration; the imbrications of meaning exist both in the same time, as it varies person to person, and within each person throughout time. Cohen's (1986, 1987) understanding of the continuous interpretation and elaboration of symbols is also helpful to consider here, primarily in conjunction with the phenomenological approach to landscape. In this approach perception and experience influence each other, not in one particular order, but interchangeably and even at times simultaneously. The woman in Sam's story goes from objecting to the turbine to seeing its worth and then to wanting to change her view so she can *see* it more often. The woman has since died, as Sam notes in her story, so I was unable to speak with her directly about her change in opinion. However, as Sam tells it, the change in this woman's understanding about the value of turbines played a crucial role in her perception of them. In this case, experience does not seem to be the direct motivating factor prompting her change in opinion. Instead the woman's change in understanding and perception elicited a wish to change how much the turbine was present in her life and therefore to change her everyday experience of it. Experience and perception interact interchangeably, simultaneously influencing each other. Indeed, Sam is also appropriating the story of this woman into her own symbol or category for interpreting and understanding place of the community turbine within the landscape of the isle.

⁶ I say 'local' and 'Orcadian' to further emphasis that she was from that particular island. She was both local to Orkney, but, even more so, to the island in question.

⁷ An interesting recent parallel, which I do not have the time or space to fully discuss here, is Katharine Dow's (2013) chapter "Building a stable environment in Scotland" in the edited volume *Parenting in Global Perspective*. Here Dow considers pressing issues of global environmental degradation and climate change affect current and potential mothers in Scotland. Parallels are drawn between what is a stable and supportive environment, fiscally and physically, for a child and for the human population.

⁸ A reference to the quote by Ingold included at the very beginning of this paper.

Conclusion

The examples of Roger, Julia and Sam serve to demonstrate the range of temporal perceptions and experiences the residents of Orkney have of the same place. The particular development of wind turbines draws out this range, providing a recent change in the landscape through which I positioned my discussions with each resident. As demonstrated, perception and experience do not merely exist, but are developed over time through each person's individual engagement with the world, enabling an understanding of experience that is at once deeply personal and open to change. Here I have combined the phenomenological approach to landscape with a symbolic analysis in order to understand how symbols are constituted and reconstituted throughout time. The temporalities I have explored suggest an array of values associated with both objects and ideas, each encapsulated in the turbines as material and symbolic forms and in the 'Orkney imaginations' they inhabit. In Orkney, the plurality of place intimately tied into a plurality of both time and meaning, bringing in to play different notions of nature, sociality, past, present and future.

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ESSAYS

Walking Through Amazonia:
An Embodied Perspective on “Natural” Environment

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Walking Through Amazonia: An Embodied Perspective on “Natural” Environment

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Based on the ethnographic analysis of a Brazilian quilombo's¹ subsistence practices in Eastern Amazonia, the article shows how walking represents an embodied, non-logocentric tool for knowing, experiencing and producing a “socio-natural” environment. First, I will focus on walking as a “technique of the body” (Mauss 1935) that the anthropologist needs to re-apprehend according to a local habitus (Bourdieu 1977) in order to understand how the forest space is perceived. From this perspective, movement in space assumes a methodological value. Secondly, by interweaving the related concepts of space and place, I will reveal how two different complementary modalities of experiencing the territory emerged during my fieldwork. One of them was somewhat more ephemeral and subjective whilst the second one was longer lasting and shared. On the one hand, by moving in space in accordance with his/her original trajectories, each individual knew a particular forest, which s/he also ultimately altered through specific “territorializing acts”. On the other hand, the ephemeral signs impressed on vegetation by the individual intersected a shared mapping of “natural” places which remained relatively steady in time.

“Learning To Make The Body ‘Light’”

During my fieldwork, I saw small groups of people leaving the village of Frechal a little after sunrise. They came back home just at midday or later in the afternoon. I became used to hearing that they were going “into the *mato*” to carry out their agricultural activities. Villagers used the word *mato* to refer to a familiar forest type habitually frequented and utilized. In order to better understand its context of utilization, it is necessary to clarify a few other terms. *Mata* was “an area where it was never deforested,” characterized by high-trunk trees, and rarely penetrated. Instead, the term *roça* indicated either a physical place – a cultivated field obtained by deforestation and consequent burning of an area – and, more in general, the whole swidden practices of the community. Spaces dedicated to cultivation and those occupied by spontaneous flora were perceived as an inseparable reality so much so that to let others know you were going into the *roça*, they simply said: “I’m going into the *mato*.”

My first walks through the *mato*, following a group related to my host family, occurred during the wet season when the soil was impregnated with water and the vegetation really exuberant. My embarrassing unskillfulness in coping with the obstacles of the path elicited ill-concealed laughs that signaled the substantial lack of “corporeal” competence in carrying out an activity normally taken for granted (Turner 2000: 55). In order to conduct my fieldwork, I immediately realized that I had to render my own manner of walking efficacious when venturing into the *mato*.

No-one offered a precise explanation as to how I had to adapt; I only knew that I needed to “learn to make my body ‘light’ (*leve*).” I did with the passing of time learn that a successful outcome depended on a series of factors such as the rhythm and gait of my stride, the inclination of my body and the pressure applied by a specific part of my foot as I stepped. Csordas’s (1999) concept of *reflectivity* – that is complementary to the *reflexivity* of the constructionist approach – clearly expresses a progressive awareness related to this range of competences incorporated within a perceptual enskillment process. As suggested by Tuck-Po, “I had to learn a whole new vocabulary of the body,” learning to walk in a single file following the rhythm of the group, putting my feet in appropriate points, “keeping my arms close to avoid brushing against piercing thorns” and “falling lightly rather than hard” (2008: 28). Conducting an “ethnography on foot” (Ingold and Vergunst 2008) means paying attention to an “under scrutinized” dimension that is “the bodily experience of the fieldworker as research process and source of knowledge” (Okely 2007: 65–66).

During this apprenticeship, I was learning not only how to move in the forest space, but also to *see*

¹In Brazil, a *quilombo* is a rural community of descendants of African slaves who receives a formal recognition. Frechal obtained it after a long juridical process deeply analyzed by Malighetti (2004). This process also ended with the creation of the Reserva Extrativista Quilombo do Frechal (Maranhão state). An extractive reserve is an environmental protection area destined to be used by “traditional populations” according to their own customs for subsistence purposes. I conducted my fieldwork in this area from March to December 2006.

the “natural” environment through a different gaze. Initially I was unable even to distinguish a cultivated *roça* from spontaneous vegetation growth. I had “to train observation” in order to recognize how nature was socialized. In other words, it was a matter of seeing nature from the practical perspective of my interlocutors that was shaped by their own way of being practically “involved” in the environment in which they dwelt. As Ingold puts it, “apprehending the world is not a matter of construction but of engagement, not of building but of dwelling, not of making a view *of* the world, but of taking up a view *in* it” (Ingold 2000: 42).

Situating Movement in the Forest Space

The centrality of walking in the everyday life of the community introduces the importance of *movement* as a specific way of perceiving the environment and producing space (Munn 1996, Low 2003). Pandya underlines that “movement alone defines and constructs space”, while “space does not define and construct movement” (1990: 793). According to Tuan, space, understood as undetermined and abstract, is simply “given by the ability to move” (1977: 12). Quite in line with this perspective, De Certeau thinks about space as something “composed of intersections of mobile elements. It is in a sense actuated by the ensemble of movements deployed within it” (1984: 117). He conceives space as a *practised place*; qualified as such by the original trajectories of those who run its paths. Whilst place is given and also immutable, space instead allows for the expression of the social actors’ agency. The act of *walking* becomes, according to De Certeau (1984: 96), the creative gesture that produces the real weft of its urban fabric, actuating a slight form of resistance against the obligations imposed by the structure of a place. Could we consider such approaches on movement and space consistent also in a natural milieu, where the signs of human sociality are visible just after a process of *education of attention* (Ingold 2000: 37)?

If we consider the strategic and creative character of the walking act, as proposed by De Certeau, a connection is possible. The *mato* was at the same time more constrictive and more flexible than an urban fabric. People used stable and regular communitarian paths for their movement in the “working space”, but they were also used to open extemporaneous passages in the vegetation, creating personal routes and modifying the environment. By walking in the *mato* with different people, I realized that everyone knew a different forest, defined by a very personal system of references. This space, perceived and lived by walking, was very much an *embodied* space, defined by “the intersection and interpenetration of body, space, and culture” (Low 2003: 10). In particular, my interlocutors ascribed a great significance to what I call the capacity of “situating movement”. What I mean by this expression, inspired by Ingold², is the capability of each person to individuate his/her own position within space correctly while penetrating the profundity of the forest; a skill of utmost importance to a community dependent on a swidden agro-forestry system. The choice of utilizing an expression such as “situating movement”, to refer to the methods my interlocutors took recourse to during the establishment of their own position in the forest, presupposes a twofold justification. The intention is to draw attention to the insignificance of orientation, meant as a reference to systems with objective coordinates, based on the cardinal points or “official” geographic localizations. As a matter of fact, *mato* space was not conceived via a hypothetical, external and dominant static point of observation, but rather through the viewpoint “of the walker”; that is via a perpetually mutable perspective, which the subject develops during the course of his or her movements. As Ingold observes:

People’s knowledge of the environment undergoes continuous formation in the very course of their moving about in it. [...] That process consists in the engagement of the mobile actor-perceiver with his or her environment. As I have already suggested, we know *as we go*, not *before we go* (2000: 230).

A fundamental element used to situate movement was the alternation between *roça* and *capoeira*. While a *roça* was an area under cultivation, a *capoeira* was “where a *roça* used to be.” The system was basically one of rotation; a *roça* took on the denomination of *capoeira* the very moment its harvesting was terminated. Similarly, a “ripe” *capoeira* - that is, a sufficiently well developed *mato* - could be deforested to convert it once more into a *roça*. Although land was considered an inalienable common property, the community acknowledged the single individual as having an exclusive “right of belonging” – which was not transferable through inheritance - on one or more *roças* at the same time, as well as on the successive *capoeiras*. Moreover, the same *areas of familiar belonging* existing in the village were mirrored within the *mato*. As the houses of close relatives were also built within close proximity of one another in the inhabited area, in a sim-

² Ingold argued that “It is [...] the ability to situate one’s current position [within a historical context of journeys previously made [...] that distinguishes the countryman from the stranger” (Ingold 2000: 219).



ilar manner *roça* and *capoeiras* were located following the same principle of proximity. Relationships among relatives within a *mato* were spatialized in such a way as to render the natural element the place of choice for the expression of domestic sociality. Therefore, everyone was more familiar with different parts of the *mato* and had a personal mapping of the “owners” of *roças* and *capoeiras*. Such a mapping became a resource “to situate movement” when a person was walking in the forest. In other words, the correct attribution of a *roça* or a *capoeira* to a legitimate “owner” was equivalent to knowing exactly “where one was”.

However, this kind of individual mapping changed every year because each *roça* was utilized for just one year. The first sign of rotational reorganization of forest space was the annual so-called “choice of the *mato*” to be deforested. During the course of their livelihood, people were inclined to rotationally use their *capoeiras* again and again. In cases such as these, walking to select the *mato* bore more of the configuration of constantly “returning” rather than that of really “going away.” It was a sort of “circumambulatory movement” (Tuck-Po 2008: 33), which enabled the individual to constantly learn how to find – or to regain – his or her own reference net within a weave of possible routes.

When vegetation had not grown back sufficiently or it was the first deforestation of a young community member, the search for new areas became instead indispensable. Due to the long resting periods of a *capoeira* – from a minimum of 3-4 years to a maximum of 10-12 years – the youngest individuals may perhaps not know anything about the previous users of a specific area. By walking within the *mato* accompanied by their most expert family members, they learned to attribute the *capoeiras* to their legitimate owners. In this manner, they gradually constructed their own mapping of the territory, which was essential for orientation but also for the granting of “respect” towards other community members. In order to deforest someone else’s *capoeira*, it was in fact compulsory “to ask for permission.” The *capoeira* could acquire a new ‘owner’ only when the previous one consented to the request.

In any case, the individual always had the obligation to signal any appropriation of the chosen forest zone. Despite the general organization of the agricultural work being of a collective³ type, the most creative phases were, nevertheless, a prerogative of the individual and were dependent on his or her “strategic” choices. These actually took on the shape of *territorializing acts*, meant as activities that transform a generic forest space into territory; that is, into a space under communitarian belonging, even though its use was exploited by a single person. The *baliza*⁴ left as a sign of *mato* demarcation, the *picada*⁵ delimiting the perimeter of the intended *roça*, the preparation of the small *virador*,⁶ and the final burning of the deforested area, were all fundamental passages designating the assertion of the individual within community life. At the same time, these ephemeral signs – impressed upon the *mato* – transformed themselves into fundamental references as a temporary definition of the individual’s own positioning within the forest space. Therefore, movement within the *mato* taught the individual how to “read” a natural environment through a process of visual enskillment.

Mapping Practices: A Network Of “Natural Places”

Walking in the *mato*, reconstructing the usual paths of forever-changing individuals, understanding the elements concerned with organizing territorial interpretation, and knowing the reference points on which their capacity to orientate was based; all of these in their totality have also implied reflection on the meaning that has been assumed by the concept of *place* within a forest space. According to Tuan, place is “a concretion of value” and constitutes a concrete and familiar reference (1977: 12). De Certeau, instead, defines place as “an instantaneous configuration of positions” that also implies “an indication of stability” (1984: 117). If “objective” mapping does not reflect the closely-woven net of references involved in organizing the effective fruition of spaces, what is acknowledged as “place” in a natural and alleged *continuum* which is perceived as being undifferentiated by an extraneous observer?

In Frechal places were, first of all, *names* – known only to community members – that identified those forest areas, where the usual subsistence activities were performed. Actually, the ephemeral rotation between *roça* and *capoeira* was integrated in an established division of territory into “natural places”. There were

³ It was based on a codified system of manpower exchange, known as *troca de dia* (day exchange).

⁴ A thin shrub used as signaling stone.

⁵ A narrow path in the vegetation.

⁶ Small, deforested *mato* portion.

mainly three types of utilized denominations. Some places alluded to physical and morphological characteristics of the area or to the presence of certain animals or plants, all of which thus became typifying as well as distinctive elements. The so-called *Velame* area, for instance, owed its name to the presence of a specific type of plant, similar to tobacco. Other places, instead, stirred up memories of times previous to the creation of the reserve in 1992 when the local nester used the land for other purposes. For instance, two names, *Cafezal e Pimenta*, were given to places where coffee and chilli plantations used to be. Finally, places existed with a relation to anecdotes about the community's past events, such as the case of the subsidence known as *Baixa de Mauricio*. This place, for example, took its name from the person who had the honor of deforesting that area for the very first time.

If movement in the forest space was characterized by a pronounced, individual specificity, it is equally true that it was always imbedded within a steady network of shared places, where collective community memory had stabilized. In a context such as this, *to map practices* means to reconstruct a geography of the territory starting from the foundational character of the practices. In other words, places were "established" as a result of a community's pragmatic necessities and remembrances. As Ingold observes:

The native inhabitant may be unable to specify his location in space, in terms of any independent system of coordinates, and yet will still insist with good cause that he knows where he is. This is [...] because *places do not have locations but histories*" (2000: 219, emphasis added).

Conclusions

The article shows the impossibility of ever capturing in a single glance the forest in its entirety and as an objectively given space. It was never perceived by community members as a landscape, observed from a neutral, external point. Rather, the experience of this "socio-natural" environment was the product of the intersection between progressively changing trajectories of single individuals and socially-shared "natural places". It was the contingent result of an "ambulatory knowing" – or "knowledgeable ambulating" – (Ingold 2000: 230). Thus territorial mapping "from within", assembled as a result of my walking with the direct users of the forest, invites reflection also upon the potentialities of movement as an important corporeal methodological tool in ethnographic research (Tassan 2013).

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ESSAYS

Esther's life story within a dryland biography:
Assessing system viability in Central Pokot, Kenya

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Esther's life story within a dryland biography: Assessing system viability in Central Pokot, Kenya

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People living in drylands are highly dependent on available ecosystem services. Whilst ranking as amongst the earliest settled, geographically largest, biologically least productive and demographically fastest growing biomes on earth (MEA 2005), land-users have long since developed a wide repertoire of skills to engage with highly variable, unpredictable and extreme environmental conditions (Huber-Sannwald et al. 2012). However, local residents continue to remain marginalised – not only by distance, topography, cultural and linguistic barriers or access to resources, but also institutionally, in that they are often not party to the policy decisions affecting their livelihoods (Whitfield and Reed 2012). Compounding this multidimensional marginalisation is the tendency among external stakeholders to simplify the relationship between land-users and environmental health, where for example blame for land degradation is often apportioned to the local users (Forsyth 2003).

Scholars now consider drylands as coupled social-ecological systems in which human activities and environmental dynamics are deeply entwined (Whitfield et al. 2011). Yet, despite these considerations, the rationales and aspirations of resident populations still remain widely neglected in research. In response to this shortcoming, scholars increasingly recognise the value of research approaches that allow “people to explore problems in their own words” (Reynolds 2007, 850; cf. Stringer and Reed 2007). A serious deliberation of these multiple voices can potentially inform the rather detached concepts that are used to describe system dynamics. As a move in this direction, our suggestion is to establish what we call ‘dryland biographies’. These biographies are a result of the individual and institutionalised practices or voices that shape and are shaped by changing ecological, cultural, political and economic realities.¹ One promising but rarely used entry point to examine such biographies is through life stories, since it is in the narration of the individual life that people make “the implicit explicit, the hidden seen, the unformed formed, and the confusing clear” (Atkinson 1998: 7).

This article represents our first attempt in exploring life stories by bringing the subtle details of one such story into dialogue with a broader scholarly concept, namely that of ‘system viability’ (Mistry et al. 2010; Berardi et al. 2013). The concept provides a generalised framework through which one can evaluate a system’s ability to survive, stay healthy, and prosper.

The Life Story as a Research Method

There are two classical approaches to life stories, one foregrounding ‘life’ and the other ‘story’ (Peacock and Holland 1993, 369-370). In the life-focused approach, these narratives are considered as a window to decipher some objective facts. Whilst in the story-focused approach, they are taken as a tool to grasp the subjective experiences of the narrator. When considered as extreme polar opposites, the former takes the story as a mirror of reality, whereas the latter takes the narration as reality (Peacock and Holland 1993, 371). Of course, both approaches matter because life stories, as communicative acts, are not merely representational forms, but they are employed by people to employ themselves in space and time (Moore 2008, 215). What makes the telling of life stories attractive to people all over the world is that they allow them to condense complex situations into more easily understandable chains of events. What knits a story together, then, are causal explanations that reflect how such events are or should be connected, as well as, how ulterior events are envisaged to unfold (González 2006, 839-841). In summary, through life stories people give spatial and temporal meanings to events and relationships, whilst simultaneously outlining normative frameworks for doing.

The life story presented in this article was gathered in January 2015 during a preliminary field study in Central Pokot, north-western Kenya. This pre-study serves as a basis for the establishment of a bilateral postdoctoral project on land degradation. A long-term acquaintanceship with Esther² (the narrator) was re-es-

¹ We adopted the term ‘biography’ from the field of border studies (Megoran 2012).

² Name changed to maintain our informant’s anonymity.



PHOTO 1: Charcoal producers during a focus group discussion
© C. Bergmann, Jan. 2015



PHOTO 2: Charcoal on sale along the Pokot-Turkana Highway
© P. Roden, Jan. 2015

established by Roden during a focus group discussion with members of a charcoal producing community (see Photo 1). It was then that we decided to conduct a second more intimate meeting with six participants, who had proven to be extremely knowledgeable on the region, and who had led eventful lives. The meeting was held in the Swahili and Pokot languages, the first of which is spoken by Roden. Three research assistants provided on the fly Pokot translations into English whilst also taking notes. The life stories were audio-recorded and transcribed with the participation of our assistants.

The Pokot Drylands

Central Pokot is chosen as an area that typifies much of the livelihood possibilities and constraints faced by communities in rural African dryland contexts. Locals engage in a wide diversity of land-use practices, ranging from mixed arable farming in the moister hills and in the hill marginal zone where rivers are utilised for irrigation, to flood plain agriculture and sedentary pastoralism in the semi-arid lowlands.

Livelihoods in this area have long been designated as insecure (Dietz 1987); suffering from periodic drought and famine, most recently in 2009, which have been compounded by long-standing inter-ethnic conflicts (Opiyo et al. 2012) and increased population pressures. Such insecurities have contributed to diversified and dynamic livelihood strategies. These changes in strategies have various environmental effects, especially in locations where natural resources and ecosystem services are more contested. In the following, we present the life story of Esther, an internally displaced woman who has no secure access to land, primarily engages in the illegal production of charcoal, and belongs to a community that is frequently ill-treated by government officials (see Photo 2)

A Charcoal Producer in Pokot: The Case of Esther

Esther, a single mother in her early forties, narrates how she became a *pelii makaa* (charcoal producer):

“In the time when Mzee Jomo Kenyatta passed away and Rais Daniel Arap Moi³ became the new president, I was a little girl living in the Masol Plains. My family were pastoralists, herding cattle and goats, and migrating with the seasons. In those years we suffered a large loss of livestock as the droughts came and the grasses dried. My parents lost everything and decided to move to Amolem, where they heard that some *mzungus* (Europeans) were setting up an irrigation project that was to support pastoralists from the Pokot and Turkana tribes hit by the drought. The *mzungus* parcelled out land of around two acres per family, and channelled water from the Wei-Wei River to these plots. With water we were able to plant a lot of different crops, like; sesame, maize, sorghum, groundnuts, and green grams – life was good. My family bought some goats, and because the pasture was *ngilet* (salty) the goats were able to bear triplets. Many people lived there, maybe 200 hundred families, we had schools, *hotelis*, a church and a health dispensary.

In Amolem, we used to live peacefully with the Turkana⁴, and we used to speak each other’s language. I still speak Turkana. But one day, a Turkana man killed a Pokot, and revenge was taken. After that people began fighting like in the past, and we all had to run away. My family left without any of their belongings and run towards Marich Pass. The journey was difficult because the whole area was very thick bush and we often had to move along dry riverbeds. There was a lot of dangerous wildlife, especially buffalo; we had to hide up trees and in gullies. We were welcomed when we arrived in Marich, because a Pokot is a Pokot. Many people moved towards Marich, and slowly the wildlife was pushed away. My family settled at the foothills of the mountains, and planted and traded in maize from the highlands of Sekerr. We were poor but we could still make a life. One day we went to Amolem, but everything was taken, even the roofs and the irrigation pipes, only the walls were left standing. At that time we never made *makaa*.

Our people started to make *makaa* around fifteen years ago when they saw a Turkana man called Kalokal who lived alone, making and selling it. At that time, for one bag of *makaa* you could buy 24 *goro goro* of maize (~ 48 kg). This was good. But today, I only get 5 *goro goro* of maize for one bag of *makaa*. When I sell to a charcoal broker I can get 400 Ksh⁵, and when I sell to an individual I get 500 Ksh. The first time I could sell one bag in four days, but now it can take up to four weeks. Sometimes I sell nothing in one month and even the bag begins to rot. If I cannot sell enough to eat, then some other *pelii makaa* share their income with me. At times when they fail to sell, then I can also help them. We are nine *pelii*

³ Moi became the second president of Kenya in 1978.

⁴ The Turkana are neighbours to the north of Pokot.

⁵ Ksh – Kenyan Shilling.

makaa selling from the same place and we look after each other. Making *makaa* is hard, but if I sell enough I can buy goats. I give my goats to herders who graze them far from here, and I can get two kids per year from each goat. I sell the goats to pay for my children to go to school.

Without irrigation it is hard to live from planting maize, and even the few goats I own can die immediately during a drought. Drought is always a problem in this area but we have very good trees for making *makaa*, especially *ses* (*Acacia tortilis*), *panyerit* (*Acacia melifera*), and *pelel* (*Acacia reficiens*). *Ses* and *panyerit* are also good for livestock, especially in the dry season. In the past we would only use dead trees for making *makaa*, but now there are so many people that sometimes we have to cut down some trees. All along the road, up to Turkana, people sell *makaa*. The government does not like us to cut trees, and sometimes they come at night and take all our bags of *makaa*, but we cannot complain.”

Bringing a Life Story into Dialogue with the System Viability Framework

In our envisaged research project we aim at realising a multi-perspective understanding of land degradation with a case study in Central Pokot. The study combines remote sensing approaches with investigations of stakeholder environmental knowledge and their rationales of action. A key objective is to analyse (mis-) matches that exist between multiple perspectives with a view to identify socially accepted ways to mitigate and remediate land degradation. Within our overall project design life stories shall contribute to a local contextualisation of system viability. For us, this does not entail a domestication of local voices within an already tailored model. Rather it will allow us to, on the one hand, show the limitations of, and critically enrich, such a generalized framework. On the other hand it will reveal commonalities and enable comparisons between the experiences and lessons of individual lifetimes. Within the framework of system viability, which was originally developed for a research project in Guyana, the health and prosperity of any socio-ecological system results from the interplay of six interrelated strategies (Mistry et al. 2010). These include:

1. **existence** – the ability to procure resources for basic survival
2. **coexistence** – the ability to engage with other interdependent systems
3. **ideal performance** – the ability to optimise resource utilisation
4. **flexibility** – the ability to diversify
5. **adaptability** – the ability to adjust practices to gradual environmental change
6. **resistance** – the ability to effectively deal with short-term variability

Esther’s life story shows that some of these strategies have been highly important to her. Overall, three inherent tensions figure prominently i.e. between strategies of existence and coexistence, strategies of resistance and adaptability, and strategies of flexibility and ideal performance. Her family left Amolem owing to a failure of coexistence at an inter-ethnic level, and Marich offered a stable environment from which they could access resources for securing a livelihood. Within a short period of time, they were able to engage in a mutually beneficial way with other systems such as those in the arable highlands of Sekerr. Charcoal production was initially taken up as a resistance strategy to cope with a temporary shock in their environment, namely drought. With more people engaged in this livelihood practice, it becomes increasingly difficult to envisage charcoal production as a long-term adaptation. However, ever since Esther entered the charcoal business, flexibility has become a key strategy for her, for example through the reinvestment of profit in livestock. Yet, her performance may not be ideal in the longer term within an environment of scarce and contested resources.

In our project, we intend to further test and develop the system viability framework such as to adapt it as a suitable tool for furthering a locally contextualised understanding of land degradation. The dryland biography of Pokot is well suited for such an endeavour because it is characterised by a variety of social-ecological systems that are typical of many rural African drylands. With this in mind, we hope that our research will have broader academic relevance and policy implications.

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Mountains as actors in the Bolivian Andes: The interrelationship
between politics and ritual in the Kallawayá *ayllus*

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Figure 1: Drawing of the valley of Charazani
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Mountains as actors in the Bolivian Andes: The interrelationship between politics and ritual in the Kallawaya *ayllus*

JONATHAN ALDERMAN

This essay will examine the way that a Bolivian Andean people, the Kallawayas, incorporate mountains—seen as beings with agency in their own right—into their structure of kinship and politics. The Kallawayas interpret mountains as inhabited by ancestral spirits, who are incorporated into the local political structure as authorities. This understanding of the mountains denies the Western separation of politics and nature. I follow de la Cadena (2014) in positing mountain spirits, known as machulas, and humans, known as runa, as mutually constituting one another within the socio-territorial space of the ayllu. In this space nature and politics are not divided but intertwined. However, the political organisation of the Kallawaya communities has undergone profound changes in recent decades that have affected the ritual relationship between the Kallawayas and the mountain spirits. The manner in which Kallawayas incorporate their ancestors as authorities therefore provides evidence for the propensity of ritual to reflect social structure.

This ethnographic essay explores the way in which humans and mountain beings interact politically in the Andes, drawing on fieldwork conducted with the Kallawayas, an indigenous nation in Andean Bolivia. In doing so, I take up the challenge of Peruvian anthropologist Marisol de la Cadena (2010), who invites us to take seriously the presence of “other-than-humans” as actors in politics. That mountains can participate in politics implies a conception of politics which does not accept a division between humanity as political and nature as a distinct non-political sphere, as Latour (1993) suggests is characteristic of modernity. I demonstrate that the Kallawayas’ relationship with mountain spirits is so central to their way of conducting politics that changes in the political structure of the Kallawaya communities significantly impacts on the Kallawayas’ ritual relationship with the mountains. In doing so, I build theoretically on work by political anthropologists such as Kertzner (1974) and Friedrich ([1966] 2009) who show that the interdependency of politics and ritual means that change in one can lead to alterations in the other, and Lukes (1975: 301), who suggests that political rituals reinforce and organise our collective representations of the way society functions.

The Kallawayas are divided between more than 70 separate communities—relatively autonomous from one another—in the municipalities of Charazani and Curva in the province of Bautista Saavedra in the North of the department of La Paz. What unites them is ritual veneration of the same mountains (Bastien 1985). The manner in which Kallawayas have traditionally related to the mountains on a communal basis has mirrored the political structure of Kallawaya communities. However, as I shall explain, changes in the way

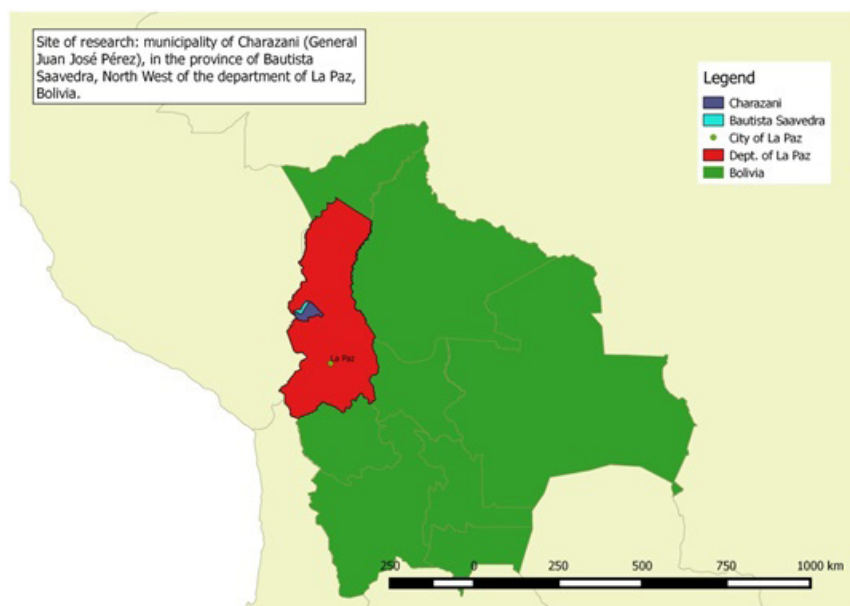


Figure 2: Site of research

that the Kallawayas relate to one another politically has led to shifts in their own ritual practice and therefore the political relationship with ancestors related to as mountain spirits. I therefore argue that the Kallawayas rituals involving mountain spirits reflect the social structure of the Kallawayas world.

The Significance of the Kallawayas Mountains

I spent much of the first few months of my fieldwork following meetings of the Kallawayas Autonomy Assembly. The Kallawayas were taking advantage of constitutional changes that allowed for the creation of indigenous autonomies (*Autonomía Indígena Originario Campesinas*, or AIOCs). In December 2009, people in the municipality of Charazani had voted in favour of converting their municipality into an AIOC and, in 2012, representatives of Charazani's 68 Kallawayas communities began writing a statute designed to eventually become their constitution. At one such assembly, a new name was proposed for what would be the autonomous indigenous territory: "Isqani Qalla-Qallan of the Kallawayas Nation." Isqani and Qalla-Qallan are two mountains, sacred to the Kallawayas. The reason for the proposal was the emblematic nature of the mountains in marking out territory. Although the assembly members were largely supportive of the change of name, the move was also met with some dissent. One of the assembly members, Orlando Alvarez of the community of Khanlaya, remarked with concern that Isqani and Qalla-Qallan were sacred places, and as such had no place in an autonomy statute. Although within the meeting little was made of this comment, outside I asked Orlando what he had meant. He told me that they were powerful places, "so powerful that they could turn men into women." Orlando's worry about using the names of the mountains indicated a view of them not as an inanimate part of "nature," but as actors with agency in their own right, and a power to intervene in Kallawayas politics. The power of the mountains could have either positive or negative effects for the Kallawayas, as "simultaneously protectors and malevolent beings" (Harris 2000: 47).

Isqani and Qalla-Qallan are what the Kallawayas call *machulas* in Quechua (they also often use the Aymara word *achachila*). *Machulas* are the ancestors of the Kallawayas who are said to reside at the peaks of the mountains (Rösing 1996a: 232).¹ They are also sometimes called *lugarniyuq*, which literally means owner of the place (the Quechua possessive suffix *-yuq* is added to the Spanish word *lugar*, meaning place). As owners of the sacred places the *machulas* are conflated with the places themselves; they both "inhabit and are the places" (Astvaldsson 2006: 111). The *machulas* are "other-than-human beings" who are "more than one and less than two entities", that participate in "partially connected worlds" (de la Cadena 2010: 351). They are the mountain, but they are not just the mountain; they are the Kallawayas ancestors, but they are not only the Kallawayas ancestors. According to Gose (2006) this identification of the mountains with ancestors is of colonial rather than pre-Colombian origin. Ancestor cults collapsed during and due to the colonial extirpation of idolatries. Pre-Colombian communities had created shrines of the mummified remains of their ancestors in the spot where they were thought to have founded the community (Gose 2008: 18). As these shrines were attacked and removed it was the mountains themselves that began to take on the properties of the ancestors. The association of the ancestors with mountains may have been a literal fusion, not just in meaning, but also physically, as mummies were buried at the tops of mountains and became putrefied (Gose 2006: 31).

The Constitution of Personhood in the Kallawayas *Ayllu*

A relationship with the *machulas* is central to life in the *ayllu*, the traditional socio-territorial unit in the Andes. Although membership of an *ayllu* has been defined by being able to trace one's lineage back to a common ancestor (Gose 2006: 31; Loza 2004: 31), some anthropologists (Bastien 1985; Canessa 2012) portray kinship within the *ayllu* as 'created,' rather than 'given.' Bastien, who conducted fieldwork in the Kallawayas *ayllu* of Kaata, defines an *ayllu* in terms of people who live in the same territory and feed its shrines (1985: xxiv); which suggests that one can become a member of an *ayllu* through performance of particular practices. Canessa (2012) notes that neither *ayllu* membership, nor personhood is given at birth, but rather are conferred

¹ Kallawayas believe that after someone's death they return to visit the living for three years at All Saints on 1st November, when they are fed by living relatives. After this their souls become part of the spirits of the landscape (Bastien 1985: 178). According to Rösing (1996a: 232) there is a temporal hierarchy of the ancestors. At the top of the hills and other sacred places are the dead of time immemorial, who do not have names. These are known as the *machulas*. Younger than these ancient ancestors, and less powerful, are the fathers, grandfathers and friends, who we can still recall by name, and who also inhabit some part of the hills. Beneath them are those who have died in the last three years, whose spirit still visits their community.



Figure 3: The Kallawayas Autonomy Assembly

on infants by the community and ancestral spirits at baptismal ceremonies and must be constantly maintained through the performance of particular practices, enhancing relations with others in the *ayllu*.

For the Kallawayas their relations with others in the *ayllu* define them as people. Kallawayas consider themselves to be *runa*, which translates roughly to human, but, following de la Cadena's (2014) analysis of the term, *not only* human. *Runa* are human beings who are defined through their intersubjective relationships with what de la Cadena calls *tirakuna* or "Earth beings," what my informants called "sacred places," "*achachilas*" or "*machulas*." *Runa* and *machulas* mutually constitute one another through practices which are a vital aspect of life within an *ayllu*. The recognition of the *machulas* is what Canessa (2012: 163), working in an Aymara-speaking community elsewhere in the department of La Paz, describes as distinguishing *jaqi* (*runa* in Aymara) from culturally Western Bolivians, known as *q'aras* (meaning Whites, but literally translated as peeled); the latter are also commonly known by Kallawayas as *mistis* (someone of mixed blood).

Considered as persons in their own right, the *machulas* have personalities and can express emotions just like *runa*. They can become angry, jealous, and enjoy receiving gifts. Most of all they do not like to be ignored, and may punish travellers who pass by without acknowledging them (Rösing 1996a: 151-2). For this reason, before setting out on a journey, Kallawayas always make an offering (for example, of llama fat and coca leaves) to one of the *machulas* in order that no accidents befall them on the road (Gifford and Lancaster 1988: 6; see also de la Cadena 2010: 339).

The Kallawayas make offerings to the *machulas* in shrines called *kawiltus* (a Quechua version of the Spanish word *cabildo*, meaning a public meeting). They do so through "an idiom of feeding" (Sax 2011: 37-8). Through feeding a relationship of reciprocity is created, "in which the other is obligated to give something in return" (*ibid.*: 38). That is, by receiving ritual foods, such as guinea pigs and llama foetuses, the *machulas* are indebted to whoever makes the offering (Abercrombie 1998: 349-50).² In return they might be asked for an excellent harvest for the coming year or good health and prosperity for the person making the offering. Kinship can therefore be created and maintained through feeding, which acts as an invitation to engage in reciprocal exchange. This follows an idea of kinship in which "food, not blood is the tie that binds" (Weismantel 1988: 171). Weismantel (*ibid.*) shows the act of feeding in the Ecuadorian Andes to create kinship between people who are not blood-related. Indeed, in my own fieldwork, the female head of the family I lived

² Guinea pigs, in the Andes, are considered a food to be eaten on special occasions, when one wishes to deepen or formalise a relationship with someone (Weismantel 1988: 101-131). Kallawayas also diagnose the cause of an illness by reading the insides of a guinea pig (Fernández Juárez 1997: 25).



Figure 4: The peak of Qalla Qallan, with chapel



Figure 5: The mountain of Isqani

with, in the Kallawaya community of Amarete, was referred to by others in the community as my “mother” (despite being younger than me). Similarly, it is the act of feeding through which *runa* create and maintain kinship ties with *machulas*, the ancestors of the *ayllu*.

In community meetings of Kallawaya ayllus, each of those present at the meeting is fed and watered and given copious amounts of coca. Similarly, the offerings made to the *machulas* are offerings for them to come and eat and drink, and chew coca. One particular ceremony in which offerings are made to the *machulas* is the *mesa blanca*. This is an offering which Rösing (1993: 185) describes as addressing a person’s “fundamental wellbeing,” “belonging to their body, spirit and soul, their family, house, patio, fields, livestock, relation with nature, and transpersonal beings.” Towards the end of my fieldwork, my friend Aurelio, a Kallawaya healer from the community of Lunlaya, performed a *mesa blanca* for me. This was several days after he had read my fortune in coca leaves and had suggested that I make the offering as a way of thanking the *machulas* for the positive outcome of the reading. I decided to do so, as much as a way of thanking them for my experiences during fieldwork and asking for their continued protection. Aurelio made plates (the plates were made of cotton wool) of ritual food and drink for the *machulas*. Six large plates were set out: two as offerings for my family and me, two for the Kallawaya shamans, living and dead, and two for the *machulas*. There were also two smaller plates laid out for the *ankari* (the wind messenger) who would carry the offerings to the *machulas*. This food and drink included sweets, coca, llama fat and wine, all of which we threw into a fire that had been prepared on the *kawiltu* in Aurelio’s patio.

Making offerings such as this is important because it ensures the relationship between *runa* and *machulas*, and a person’s good health. The cause of ill health is often looked for in a person’s relations with others in the *ayllu*, since sickness and misfortune can be understood in the Andes in terms of how well or badly the *machulas* have been fed (Sax 2011: 8). Healing such sickness is a particular specialisation of the Kallawayas, which they are known for throughout Bolivia. When Kallawayas treat illnesses, they do so by trying to rebalance the equilibrium between spirit and body, not by treating the body of the patient in isolation, but by examining all of their relations—with their family and community, and with what Rösing calls the “transpersonal beings of the *ayllu*,” most significantly the *machulas* (Rösing 1995: 264). Kallawaya conceptions of personhood, then, are defined by the relations *runa* have with the *machulas* within the *ayllu*. As I shall examine in the next section, perceiving the *machulas* as powerful members of the *ayllu* has consequences for the manner in which the Kallawayas conduct politics.

The Kallawaya political structure involving *machula* authorities

The *machulas* are not just seen as having personalities like humans, but also as engaging in similar activities to them. One informant in the town of Charazani named Juan, the son of a prominent local healer and a trainee healer himself, told me that, just like the local peasant union, the *machulas* hold meetings between themselves and that, in parallel with the peasant union, each of the mountains holds a particular position of authority (known as a “*cargo*”) within their own similarly structured union. For example, there is a General Secretary, a Secretary of Relations, a messenger, etc. Juan told me that the human political structure was in fact a copy of the *machula* assembly. When the Kallawayas hold meetings in which they elect their leaders for the year, they replicate the meetings held by the *machulas*, who elect their own leaders by throwing rocks.

Kallawaya communities in the valley of Charazani are structured hierarchically within the national peasant union. Each has its own authorities, which change from year to year, and who elect provincial level authorities who attend departmental- and national-level meetings in La Paz, Bolivia’s *de-facto* capital. Similarly, as Aurelio explained, the *machulas* have their own hierarchical structure, with national-level leaders all the way down to the mountain which holds authority within the community. Like their human counterparts, the *machulas* do not continue as authorities indefinitely, but rather they rotate positions of authority. Although Kallawaya communities have several mountains that are significant to them, there is always one that is revered above the rest for that year and is viewed as the protector of the community. This is the *watayuq*, which literally means the “owner of the year”. The *watayuq* is fed in every community ritual over the course of the year because of the influence this mountain has over the community’s wellbeing. The *watayuq* is seen as one of the most important influences over the weather (Rösing 2003: 187, 601) and, thus, must be fed well in order to be kept in good humour, so it may provide beneficial weather to the community’s harvest. One informant, Basilio, the General Secretary of the community of Khanlaya for the year I was conducting field-

work, told me that an important reason his community makes offerings to the *watayuq* was so there would not be hail or rain.

It is significant which mountain becomes the *watayuq* because the distinctive character of each mountain can influence the production of the community during the year. The mountain of Tuwana is associated throughout the Kallawaya region with an abundance of foodstuffs, and is therefore the “*watayuq par excellence*” (Rösing 1996b: 338). It is preferred by all communities over a mountain associated with lightning, rain or hail, such as *Isqani*. Juan, my informant in the town of Charazani, told me that it is not the Kallawayas themselves that choose which mountain will be the *watayuq* for that year, but the *machulas*—the mountains themselves. Because they stand to receive the most veneration and the tastiest offerings over the coming year, the *machulas* compete vehemently for the role of *watayuq* (Rösing 2003: 527).

The identity of the mountain of the year has to be discovered by the community’s shaman. He is called the *wata purichiq*. The *wata purichiq* is the one who makes the year walk and is the foremost ritualist in the community. He makes the year walk by ensuring that the community plants and harvests at the correct times and performs the appropriate agricultural rites, including feeding shrines on the *watayuq*. The *wata purichiq* discovers the identity of the *watayuq* by reading coca leaves. He drops different coca leaves in front of him, with each leaf representing a different mountain. Rösing (2003: 530) writes that he must read the leaves a minimum of three times to determine the *watayuq*, but if he is in any doubt the process can take days as he reads the coca over and over again (*ibid.*: 601). Although it is the *machulas* themselves who choose the *watayuq*, the *wata purichiq* can have an influence over which of the mountains can become *watayuq* because he chooses which of the mountains to make candidates (*ibid.*: 529). For example, according to Rösing (1996b: 338) the *wata purichiq* of the Kallawaya community of Kaata never included the mountain of Sunchuli in his readings because this mountain represents the underworld. However, Rösing (2003: 602) also claims that no ritualist would assert that there is a single person on earth who can really influence the election of the *watayuq*, because if the choice of the *machulas* is not among the leaves selected by the *wata purichiq*, then he will not be successful in looking and will have to change his selection.

When Latour advocates for the inclusion of non-humans in democratic processes, and for them to be recognised as social actors, he suggests that they are included through spokespeople, because non-humans need humans to speak on their behalf (2004: 62-77). At a superficial level, we could view the *wata purichiq* in this manner—as a spokesperson for the *machulas*. However, this suggests a view of non-humans as unable to speak for themselves. Latour’s suggestion of spokespeople (which might have valid applications for his example of scientists working with cells in laboratories) implies an understanding that non-humans cannot speak. Kohn (2013: 91) points out that the lumping together of all non-humans together in a single category, as needing spokespeople, misses a conception of non-humans as selves, that can communicate. As Kohn proposes, some non-humans, as selves in their own right, communicate in a way that is knowable to us. The communication of the *machulas* is viewed in just such a manner by Kallawayas. Rather than the *wata purichiq* speaking for the *machulas*, it was my impression that my Kallawaya informants viewed the *machulas* as speaking through him.

The foremost manner of communication in which the *machulas* communicate with *runa* is through coca leaves. The role of the *wata purichiq* is that of an expert mediator who reads the leaves. The coca leaves indicate to the *wata purichiq* the mood of the *machulas*. The *ankari*, the wind messenger of the *machulas*, brings the *wata purichiq* news from the meetings of the *machulas* by blowing the individual coca leaves this way and that as they leave his hand. If some disaster has befallen the community then the *wata purichiq* must find out through the coca which of the *machulas* they have angered and a commission must then go out with gifts to ask for forgiveness. The *machulas* are, in a sense, the moral guardians of the community; they can take offence at the behaviour of any one member of the community and punish it collectively if they receive news that displeases them (Oblitas 1963: 56-60).

Bastien (1985) portrays the person of the *wata purichiq* himself physically as a mediator between the community and the mountain as a physical entity. According to Bastien (1985: 65), when the *wata purichiq* in the Kallawaya community of Kaata ritually ate thirteen servings of food then through him the thirteen shrines on the mountain were fed. Because of his position as a spiritual mediator the *wata purichiq* must be a certain



Figure 6: Aurelio preparing the *mesa blanca* offering for the *machulas*



Figure 7: The offering burnt on the Kawiltu

type of person to take on the role. He must be the foremost ritualist and the wisest man in his community. One informant, Aurelio's brother-in-law Fidel, told me that "the *wata purichiq* is an expert who has to know everything, if you are ill he has to cure you... he has to be able to use medicinal plants, [to know how to use] everything, [different types of offerings], the amulets to transfer magical powers." Fidel gave the impression that the *wata purichiq* should be someone of an almost saintly disposition. He told me that if you are hateful, jealous, or you are not happy, then you could not be a *wata purichiq*, and that Jesus Christ was a *wata purichiq*. Fidel's description of emotional equilibrium being important in terms of a ritual expert's ability to perform his role highlights the importance among the Kallawayas of keeping negative emotions at bay for one's general wellbeing, as is the case with other Amerindians (Overing and Pasas 2000: 20). More significantly, the importance of this emotional equilibrium is demonstrated by the ritual expert's ability to act as a *wata purichiq*. In the Andes, negative emotions, particularly envy, are believed to cause illness (Abercrombie 1998: 68) and are seen as the root cause of witchcraft (Rösing 1996a: 31). The *wata purichiq* must maintain emotional equilibrium in order to cure, rather than create, illness.

The Splintering of the Kallawayaya Political Structure

Aurelio explained to me how hierarchical structures of the peasant union and the *machulas* had traditionally functioned. The Kallawayaya region, corresponding roughly to the province of Bautista Saavedra in the department of La Paz, has three altitudinal levels: highlands, valley and *yungas* (semi-tropical lower-valley). Each of these altitudinal levels would have its own *watayuq*, and the presidency of the *machulas* of the whole Kallawayaya region would rotate between them. A shared *watayuq* was something that unified the whole Kallawayaya region. The *wata purichiqs* from around the region would meet once a year to discover through reading the coca leaves what would be the single most important *watayuq* for the Kallawayayas for the coming year. However, according to Aurelio, the *wata purichiqs* had not met since around 2006, so the custom of having a single unifying *watayuq* had fallen into disuse. The reason for this can be found in changes to local political organisation around that time.

In 1953, after agrarian reform following Bolivia's 1952 revolution, a single peasant union, the *Confederación Sindical Única de Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia* (CSUTCB), known locally as the *Única* was created, of which all of the communities of Bautista Saavedra became members at a provincial level. The *Única* remained a hegemonic political force locally until 1994 when the coca-growers in the tropical part of the province broke away to form their own federation, called FOYCAE (*Federación Originaria Yungas Carijana Agro-Ecológico*). Later, the highland communities also broke away from the *Única* to form CONAMAQ (*Confederación de Ayllus y Markas de Qullasuyu*) in 2007. This left the *Única* only representing the communities of the valley. Although there was initial animosity between the *Única* and FOYCAE at the coca-growers decision to leave the union, as most of the coca-growers were migrants from valley communities and it suited no one for there to be bad-blood between them for long, they were soon on speaking terms. However, relations have continued to be strained between the *Única* and those communities who broke away to join CONAMAQ.

I asked Aurelio whether there was any connection between the failure of the *wata purichiqs* to meet over the last few years and the break-up of the province's communities politically, having previously all been unified within the same organisation. "But of course there is!" he exclaimed. Previously, when all the communities had met together, it had been the job of the syndical authorities of the communities to convoke the council of the elders—comprised of the *wata purichiq* of the Kallawayaya communities—but now this was not happening. Aurelio blamed this on two causes. Firstly, the community leaders no longer spoke with one voice, and simply did not meet together as one group any more. The manner in which the Kallawayayas ritually related to their mountains had splintered to mirror the changes in the way that Kallawayaya communities related to one another. This is evidence for the interrelatedness of ritual and politics—ritual relations with the mountains is, after all, are fundamental part of Kallawayaya politics—and the way that ritual adapts to political changes (Friedrich [1966] 2009; Kertzner 1974).

Secondly, Aurelio believed that the community authorities have become too materialistic in their concerns in recent years. Instead of focussing on spiritual matters, they were more concerned with travelling to the city of La Paz to look for "development projects" for their community. Over the last twenty to thirty years, peasants in the Kallawayaya region have engaged more in life outside the province as their ability to

travel easily to and from the city has improved (a road was built in 1983 linking many Kallawayas communities with La Paz, and others were constructed around 1994). Political reforms have also made it possible for their communities to be legally recognised, and therefore opportunities have arisen for them to engage with national-level agencies, such as NGOs, and priorities have changed from the spiritual to the materialistic.

An additional reason why the Council of the Elders was no longer being convoked was that in many communities there simply were no longer *wata purichiqs*. I realised this when I spent carnival in the Kallawayas community of Khanlaya and the ritual offerings were made not by the *wata purichiq*, but by the General Secretary, the union authority in the community. When I asked Orlando (the Autonomy Assembly member mentioned at the beginning of this article) about this he told me that the community had not had a *wata purichiq* for the last ten years due to “city thinking”. The majority of the people from Orlando’s community live most of the time in the city and only return for parties such as carnival. They decided when the last *wata purichiq* died that they would abolish the position entirely. However, Aurelio told me emphatically that without a *wata purichiq* there was no *ayllu*, because the life or death of the *ayllu* depends on how well the *wata purichiq* feeds the shrines (Bastien 1985: 57). The *ayllu* in this region, then, is being threatened by the “city thinking” of people who no longer live on the land and are, therefore, losing their relationship of reciprocity with the mountains of their community.

The consequence is that Kallawayas’ understanding of themselves as people is threatened on a fundamental level. The relationships in which Kallawayas are enmeshed define them as *runa*. Following de la Cadena (2010, 2014) and Kohn (2013), I understand *runa* and *machulas* as mutually constituting one another within the specific ritual arena of the *ayllu*. The interaction between *runa* and *machulas* constitutes the former as something more than human and the latter as more than mountains. A lack of attention to reciprocal practices affects the personhood of each. As another informant from the community of Khanlaya, Fernando Huanca, put it, “we have to pay them respect, because, if we forget them, they forget us.”

What is believed to integrate human beings as *runa* into the wider network with others are their *ajayus* (souls) (Burman 2011: 120). Aurelio told me that Kallawayas believe *runa* have two *ajuyus* and averting their loss forms the basis for Kallawayas ceremonies. These *ajayus* are their large *ajayu*, and a smaller *ajayu* (known as *animu*). They fulfil a function of agglutinating the different parts of the body together in a sense of unity. Although the *ajayus* generally remain inside the body, either of the *ajayus* can be lost, the large *ajayu* upon a serious illness, and the smaller one from fright (Fernandez Juarez 2008: 112). According to Burman (2011: 92, 120), Aymaras see the stresses of modern life associated with the city as likely to be responsible for the loss of a person’s *ajayu* because their lifestyle breaks the connection between themselves and the spirits of their *ayllu*. This process can lead to loss of identity. A foreign spirit is then able to take its place, in the form of foreign mental, ideological or religious doctrines. For this reason, migrants in highland Bolivia often go to great lengths to maintain fields in community because what is at stake is “the very sense of who they are as human beings” (Canessa 2012: 164). However, as I have pointed out with reference to the community of Khanlaya in particular, migration has effects on ritual practices that threaten both the social relations in the *ayllu*, and the political relations between *ayllus*.

When Aurelio talked of solving the local political problems, he posited the problems in terms of illness caused by an abandonment of *ayllu* traditions and embracing capitalist modernity, which affects the very soul of Kallawayas. He calls this *sifilización* (a sickness caused by exposure to “civilisation”), and proposes a cure in terms of rituals that would unite the three unions with each other and the sacred places of the Kallawayas. According to him, the leaders of the three provincial federations were all ‘sick,’ citing the nylon clothing they wore, a desire to earn money and a loss of spirituality on their part. He suggested that representatives from the highlands come to him with llama fat and from the lowland *yungas* with coca and perform a ritual to ancestor spirits. Because healing requires a rebalancing of physical and spiritual equilibrium (Timmer 2001: 284), by bringing the political leaders together in a ritual ceremony, Aurelio proposed to rebalance political and spiritual equilibrium of the local leaders, creating solidarity between them. This suggests an understanding of the power of joint ritual in Durkheim’s ([1912]2008) terms to create solidarity between its participants, the ingredients from the three levels uniting the Kallawayas as one body.

Conclusion

A relationship with the mountains is central to belonging to a Kallawaya *ayllu*. Isqani and Qalla-Qallan seem to have been invoked by the Kallawayas in the municipality of Charazani by those seeking autonomy precisely because of their significance as sacred places in a traditional Andean territorial structure. What is more, these places are regarded by many *Kallawayas* as being political actors in their own right. It is the relationships which one has with others in the *ayllu*—including the *machulas*—which define one as a person—as *runa*. I have described how in the Kallawaya *ayllu* one becomes *runa*, and this status is maintained through reciprocal exchange, particularly of food. The identity of mountains as *machulas* is similarly maintained through the reciprocal relationship *runa* maintain with them. The identity of both within the *ayllu* depends on the maintenance of reciprocal acts.

I have shown the ritual relationship the Kallawayas have with the *machulas* to be interconnected with their political and social structure. The Kallawayas adapt their ritual practices in accordance with changes in their political and social structure because there is no divide between the political relationships of humans with one another and of humans with other-than-human beings, but these relationships are connected within the *ayllu*. This means that as the structures which unite the Kallawaya communities have fragmented, the relationships with the *machulas*, through the *watayuq*, have taken into account the current political realities in which the Kallawayas do not come together as one group. As the Kallawaya communities of the lowlands and the valley withdrew from the provincial peasant union, and the Kallawaya communities ceased to be unified within a single political organisation, so the joint ritual practice of recognition of an overarching *watayuq* has been abandoned. This supports Durkheim's [1912] (2008) analysis of ritual as creating "collective representations" of society, and Lukes (1975: 301) assertion that "the symbolism of political ritual *represents, inter alia*, particular models of political paradigms of society and how it functions." The ritual relationships of the Kallawayas with the *watayuqs* effectively function as a collective representation of the structure of Kallawaya society.

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Becoming With, in Life and Death

HANNAH KUEMMERLE



Figure 1: Laika and I
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Becoming With, in Life and Death

HANNAH KUEMMERLE

Based on a life-long relationship between trust and domination of human and horse, this essay is a personal reflection on how perceptions and relationships shape the way we (as humans and other-than-humans in shared relationships) deal with implemented mercy deaths. What can we learn from each other when it comes to the decision of putting our companions down? This contribution explores, on one hand, the relation between domination and compassion as a way of dealing with an animal's life and death. On the other hand it investigates trust and correspondence beyond borders of human exceptionalism as a different, more open way of becoming with each other, focussing on the transformative potential of co-responding relationships.

It was a rainy day in autumn 2014, when my father called, telling me that my sister Laika was diagnosed with a tumour in her left jaw. Living in Scotland, I booked the next available flight to Germany, feeling sick of life and afraid of death. Arriving at home, there was not much to do. The tumour grew within days and the only thing left was to say goodbye. When the specialists arrived with the syringe to put her down, it felt as if a part of me died with her.

A lifelong bond entangled Laika with her family, but especially her sister Larissa. They met when they were young and always stayed together. They slept next to each other, shared their food, supported each other and were afraid without each other. It seemed always clear: as they lived, they would die. Both would leave this world together one day. The day the decision was made to put Laika to sleep, Larissa proved me wrong, raising questions that inform this essay.

Most people would consider Laika and Larissa as quite ordinary horses. Their bodily features reveal them as animals, with a tail, a mane, four hooves on the ground and three different gaits. They carry us around, eat hay and grass and don't speak. For me, they were different. They were my siblings, trusted friends who influenced my becoming in this world. When I had to put Laika down, it struck me how we humans, who often consider ourselves as friends or companions, family members, or even teachers or pupils of non-human animals (Sanders 1995, Despret 2004, Birke 2007, Maurstad et al 2013), also consider ourselves as able to decide about life and death of these fellow beings. Informed by the life and death of Laika and Larissa, and supported by literature from the field of social anthropology and human animal studies, this essay is a personal reflection on how perceptions and relationships shape the way we (as humans and non-humans in shared relationships) deal with implemented mercy deaths. I will investigate this topic in respect to what Despret, in her study about everyday practices of cattle and pig breeders, calls the "difference which matters" (2008: 133). In the first part, I will examine human approaches which render "modes of subjectivity" (ibid) impossible, exploring domination and compassion as ways of dealing with an animal's life and death. Does an act of mercy killing, based on a compassionate decision, arise from a bond based on mutual understanding? What does this indicate about relationships between us humans and our non-human companions? Guided by Larissa, the second part will consider relationships "where humans and animals talk to each other, make each other propositions, get on and present modes of subjectivity to each other" (ibid), concentrating on the transformative potential of co-responding relationships between humans and non-humans, inquiring trust and mutual understanding as an alternative way of becoming together.

Domination and Compassion

The term *euthanasia* originates from Greek, meaning 'good death' (*eu* – 'good/well' + *thanatos* – 'death', Online Etymology Dictionary 2001 - 2014). According to Mosterín (2006) and others (Pool and Geissler 2005, Richards 2012), setting a date for a 'good death' derives from a desire to control the departure from this word as painless and calmly as possible. Although humans are seen as having, in contrast to other species, the ability not only to reflect upon their lives and decisions but also actively decide for their lives to end, it paradoxically seems to be less controversial to control an animal's death than to plan one's own passing away (McMahan 2002, Sanders 1995, Warren 1997).

As mentioned above, Laika and Larissa were inseparable. If I would go on a walk or ride with only one of them I never got far. Laika or Larissa would only walk a few meters and then just stop. There is no way you can move a 400 kg horse unless it wants to move (or you belong to the riders who use whips). Thus, from being two years old, both were together day and night, creating in our minds the idea that if one horse would die the other would somehow follow soon. Consequently, when Laika was diagnosed with her tumour,



Figure 2: Laika and Larissa, inseparably



Figure 3: Becoming with. Larissa and I

no one questioned putting Larissa down, especially as she had arthritis (a joint disease) for years. What if her illness would get worse? What if the grief about the death of her sister would break her and we would have to put her down shortly thereafter? Regarding the fact that horses are herd animals and should never live alone, would it not be an act of compassion to save her from living a life full of pain, even worse without her sister? Our compassionate conclusion was driven by the fear of the consequences and the unexpected, but it was agreed: as in life so in death! Both horses would be put down together. Although our decision was not an easy one, it was certainly something my family could live with. For most of us it felt sad, but all right. That is the way life goes, is it not? At some point you just have to put most animals down and after all, the reasoning goes, it is luckily not your 'real' sister. In trying to understand this relative lack of discomfort surrounding the death of animals in contemporary western society (Sanders 1995), and to comprehend, in this context, my family's straight-forward decision, I consulted the Bible, as a well-pronounced account of our society's still pervasive Judeo-Christian roots. In the Genesis, God creates mankind in his likeness "so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." (Holy Bible, Genesis 1:26). As Martin (1992), in his comprehensive discussion of Genesis 1:26 analyses, humans seem to be defined superior, created in God's image. We alone are seen to possess a soul, made to rule over all other creatures, belonging to the realm of culture. Animals, Martin further reflects, seem to be mainly created for humans' use and enjoyment. They have not been built in God's likeness, lack soul, and belong to the realm of nature (Ingold 2000). Due to their "limited cognitive and emotional capacities" animals seem to be "not responsible agents", incapable of deep relations and unable to engage in "complex and skilled activities" (McMahan 2002: 8). These themes were all reflected in my family's lived experience when deciding for Larissa to die: We took the decision in our hands as a matter of course. Larissa, on her part, did not seem to comprehend the complex intellectual decision-making process we were engaged in for days. And how could she? She was, after all, just an animal. This deep dichotomy between humans as superior, controlling, and responsible and the inferior, controlled animal relegated Larissa to the category of property: she was, after all, in our possession and as 'caring' humans it was our right and responsibility to make a final decision. Just as Ducos (in Ingold 2000: 64) states, "Human beings, as social persons, can own; animals, as natural objects, are only ownable". The decision we took, and how we took it, revealed the unquestioned ambivalence that characterised our relationships with Larissa and Laika. I was only ten years old when I first saw them, and felt immediately a strong love and affection for 'my' horses. The thought of them dying one day worried me my whole life. But why, then, did I still use the whip if I wanted them to 'learn' something they would not do right in a particular moment? Why did I still force them to work even if they wanted to stay in their field? And why did I still try to persuade them to jump over obstacles if they did not want to? Surprisingly, they still called me when I walked by their field. They rubbed their heads gently on my arm or shoulder when I stopped by and welcomed me after a period away from them. This highly ambiguous relationship, what in previous literature has been theorised as that of *trust and domination* (Ingold 2000), was reflected in the decision about Larissa's death: Deciding *for* her to die made us treat her as a non-person, almost as an object, as a being without a separate will or intentionality for us to take into account. Feeling the responsibility for our protégé, we decided *for* her death in order to save her from pain, perceiving the decision as compassionate act of 'mercy killing'.

How does deciding *for* a non-human animal on the basis of compassion compare and relate to the notion of domination seen above? In order to more fully understand the contemporary use of the word compassion, I consulted the Oxford Dictionary (2014). Compassion is here translated as "sympathetic pity and concern *for* [emphasis added] the sufferings or misfortunes of others" and one example cites that "the victims should be treated with compassion". This definition, in combination with the example, seems to function well in a hierarchical order between a merciful master and his subordinate. Our decision about Larissa's death was a compassionate, sympathetic one. Taken by us, her 'masters', *for* her, the animal. Deciding *for* someone else, then, no matter whether with compassion or cruelty, implies a control over the other, who is not able or allowed to decide or participate in a decision. The concept of compassion *for* someone, thus, seems to correspond with the treatment of animals as non-persons, or objects, in a relationship of dependency. If we take a closer look at the etymological roots of sympathy and compassion however, a different picture opens up: both expressions speak about an affinity, a *shared* feeling between certain parties. Originating from the Latin word *compati*, compassion means to suffer *with* (Online Etymology Dictionary 2001 - 2014) – *sharing* the suffering of someone else, building a bridge between different levels. Sympathy, likewise, stems from feeling *together* (*syn* – 'together' + *pathos* – 'feeling', Online Etymology Dictionary 2001 - 2015). Thus, if a master *shares* something *with* his subordinate, a relationship is more likely to meet at eye level and mutuality is possible. Compassionately *sharing* life and death *with* the non-humans we live with seems, then, rooted in a different way of being together which I will further examine below.

Trust and Correspondence

While discussing the issue of Larissa's life and death with my family, sitting inside the house with a coffee, I *thought* about all these questions. I could understand the arguments put forward and agreed to put both horses down together. However, when spending time with Laika and Larissa, or even when I was alone at night, something kept me alert or awake. I therefore decided to spend more time with the horses, to understand where my conflicting feelings originate. Slowly, over the following days, our relationship deepened. And it did not only change Larissa, or me, but my entire family and our decision.

But let's go back and try to understand what happened: When I decided to involve myself not only in a decision making process around the coffee table, but to spend more and more time with the horses, I suddenly experienced what Tim Ingold (2000: 69) calls a "[...] deep, personal and affectionate involvement... [an] involvement not just of mind or body but of one's entire, undivided being". Boundaries, which made Larissa, in our eyes, 'animal' and us 'human', started to blur step-by-step as I got to know her better. Yes, she was limping, but I noticed that her eyes were clear and full of life, her posture was energetic, and her movements showed her highest spirit in years. Every part of her body told me how she relished the warm sun on her coat, how flexibly the soil supported her painful hooves and how much she enjoyed the grass she wallowed in. Her strong movements, her liveliness, her good appetite, and her contentment told me, undoubtedly, that she wanted to live. The undivided presence and 'availability' of both, Larissa and me, created openness within the other, produced a body and mind open to become with the other, allowing a particular, personal communication of body-, sign-, and spoken language to unfold between us. Just as Despret (2004) in her work about 'Anthropo-zoo-genesis' found out: if human and horse start to attentively focus on each other, to get involved with each other, their bodies become more sensitive, start to speak to each other and embody each other's minds. When I felt how far I could enter Larissa's world through openness and attentiveness, through letting her be my teacher, I understood that she could teach me as much about death as she did about life. I was not only myself, alone with a frightening decision anymore, I was a 'becoming Larissa-Hannah', not only thinking about her life, but suddenly experiencing life *with* her. And as I understood in that moment, she, too, was not Larissa anymore, but 'becoming Hannah-Larissa'. We both shared our lives, opened up for each other and started to trust in our relationship. We were not merely agents of different species anymore, but beings *becoming with* the other. And as Donna Haraway states so strikingly, only if we enter into relationships based on mutuality and correspondence between *persons* who *transform* each other, are we able to "*become* when species meet" (2008: 5, emphasis added). Our involvement, our being-with-each-other, told us to trust each other. I 'made' a Larissa which wanted to be with me and vice versa. This process of 'making-each-other-up' through close and attentive interactions changed our entire (body-) language. Along with her showing me how much she enjoyed being alive, my body language became more self-confident. I was more and more able to express the changing relationship between Larissa and me and to tell my family what I experienced. Instead of seeking to convince my fellow humans, based upon my own engagement with Larissa, I asked them to *get involved* on their own. Not being familiar with this degree of trust and openness towards a non-human animal, my family was initially sceptical. But as they sensed how much this deep involvement had changed my appearance, body language and conviction, my father soon began to take time with Larissa too, and eventually got his answers concerning her life or death *from herself*. Not having to carry the weight of this decision alone anymore, I saw that everyone's closeness with Larissa now put her in the centre of focus and discussion. No one was discussing *for* or *against* her life anymore. Everyone became aware of her particular way of being in the world, and her personal way of joining the discussion related to her future. "Relationships based on *trust*", as Ingold (2000: 70) states, build the contrast to "those based on *domination*". Trusting Larissa as responsible agent allowed us to recognize her personal autonomy, understanding the redundancy of control (Ingold 2000). The deep, affectionate, growing relationship with her took the weight off everyone's shoulders, as she joined the discussion and taught us in these days that a decision for or against euthanasia is not a decision to be carried by the 'animals owner' alone, but that it could, and perhaps should, evolve from an open and attentive communicative engagement with each other.

Trusting our joint *becoming with*, we finally decided not to put Larissa down but to let life unfold. The first weeks after her sister's death were tough but soon after we found a new companion for her. She is now walking more than she did during the last couple of years. She is full of life and energy and shows us every day that our joint decision was the right one.

Our experiences seemed to resonate, in many ways, with Ingold's notion of the meshwork and the entanglement of humans, animals and environment, where "[...] the organism (animal or human) should be understood not as a bounded entity surrounded by an environment but as an unbounded entanglement of lines in fluid space" (2011: 64). Spending time and attentive engagement with Larissa enabled us to understand life in a different way. It emphasised what we shared as living beings, as opposed to what separated us. Our

shared process showed us that beings, as entangled lines of interaction, and their relationships in life and death, evoke living knots of mutual understanding. It reflected how shared, open decisions about life and death beyond the limits of human exceptionalism, that posit strict boundaries between ‘humans’ or ‘animals’, can potentially allow fearless, creative decisions to reveal themselves.

Concluding Reflections

Initially, neither my family nor I were able to perceive Larissa as anything other than an animal, hence it was our task to care, to decide what was best for her. As her human ‘masters’ and owners we felt the heavy weight of responsibility on our shoulders when it came to her death. Driven by fear of an uncertain future, we decided to take it in our hands and *compassionately* decide *for* the animal to die. As explored above, the predicament that we found ourselves in, and our reactions to it, echoes a wider discourse of human-animal relationships related to human mastery and control. Counteracting this notion, and our initial decision, the final result, I argue, was a shared decisions based upon growing relationships of trust. The new level of trust connecting Larissa with myself and the rest of my family based itself not upon a hierarchy of difference, but instead emphasised what was *shared* through an experientially grounded *compassionate* engagement *with* each other.

Through closely interacting with Larissa at this crucial moment in both of our lives, and the ensuing process of open, reflective thought and decision-making, I came to realise the potential of the animal’s ability to be part of defining its own time for departure (through euthanasia or ‘on time’). Putting *beings* in the centre, both humans and non-humans, and learning from their sensations towards life opens the way for *becoming with*, experiencing that we are “constitutively, companion species. We make each other up, in the flesh” (Haraway, 2008: 16).

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ESSAYS

The Politics of Walking:
Rural Women Encounters with Space and Memoir

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The Politics of Walking: Rural Women Encounters with Space and Memoir

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A group of elderly and retired women from a northern village in Spain (they call themselves las chicas, the girls), try to gather every week to take a walk together. Assembling my ethnographic notes, I describe the walk and offer an analytical foray into the following questions: What can we learn about the rural and the relationship of these women with the rural? What is the specificity of walking here? Walking is a practice that has in this case a twofold capacity: walking creates a mobile space for visibility in in which rural women's work is considered private, and thus, walking provides a precious inter-subjective space for relationality; and second, the walk enacts a particular archaeology of memoir. The landscape bears witness to the socioeconomic changes of the rural environment. Such memoirs are actualized in the walk. Finally, as las chicas walk, not only do they travel across space and time, their movement allows for a particular methodological engagement of the researcher with the methods of research. Mobilities often question what hinders mobilities. But here my question is, what is walking telling us about both the rural and these women in the rural context?

Introduction

Walking has gained increased prominence in social, cultural, geographical and anthropological works in recent years. Following the lead of de Certeau (1984 [1980]), walking has been analysed as a spatial practice that offers insights on the connection between embodied movement with space and time (Anderson 2004, Pinder 2011). In urban studies, walking has often figured as a vector to learn about how bodies, through their walking, learn to sense and learn the spaces that surround them (Pinder, 2011). Accounts of walking have served authors in delivering theoretical analyses of urban embodied experiences (Pinder 2011, Andrews et al. 2012, Pooley et al. 2014, Vergunst 2010). Vergunst goes a step further in his analysis as he takes walking as a rich practice to open up debates about urban forms, social relations and power relations that play out in familiar landscapes such as streets (2010: 98). My contribution in this case looks into a particular way of walking in a rural space. What is the specificity of walking here? What can walking offer as a practice to open up debates about women in rural environments? I draw on the work of Doughty (2013) and Vergunst (2008, 2010) to open up a debate about the social relations of rural women in the north of Spain and the political implications of such analysis. I first analyse the relation between walking and the politics of visibility of rural women in Spain. Walking, I point out, is a practice that has in this case a twofold capacity: walking creates visibility and it enacts a particular archaeology of memoir. As *las chicas* walk, not only do they travel across space and time, their movement fosters some sense of continuity and belonging and, in the same move, allows for a particular methodological engagement of the researcher with the researched. Thus, a complementary argument of the text turns to the politics of methods. Walking has received attention as one mode of fieldwork that can provide interesting methodological innovations (Aoki and Yoshimizu 2015, Bendiner-Viani 2005, Deriva 2005), for walking as a method allows us to create atmospheres for research that combine different levels of engagement. As Bendiner-Viani shows, walking the familiar public spaces with our informants provides rich narratives of the “personal and social structure of the individual’s experience of familiar public spaces” (Bendiner-Viani 2005: 395). Mobility studies often questions what hinders mobilities. But here I invert the question into: what makes these women move? What can we learn about the rural by following their walking? The analysis of walking offers insight of what mobilities facilitate or interrupt, both in the methodological and empirical level.

Methods

The material that composes this text is ethnographic. To create the structure of the article I draw on two empirical examples based on my ethnographic accounts of the walks with the women I spent most time with. Each example is accompanied by an analysis that serves to arrange sections of the article. My interest is not to represent or identify the walks in isolation, but to compose a narrative drawing on specific situations that took place during the walks. For that I do not identify singled out walks as isolated experiences, but mix the walks for analytical purposes.

My relation to the village where I conducted fieldwork was initiated six years ago when I arrived

in the village for the first time during the summer of 2010, on a private visit. Out of that visit I have been coming back regularly since then. Every year I spent a few weeks there during winter and summer, combined with more intensive visits during the fall or winter every second year. My interest in this village was sparked after observing how families living in the hills that loosely comprise the village related with food. I closely followed the communal sharing of patches of land, the interchange of food, and the collaborative feeding of scraps to the animals. Women walks quickly emerged as an important analytical category. Most of the women were already retired and had either lived in the village for all their lives, or had returned as soon as they retired. The village is situated on the coast of west Galicia, Spain. The top hills of this area of Galicia are dotted by houses which are typically surrounded by gardens, vineyards, and vegetable gardens. The mountains are now covered with eucalyptus trees planted during the sixties. As the hills go down into the coast, the Atlantic sea hosts an incessant movement of merchant ships, fishing boats and cargo ships going in and out the port of Vigo.

Las Chicas: Women Living in Rural Galicia

Las chicas is a term that the women who hosted me in the village use to refer to themselves. Girls would be the proximate translation of *chicas*. The context in which I first interacted with them is representative of the general background for women in rural Galicia. When I first travelled to this region in 2010 it had been a fairly hot and dry summer. It coincided with grape harvest so I volunteered. The big festivity of the village was coming up, and we were surrounded in a festive atmosphere. After the strenuous work, one of the women announced that later in the afternoon, they should go for a walk.

“Let’s meet tomorrow with *las chicas* to walk,” one of the girls said.

“Yes, its been a while since we went out for our walk,” another added.

The Non-Universalized Walker

A classic figure in the history of the study of walking is the *flâneur*, the wandering urban walker of the nineteenth century, an idle and contemplative white man first studied by Walter Benjamin as a prequel of the tourist. For the *flâneur* walking was an aesthetic act. One would walk to let himself be surprised by the city – its corners, its mysteries, its shops. The stroller of the city was quintessentially an urban creature, a man too, that could roam the city without being called out for immoral behaviour. De Certeau (1984 [1980]) devotes one of his chapters of his *L’invention du Quotidien* to walking. Mobility is a crucial concept throughout the book as it focuses on practices of the mundane. Interestingly, walking is analysed as a form of resistance to the opaque: walking would be an elementary form to understand the city and inhabit the city, to make memories visible, either individual or collective. In his book, de Certeau compares the practice of walking to the capacity of speech. The pedestrian enunciates the city in his footsteps as the talker enunciates his discourse in his talking. Walking is the ultimate urban activity, and the pedestrian its natural creature. Walking shapes the contours of the city, creating the space of the city by the repetitive footsteps of the pedestrians. The paradox between space and pedestrian is a paradox between allowing and impeding. There are moments when space incites walking or interrupts walking (Solnit 2001). But there are such walking practices that have been interrupted not because they did not happen, but because they were not recorded. Rebecca Solnit reminds her readers that the walking practices of women have not figured in classic texts on walking (Solnit 2001). Due to moral and sexual constrictions, women have figured in the streets as unruly subjects, heavily sexualized. This has had the effect of not only preventing women from walking and taking over public spaces, but also having these acts ignored or not narrated as such (ibid).

Works attached to the ‘mobilities turn’ define mobilities as essentially composed of space and time (Creswell 2006, Urry 2002, Davies 2012). Space either facilitates or interrupts moving bodies and those bodies are essentially defined as moving across time. But who is allowed to move and who is not? What are the effects of moving in space and time? What kind of moving gets narrated and compiled and what move remains invisible? As Pinder (2011) points out in his essay on the poetics and politics of walking, the tendency to draw on de Certeau’s formulation of walking has the effect of universalizing the ‘moving body’ through references to a supposedly universal walker that is “seemingly ungrounded and undifferentiated” (Pinder, 2011: 687). There is a need to recognize the situatedness of walking and its positioning in relation to flows of

power and practices (Creswell 2006, Wilson 1992)¹.

Going for a walk, the Spanish *paseo*, is an habitual practice in Spain. *El paseo* is a walk generally taken after lunch or before dinner when the weather allows. Arm in arm, in big or small groups, adults and children take the streets for fresh air to stretch their legs. Most city centres of Spain have big *paseos*, avenues to walk under the shade of trees. The geographical makeup of the village, however, is different. Composed of scattered houses surrounded by patches of land in this somehow chaotic and unplanned makeup, there are still many patches of land that are not fenced, and can be walked, as *caminos* are kept open between them. Those *caminos* communicate houses with other houses and are kept open by the villagers that know where the *caminos* are and lead to. To get from house to house one can either know the *caminos* still open and cross through vineyards and gardens, or take the road transited by cars. Furthermore, this village is somehow an anomaly, as there are no pedestrian walks whatsoever, as the old main *camino* has been turned into a main road with space only for automobiles. It seems that walking has been replaced by the use of cars or motorcycles. But *las chicas* still walk. Against all odds, and in a landscape that no longer welcomes pedestrians, they walk. Walking is a substantial part of their social relations².

Rural walking has been contextualized as leisure hiking, a medium for transportation from one place to another, a pleasurable way to enjoy nature, and lately, as having therapeutic capacities. None of these categories apply to *las chicas*. The 'therapeutic landscape' framework shows how specific places either contribute or negatively affect wellbeing (Anderson 2004, Milligan et al. 2004). The therapeutic qualities rural walking can offer to wellbeing have been analysed elsewhere (Gatrell 2013, Conradson 2005, Doughty 2013). In such analyses, walking is performed by patients or guests in health residences seeking to improve their wellbeing. The intentionality of such walking in the rural space is therapeutic and the actors do not necessarily belong to the rural environment. Thus, it leaves out the analytical scope of 'rural actors'. What is the walking telling us about both *the rural* and *these women* in the rural context? I identify two instances that, thanks to the walk, become visible to the analytical eye. First, the walk permits us to flesh out how rural women deal with visibility, and second, the walk is a catalyst for an archaeology of memoir, which performs the landscape into a witness of the economical and social transformation of the rural environment.

Visibility: Domestic Work vs. Open Walks

Fieldwork Vignette 1.

The walk begins. It is a very hot day; it is so hot that we meet up at seven in the evening. The walk will take us a little more than two and a half hours today. Certainly *las chicas* have all done their house chores, including getting dinner ready for when they come back. I am impressed by their outfits. I was expecting them to be wearing sneakers and comfortable clothes but instead they are wearing street clothes, have make-up on and wear comfortable yet urban shoes. They all look pretty, I think to myself, and have cared for their appearance. This, I understand, is not a hike as I expected. This is more similar to 'going out' than 'going to walk'.

¹ Wilson (1992) argues that with the intensification of the private/public separation after the Industrial Revolution (here we are just talking about urban north European settings), the presence of women in the streets was the occasion for a number of moralizing and regulatory discourses.

² In this text I pay attention to what the walking of these women tell us about rurality and walking in the specific rural setup investigated. As my fieldwork progressed, one of *las chicas* got diagnosed with high cholesterol. This produced a shift in their walking. They partially re-invented their usual walks into a new category, that they came to call *ruta del colesterol* (cholesterol route or walk). Reinventing their otherwise custom walks, they started walking these *rutas*, alongside with their usual walks. Even though only one of *las chicas* was diagnosed with high levels of cholesterol, they collectively took up the advice given to the individual. I analyse elsewhere *la ruta del colesterol* as a relational and collective dispositive of care, suggesting that the management of one's well being can also be nurtured through relational care. They see cholesterol as a threat not to the individual body (as conceptualized in medicine) but as a threat to the collective. Naturally, they respond to the collective threat with collective action: taking up the instructions of medicine together. Instead of detaching from the collective following directives in an individual way, they collectivize care directives targeted at the individual.

We are going towards the beach of Santa Marta. It is a trajectory that they have walked many times before, they tell me, since they were children and used to go swimming, spending the day at that very beach. However, the ground they step on is quite different, asphalt replaces sand. The path we follow is not a pedestrian path but a proper road, one for motor vehicles. It is more dangerous now than before, they say, because the road has many blind spots for drivers and in the summer there are even more cars because of visitors from other parts of Spain, and festivities. They admit that the conditions are not the best and are angry about not having proper paths to walk on but:

“This won’t change until a tragedy happens,” says Marina.

This time, as on other occasions, *las chicas* walk in a compact group, bouncing from side to side as they are totally immersed in their walking and chatter. The fact that *las chicas* occupy most of the road with their bodies makes them visible to the drivers. This not only protects them from being hit by a car, I think to myself, as they are visible from a distance, but allows drivers to recognize them. Every time they hear a car coming, they pay attention to the car, and move towards the edge of the road, to yield place. In fact, as it happens, each time one recognizes the other, a driver would stop by them and chat briefly.

“How are you?”, “Where are you going?”, “How are the grapes looking this year?”, “Terribly wet this year, right?” an unknown driver stopped by and asked.

“This is how I get to see people!” Marina points out. “Otherwise I would be home all day, as work is never finished. And nobody walks anymore, everyone is with their cars, so this is how we get to bump into people, going out for a walk”.

Marina clearly points out that for her the walk is a medium to interact with people. A way to get out of the ‘domestic’ sphere of their never-ending work at home and in their gardens. As Marina points out, nobody walks anymore. However, they keep on walking, even if the infrastructure is not the most appropriate for it. The infrastructure actually hinders their walking, but they reverse such hindering in an act that, following de Certeau, could be interpreted as a form of ‘resistance’. Walking would be an elementary action to inhabit the rural space for these women, as walking has the impact of re-appropriating the territory as walkable, invaded by their bouncing. As they walk together, they make the landscape *theirs*, claiming it by invading what otherwise is not supposedly meant for them but for motor vehicles. They occupy the public roads and revert them into a mixed space for walkers and vehicles.

The first performative effect of their walking is making themselves noticeable –heard, seen, talked to and about by others. At the same time, their invasion of the road, the second performative effect of their walk, makes a problem visible – the lack of pedestrian walks. Thus, the impact of certain infrastructure or lack thereof is exposed to the eye of drivers and passers-by, while at the same time *las chicas* remain visible. What does this visibility tell us about the other side of the coin i.e., about their life in the rural context?

These women are busy women. Their daily lives are bursting with activity. The tasks and chores they have differ from *chica* to *chica*, as their family lives are different from each other. Some live with their husbands, sons or daughters, even grandchildren; others live alone, like Marina and Sofia. What they have in common is the fact that all these women carry out similar domestic chores – cleaning, shopping, cooking, and farming practices. All of the *chicas* have a vegetable and flower garden. Sofia is the only one who keeps chickens, not only for herself but for Alicia and Azucena too, as they do not have the space nor the expertise to raise and kill them. Tending their vegetable gardens is a daily activity spiced up by the peaks of labour at certain times of the year: giving phosphates to the vineyards, checking and repairing the poles that sustain them, picking fruit, killing chickens, driving to Portugal to get new young chickens, and so on. Such demanding work as picking fruit, repairing poles, or killing chickens is done together rather than alone. Escuriol Martinez et al. (2014) argue that not only have the productive activities of rural women typically been ignored in scholarly work but, and more importantly, these activities tend to remain invisible as most men in the rural context joined the agricultural model (monoculture) promoted in the sixties, while women kept practicing a small-scale model focused on small patches of land, rotation, and combination of animals,

vegetable gardens and fruit gardens (Escurriol Martinez et al. 2014). This is the arrangement I found going on with the elderly women I did my research with. Women tended their small patches of land and often shared the work of, for example, grape harvesting, corn cultivation or distribution of food scraps to the small farm and domestic animals. The work of these women fed their families and others through their extended network of food exchange among friends and family. Tending vegetable, flower, and fruit gardens goes hand in hand with making artisanal food products such as jams, cakes, dry flowers and wine. Food crafts have been traditionally a way to preserve excess food and agricultural production in rural communities, but in the case at hand, it is a form of sustaining and nurturing relations, as there is no monetary exchange whatsoever. Thus, I identify their food-production practices as a way of *feeding relations* rather than creating business relations. They would feed their networks through the reciprocity of exchanging food amongst each other to keep on feeding their families and their gardens. These feeding relations are eminently situated in a domestic realm.

The walks are a way to re-socialize outside of the farming work, which is, in the case of rural women in Galicia, a continuum of domestic work. Going for a walk is an opportunity to get out of the house, put on nice clothes (as they do) and put on some make-up. An obvious opportunity to be visible out of the domestic space is to take a walk together.

Archaeology of Memoir

Fieldwork Vignette 2.

(...) After a good while we arrive at another beach called Melide. After Melide, a building in ruins on the horizon catches my attention. It is on a pier, huge and by the sea. We are facing the ruins of the Massó factory, an abandoned fish cannery. Not every *chica* but almost every woman in the region had worked at least once in her lifetime under its roof. Sofia's mother worked there. Susana's mother worked there. Marina and her sister got jobs at Massó when they were young, removing tiny anchovy spines. Almost everyone I would meet in the village has had some relation to Massó. Now it is all ruins.

"The City Council had a project to destroy the old factory buildings and build luxury-summer-apartments. It is a doomed plan now with the financial and political crisis in Spain," explains Azucena.

"The factory fell victim to urban and political speculation," adds Sofia.

Massó is a spectacularly big complex made by the main building (the factory) and several smaller adjacent structures like the pharmacy, workers rooms, the medic, the shop, and so on. Like a miniature town.

I am surprised how the chatter abruptly stops in Massó for a while. When we walk beside the factory a new silence takes hold of *las chicas*. After a while, the conversation resumes. It is not by chance that we arrived at Massó. It is a place *las chicas* often visit during their walks as it is a standing building from their past.

Walking practices have become an important site in the analysis of commemorative and political actions (Bonilla 2011). Once a year, a number of *chicas* and other friends hike into the woods on a walk that finishes at a monument where they symbolically commemorate the Spanish Republic and those killed by the fascist rebels during the Civil War. This commemorative walk creates a particular collective engagement with the history of the village and, more broadly, with the history of Spain. The walk turns into an emotional action. Emotions, argues Cole, help to provide and seal knowledge about the past in a way that is turned into a lived experience (Cole 2001).

Yet, the kind of memorialization that takes place in front of the Massó factory is both intimate and political, familiar and public. This walk into the factory impacts their personal lives as much as the political and public, for their walks are not politically oriented, but their presence has a political bearing. They create a social practice that makes them visible in the public space, a group of women that decidedly put on their

good clothes and some make-up to take walks without a determined purpose.

“You know, these [walks] are an occasion to keep track of how people are doing. Passing by the homes of people we can check on each other and see if someone knows how he or she is doing. We often [when we go to walk] take a detour to check out how the construction of a new house or how our fields are doing. Most of us have lived here before [in the past], so we know our way around. So we keep on cutting through fields, or crossing through small forests. This is how it has always been here,” says Marina.

Their social practice of walking leads to their walking by and through places – houses of people, buildings, lands, factories and so on. The visualization and passing by such locations permit histories to flourish. Sharing such histories of people and places is a way of sharing social knowledge – about the history of the place and about their lives. Walking in this way functions as a repository of memories, which is also a repository of knowledge about the rural landscape and its socio-economic changes. A world that is not an abstract entity, but local and lived in the landscape. A landscape that bears witness to the historical changes that have cut through rural Galicia, and that these women memorialize in their walks.

Their walks are not guided by anyone in particular but created by their own local histories. Once they convene at the meeting point, a route will be chosen. Marina says: “[we] know our way around. So we keep on cutting through fields, or crossing through small forests. This is how it has always been here.” *Las chicas* are creating their own shared territory of memories and knowledge through their walking practices. For *las chicas* the walkability of the village, then, does not depend on the built environment, like in the previous section on visibility. The built environment – roads made only for cars, fences, or almost invisible *caminos* – do not hinder walkability. It is their shared memories revived in their walks that make the landscape apt to their walking. And walking makes that knowledge alive, as their walking reiterates the paths they know. Here most clearly, the interconnection between memorialization and what mobilities allow for, even though the infrastructure hinders it, becomes a salient characteristic of the walks.

Conclusion

In this essay I have analysed walking in relation with elderly women living in the rural context of Spanish Galicia. Such description fosters an exploration of the politics of visibility/invisibility of rural women and the relation between mobilities and memorialization. Walking, I show, is a relational practice that has a twofold capacity: walking makes these women into visible subjects in the rural context, providing the women with inter-subjective space for relationality; and second, it enacts a particular archaeology of memoir through contact with the landscape. I want to point out that as *las chicas* walk, not only do they travel across space and time, their movement fosters some sense of belonging and facilitates an analysis of the situation of rural elderly women in Galicia, what I call here *the politics of walking*. When they stubbornly occupy a space that has been taken away from them, they re-enact the landscape as belonging to their lives by walking time after time. Thus, the walkability of the built environment turns out to be defined not by the material infrastructure, but by the shared knowledge of the walks, the *caminos*, and their memories and recollections of places. The women create their own intervention into walking. They don't hike. They don't look for a pleasurable contact with nature. The destination of the walk is not what matters to *las chicas*, as they do a round trip. They do not have a destination or aim. They do re-interpret the *flâneur* in their own way. Walking would be an elementary form of understanding and inhabiting the city for de Certeau, of making memories visible, either individual or collective. Walking is the ultimate urban activity, and the pedestrian its natural creature. Walking in rural areas seems to be a practice limited to the activities of transportation, sporting, or the pleasurable enjoyment of nature. However, in the walk analysed in these pages, *las chicas* enact walking as a way to continue inhabiting the rural, which in their case is a way to keep their memories alive and get out of their never-ending domestic chores into the visible public space – even if that entails walking through dangerous roads.

I want to conclude the discussion section with a methodological intervention³. An analytical exploration of the walks of *las chicas* has something to add to social science methods too. Walking is a methodology that has been used in previous research on women's political situation in Spain. Walking was the methodology implemented by the Madrilenian feminist collective *Precarias a la Deriva*. The *derivas* were walks undertaken by the researchers with the women subjects of the investigation. The topic was to study the situation of migrant women in Madrid in the context of an economic and political shift in Spain in 2004. As more Spanish women were incorporated in the labour force, migrant women took the role of paid caregivers to cover care work. With the *derivas*, a group of researchers cut through the city of Madrid following the trajectories of women care workers – from home to work, from work to school to pick up their employees' children, from there to their own children's school, and so on. *Derivas* made the circuits of female precarity visible and analysable. Walking was chosen because it gave research a fluid character. Thanks to the *deriva* it was possible to cut through different environments, crossing through diverse spatial, temporal and social spaces, which is actually how we compose our lives.

The ethnographic potential of conducting walking tours has been analysed also by Aoki and Yoshimizu (2015). The authors wanted to explore the experimental possibilities and limits of walking as a methodology. In their text on women sex workers in two different cities, they used walking tours as an ethnographic method that functioned as a mode of 'historical engagement' to reflect on the lived and unfolding relations that the subjects of their research had with space and bodily relationships towards it. In contrast to sit-down interviews, walking allowed for moments in which different engagements with space and time unfolded during the walks. At the same time, the territories of the walks elicited memories and experiences that unfolded during the ethnographic encounter.

Walking, as I stated in the introductory section of this text, has been incorporated into ethnographies by scholars interested in the urban space, and walking has been seen as a way to engage and shape the urban territory. Space was the main analytical entrance to theorize walking (Bendiner-Viani 2005). Here I propose that walking is a practice that, in juxtaposition with their domestic rural work, creates a mobile space for visibility. Walking practices for these elderly women in the rural context has a political effect, as occupying the streets turns these women into visible actors in an otherwise setting that more and more impedes their visibility. The walk too has the capacity of sustaining ways of knowing that are collective. And those ways are re-enacting memories that foster knowledge preservation practices. These ways of knowing are not located in the abstract realm but are enacted by and through the practice of walking, thus producing a shared understanding and engagement with space (O'Neill and Hubbard 2010). The landscape is made a witness of the past and the recent socio-economic changes in the rural village.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank the women who welcome me during fieldwork. This paper was made possible by an ERC Advanced Grant (AdG09 Nr. 249397) financing the study of Eating Bodies in Western Practice and Theory lead by Annemarie Mol. Thanks for their comments and support to the 'team' Annemarie Mol, Emily Yates-Doerr, Filippo Bertoni, Sebastian Abrahamsson, Else Vogel, Cristobal Bonelli, Anna Mann, and Tjitske Holtrop. Thanks also to Kristine Krause, Justine Laurent, and Emil Holland for encouragements and critique. Finally, I would like to thank the three anonymous reviewers of this journal for their helpful remarks, and Mercedes Duff for correcting my English.

³ Ingold and Vergunst (2008) notice one of the striking characteristics of ethnography is that much of the actual work is carried out on foot. The issue of walking often figures in ethnographers' field notes, no doubt, and in their results too. Beautiful examples can be found in the following texts: Pinder (2011), Pink (2007), Vergunst (2010), Anderson (2004), Bonilla (2011), *Precarias a la Deriva* (2005).

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01

Humans and the Environment

EXPERIENCES OF FIELDWORK

Learning respect in the mountains
*Children's perception of nature and its master spirits in a
Pehuenche community*

GABRIELA ALEJANDRA PINA AHUMADA



Figure 1: The field site is a Pehuenche community located between rivers, mountains and araucaria forests

All photos © Gabriela Alejandra Pina Ahumada



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Learning respect in the mountains

Children's perception of nature and its master spirits in a Pehuenche community

GABRIELA ALEJANDRA PINA AHUMADA

Introduction

On a warm spring day in Lonquimay, my three little host nieces (aged 6 to 10) and I go out looking for wild mushrooms in a small patch of forest near the house. They run around and climb the trees, racing each other. They play, sing, joke, and constantly direct my attention to the things they like: trees, flowers, birds and streams of water. Their contagious laughter is echoed by the surrounding mountains.

As we head towards the house with our bounty, the girls become visibly serious and point to a tree not far from the path. Speaking fast and interrupting each other, they explain to me that people once saw a naked woman standing on top of the tree. They say she must certainly have been a witch or an evil spirit, and is probably still around, even if we can't see her now. They suggest that we keep our distance from the tree and walk quietly until we get home.

The girls' abrupt change in attitude catches my attention as it signals the importance assigned to this information, and it is also a common trait in the conversations I have had about supernatural beings with both Pehuenche children and adults in the region.

Research Context

My research deals with childcare ideas and practices among the Pehuenche people of southern Chile, focusing on kinship, emotional development and personhood incorporating children's perspectives and learning processes. My work will explore how childcare is related to the creation, strengthening or dissolution of kinship ties, how emotional life is handled, and how care contributes to the acquisition of personhood. By attempting to answer these questions, I hope to understand the potential role of care in fostering sociability among the Pehuenche, and to explore the underlying ideas and practices of kinship and personhood that are involved therein, with a particular focus on the lived experience and emotional lives of children.

Initially, since my focus is on family life, the issue of children's perception of landscape and environment was not included as a research topic. However, through my involvement in children's daily experiences, and through engaging with adults in conversations about children and childcare, I have come across a range of ideas and practices that highlight the importance of the environment and its relationship to people as a means to understanding Pehuenche ideas and practices about personhood and sociality.

The Field

I'm currently carrying out fieldwork in a rural community of roughly 2000 people in southern Chile, located in the Andes foothill region near the Argentinean border. Here, Pehuenche family life exists among hills, rivers, streams, araucaria forests and pasture lands (Figure 1). Through the year, the weather conditions vary from heavy snow in the winter to burning sun and long periods of drought in the summer.

As a way to spend some time with children during the summer holidays and weekends, I accompany them on their trips to the places where they take their animals for pasture, to go foraging for mushrooms in the forests, and for a swim in the river (Figures 2 to 5).

It is in these moments that we engage in conversations about landscape and nature. The children enjoy scaring each other (and me) by telling stories of the supernatural beings that one could encounter in the forests and lakes. In my talks with grownups, the stories are often repeated: not to make me afraid but to instruct me about the proper way to enter spaces dominated by nature, such as mountains and rivers, to avoid



Figure 2: One of the children's favourite activities is foraging for mushrooms

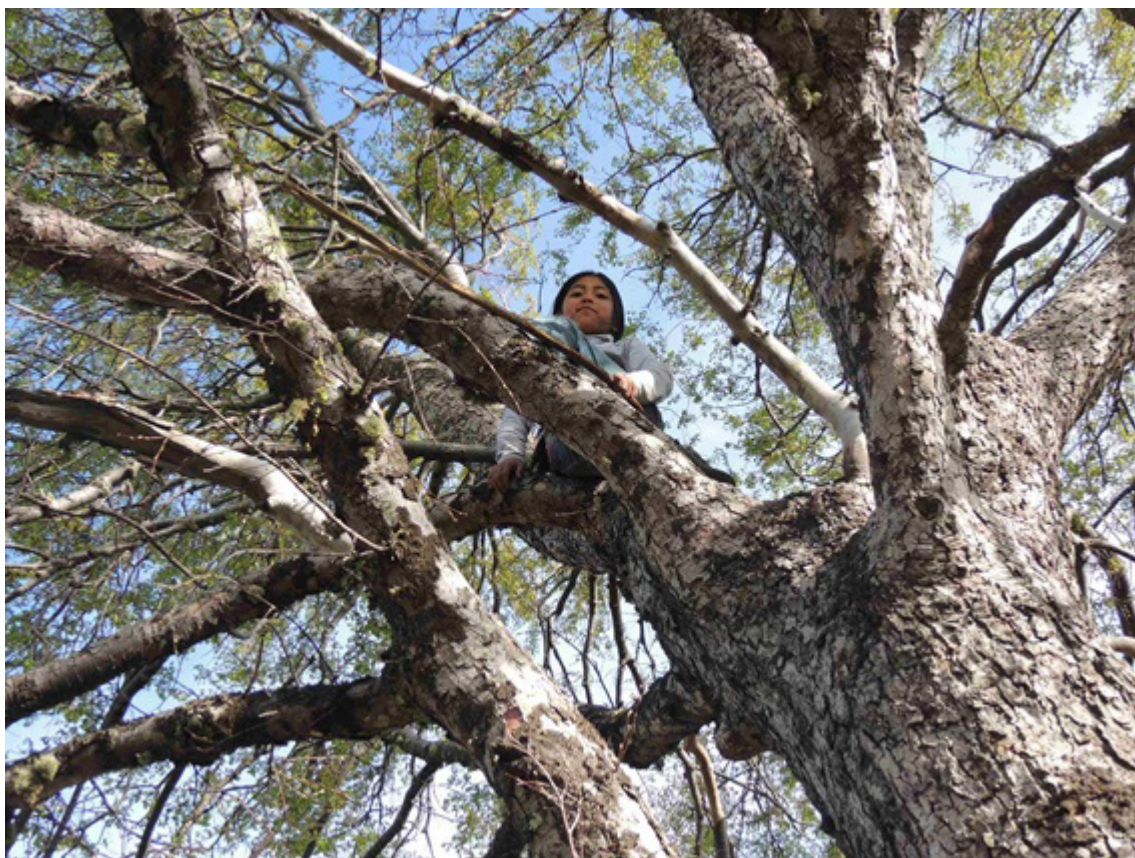


Figure 3: They have to climb trees to look for mushrooms



Figure 4: On hot summer days, children enjoy swimming in the river



Figure 5: Children play in the forest

the revenge of the *ngen* in the forms of ill health or bad weather. Pehuenche tradition emphasises the respect one should show to natural entities. When entering a river or a lake, for example, one should ask permission from the *ngen*, stating that one comes with respect and good intention. Children are especially prone to upsetting the *ngen* because they haven't learned to restrain themselves and are often too loud and playful.

In learning to interact with nature and its master spirits, children learn to engage in productive and respectful relationships with others outside their kin group, which is a key element in the constitution of Pehuenche personhood. The scary stories are cautionary tales about the ill consequences of being discourteous. They teach children that they are not exempt from rules and that, just like adults, they can be held accountable for their actions. In a society that emphasises individuality and self-determination over hierarchical structures, passing on the value of respect is key in organising social life.



02

Walking Threads

Interrupted everyday motions –
Journeying with threads and lives



Photo © Walking Threads

RAGNHILD FRENG DALE



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Interrupted everyday motions – Journeying with threads and lives

RAGNHILD FRENG DALE

An afternoon in Seaton Park, Aberdeen, March 21 2014, in the small breathing space between events.

A thread, shimmering with golden linings, binds and holds five human beings together.

Sensing myself – and us – in thread-motion, adjusting to the crisp air around,
with that particular northern feeling of warm sun in a cold season.

My woollen jumper and blue duffle jacket shield me from the cold air;
grateful I have my hat on and no bag to carry as we go along.

Our detached and free-floating bodies no longer separate, but part of a common movement guided
by a golden line that we are setting in motion and set in motion by.

Sensing the shared existence and the fragility by which we humans exist, walking in a non-regular
shape that carries us in directions we had neither planned nor expected.

Being the unexpected, sensing the unexplainable.

Breathing and moving connection(s).

People, wind, grass, trees threading through the things we do.

Becoming a point of attraction, amusement, astonishment, or treated with indifference;
interrupting the way of the everyday and playfully overturning the expected way of moving,
walking and being in a public place.

Sensing how safe I feel, in this framework,

moving and being moved,

entangling our hands, arms, fingers and threads, our attention and our consciousness focused on a
common cause.

The absence of words, not at all missed.

The journey becoming as we move along, unplanned, exploring.

A place some have never seen, and we all see anew for the first time.

The river, sparkling with movement and life, refracting the rays of the sunshine to bathe us
from two angles at once, tangling our lives together through the air and molecules and flows of
unintended intentions that move us along.

The path, dry at first, then partially muddy, a small complication to negotiate between us and the
elements – the sensation that our bodies are not separate but one assemblage moving with different
wills, meeting like the river flowing next to us.

Reaching a point that feels like an end, converging on a time as the sun moves and the moment
starts ebbing.

Leaving our connecting thread behind, still
strung out, and blowing in the wind.

The sense of freedom as the thread is left behind, though I never felt unfree whilst holding it.

Running back across the park, between patches of grass and soil and trunks of trees, balancing on
benches, rolling over and lying fully outstretched in the grass, in the sunshine, our faces turned up
towards the sky and our skeletons sensing the soil beneath us.

Walking back to a familiar world.

Carrying the gift of a shared experience between us.

Separate, connected, together, and apart.

Acknowledgments

*With special thanks to my fellow travellers: Paola Esposito, Valeria Lembo, Peter Loovers, and Brian Schultis
– and to Caroline Gatt and Gey Pin Ang for weaving our lives together. Without you none of this would have
been.*

Introducing the Walking Threads Project

PAOLA ESPOSITO &
JAN PETER LAURENS LOOVERS



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Introducing the Walking Threads Project

PAOLA ESPOSITO &
JAN PETER LAURENS LOOVERS

The bare and cold room with wooden floors of Dunbar Hall, Aberdeen, had become a place where bodies were moving and discussions flowed. From the 17th to the 22nd of March 2014, a performance workshop, titled “Performance reflexivity, intentionality and collaboration: A Sourcing Within worksession”, was hosted at the University of Aberdeen as part of the ERC-Advanced Grant project Knowing From the Inside led by Tim Ingold at the Department of Anthropology. The organizers of the workshop, anthropologist Caroline Gatt and performer Gey Pin Ang, aimed to explore how intentionality and reflexivity work together at the centre of creative decision-making in performance, in order to assess its relevance to anthropological practice. Using physical and vocal exercises, participants explored modalities of action that felt organic rather than forced; both in movement and in sound.

Following the workshop, five of us – Brian Schultis, Peter Loovers, Ragnhild Freng Dale, Valeria Lembo and Paola Esposito – found ourselves still in tune with and responsive to each other in ways we had not expected. On the 21st of March, a sun-filled Friday in early spring, we decided to spend our afternoon together going for a walk in Old Aberdeen, towards Seaton Park, in the vicinity of Dunbar Hall and the University of Aberdeen. After visiting the medieval St. Machar’s Cathedral our walk took an unusual turn. As we lingered passed the graves in the churchyard, Valeria took a ball of golden thread out of her bag. This was an object of “personal relevance” that she had brought to the work-session as a prop to work with, following Gey Ping’s instructions. Now she was unravelling it, admiring it shimmering in the sunlight, and offering one end to each of us as she did so (see Lembo, this volume). From that moment onwards, as though under a silent spell, our stroll transformed, turning into what we retrospectively, and on Peter’s suggestion, have come to know as “Walking Threads”.

We resumed walking in silence, out of the graveyard into the street. With each of us holding on to the thread we let the thread walk with and between us, so that we were both leading and being led by it – pulling, following, sensing and guiding. As we passed through the gates of Seaton Park, which is adjacent to the Cathedral, the scene changed. Suddenly surrounded by the luxurious vegetation of the park, a sense of possibility captured us. Following one of the footpaths, we descended into a beautiful and carefully maintained garden. There our walk spread out as a myriad of forms and colours, and intangible qualities caught our attention as we were swept into a transient flow. Not only did we become tangled in the thread, but also with trees, passers-by, the wind, Peter’s video camera. Our limbs and clothes were caught in a meshwork of lines and knots, bindings and unbindings. All the while the thread drew ever-shifting shapes through the air. By the time we were in a less trodden area of Seaton Park, by the River Don, “walking” had become more akin to dancing or, as Brian later remarked, “drifting” together. By the river’s bank, we tangled the thread to a solitary post. There our walk with the thread came to an end. Not so in our lives. Walking back the way we came, a sense of play and exploration still accompanied us.

After that day, and in the months that followed, we exchanged emails and shared pictures and videos of the walk. We began to ask ourselves what to make of our experiences on that Friday afternoon. In keeping up with the creative momentum, we decided to give ourselves some time to allow our individual thoughts about the walk to take shape. We set up a web-based group archive where we would gather material relating to the Walking Threads and individually, or in some cases in collaboration, began contemplating on its practical and theoretical reverberations. The collection of essays, reflections and creative interventions in this volume is the result of that engagement. It can also be read as an exercise in attunement – no longer pursued in each other’s presence but across time and space as we live our lives in different places, covering the distance through our memories and imaginations.

As our conversation evolved and we shared our initial reflections, common themes and perspectives emerged – such as our common reference to Deleuze and Guattari (Esposito, Loovers, and Schultis, this volume) and Ingold (Esposito, Loovers, and Lembo, this volume) – binding together our individual experiences and expressions of the event. This theoretical or philosophical commonality is not that surprising

as Deleuze and Guattari and Ingold have been at the front of a different approach towards materials in which movement and becoming stand at the core (for instance, Deleuze and Guattari 2003; Ingold 2013). There could have been other entry points. Strathern and Green, for example, refer to threads and knots as metaphors to engage with and describe complexity within anthropological language and thought. Green (2014) questions the tensions that come into play with entanglements and how differences are created in each encounter. Strathern (2014: 34-35) contends that the ways in which relations come into being need to be an essential part of ethnographic description and the forming of anthropology. Descriptions are, she holds, themselves an intervention in reality, and as such internal and external conditions shape both the reality and its description as they come into being (ibid: 23-27).

Whilst we applaud their emphasis on relations, moments of fixity and fluidity, and theoretical or anthropological interventions, we have taken a different route and one that bears more resemblance with the philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari and the anthropology of Tim Ingold. If we were to link our work to the metaphorical threads of anthropological thought, as Green advises us to do, we suggest that we are closest to Tim Ingold's call for finding ways of "corresponding" with the world (Ingold 2013: 7-8). Walking Threads could be understood as one such exploration towards correspondence, in emphasising the methodological potentials of an "education of attention" (cf. Tim Ingold), where we grow with things and beings in this world. The engagement with the golden thread, as a material that matters, affords the unfolding of a particular way of thinking that is *with* the world rather than *of* or *about* it. Our concern is not with description per se, but with the affordances of different ways to engage with and in the world. To us, the thread is not a metaphor, it is a concrete thing which both guides and shapes our experience in definite if open-ended ways. To walk with the thread, and to stay with it, is to witness how "experience" takes form and begets "meaning", "thought" and "imagination" in manifold ways. As we share our experiences with the thread, we weave movements and stillness, utterances and silences, thoughts and dreams with those of others. The threads keep us grounded and connected whilst allowing "tensions" to arise and resolve. The literal tensions of the thread through contra-movements are entangled with our theoretical and poetical descriptions, which again come to shape our experiences as we keep going along.

Since that sunny day in Aberdeen, those first tentative explorations and experiments that make up this special issue, have spread and have become entangled with other places and people. Caroline Gatt and Gey Pin Ang, as initiators of the workshop, were the first to be invited to join in the Walking Threads project and our subsequent work around it. We also decided to share our Walking Threads project more widely by taking it to new academic settings. Our first public presentation of the Walking Threads was at the conference "Spaces of Attunement: Life, Matter, and the Dance of Encounters", Cardiff University, March 30-31, 2015. The second was at the "Beyond Perception 15 symposium", University of Aberdeen, September 1-4, 2015.

In engaging other people in walking with the threads, we have refrained from offering an explanation of the walk in our presentations. Our intention has not been to impose meaning onto the Walking Threads, but to entice participants into questioning, wondering, exploring and experiencing through the different threads presented, both literal and metaphorical. Attempting to stay true to our original experience of the Walking Threads while guiding others into it, we have used movement, song and poetic expression (see for example Freng Dale, this volume) to create, and re-create, conditions that made the first walk with the thread possible for us: a suspension of direct literal communication; an attitude of "listening"; a sense of opening to the unexpected – elements that had already emerged in "Performance reflexivity, intentionality and collaboration: A Sourcing Within worksession".

To continue our conversations amongst ourselves and with others, we have set up a website at www.walkingthreads.wordpress.com to document the experiences as well as to give possibility to other participants in the Walking Threads to contribute with their comments and feedback. We have also commenced exploring other threads. Peter Loovers, for example, has engaged with threading trees while other artists have shown interest in sharing their own particular approaches to working with threads. Our shared email exchanges form numerous other threads that spread across space, time, materials and states of mind. So where does this engagement take us? What thoughts and images does it conjure up? What dreams of the future? We suggest that underlying this project is a sense of urgency toward restoring our connection with the world in ways that are playful, sensitive, sustainable and decentralized.

Exploring the interweaving of perception, action and thought through the threads, witnessing its

intersections and trajectories of becoming, is a simple yet important move in this direction. Walking Threads is an exercise in multiplicity. It is to see and to experience ourselves and the world as interwoven. Play and playfulness are central to this engagement. As Ravetz has highlighted, anthropologists tend to orthodoxically consider play as a topic for study, rather than something an anthropologist indulges in while working (Ravetz 2011: 175). By intersecting and linking methods of work pertaining to the performative practice with the anthropological and philosophical research (see for instance Ang, this volume), one of our biggest challenges (and gentle provocations) has been indeed to integrate play and playfulness within the academic context and our researchers' practices and lives.

Finally, it is likely that, had it not been for the Walking Threads experience, the five of us would have lost sight of each other. Researchers meet at conferences and workshops and share great conversations, touching moments and illuminating experiences. They promise each other to exchange bibliographies and ideas and to stay in touch. Yet, because of their busy, at times chaotic lives, those conversations and exchanges seldom are coming to fruition. Walking Threads gently bonded us together. Its materiality afforded us the opportunity, if ever so fragile, to stay connected, to spin each other's creativities and weave them together through collaboration.

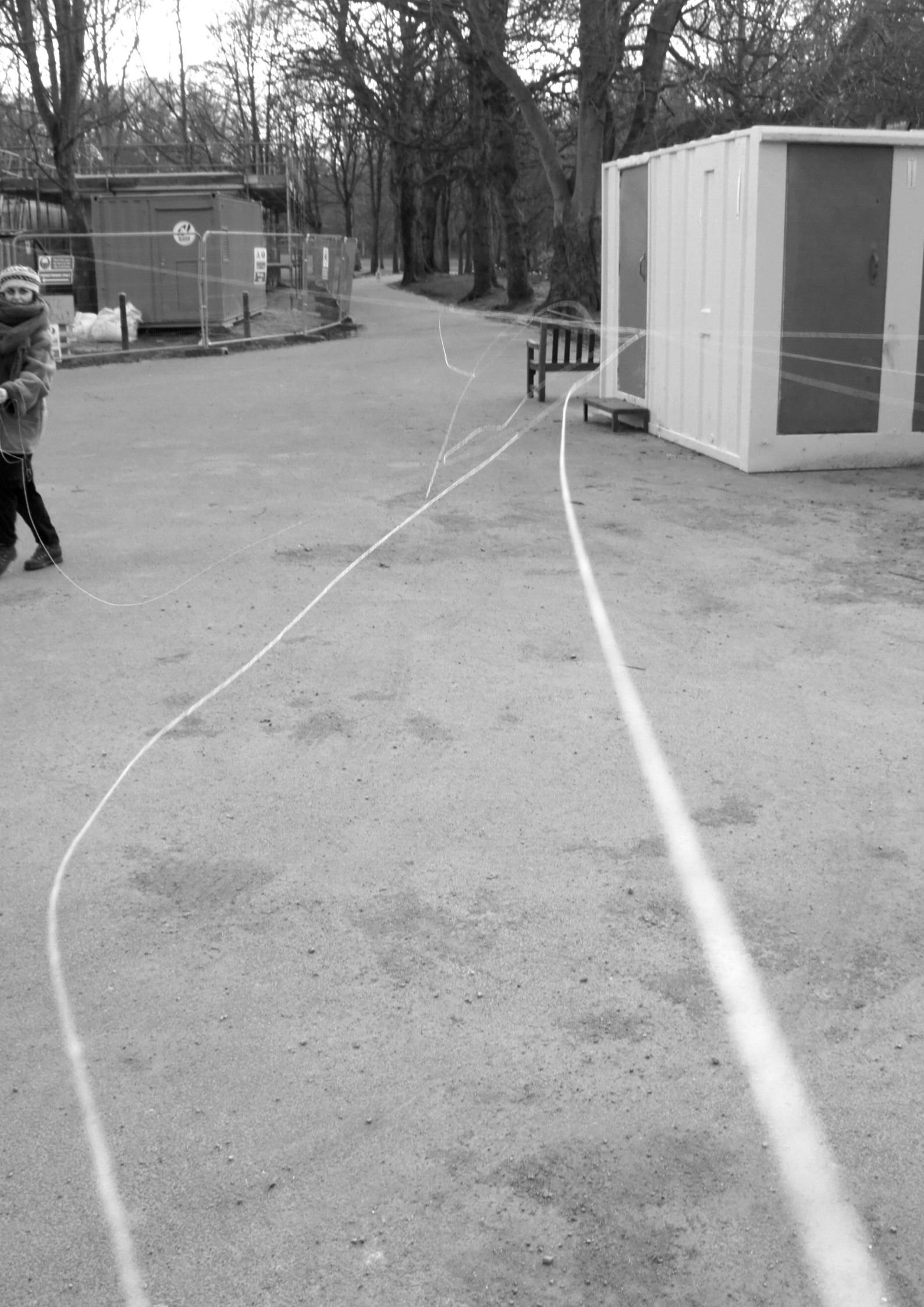
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We would like to thank the editorial board of The Unfamiliar for dedicating a special issue of their journal to the Walking Threads project and for their insightful comments on our work. We further want to thank all the participants in this issue, particularly Ragnhild Freng Dale and Valeria Lembo for their contributions to this introduction.

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“Walking threads, threading walk”:

Embroidering reflection



Figure 1: “Walking threads, threading walk”, embroidering reflection
All photos © Valeria Lembo

VALERIA LEMBO

Improvising, playing and singing with a golden thread



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“Walking threads, threading walk”: Embroidering reflection

VALERIA LEMBO

This series of embroideries on textile (see Figure 1, 2, 3, 4, 5) was inspired by the “Walking Threads” event, which took place spontaneously and alongside the “Performance reflexivity, intentionality and collaboration: A Sourcing Within worksession” in Dunbar Hall, University of Aberdeen. Before starting the worksession, Gey Pin Ang compiled a list of things for participants to bring along, including “either a daily object or an object from [y]our childhood or a dream” (see also Ang, this volume). As an object from my childhood I chose a bundle of golden thread. By acting and improvising with it under Gey Pin’s guidance, I could explore its “affordances” (Gibson 1986) beyond the usual ones, searching both for possible and impossible affordances; sensing the thread, playing with it, relating to it as though it was for the first time: an exercise in astonishment and wonder. It was a thread and not a thread, it was more than just a thread.

I re-enacted the atmosphere of my childhood games, my physical theatre improvisations with songs and texts resonating with the memories of my grandmother - a professional embroiderer who taught me the first rudiments of her art. Moving and acting in the workshop room, together with the thread, allowed me to re-live the imaginative and playful attitude of my younger self, wherein a thread could transform itself into an animal, into a rope on which to balance, or into an instrument to play, hence enacting a ‘poetics of affordances’ which animated and affected my processes of memory and imagination.

Walking With A Golden Thread

After the workshop I went for a walk together with my fellow participants, Brian, Paola, Peter and Ragnhild, in order to see the medieval St. Machar Cathedral and the adjacent Seaton Park. The thread was still with me. Leaving St. Machar’s Cathedral, I impulsively took it out of my bag. I was holding the thread as I stepped around the old graves of the cemetery while trying to keep on to that same explorative attitude of wonder I had during the workshop. I passed the thread to each of my fellow walkers at the gate of the Cathedral, and we all started walking and moving with it in ways we had not intended. By sharing the thread, as we had previously shared singing during the worksession, the playfulness of our individual and collective improvisations in the workshop room leaked out of that time and space: it “exceeded”. The playful exploration of the thread’s affordances hence was collectively reenacted in the park, becoming an “enabling constraint” (Manning 2009: 230), through which, in turn, we could mutually explore the participants’ and the park’s intertwined affordances.

By walking and holding the thread, whilst simultaneously being held by it, we started a “journey”, as Ragnhild Freng Dale (this volume) names it, across the park: St. Machar’s Cathedral, the cemetery, a gate, dust that we inhaled, brown leaves, white flowers, benches to pay attention to or to jump on, a narrow path, a wide open green space beyond the whole length of the thread, uncounted diagonals of our w(e)aving arms, joints bending, shoe laces, curious and non-curious people passing by, a dog, a curve, a slope, a crossing, the smell of the hoed ground, a twig entangled, the noise of the river getting closer. In this collective coupling of perception and action (Ingold 2000, 2011a), in order to keep playing, our attention had to stay as open as the park we were in, engaging in a search for meaningful and creative modes of “being-in-the-park”.

The thread was shimmering in the sunshine, moving through the air, as well as through our fingers, constantly animated by the currents of the Aberdonian wind. By proceeding with the walk, as we were moving across Seaton Park, the thread’s webbed shape was ever-changing. We stopped several times in order to contemplate the beauty of the movements of these glittering patterns through the air. Observing the threaded web shaking and changing its shape according to our movements and to the air’s movement in the park made me reflect on the link between wind, movements and materials and on the Ingoldian notion of the “weather-world” (Ingold 2007b, see also Looers, this volume).

Breathing With A Golden Thread

As a former practitioner of a breathing awareness technique for singers called *Atem*, *Tonus*, *Ton* (Breath,

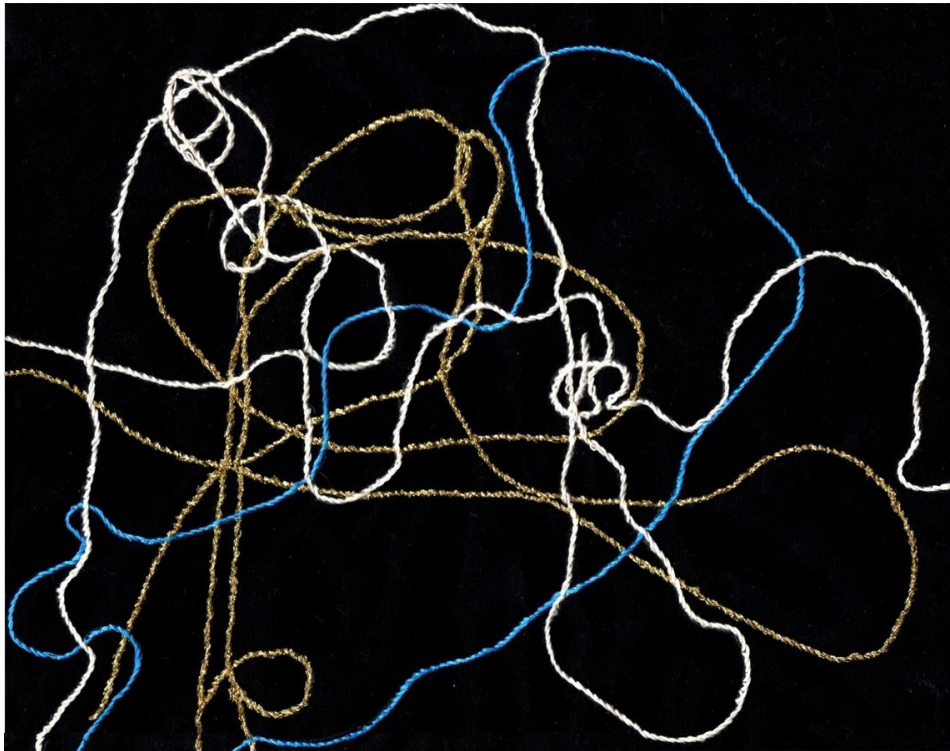


Figure 2: "Walking threads, threading walk", embroidering reflection

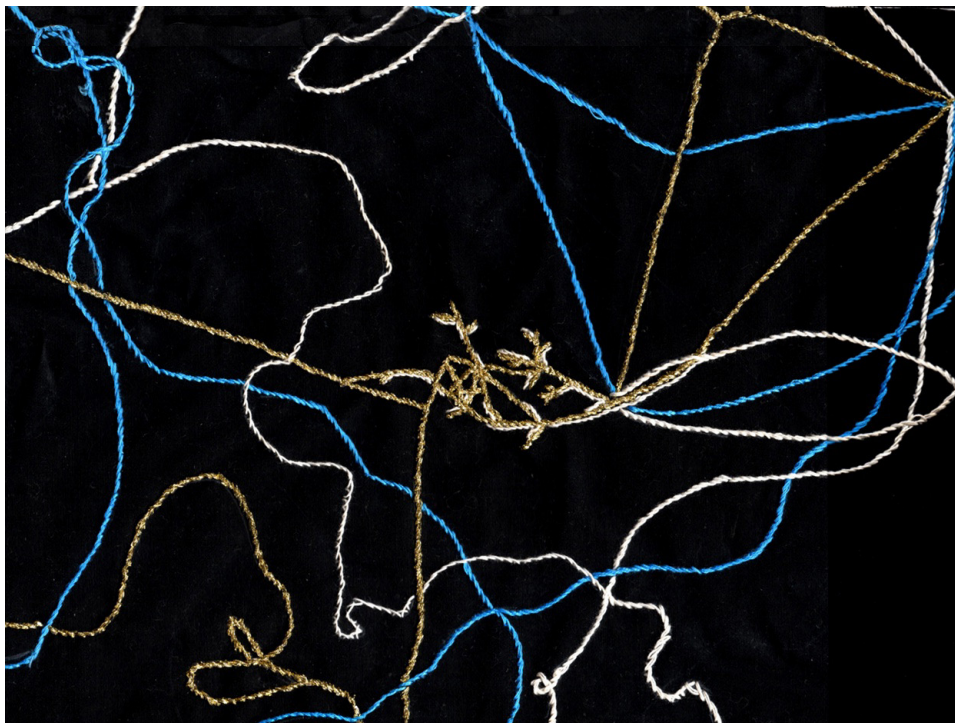


Figure 3: "Walking threads, threading walk", embroidering reflection



Figure 4: "Walking threads, threading walk", embroidering reflection



Figure 5: "Walking threads, threading walk", embroidering reflection

Tone, Sound), developed from German breath-therapist Ilse Middendorf's research and teaching principles while adapted specifically for singing, I have learned how breathing and movement are intimately connected. During the walk I tried to observe and to "actively listen" (see also Ang, this volume) to what was going on, in terms of air circulation within and without my body. According to Middendorf, breathing and movement are indeed like a playing couple: breath fuels movement whilst being guided by it, as well as movement rising from breath (Middendorf 2005).¹

The Aberdonian wind was animating not only the thread, but also our movements with it. In turn, our movements and actions with the object affected the quality of our breathing processes. By "drifting" together across the park, as Brian Schultis (this volume) writes, the thread drew the entanglements of our bodies (and of the things that we encountered) in the weather-world. Lines of interchange occurring between wind currents and our breaths became visible through the air. This sort of bodily engagement with the thread shows some similarities with the one between the kite and the kite-flyer described by Ingold. As Ingold writes, these are "both jointly immersed in the current of air" (Ingold 2010: 133), likewise we were jointly immersed with the thread in the wind. Ingold develops his discussion by highlighting the importance of the "medium" within this kind of relation: "the medium is a condition of interaction, than it follows that the qualities of that interaction will be tempered by what is going on in the medium, that is by the weather" (ibid.). The Walking Threads event and exercise enabled us to visualise and sense through our fingers, and around our bodies, precisely how our social interaction as breathing beings was tempered by the currents of the wind as medium.

Embroidering With A Golden Thread

Once back home, I chose embroidery as a reflexive technique to engage with the "Walking Threads" event. An important source of inspiration was an edited book titled *Redrawing Anthropology*, in which Ingold calls for a "Graphic Anthropology" (2011b). The notion of "Graphic Anthropology" aspires to a rekindling of the discipline, where "to follow the materials, to learn the movements and to draw the lines" (Ingold 2013) are at the very core of its agenda.

As a preparatory stage, I started drawing many sketches to be copied on textile and embroidered with golden thread. Keeping in my heart the memory of our animated "Walking Thread", I tried to draw with it. Again, I started playing with it, reenacting the exploratory attitude I had improvised with during the physical theatre workshop in Dunbar Hall. Working on the floor of my room in Capri and Naples, I have been randomly throwing the thread on paper and blowing on it. Whenever possible, I have been working outdoors or keeping my window open, in order to let the thread alter its lines following the air currents of breath and wind. In addition to this, I also referred to the pictures we took during the event.

Bearing in mind Ingold's lesson about lines, according to which traces and threads (two main manifestations of lines, see Loovers, this volume) are readily inter-convertible (Ingold 2007a), I was excited by the idea of engaging in a reflexive process to transform the golden 'Walking Thread' into an embroidered surface.

Lines And Reflections

Reading Ingold's book *Lines*, nevertheless, left me with a major unresolved question. The book's preface and introduction begins with the question: "What do walking, weaving, observing, storytelling, singing, drawing and writing have in common?" and the subsequent answer: "they all proceed along lines" (Ingold 2007:1). As embroidery is also included within the book's discussion, I would consequently add embroidery to the above list. My big question was: Where exactly does this common factor lie?

By stitching again and again in *punto erba* (stem) technique, re-living my grandmother's teachings by pointing the needle on the black textile and pulling it with my right hand diagonally towards the side, I could not help but think about the thread moving through Aberdeen's cold wind. I started to realise how much this experience of entangled walking had affected my embroidery practice and the way I look at embroidered artefacts – as complex things created within complex social interactions in the "weather-world". I

¹ Middendorf's research on breathing has been highly influenced by Asian bodily and spiritual disciplines such as *yoga* and *tai ji quan*. All of the workshop participants had practiced the latter every day, prior to engaging in the theatrical sessions of the 'Performance Reflexivity' worksession, under Gey Pin's guidance. Ang is indeed conducting research on *tai ji quan* as a pedagogical tool for singing and performing. By practicing *tai ji quan* before singing and acting during Gey Pin's workshops I felt able to explore more in depth the relation between breathing, movement and singing.

also began to pay attention to the breathing process related to my looping gestures whilst embroidering and decided to explore the similarities between this activity and singing. In this process I considered songs as threaded breaths embroidering the air, *vice versa* my coloured threads became breaths that were singing a story through textile. By paying attention to embroidery as it was a different (and silent) way of singing, I tried to apply to my stitching what I learned from the *Atem Tonus Ton* singing workshops: to observe the flows of breath and to become attentive to the way in which the air (and the wind) flows through the body. Whilst embroidering I noticed how the quality of breathing could affect the precision of my stitching. The more the breath could flow unconstrained and deep, the more beautiful were my stitches. This, again, was similar to some aspects of singing, wherein unconstrained breathing is fundamental for the quality of sound exhaled and for the singer's full expression. I take this to mean that the processes at the very core of the formation of lines, both in singing and in embroidery, deal with breathing and air circulation processes within, outside of and in relation to breathing bodies. What about writing, drawing, walking, observing, weaving, storytelling? What about the breathing processes related to these actions? Perhaps this was (and is) the direction towards my search in understanding what these activities have "in common". Perhaps the commonality might be found in that tiny yet immense, mysterious "in-between" (Ingold 2015) of exhaling and inhaling again.

Regarding my embroidered reflection, I like thinking about these stitches as though they were similar to steps. Proceeding stitch by stitch in order to embroider is a repetitive gesture which is nonetheless different each time; similarly each step and breath is unique while being repeated.

For me, this opens onto a new research question: in what ways can materials, artefacts, skill apprenticeship, gesture, breathing, lines, songs (?) and the "weather-world" relate to each other? The way I would like to proceed in my research aims to keep the openness of our unplanned walk across Seaton Park. In order to investigate these relations, it is my intention to intersect my anthropological research practice with playful collaborations and experiments in singing, embroidering and, of course, further walking with the golden thread. The embroideries I present here are intended as the initial traces of the movements of an ongoing process of research, reflection, study, and knowledge formation from inside the knots of theory and praxis. The golden thread is modifying its form again, generating new avenues of inquiry.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank all those who took part in this event, especially my "Performance and Reflexivity" workshop fellows: Brian Schultis, Paola Esposito, Peter Loovers and Ragnhild Freng Dale, who are still taking care of this thread by passionately engaging in different sorts of reflexive contributions.

My special thanks goes to Peter Loovers, who formulated the expression "Walking threads, threading walk". The work I present here has grown out of our correspondence and collaboration, and of many inspiring readings suggested by him. My gratitude also goes to my artist friends Anna Pola Polanski and Andrea Cacace for their advices, technical help and feedbacks on drawings and embroideries.

*I also want to particularly thank Gey Pin Ang, for her teachings during the "Sourcing Within" worksessions, and Caroline Gatt, with whom I have been sharing some of these sessions and many songs, for organizing the "Performance and Reflexivity" workshop and inviting me to the University of Aberdeen in March 2014 to share my work. Without their inspiring passion and commitment the "Walking Threads" event would have not been possible. Last but not least, I would like to thank Tim Ingold for introducing me to the reading of the book *Redrawing Anthropology*. This text is my first try towards a "Graphic Anthropology".*

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Stepping in and out of the picture:
A drawing-based reflection on Walking Threads

PAOLA ESPOSITO



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Stepping in and out of the picture: A drawing-based reflection on Walking Threads

PAOLA ESPOSITO

Following the “Walking Threads” experience (henceforth WT), Peter, Ragnhild, Valeria, Brian and I kept in touch to share pictures and videos. After some time, Valeria and Peter proposed that we also gather our thoughts and reflections on the walk. Up to that point I had spent little time reflecting on the peculiar turn that sunny afternoon in Aberdeen had taken. I had enjoyed it in the moment, up close and through immersion in the action. The contributions of my fellow walkers reflect the richness of this perspective. They evoke a sense of opening to the unknown (Freng Dale), of blurring individual boundaries through “drifting” together (Schultis). They venture into the poetic and theoretical “affordances” of getting tangled in thread-lines (Lembo, Loovers).

My own recalling of the walk triggered a tactile sensation of something clinging onto my limbs, like a spider web. This sensation anchored my memories of the walk to my body, and resisted my attempts at seeing the walk from a different, more removed perspective. Along with my memories of entanglement in the web thus came a sense of frustration, of not being able to untangle myself and see the walk from a distance. Because of this, I felt that the significance of the WT eluded me. Until, one night, a different perspective offered itself. It came without warning, as a “hunch” of an image (Talbot, quoted in Ingold 2013: 127).

Prior to that night, I had been reflecting on Bruce Baird’s (2012: 194-6) review of *Ailing Terpsichore*, a text by Japanese *butoh* dancer and author Tatsumi Hijikata. As I was reading the few pages that Baird devotes to this text, I had the uncanny physical sensation of something seeping into me and, in an impulse that I can only describe as terror, I left the pages, promising myself I would go back to them later. As it turned out, Baird’s words had already worked their way in, and now, scattered like fragments of glass, they strived to condense, disturbing my sleep and waking me suddenly in the dead of the night, demanding attention. As my thoughts ebbed and flowed, words were finally drawn out into a rapid sketch (Fig 1).

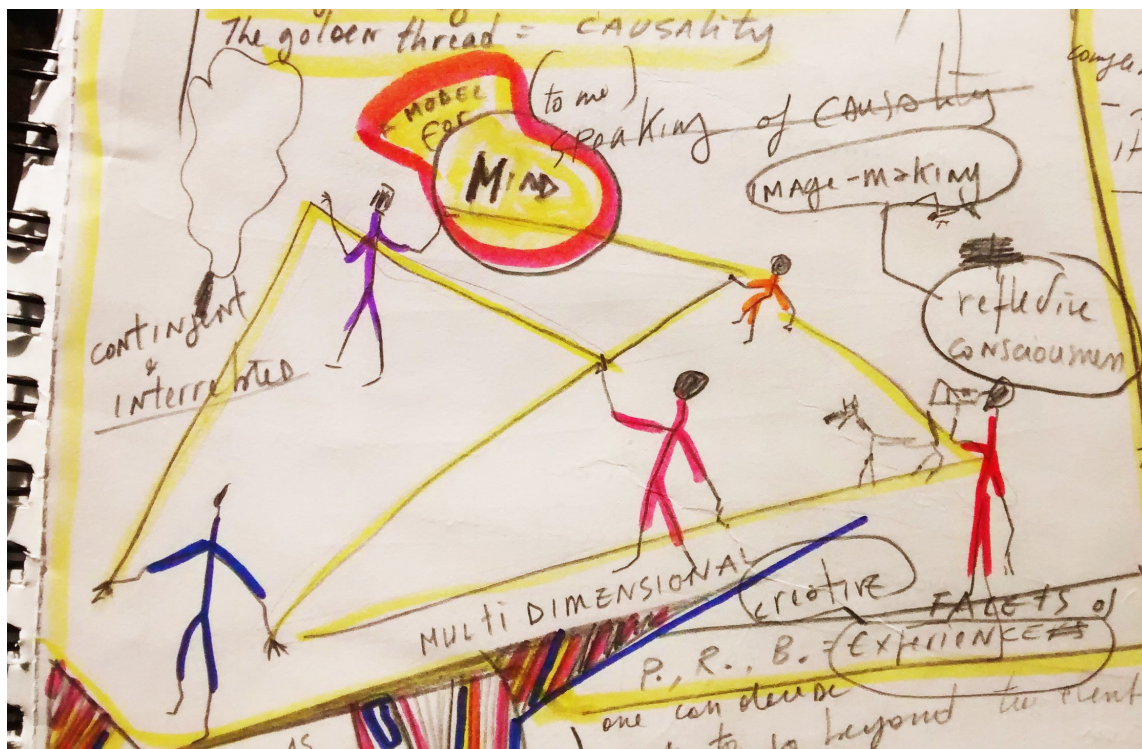


Figure 1: A sketch of Walking Threads. This is a “zoomed out” perspective at its incipience. Lines are still “gestural” or “non-propositional” (Ingold 2013: 126).

Photo © Paola Esposito

In his discussion of drawing as a way of telling, anthropologist Tim Ingold (2013: 126) points out that “sketches are [lines] *on their way towards proposition*” (emphasis in original). The lines composing a sketch are “gestural” in that “[t]hey issue *from* things (including bodies) rather than making statements *about* them” (ibid; emphasis in original). The lines I drew that night issued from my body in the same, gestural way. They guided me through the sensuous, visceral tangle of the WT, in which I had felt trapped, out in “the open” of a perspective “from the outside”. The development of that initial sketch (Fig 1) into a digital image (Fig 2) consolidated this movement of my thought from close-up to distanced, from visceral to detached, and from haptic to optical (Ingold 2013: 126). In what follows I lay out the thoughts that, through the traces of words and of drawings, yielded a “double” perspective on WT: haptic and optical; “zoomed in” and “zoomed out” (Knappet, in Ingold 2011b: 45-63).

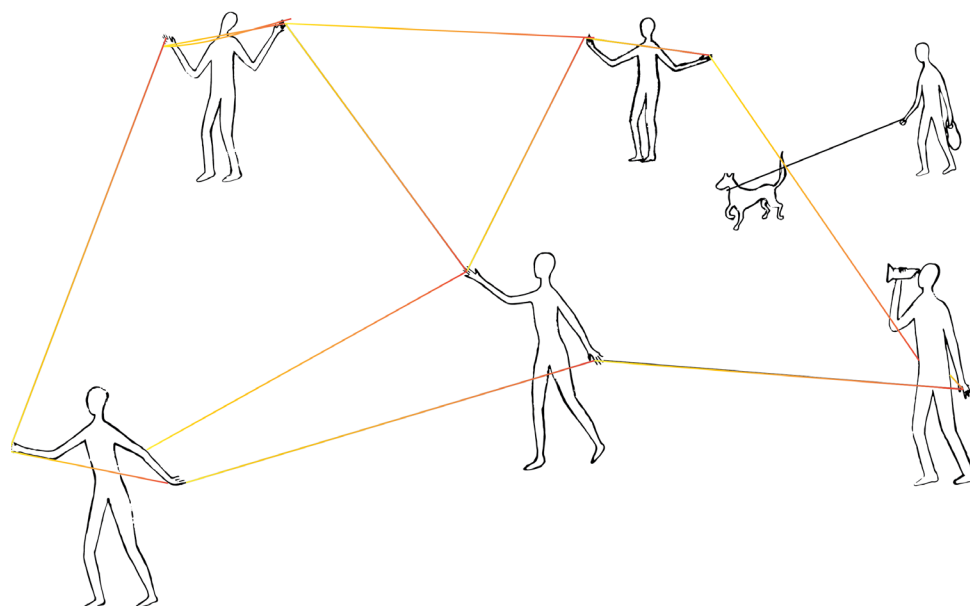


Figure 2: A “zoomed out” view of the Walking Threads. Lines are “non-gestural” and “propositional” (Ingold 2013: 126).
Photo © Paola Esposito

Why, then, had I been so deeply affected by Baird’s writing on *Ailing Terpsichore*? To answer this question, a few words on Tatsumi Hijikata and his work are in order. Hijikata (1928-1986) is generally known, along with Kazuo Ohno (1906-2010), as one of the founding fathers of *butoh*. This is a dance that is said to be “formless”: it resists formalisation into any conclusive system of movement, relying on intensified proprioception – the perception of one’s own body – to sustain movement work instead. The use of verbal imagery is widespread among *butoh* dancers: words act as devices to stimulate and “scaffold” (Downey 2008) perceptual attention as well as to achieve nuanced qualities of movement.

Hijikata was well known for probing the limits of the moving body through counter-intuitive verbal cues and combinations of words. He drew inspiration from manifold literary and figurative sources, including French literature – especially Genet and Artaud – Dada and Surrealism. Memories of native Tohoku, his involvement in the Tokyo art scene (where he moved to pursue a career as a dancer) and the rebellious, unsettled cultural climate of post-war Japanese society are also acknowledged as formative influences to his work. He developed a visceral, radical approach to dance, which made him a maverick of the Japanese dance scene, and a cult figure for generations of artists to come.

In his review of *Ailing Terpsichore*, also known as Hijikata’s memoirs, Baird offers a fresh entry point into Hijikata’s world. He does so by highlighting some of Hijikata’s stylistic choices as a narrator. These choices point to the dancer’s sense of his body as enmeshed in a world of continuities, in which everything connects to everything else through multiple if not always obvious trajectories. For instance, Baird highlights the reoccurring of the Japanese word *sei* throughout *Ailing Terpsichore*. He tells us that this word can

be translated variously as “on account of what”, “outcome”, “consequence”, “result”, “guilt”, “fault”, and “blame” depending on the context in which it is used (Baird 2012: 194). Contextual nuances aside, Baird explains that a sense of causality is constant in *sei*, and its appearing over and over in Hijikata’s text points to the dancer’s “obsession with actions and entities that affect things” (Baird 2012: 196).

In attempting to trace the origins of a particular situation or event, Hijikata follows different imaginary leads, hunting “for hundreds and hundreds of *seis* but with little surety as to whether the right one has been identified” (Baird 2012: 195). This leads to a proliferation of *seis* in the text and, for the reader, a sense of immersion in a dense field of cause and effect, with actions and entities that affect each other, even when spatially and temporally apart. Hijikata’s interest in how things are wrapped in, entwined or involved with each other is cited as another sign of the dancer’s concern with causality and relation:

Hijikata’s physical preoccupation with things that envelop, such as mist, haze, gossamers, odors [sic], and clothes, and the way that they wrap, cloak, and involve other things, is a counterpart to his metaphysical (but in fact equally physical) preoccupation with how things are connected to and related to other things (Baird 2012: 196).

Baird argues that this ubiquity of causal links or relations, and the disregard of spatial and temporal distance between “cause” and “effect”, corresponds to “all the choices, thought patterns, and societal structures that constitute the life-forming and identity-forming space surrounding [Hijikata]” (Baird 2012: 196). That is, “[t]he concern with *sei*... when multiplied over and over is the same as the concern with the socialization of the body and mind by customs, concepts, and purposiveness” (ibid). The notion of “desocialisation” to reveal the “origins” of the body is, incidentally, a core theme in *butoh* practice.

From reading the excerpts in English from *Ailing Terpsichore*, one may infer that Hijikata was indeed someone who was very observant and alert. These characteristics might have led him to perceive his own self as “parcelled out” or distributed between different “origins”. Consequently, he might have conceived of his very identity as sparse, with no fixed centre. Consider, for instance, the following excerpt from *Ailing Terpsichore*:

I developed with the feeling of always having my pulse actually taken. I was constantly eaten by snow; and during the autumn, bitten by locusts. During the rainy season I was cut by catfish; during early spring drunken greedily by a river; and I guess my vision was naturally oriented toward those sorts of things. (Hijikata, quoted in Baird 2012: 185)

The notion of “being consumed” by disparate things suggests a distributed, dispersed sense of self, which is evocative of the elaboration of a schizophrenic point of view by Deleuze and Guattari (1984). While for Hijikata it is *sei*, cause-effect, for Deleuze and Guattari it is “desire” that drives the world’s cannibalistic intimacy with itself. Desire causes things to be involved with one another, flowing into one another, feeding into multi-layered processes of “production”.

For the schizophrenic as a “universal producer” (Deleuze and Guattari 1984: 7), everything is a “desire-machine” involved in a relation of production, everywhere and at all times. The ever-working connectedness of machines, of different sizes and at various scales, leaves no clear boundary between producers and produced. In fact, for the schizophrenic, “[t]here is no need to distinguish ... between producing and its product” (ibid): caught in the flow of desire, they are one and the same thing. Even the body is composed of micro machines, which engage with the macro machines of the cosmos: “Celestial machines, the stars or rainbows in the sky, alpine machines – all of them connected to those of this body” (Deleuze and Guattari 1984: 2).

Against this backdrop of relentless production, Deleuze and Guattari introduce the notion of “body-without-organs” (BwO). This is a body that has ceased any productive or reproductive function to become a mere place of passage. The BwO is a de-subjectified, de-gendered body, which serves as a transit for the “plateaus” of intensities that constitute the world. “A BwO is made in such a way that it can be occupied, populated only by intensities. Only intensities pass and circulate” (ibid: 153). This body has no organs in the sense that they have themselves become nothing more

than “intensive principles” (ibid: 165) which distribute themselves regardless of the form of the organism.

[O]rgans are no longer anything more than intensities that are produced, flows, thresholds, and gradients. “A” stomach, “an” eye, “a” mouth; the indefinite article does not lack anything; it is not indeterminate or undifferentiated, but expresses the pure determination of intensity, intensive difference (Deleuze and Guattari 1984: 164).

I shall return to the notion of BwO later on. Meanwhile, the reasons of my “terror” in reading Baird’s review of *Ailing Terpsichore* might have become self-evident by now: the notion of the world as sensuously, voraciously interpenetrated, with everything potentially linked to everything else must have struck a chord in my imagination. With regard to Baird-Hijikata’s use of *sei*, I must have transposed it onto my experience of WT, which also lingered in my mind at that time. As I drew a sketch of WT, I remember seeing the thread as a materialisation of *sei* or “causal relation”. I also remember not being concerned so much with effects or results, as with the very intertwining and sorting of *sei* in a sentient web of experience – what Ingold might have called a “meshwork” (Ingold 2013: 132-133).¹ In drawing the walkers’ silhouettes, their representation as self-contained “bodies/entities” was no more significant than their “flowing” into and forming one another through connecting thread-lines. For Ingold, a particular type of “containment” applies to the body: far from being “embodied” – a term evoking enclosure – bodies are, like things, implicated into one another and the world through a constant, if not always visible, process of “leaking” (2013: 95). Similarly, the silhouettes in my drawing entailed continuation not just self-containment. Otherwise put, their “containment [was] not equivalent to enclosure, confinement, or immobilisation” (Ingold 2000:100). It entailed permeability.

As I drew, I imagined our bodies as simultaneously distinctive and enmeshed. Each silhouette has a recognisable outline – vaguely defining our particular identities as participants. Yet, if one suggestively “steps into” the drawing, that is, at the level of the traces left by the pencil on the paper, then silhouettes would become virtually indistinguishable from each other, as well as from the thread that connects them. Like in Ingold’s (2011: 89-97) anecdote of the spider web, the lines of thread become extensions of our being. As with SPIDER, “[i]t is as though my body were formed through knotting together threads of life that run out through my ... legs into the web and thence to the wider environment. The world ... is not an assemblage of bits and pieces but a tangle of threads and pathways” (Ingold 2011: 91-92). The threads tell of their own intersecting and entwining with bodies and with aspects of the world. That is, threads are “transducers” (Ingold 2013: 102): they “register” the walkers’ bodily movements across the “weather-world” (Ingold 2000), converting fleeting encounters into kinaesthetically perceivable pulls, vibrations, slacks and tensions, and into visible, geometrical shapes. Like a cobweb “telling” the spider of the insects and leaves that are caught in it, the WT could be understood as a kind of body-prosthesis which “extend[s] the spatiotemporal range of a person’s movement, influence and experience” (Ingold 2000: 100).

Step into the picture, and bodies *are* entangling lines – bodies are “things” (Ingold 2013). Step out of it, and bodies are discrete silhouettes, bound by discernible shapes – bodies are “objects” (Ingold 2011b: 5). Their relation, or “topology” (Knappet, in Ingold 2011b), changes accordingly: in the first case, it is a meshwork; in the second, a network (Ingold 2013:132-133). Step out, and silhouettes are nodes in a circuit, “facets” of an “aggregate,” what Gregory Bateson (1979: 92) would have called a “mind”. Bateson, whose contributions span anthropology, biology and psychology among other sciences, was fascinated with the patterns of resemblance and correspondence between the “natural” and the “human” world. For instance, he saw any process, being it cultural or biological, as resulting from an interaction of different parts. Such combined interaction, which hinges on “difference”, creates “wholes” or “aggregates” of the kind of “*thought, evolution, ecology, life, [or] learning*” (ibid: 92, original italics). Mind is such a kind of aggregate, since “mental function is immanent in the interaction of differentiated ‘parts’” (ibid: 93).

Step into the picture: shifts and adjustments, thresholds and gradients beget “difference” (Bateson 1979: 94-100), which is captured by the silhouettes-threads and channelled into movement. Step out of the picture: the thread carves transient geometries of immanence out of the “intensities” of air, wind, sunlight, trees, land, water and the movements of passers-by. These intensities spill over, exceeding the two-dimensionality of the drawing. Perhaps a 3D rendition of the drawing would be more appropriate to approximate

¹I am here following Loovers’ (this volume) interpretation of the walk as “meshwork”.

the intermingling of forces and materials, flesh and currents. Silhouettes would then become bodies-without-organs (Deleuze and Guattari 1988): pure bodies constituted by what passes through them, passages of intensities and compressed spatiality, caught up in transverse relations with other aspects of the world – trees, grass, wind, sunshine, passers-by – regardless of physical distance from them.

It is a question of making a body without organs upon which intensities pass, self and other... The field of immanence is not internal to the self, but neither does it come from an external self or a nonself. Rather, it is like the absolute Outside that knows no Selves because interior and exterior are equally a part of the immanence in which they have fused (Deleuze and Guattari 1988: 156).

It is in this field of transiting, morphing immanence, which knows no inside nor outside, that a twig decides to get entangled. This precipitates another nodal convergence, another passage for intensities, and another body-without-organs. I say “decides” to get entangled because, in joining in the dance of *seis*, it is as though the twig becomes one of us walkers. That is, the thread is not “one of us” in absolute terms, but by virtue of its enmeshment in the *sei*-web, of its co-option in the animated fabric of our treading. As a puppet comes to life through the calibrated pulls and releases of a puppeteer’s threads, so does the twig through enmeshment in our web – walking, dancing and drifting as we do. Animacy is the basis for the twig’s new identity, which mirrors our own by virtue of mimetic empathy (Willerslev 2007: 99-106). In this respect, the twig is less one of us and more a projection of us as different facets of an open-ended whole.

While empathy is a condition for metamorphosis (Ingold 2000: 106), the transformation of the twig into “one of us” is only temporary as the twig retains its twig-form, its “coming to life” relying on the make-believe we engage in – a bracketed occurrence in the flow of being. Within this flow the distinction between “zoomed-in” and “zoomed out” perspectives blurs, as open-air intensities fill in the shells of our thoughts and memories, and our stories unravel, staged on the unfolding scales of sky, land and rivers – singing and sung in the multi-faceted resounding of life. Albeit temporarily, then, WT allowed us “to [temporarily] dissolve the very boundary that separates mind from the world, and ultimately to reach a level where they are one and the same” (Ingold 2000: 100).

Bateson understood mind as a self-monitoring (and self-corrective) system of multiple parts, at least until death occurred, which dissembled and randomized the multiple parts of the system: “Death is the breaking up of the circuits and, with that, the destruction of autonomy” (Bateson 1979: 127). By a movement of self-dissolution, or perhaps of moult, we entangle the threads to a post, and the twig with it, as vestiges of our passage. The post stands as the conclusion of our walk, and as the “death” – and rearranging – of the mind we were.



Figure 3: Tying the thread to a post at the end of the walk
Photo © Walking Threads

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Walking Threads:
A Memory and a Reflective Speculation Inspired by
Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari

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Walking Threads: A Memory and a Reflective Speculation Inspired by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari

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A Memory of a ‘Drifting’ Walk

I remember the feel of the thread on my fingers, sometimes rough and biting, loose and fibrous at other times. I remember the feel of it on my shoulders and neck... fragile, out of scale with my body. I always wanted to keep it off the ground, and to do that I needed to keep alert to the tension that I could feel and to the ever changing pattern of gold that I could see, my concentration heightened from focusing on both sight and touch. I was more aware of my fellow walkers through this double awareness of the thread than by observing them directly, like a fisherman who perceives a fish through a line. Sometimes I was in the centre, other times I found myself at the periphery. Sometimes I was moving... making something happen. Other times I was a fixed point... keeping still while everything changed around me. It was a walk filled with lines, yet it was among the least linear walks I’ve ever taken. In fact it hardly felt like a walk, more like a float, or a drift. Yes, the water imagery feels right... as though all the thick swirling currents that work on your body when you walk or swim through water had been refined down into their most subtle form... compressed into the gentlest tug on a thread.

I also remember the people holding the thread... the many nodes on the web... my fellow drifters and the wind, sun, trees, and twigs joining us as we went along. There is a certain kind of intimacy that comes from floating together. I was not deciding what to do or where to go in response to others with whom I related as one independent subject to another, but implicated in the development of the pattern of thread which not only recorded all our movements but could be said to be the sum total of them. Intimacy is a surprising word for it, even though that is what it felt like, because it is not so much a question of being close to some ‘other’ but being lost in a greater totality in which the notion of other fades away. My being, in this instance, was expressed not by my individuality but by an evolving form which included people and things, which appear as others only upon retrospective reflection. I was not just *in* the drift of the thread through the park as an outsider who observed and sometimes affected it, but *was* that drift along with the four others. In my memory, separated by time, I think of this being the drift as a kind of intimacy with those four, and the whole environment.

A Reflective Speculation

Two points in this memory inspired by our walk in Seaton Park brought Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari to my mind. Namely the way I describe my position as constantly changing and my perception being the drift rather than being in it. In *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Deleuze and Guattari make a distinction between movement and speed in relation to a body:

Movement designates the relative character of a body considered as ‘one’ and which goes from point to point; *speed, on the contrary, constitutes the absolute character of a body whose irreducible parts (atoms) occupy or fill smooth space in the manner of a vortex*, with the possibility of springing up at any point (1987: 381, emphasis in original).

This “possibility of springing up at any point” connects to my memory of constantly changing positions. Drifting is not simply undirected movement, but a changing of the character of body from something that moves from point to point to something that occupies or fills a smooth space. The thread played a crucial role in accomplishing this change of character by interrupting, for instance, my long distance vision. It led me to focus more on my physical sensations and the manipulation of the thread which appeared directly in front of me and which I could affect by my movement.

Inspired by art critic Alois Riegl, Deleuze and Guattari couple this kind of close vision with a particular kind of space. In their description, “the first aspect of the haptic, smooth space of close vision is that its orientations, landmarks, and linkages are in continuous variation; it operates step by step. Examples are

the desert, steppe, ice, and sea, local spaces of pure connection” (1987: 493). Seaton Park is not ordinarily a space of this kind. Yet, through the attention demanded by the thread, it transformed.

The character of my body also transformed from being “considered as one” to a body whose irreducible parts stretched across the park. This quality, I think, led to my sense of being ‘the drift’. My subjective self was superseded by a new individuation, a haecceity in Deleuze and Guattari’s term, which they describe as “... a set of speeds and slownesses between unformed particles, a set of nonsubjective affects” (1987: 262). Deleuze and Guattari never describe this kind of individuation as intimate. Intimacy, for them, comes on another plane, where there are not only nonsubjective affects but also subjects capable of feeling. Later though, when the drift had ended, I think that intimacy was the way my body remembered having been a haecceity, in this particular case the haecceity of a drift of thread and bodies on a cold sunny afternoon. Perhaps intimacy is nothing else.

Deleuze and Guattari see individuation as a haecceity, as something to be achieved: “You have the individuality of a day, a season, a year, *a life* (regardless of its duration) – a climate, a wind, a fog, a swarm, a pack (regardless of its regularity). Or at least you can have it, you can reach it” (1987: 262). If so, *Walking Threads* is an experiment in finding a method for reaching an individuation as a haecceity. This is a paradoxical idea in that any kind of method or attempt guided by the will presupposes individuation as a subject who undertakes the attempt. Yet the experience of walking threads demonstrates how we might live with this paradox. Walking with thread is not an action with predetermined results but a practice which can engage people and landscape in a way that makes it likely that a haecceity may appear. Further connections, between our ‘Walking Threads’ walk and that of Deleuze and Guattari have been taken up and expanded upon by Peter Loovers and Paola Esposito in different ways (this issue). Personally, though, it is this tentative association between smooth space, speed, haecceities, and intimacy that excites me about what happened that afternoon – when walking with a length of thread opened up new connections and possibilities for intimacy between people and with places. I’m still following where this thread leads.

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“Walking Threads, Threading Walk”:
Weaving and Entangling Deleuze and Ingold with Threads

JAN PETER LAURENS LOOVERS



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“Walking Threads, Threading Walk”: Weaving and Entangling Deleuze and Ingold with Threads

JAN PETER LAURENS LOOVERS

In this paper, I explore theoretical discussions that have emerged through the exercise with Paola, Ragnhild, Valeria and Brian, and through personal correspondences with Valeria, philosophical treatises by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, and anthropological works by Tim Ingold. The subsequent theoretical exploration has been my attempt in weaving together all these different correspondences by walking in the theoretical imaginations of Ingold and Deleuze. Walking Threads, I conclude, can be considered as an exercise or way of incorporating theory into practice.

Introduction: Walking Threads, Walking Theories

It is a sunny early afternoon on the first day of spring 2014 when the walking moves the golden thread, and the thread moves the walk. Together with my fellow collaborators (Paola Esposito, Ragnhild Freng Dale, Valeria Lembo, and Brian Schultis) we had just emerged out of St. Machar Cathedral, Aberdeen. Nearing the exit, or entry, gates of this medieval holy place, a ball of golden thread appears in the hands of Valeria. Playfully and without a sound she gives the thread to the others. Initially I start making photos as an observer, but soon I find myself becoming entangled with the thread as we start walking towards, and later into, the adjacent Seaton Park. I become mesmerised by the geometrical shaping of the thread and the collective movement of the five of us in relation to the thread. Using my fingers, hands and even mouth, I try to keep the flow of the thread going without it getting entangled with the trees or my video camera. My attempts are futile and soon the thread incorporates the camera into the meshwork. As we descend down the small slope and enter the central part of Seaton Park with lawns, flowerbeds, and paved footpaths, we start diverging and converging from each other and geometrical figures are being formed. The wind picks up a little bit and affects the thread and subsequently our movements with the thread and each other. It is at this precise moment during our walk that I am reminded of Deleuze and Guattari’s multiplicity, haecceity, and rhizome and Ingold’s field of manifold relations, meshwork, and lines. The lines of the thread that are now moving with the wind and our movements, the geometric shapes of our entanglement, lead me to ponder about theoretical conundrums that have occupied my thoughts for over a decade since I was first introduced to Deleuze and Guattari and Ingold in 2002 by Fabiola Jara at Utrecht University.

We continued “drifting” (Schultis, this volume) or “journeying” (Freng Dale, this volume) further into Seaton Park towards the Fountain. Of the five of us, I was the only person who had been to Seaton Park before. In fact, during my first year of postgraduate studies at the Department of Anthropology, I had numerous times walked the paved footpath moving between University and the student halls up the hill behind Seaton Park. Since then I had frequently returned to Seaton Park for a Sunday stroll, or to enjoy the flowers in spring, summer and autumn. Thus I was quite familiar with Seaton Park, and yet while we were moving in the flows and counter-flows of each other, other things and people and the golden thread, I felt I experienced Seaton Park in a very different way. My attention was drawn to our “correspondences” (c.f. Ingold, see below). The event finished as abruptly as it had started when the thread ‘grabbed’ a pole and became entangled with the fixed point. Each of us went to the pole and left their part of the thread knotted and woven to the pole.

In the weeks that followed, the five participants contemplated how to make sense of these experiences. My initial intuition towards, and pondering on, Deleuze and Guattari’s multiplicity and rhizome and Ingold’s lines, meshwork and field of manifold relations led me to phrase our walk as “Walking Threads, Threading Walk”. I imagined how we were threads becoming entangled in the “weather-world”, how we were a multiplicity of multiplicities in which the golden thread became a rhizomatic expansion connecting our beings with the thread.

In the subsequent correspondences with Valeria Lembo, I revisited Deleuze and Guattari’s philosophy as well as investigated in more depth Ingold’s work. Quite like the walk, the process was messy with texts and books moving to and away from my desk and thoughts. During this theoretical exploration, which very much has been a practical endeavour of weaving together the different ideas, the ‘memorial imagination’ of our threaded walk in Seaton Park often emerged to the front as I was writing and thinking about concepts that these three academic scholars had developed. At the same time, I corresponded with Valeria about her

embroideries and questions and ideas she had about Tim Ingold's anthropology. The result that you find below, then, is very much reflecting this 'messiness' of books and articles becoming woven together with ideas, clarifications, confusions, playfulness, and last but not least, the experience of being walking threads.

Maria Elizabeth De Freitas' (2014: 285), who argues that a "theoretical framework is like a meshwork of lines ... a knot of entangled lines", points to something similar to what I have in mind. I here invite the reader to take, or walk, this theoretical threading walk with me, to take up parts of the threads and move along or away, to continue her or his own weaving with Deleuze, Guattari, and Ingold (see also Esposito, this volume, for an alternative weaving). Finally, I ask the reader to explore with an actual thread (colour is not the most significant, ours happens to be golden) and consider which theoretical imaginations or walks the thread might afford to her or him personally. Perhaps the thread does not lead to those scholars that have shaped me tremendously, instead it might lead to different insights and conundrums and contemplations. As for me, in the following pages I will elaborate on multiplicity, rhizome, surfaces, graphic anthropology, weather-world, lines and more as facets that I related to the walking thread and correspondences with Valeria on wind, embroidery, and drawing amongst other discussions. As the below pages will exemplify, I follow Ingold in saying that:

Life is lived in a zone in which earthly substances and aerial media are brought together in the constitution of beings, which, in their activity, participate in weaving the textures of the land. Here, organisms figure not as externally bounded entities but as bundles of interwoven lines of growth and movement, together constituting a meshwork in fluid space ... [or as] a zone of entanglement ... [where the organism] threads its way along paths through the weather world (Ingold 2008: 1796)

Deleuze – Lines, Rhizome, Multiplicity, Becoming

There is a beautiful picture of Sylvano Bussoti's entangled musical notes that introduces Deleuze's notion of the rhizome (Deleuze and Guattari 2003: 3). I have returned to the rhizome and accompanying multiplicity on many occasions and often contemplated how to visualize it. An entanglement of lines with knots, loose ends or beginnings, a divergence and confluence of threads would perhaps be such a summary of understanding rhizomes. Like Bussoti's 'scrabbled' musical notes, the notion of the rhizome, in essence, concerns itself with relations. In a widely cited elaboration, Deleuze and Guattari describe the rhizome as something that breaks away from Cartesian dualities, away from hierarchies and the notion of clear beginnings and endings (2003: 3-25). Thus the rhizome grows and ruptures, moves, converges and diverges. What Deleuze and Guattari consider are lines, and we shall see in a short while that they are not alone. They make a distinction between three kinds of lines: molar, molecular, and flight or fleeing (Deleuze and Guattari 2003: 505). The depiction of the tree throughout Western scientific history, according to Deleuze and Guattari, is of the first line - thus we have the kinship tree, the animal kingdom tree. Or in short, these are trees of hierarchies or "segments" with confined "contours", such as concrete boundaries and points of starting and ending. The idea of the rhizome is that of the molecular line: whilst the tree grows upwards, the rhizome spreads and grows up and down. Or in their words: "[the rhizome] frees itself, breaks and twists ... [it] passes *between* things, *between* points" (ibid: 505). It is in this sense that the molecular line is that of a multiplicity. The *One* tree of the molar line becomes that of a *multitude* of tubers or roots (lines) of the molecular line. The line that has the most interest for Deleuze and Guattari is the final kind of line – the line of flight which is similar to the molecular line. The line of flight flees away from the molar line, they break away and rupture them. It is the interplay and the movements away from the previous lines that constitute the line of flight.¹ The line of flight, thus, enables an endless openness in becoming without being confined to State regimes, scientific schema, societal pressures. Before we proceed I need to briefly introduce the notion of haecceity as an important element of the molecular line and the line of flight. For Deleuze and Guattari (2003: 261-3), a haecceity is constituted by the "relations of movement and rest ... capacities to affect and being affected". The haecceity "has neither beginning or end, origin nor destination; it is always in the middle. It is not made of points, only of lines. It is a rhizome". The haecceity, thus, is always becoming.

The above outline of the three lines is important to keep in mind. Deleuze and Guattari reappear

¹ In his book *Difference and Repetition* (1994), Deleuze elaborates on this line of flight as being generated by the abstract line (see also De Freitas 2014: 289). Deleuze and Guattari find this line the most interesting as it furthers their ideas on becoming.

throughout their work and certainly they have *become* these lines to stay in their terminology. In this fashion we read:

...becoming and multiplicity are the same thing. A multiplicity is defined not by its elements, not by a centre of unification or comprehension. It is defined [and here we have to accept their contradiction to define and perhaps to be grown might be a better wording] by the number of dimensions it has; it is not divisible, it cannot lose or gain a dimension without *changing its nature*. Since its variations and dimensions are immanent to it, it amounts to the same thing to say that each multiplicity is already composed of heterogeneous terms in symbiosis, and that a multiplicity is continually transforming itself into a string of other multiplicities, according to its thresholds and doors (Deleuze and Guattari 2003: 249).

Following this line of thought, Deleuze and Guattari argue that the individual is “an infinite multiplicity” (ibid: 254). Subsequently, and re-reading the earlier lengthy citation, the individual is thus not a *One*; it is not a confined molar line. Rather the individual multiplicity is “continually transforming itself into a string of other multiplicities”. In my own understanding, I have considered multiplicities as relations and all that I see, feel, contemplate about are relations. Thus it is not surprising, then, that I first considered our walking with the golden thread in Seaton Park as a multiplicity of multiplicities. We were connected, or related, physically through the thread as well as through our movements together. My own movement, then, was in a continuous play, alignment, tension, exploration with the other four collaborators as well as with the wind, the by-passers, my video-camera, trees and twigs, clothes. The consideration of relations also brings me to the next step in this ‘theoretical walk’, namely Tim Ingold.

Ingold – Field Of Relations, Walking, Making, Lines

Sometimes it amazes me how much Ingold and Deleuze share whilst using different words and examples. One particular sentence has captivated me for over a decade since I first came across it in 2002. Ingold outlines a person as a “singular locus of creative growth within continually unfolding fields of relations” (2000: 4-5; see also Ingold 2011a). To a certain extent, this is quite similar to Deleuze and Guattari’s notion of multiplicity. Thus, like the multiplicity of an individual, the singular locus – like the field – is necessarily constituted through relations. To further this argument Ingold also arrives to the notion of lines, and indeed finds his connection with Deleuze. Ingold describes the person and things as a “bundle of lines” (citing Deleuze and Guattari *in* Ingold 2011a: 10) or “parliament of lines” (Ingold 2007a: 5). He distinguishes two kinds of lines: a thread and a trace (Ingold 2007a, 2010b).² A thread, Ingold describes, can be considered as a rhizome or as an animal in that both are “complexly connected bundles of threads” (2007a: 42). A thread, Ingold goes on to say, can also be seen as the more common association with wool and other things fashioned by human hands. A trace, Ingold continues, is “any enduring mark left in or on a solid surface by a continuous movement” (ibid: 43). Whilst making a distinction at first, Ingold concludes that “[i]t is through the transformation of threads into traces ... that surfaces are brought into being. And conversely, it is through the transformation of traces into threads that surfaces are dissolved” (ibid: 52; see also Ingold 2015: 64-5). To exemplify this interplay between trace and thread, Ingold offers a number of examples about weaving in which the surface organically grows through tracing or threading/embroidery. Here he finds the relation not only with weaving or drawing but also with writing:

Just as the weaver’s shuttle moves back and forth as it lays down the weft, so the writer’s pen moves up and down, leaving a trail of ink behind it. But this trail, the letter-line, is no more the same as the line of text than is the line on a tapestry the same as the lines of its constituent threads. As with the woven tapestry, when we look for the text-line we do not find it. It exists neither as a visible trace nor as a thread. Rather, it emerges ... (Ingold 2007a: 69-70).

Building forth on the notion of trail, Ingold makes a distinction between the transporter and the wayfarer. For the careful reader, it might become clear that here we can find some resonance with Deleuze and Guattari’s molar and molecular lines. Thus the transporter moves from point to point in a sequence. In fact, so Ingold argues, the transporter is not walking but is an assembly of point-to-point connectors. Wayfaring, to the contrary, is like the molecular line in that it is the becoming of a line which counts. Perhaps wayfaring is like

² Maria Elizabeth De Freitas (2014: 287), referring to Ingold’s work on lines and Deleuze and Guattari’s work on topology, elaborates that besides the trace and the thread, Ingold distinguishes a third line – the ragged line that appears when a surface is cut or ripped.

Schultis' "drifting" (this volume). The wayfarer is the movement whilst the transporter is moved. It is in this sense that we arrive to Ingold's notion of respectively meshwork, molecular lines or lines of flight in Deleuze and Guattari's terminology, versus network, what they would refer to as molar lines or lines of occupation. A meshwork, according to Ingold (2007a, 2011a, 2013), is constituted of interwoven trails, and the "lines of the meshwork are the trails *along* life is lived" (Ingold 2007a: 81, original emphasis) and in which movements of the inhabitants weave the environment. The encountering of a place, or wayfaring into a place, is considered by Ingold as a complex knot of the lines of movement. These knots are constituted by a multitude of lines of person's trails. "Every place, then, is a knot in the meshwork, and the threads from which it is traced are lines of wayfaring" (ibid: 100). The meshwork, Ingold restates in his later work, is an 'entanglement of lines' (2013: 132) or "entangled lines of life, growth, and movement". And it is in this work that he marries the meshwork with Deleuze and Guattari's "lines of becoming" (ibid: 132). Flowing out of his reading of Deleuze and Guattari, Ingold (2013: 134-6) distinguishes between geometric, organic and abstract line.³ For the geometric line, Ingold refers to it as the connection between two points, such as a thread that connects A with B. The organic line, in contrast, "trace the envelopes or contours of things as though they were contained within them" (ibid: 134). The abstract line, however, is of a different kind. It is the line that is a becoming, that is between, that is movement. It is indeed the line of life. In the bringing together of movement, lines and life, Ingold returns once more to Deleuze and Guattari. *Haecceity*, Ingold illustrates, is at the heart of becoming and multiplicity or meshwork.

Now we need to return to the field of relations and a discussion of the world we inhabit when wayfaring, or when becoming. Here Ingold has been reformulating concepts such as environment and more recently sky-earth or weather-world. Rightfully so, Ingold reminds us of the sky and the earth and the weather. The weather-world has often been left aside in anthropological literature. Whereas his work on environment did perhaps not capture such a reminder, his most recent work attempts to do just to the wind, the sun, the clouds, the earth (see Ingold 2010b, 2011, 2015). He writes about the inhabited world as constituted by the flows of dynamic earth, weather, and sky. It speaks of the emergence of the inhabitant in these flows or movements *in* life. The environment, or weather-world, is "a tapestry ... a field not of interconnected points but of interwoven lines" (ibid: 84), where the "living, breathing body is at once a body-on-the-ground and a body-in-the-air" (Ingold 2010b). Ingold (2011a: 117) puts a lot of effort on emphasising the "open world" which "has no boundaries, no insides or outsides, only comings and goings".

How does the wind figure in all this? As we were walking with the golden thread through Seaton Park, the wind would at particular moments become more forceful, pulling the thread and ourselves, shaping the geometrical figures of the golden thread that connected us, and affecting the movements of speed and the rest of ourselves as threads. "The wind," Ingold goes on to say, "mingles with substances as it blows through the land, leaving *traces* of its passing in tracks and trails" (2011a: 120, my emphasis). In the article *Earth, Sky, Wind, and Weather*, Ingold (2007b: 32) elaborates on the wind and offers the word '*enwinded*' to suggest that the body rather than being embodied should be seen as enwinded. By this he connects the body with the wind through breathing. Interestingly enough, as Ingold (ibid: 31) illustrates, the Latin words for life-giving (*animare*) and breath (*anima*) derive from the Greek word for wind (*anemos*). Wind, it could be said, is life-giving and breathing. For the wayfarer, then, tracing paths through threading in the weather-world is ever to "feel the wind" and "to experience [the] comingling" between perceiver with the world and the perceiver who touches (ibid: 29). "[W]hen the body feels, the wind feels, since the wind, in its currents has already invaded the body's tactile awareness" (Ingold 2011a: 134). It is through such "body's sensory entanglement in the lifeworld" that "knowledge [is] formed along paths of movement in the weather-world" (Ingold 2010b: 136). It is as such that knowing is growing with the movements of the way-farer in or through the weather-world. The body comes to know the world through its movements in the weather. Whilst in his previous work Ingold has focused on the ground to elaborate his ideas, in the chapter *Wind-Walking* in his most recent book *The Life of Lines*, Ingold turns to the theme of paths, traces, threads, breath and wind. In some more detail, the link is made between breathing, wind, and walking. "The wind-walker's every inhalation [or inspiration]", Ingold (2015: 66) exemplifies, "forms a vortex in the wind's passage as it sweeps past, and every exhalation [or expiration] is like an invisible stick which thrusts through the opening created thereby". Whilst he had left wind behind in his earlier work, Ingold now explains that it is through breathing the air that it becomes possible to perceive the air. Perhaps, enigmatically, one could argue that Ingold now

³ In his earlier work (2011a: 63), he speaks unfortunately of a geometrical abstract line as the geometric line.

speaks of the ‘enbreathing body’.⁴

Ingold - Drawing, Writing, and Correspondence

As I started sharing my work on the lines of Deleuze, Guattari and Ingold with Valeria, she started sharing her work on embroidery and drawing. Inspired by her initial drawings for embroidery, I also took up the pencil and made a few sketches as well as revisited a previous exercise to draw movement. During our correspondence we reflected on the connection between drawing, weaving and lines in Ingold’s work. Ingold (2007a: 51-3) comes to an epiphany on the relationship between lines and surfaces whilst travelling on a ferry between Norway and Sweden. Watching three ladies, he contemplates their activities. One woman is writing, the second is knitting, and the last one is doing embroidery. He argues that in the case of writing the person is tracing a line *upon* an existing surface. In the case of knitting, the person is threading a line *into* a surface. It is embroidery, however, which offers an in-between. The person starts with a trace *upon* an existing surface, much like the writer, yet as the knitter the person threads the lines *into* the surface. Thus the trace transforms into the thread and perhaps likewise the thread transforms into a trace, but what about drawing?

In the article *Drawing Together: Materials, Gestures, Lines*, Ingold reasserts his work on lines and moves away from a study *of* lines to a study *in* lines (2010a: 300-1; see also Ingold 2011a: 220-6). By this he implies that through practical engagements with materials, insights are shaped without a clearly pre-conceived idea rather than a detached, observational endeavour in which hypothesis or endings of projects are the goal. He turns to painting and drawing to make his point with support of the work by the art historian Norman Bryson. To paint is to perceive a surface with particular boundaries defined by the edges of the canvas. Every trace, the touch of the brush, has to be calculated in relation to the totality of the painting. Thus there is a moment of hesitation, a moment of reserved anticipation. The pencil, however, is free from such hesitation and can carry on where it has left or begin where it wants. The drawing of lines, so Ingold concludes with Bryson, is never finished since there is always another possible line to be drawn. Or as Ingold puts it eloquently: “[s]o as painting moves to completion, drawing carries on: it is always work in progress, manifesting itself in its lines of becoming rather than an image of being” (2010a: 301-2). Contemplating Bryson’s work, Ingold moves to comparing painting and drawing or closeness and openness with society and anthropology. Thus life can be understood:

as a tangle of threads or life paths, ever ravelling here and unravelling there, within which the task for any being is to improvise a way through, and to keep on going. Lives are bound up *in* the tangle, but are not bound *by* it, since there is no enframing, no external boundary’ instead it ‘undergoes continual generation along a line of growth’ (ibid: 302).

As a result Ingold argues for a “graphic anthropology” (ibid: 303-4; see also Ingold 2011b). This kind of anthropology, he contends, is concerned with following the materials, copying gestures (or learning movements) and drawing lines. The lines of the drawing are threads which “weave the surface rather than being laid upon it” (Ingold 2010a: 304) in which the drawing is “a mode of description” where the “observing eye is drawn into the labyrinthine entanglements of the life world, yielding a sense of its forms, proportions, and textures, but above all its movements” (ibid: 309). Here Ingold furthers his critique on the dichotomy between written texts and the image or literacy versus photography and painting.⁵

In a number of recent articles (2010a, 2011a, 2011b, 2013, 2014, 2015), Ingold takes a stance against ethnography and develops his advocacy for anthropology. He elaborates that ethnography is concerned with describing a study *of* people and thus subsequently “othering” (2010a) the people with whom the anthropologists work. In *That’s Enough About Ethnography* (2014), he leaves no doubt that we need to rethink anthropology and ethnography. Building on the previous discussed urge towards a graphic anthropology, Ingold restates the relation between ethnography and painting as an “art of description” (Alpers *in* Ingold 2014)

⁴ See also Lembo (this volume) on a further discussion of breathing, weather, singing, and embroidering.

⁵ Ingold’s elaboration on drawing and correspondence resonates with the French philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy’s recently translated book *The Pleasure of Drawing*. The opening sentence, “[d]rawing is the opening of form” (2013: 1), gives away what Nancy has in mind. Like Ingold, Nancy is sceptical about painting as totalizing and non-dynamic. Instead, Nancy goes on to say that drawing brings together “act and force [puissance]” (ibid: 1). For Nancy it is not only an opening of form, but also a “birth of form” (ibid: 3) in which form equals idea (ibid: 5-10). “[D]rawing”, as he restates a little later on, “unfolds a novel sense that does not conform to a pre-formed project. It is carried away by a design that joins with movement, gesture and expansion ... to give birth to form” (ibid: 26).

or as “*ethnographicness*” to borrow his own word. To further his argument, Ingold turns to the notion of participant observation as an “ontological commitment” in which observing and participating are intimately woven together and should not be considered as separate (2014: 387-8). To get away from the impasse with ethnography as being dripped with description (e.g. factual descriptions of cultural practices), Ingold passionately advocates for anthropology and to consider it as a “practice of education” (ibid: 388). The novice anthropologist has to *attend* to what others are saying, doing. Such education necessarily brings the method of participant observation together with “one’s own perception and action with the movements of others” (ibid: 394). Such “togetherness” (Ingold 2010a: 311) is coined by Ingold as “correspondence” (2010a, 2011a, 2013, 2014, 2015) and concerns living attentionally not intentionally with others (2014: 389). It is thus to “open up our perception to what is going on there so that we, in turn, can respond to it” (2013: 7), and it is this “relation with the world” that Ingold calls *correspondence*. This has also implications for writing, thinking, talking as well as in knowing and being *in the world*. Anthropology, as a correspondence, “is carried forward in a process of life, and effects transformations within that process” (Ingold 2013: 3). Such correspondence very much looks like Ingold’s views on drawing by hand, discussed above, where there are no endings but instead “carries forward” in “lines of becomings”.

Deleuze and Guattari - Form and Matter

Let us now delve a little deeper into the relation between becoming, materials, and lines. What was happening as I was walking together with my fellow collaborators through the park and becoming threads? What Ingold (2013: 21) investigates “making... as a process of growth”. Such investigation defies the conventional theory of *hylomorphism* in which practioners (makers) impose form onto material (see also Ingold 2012a, 2012b). The form, in this view, is a set *idea in the mind* that needs to be transformed *onto* the matter. Instead, very much like the drawing discussed above, Ingold (2013: 22-5) argues that we need to take a *morphogenetic* approach in which making is understood as a “confluence of forces and materials”, as “form-generating”, or as “form-taking activity” to refer to Ingold’s borrowing of a word by the French philosopher Gilbert Simondon. Deleuze and Guattari have also turned to Simondon’s critique of the hylomorphic argument, and Ingold goes to some length to express their view. Here the relation between wayfaring and lines is illuminated:

The trouble with the matter-form model, argued Deleuze and Guattari, is that in assuming ‘a fixed form and a matter deemed homogeneous’ it fails to acknowledge, on the one hand, the variability of matter – its tensions and elasticities, lines of flows and resistances – and, on the other hand, the conformations and deformations to which these modulations give rise. In reality, they insist, whenever we encounter matter ‘it is matter in movement, in flux, in variation’, with the consequence that ‘this matter-flow can only be *followed*’ [sic. Deleuze and Guattari 2003: 408-9]. Artisans or practioners who follow the flow are, in effect, itinerants, wayfarers, whose task is to enter the grain of the world’s becoming and bend it to an evolving purpose. There is an ‘intuition in action’ (Ingold 2013: 25).

According to Deleuze and Guattari (2003: 369-72), this distinction between the hylomorphic and the morphogenetic model also resonates with two types of sciences and scientific procedures: respectively royal science and reproduction (or *logos*) and nomad science and following (or *nomos*). This distinction also seems to resonate with Ingold’s distinction between ethnography and painting and anthropology and drawing as I discussed above. Deleuze and Guattari use form, matter, content, and expression in a particular way. These terms are connected through a “double articulation”:

The first articulation (“sedimentation”) chooses or deducts, from unstable particle-flows, metastable molecular or quasi-molecular units (*substances*) upon which it imposes a statistical of connections and successions (*forms*). The second articulation (“folding”) establishes functional, compact, stable structures (*forms*), and constructs the molar compounds in which these structures are simultaneously actualized (*substances*) (Deleuze and Guattari 2003: 401-1).

Here Deleuze and Guattari turn to the geologist Louis Hjelmslev. Hjelmslev “used the term content for formed matters, which would now have to be considered from two points of view: substance, insofar as these matters are ‘chosen,’ and form, insofar they are chosen in a certain order” and by doing so “[h]e used the term expression for functional structures, which would also have to be considered from two points of view: the organization of their specific form, and substances insofar they form compounds” (ibid: 43). The main point I take from this is that form and matter cannot be separated.

A hylomorphic distinction between form and matter can also be found in Deleuze and Guattari’s dis-

cussion of reproduction. “Reproducing,” they argue, “implies the permanence of a fixed point of *view* that is external to what is reproduced: watching the flow from the bank” (ibid: 372, original emphasis), and in which the “iterator” constantly *reterritorializes* around *this point of view* to use Deleuze and Guattari’s enigmatic words. To make, to write, or to reproduce for that matter, is in this fashion to ‘discover’ the form bound to laws of description and objectification. The “iterator”, or royal scientist, thus steps outside the flows in life. The form, as pre-conceived concept in the mind, is produced as a reproduced object. Rather than wayfaring, the royal scientist goes from one point of view to another point of view. To *follow*, Deleuze and Guattari argue, needs to be distinguished from reproduction. “*Following* the flow of material” and “to be carried away by a ... flow” (ibid: 373), as the nomad science or morphogenetic model exemplifies, means to be like Ingold’s wayfarer or Deleuze and Guattari’s itinerant. It concerns an “intuition in action”. This *following* corresponds closely with the lines of becoming and lines of flight. Like the lines of becoming and lines of flight, to follow implies to be swept up in the currents of life and to be in between. There is thus not a clear ending nor beginning which marks a finished product. Nomad science understands form and matter as:

...more immediately in tune with the connection between content and expression in themselves, each of these two terms encompassing both form and matter [see the double articulation]. Thus matter ... is never prepared and therefore homogenized matter, but is essentially laden with singularities (which constitute a form of content). And neither is expression formal: it is inseparable from pertinent traits (which constitute a matter of expression) (Deleuze and Guattari 2003: 369).

Now where does weaving come into place? Although not referring to the double articulation, Ingold (2011a: 210-19) provides an insightful perspective on Deleuze and Guattari’s critique of the hylomorphic model. With Deleuze and Guattari, Ingold considers practioners as wayfarers who follow where the materials lead them to. Ingold (ibid: 211) points out that “the skill of the practioner, *tehkne*, is derived from the Sanskrit” by combining the words for axe and carpenter. Thus, “[t]he carpenter” is “one who fashions ... a shaper, a maker”. Interestingly enough, as Ingold addresses, the Latin verb for ‘to weave’, *texere*, derives from this word *tehkne*. Ingold, thus, shows that the carpenter can be understood as a weaver. In his earlier work (2007a), he already noted that the words texts and textile come from this Latin word *texere*. To make is to weave, to write is to weave. This entails “improvisation ... [t]o improvise is to follow the way of the world, as they open up” as wayfarers (or itinerants or practioners) weave themselves into life with “thread-lines” (Ingold 2011a: 216).

Deleuze, Guattari and Ingold - Spaces and Surfaces

This weaving in the world also gives a different understanding of surfaces. As Valeria was ‘finishing’ her embroideries (Lembo, this volume) we started discussing the notion of surfaces and I was reminded of our walk in Seaton Park when we were moving towards the river Don. Whereas the earlier part of the walk had been on pavement and grass, the sandy path towards the river was less trodden and indeed muddy closer to the river. Being intrigued by the thread, I had not paid attention to the ground, something that changed abruptly when my feet started to get slightly stuck in the mud. The wind, as I will discuss in further detail below, had increased again in the open and the thread and ourselves being swept up with the flows and forces.

Pondering about Seaton Park and Valeria’s embroidery work, my theoretical walk took me back to Deleuze and Guattari’s *A Thousand Plateaus*. Let’s start with their work on “strata” and the “plane of consistency” or a “surface of stratification” (Deleuze and Guattari 2003: 40). The strata also referred to as striated or sedentary space by Deleuze and Guattari (2003: 474-500), concerns the layers or boundaries that imprison the flow and confine it. The striated space organises and orders. “Lines,” in this space, “go [sic] from one point to another” (ibid: 478) whereby the “line describes a contour” (ibid: 497). The smooth space or plane of consistency, however, is in-between the layers of striated spaces. It is concerned with lines of flight and haecceities (see also Schultis, this volume). “The plane [of consistency] consists abstractly, but really, in relations of speed and slowness between unformed elements and in compositions of corresponding intensive affects”, and these haecceities “are precisely modes of individuation proceeding neither by form nor by the subject” (ibid: 507). Thus, whilst in striated space “the line is between points”, in the smooth space “the point is between lines” (2003: 480). Deleuze and Guattari see a constant moving between these spaces where the striated space ever tries to enclose, or narrow down, the smooth space.

Until recently (see Ingold 2015: 80-2) Ingold does not speak of striated and smooth spaces, but instead contemplates surfaces. Building on James Gibson’s work, Ingold illustrates Gibson’s distinction between the three components that constitute the environment: medium, substance, and surface (Ingold 2011a:

22-4, 115-25). “The medium is air” and “affords movement and perception” (ibid: 22). The substance, however, is more solid and consists of the materials that constitute the “necessary physical foundations for life”. Finally, the surfaces are in between the substance and the medium. Here, Ingold stresses, it is important to note that Gibson considers these surfaces between one kind of material (e.g. a solid rock) and another kind of materials (e.g. a gaseous air). Surfaces, for Ingold, are “open ... where life is going on” and where the division between “earth [substance] and sky [medium] gives way to flows and counter-flows of materials” (ibid: 87). Ingold, however, is critical towards Gibson’s understanding of environment and objects (2010b: S124-5, see also Ingold 2011a for a critical review on Gibson’s affordances). For Gibson there are objects on the surface that afford inhabitancy – the cave, the tree, the burrow. These, however, are laid onto the world like “furniture ... on a pre-prepared and absolute featureless floor” (in Ingold 2010b: S124). Ingold, instead, argues that the hills and trees are “the formations of that surface”. The usage of the notion of surfaces in Ingold’s work, however, seems not only to refer to Gibson’s work. Above I have written about the relation between threads and surfaces in which the surface grows through the weaving (or writing or drawing) (Ingold 2007a: 65). Citing artist Vasily Kandinsky, Ingold shows that “a particular capacity of line [is] its capacity to create *surfaces*” (in Ingold 2007a: 45). Cuts and cracks made by walking or digging elucidate the fluidity of the surface. The surface, then, too is woven through the movements in the world or indeed through drawing (see Ingold 2010a: 304). In such fashion, I would argue that Ingold opposes the idea of a surface *upon* the world, but rather considers a surface *in* the world (see Ingold 2011a: 111; also 2015). As he writes: “it is in this intermediate zone that life is lived, at depths depending upon the scale of the creature and its capacity to penetrate an environment that is ever more tightly woven. It is in this sense that creatures live *in* the land and not *on* it” (Ingold 2008: 1803). The “land”, then, is a “vaguely defined zone of admixture and intermingling” (Ingold 2011a: 119).

Walking Threads

Let us now return once more to the fateful Friday early afternoon when the sun was shining and a little wind was flowing through the land. As the golden thread was unravelling and we were making our way into the park, a thought occurred to me. The thought itself was not particular novel and has been re-appearing for many times throughout this last decade since I have been introduced to the work of Ingold and Deleuze (and Spinoza and Leibniz for that matter). “Bundles of lines” it echoes, “multiplicities” it whispers, “rhizome” it calls. With such pondering, ‘walking threads, threading walk’ came into being. As I mentioned above, I see fields of relations or multiplicities throughout my movements in life. It appeared to me, as the camera started to tangle up and a tree tried to embrace and hold the thread, that this exercise was a ‘visual reminder’ (for the time being let me phrase it as such even though it is an incomplete wording) of multiplicities and Ingold’s work on walking, lines, and weaving. As we deliberately, or non-deliberately, moved under or above the golden thread, and thus weaving knots and entanglements through our movements, the *geometric lines* subsided. Instead, our *lines of becoming* started to weave together and it became difficult if not impossible to distinguish ending or beginning. Indeed, as we moved on, trying to keep the thread away from the ground and exploring the capacities of the thread as well of ourselves as a cohort, it reminded me in great delight of a multiplicity, or rhizome, with ebbing and flowing geometric patterns. It reminded me of the field of relations, and the movements of relations both that pass swiftly and those that become tangled up or again untangled (such as the twig, camera, and the tree or shoe or by-passers). At the same time, knots were unfolding through our movements or weavings. Contemplating about these becomings, I wondered whether we are threads that were taken for a walk or if we were walking a thread. I suppose the answer is to be found in the between. Thus we were lines of flight, being transformed through the connecting string of multiplicities, as we moved through Seaton Park. A *haecceity*, with movements of speed and rest (and perhaps capacity to affect and be affected). The thread, too, was a line of flight as I found in my futile attempts of tying together both ends of the thread at one stage. The thread, however, did not want to be knotted into a bound circle but instead was unbinding and flowing.

As we continued walking, we arrived at a crossing where one path would lead us to the student dormitories I once lived, one path would lead us to the playground, and one path would lead us to the river. We halted, questioning this dilemma of where to take the thread – or be taking by the thread – and an initial move was made to take the right path and go towards the playground. With the knowledge of the Park, however, I responded, seeking to guide Ragnhild as the walker in front towards the river-side with the particular thought of Ingold’s work on wind and water. I imagined more openings and liked to share this part of Seaton Park with my fellow walkers. The walking threads attentively responded again, and we changed direction. Upon approaching the river, the wind was sweeping the threads and here another thought came to me. How can this

golden thread make us understand Ingold's notions of weather-sky-earth more profoundly? As we were (or at least I was) amazed with the relating wind and the alternations in the geometric patterns, I began to answer the question that through the weaving of the thread, and to perceiving ourselves as threads (like lines), it was clear how our bodies move with and against the wind and how we might understand the field of relations in the terms of force (*puissance*) and power (*pouvoir*) in which movement is not a homogenous flow but rather fluxes and waves, ruptures and grows, follows and works against. Through the wind we were *threading into the world*, weaving our textures in the air. To follow Ingold's line of thought, we were *drawing with the wind as we were walking with our threads curving and waving*.

The watchful reader can see how we were moving in smooth space, though always finding the efforts of the striated space to reterritorialize, to "bound" the threads. The wind is not particularly a cooperative participant in the striated space, it flows and moves at its pleases - very much like the lines in the smooth space. Remembering the wind whilst walking in the park and especially alongside the river, it has become clearer to me what Deleuze and Guattari might mean with "lines of flight". The threads that want to flow, to move with the wind whilst other powers try to restrain and enclose. This very much looks like a *windy thought or world*. By this I build forth on an idea of Valeria Lembo to start with a *common wind* rather than a *common ground* to think and to have a *wind of thought* rather than a (*river*) *current of thought* (personal communication). Rather than moving or flowing with the current of the river – the metaphor that Deleuze, Guattari, and Ingold have used – the moving wind offers different perspectives. It speeds and rest, its desire is to flow. Perhaps the wind is a haecceity? To sum up, what does it entail to use *the river or the wind to think with*? It is a question that the Walking Threads, to me, has offered some more insights into Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy and Ingold's anthropology. This walk and its open experimentation has made it more tangible and easier "to imagine the social world as a tangle of threads or life paths, ever ravelling here and unravelling there" (Ingold 2010a: 302) whilst being "immersed in the incessant movements of wind and weather, in a zone wherein substances and medium are brought together in the constitution of beings that, by the way of their activity, participate in stitching the textures of the land" (Ingold 2011a: 121) in which "[l]ives are bound up in the tangle" (Ingold 2010a: 302). It is this *binding* that became so apparent when we were walking threads, as the threads between the bodies bound the five of us together whilst mingling with the ground, the wind, the camera, and other beings. Our lives were quite literally bound up *in* the tangle, but not bound to it as the wind carries on the threads. Deleuze and Guattari's "intuition in action", Ingold's "practice in education", and Gibson's "education of attention" seem to correspond closely with Walking Threads in that it has been through the practice of 'walking with threads' and 'threading the walk' that insights have appeared in life. Indeed, Walking Threads challenges the hylomorphic model, offering instead a different kind of anthropology based upon practical engagement, experimentation and the realisation that anthropological knowledge production is intimately part of the ongoing flow of life.

The walk with the thread 'ended', or perhaps transformed, as abruptly as it 'began', as we entangled the thread to a post. With the tying of the thread, I was thinking of particular knots that are commonly used in northern Canada to hold boats. It was here, as with the other parts of walking, and perhaps indicated by this text, that the interplay between past, present, and future was woven together.

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An Intuitive Walk – a thread to play along

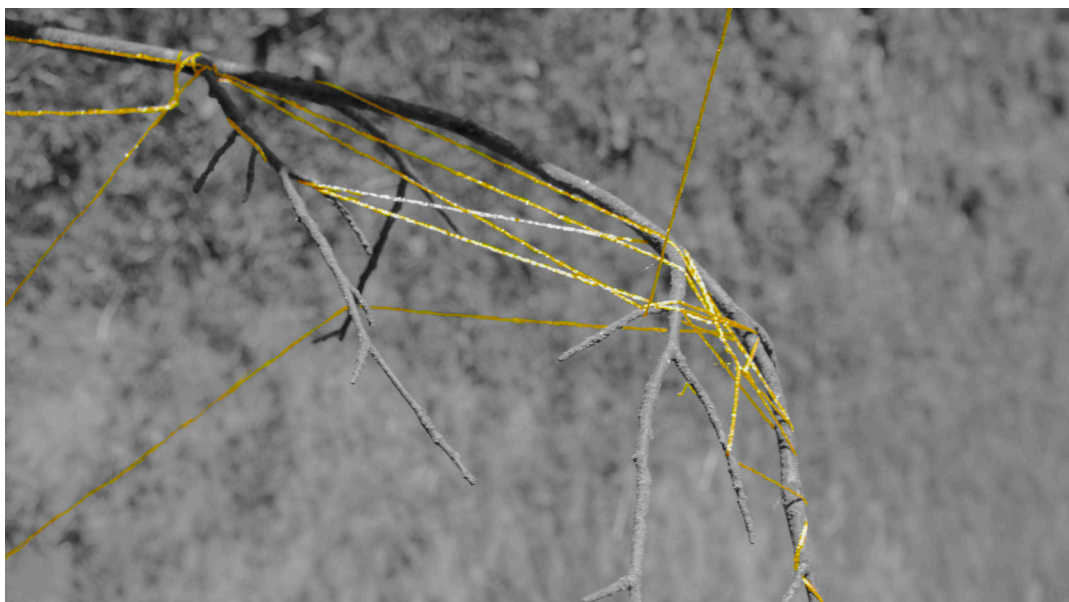


Photo © Walking Threads

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An Intuitive Walk – a thread to play along

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The *Performance reflexivity, intentionality and collaboration: A Sourcing Within worksession* that took place in Aberdeen, March 2014, was planned for anthropology researchers and students. Having had a few previous firsthand experiences of the workshop, Caroline Gatt, a Research Fellow at the Department of Anthropology, University of Aberdeen, invited me to lead a workshop over three days consisting of three half-day sessions. I am an actress/pedagogue currently pursuing a Drama: Practice-as-Research PhD, School of Arts, University of Kent, Canterbury. Since 2006, I have been conducting *Sourcing Within* worksessions mainly for performing practitioners. Gatt proposed the workshop in Aberdeen to be tied into the *Knowing From The Inside* project (KFI), under the auspices of her department, in which she leads a sub project on *Performing collaboration: The challenges of difference in sustainable knowledge-artefact making*. Alongside the worksession, there were presentations by some anthropology researchers cum performing practitioners including Valeria Lembo, Brian Schultis and Paola Esposito.

In the following pages I will share with you some of my observations of the *Walking Thread Initiative* from a performative perspective. I will also highlight some fundamental difference between a researcher and a practitioner, which I have experienced through this worksession in Aberdeen.

A Necessary Discourse

Halfway through the second day of the Aberdeen worksession, sadly Gatt had to leave. This, however, made the session into a spontaneous and alive situation whereby each participant had to respond to and improvise around the logistical arrangements. This seemingly communal response did not hide our differences in terms of our fields of studies, disciplines and rigors as in anthropology and in theatre. During a session on vocal work, some researchers began to observe instead of participating. When I asked them for the reason, the answer was: “We do not understand.” Perhaps without Gatt’s intervention, there was an increased unfamiliarity in terms of working approaches and terminologies used in our respective disciplines. Faced with something incomprehensible our instinct is to withdraw from the unknown. To take the role of an observer might seem natural for these Anthropology researchers. However, for me as a practitioner it is so essential to experience from inside, actually doing it. In the absence of Gatt, we developed a discourse revolving around the concern of “knowing” versus “doing”. The discussion surrounded the objectives of the workshop and the issue of not having a verbal explanation prior to doing, in this case, on the vocal work. Fortunately, this incident did not impede us from finding our meeting point the next day, which was the last session. Surprisingly the session went very well through a mode of mutual attention, spontaneous participation, and thus, understanding. There was a receptive atmosphere with “active listening” (see below) among the group, in the end, which was in accord with the aim of the workshop.

Beyond the Workshop – The Walk

The above account merely hint at and set out The *Walking Thread Initiative*, a collective act by Esposito, Freng Dale, Lembo, Loovers and Schultis. They went for a walk that afternoon after the completion of the workshop. It was an independent and unplanned act by these five individuals after brief days of communal working, sharing and exchanging. It spontaneously happened when Lembo threw out the thread to the others during their walk. As we have seen in the different reflections of the walk in this issue the others immediately responded to this. The entire walk, which lasted quite some time, emerged beyond the workshop setting, still, the boundaries might not be that clearly defined, as can be seen in Lembo’s conscious effort of holding on to and attitude of exploration and wonder cultivated in the previous worksessions.

Active Listening – Awareness Of Self

Observing the video documentation of their walk in Seaton Park, Aberdeen, my impression was that they did this with intuitive listening, reacting and adjusting to each other and to the changes of the threads flying in the wind, as well as through their constant mobility in the changing environment. During the act of walking, each of them was immersed in what they were doing yet continuously weaving, spreading and passing the thread amongst themselves. In many ways, it resembled what Gatt wrote regarding the workshop content:

What makes listening *active* not passive is a type of *awareness of self* that makes it possible to pay *attention* to the changes happening *in oneself* while *simultaneously responding*, thereby offering actions for the ensemble to listen to, to pay attention to (2014).

It is only after their impromptu walk that the team of five sought to continue their interaction via the *Walking Thread Initiative*, which one-year later, for instance, became a participatory event involving others in a similar walk at a conference in Cardiff. In certain aspect, it is an active listening in oneself that brings one's attention from outside to what is inside, and then finds its awareness to what exists outside. Though an anthropology researcher, Gatt's previous experiences of attending these *Sourcing Within* worksessions might have brought her closer to the above testimony, her embodied practice, possibly, has further enhanced her knowing.

Personal Reaction and Association: The Golden Thread

In the usual *Sourcing Within* worksessions with performing practitioners, I often ask participants to bring their choice of an object; either a daily object or something related to childhood memories. Each would then be encouraged to begin an active search – linking the object with their own inner stream of thoughts, to their intention when using the object, their reactions, with whom, for whom, in what tempo-rhythm they were using the object, and so on. It is an exercise to cultivate one's organic and instinctive reactions and associations.

As in the case of Lembo, a performer who has attended several worksessions prior to Aberdeen, the thread she brought to the workshop had a personal calling for her. Through the thread, she has developed the remembrance of her grandmother who had taught her embroidery. However, this only became visible in a subsequent *Sourcing Within* workshop, which she attended in Tuscany in April 2014. It was while working alone that Lembo further discovered her creative potential within and incorporate the thread into her acting proposition – the action of her grandmother came alive along with her speaking, singing and playing the accordion – re-connecting her to her heritage and tradition.

A Thread To Play Along

In the past, our workshop participants have often found like-minded and potential collaborators afterwards. Some collaboration may take the form of an impromptu act, while others may flourish into various modes according to the individuals' needs and callings. What then, might one ask, is the aspiration of this initiative?

This particular *Walking Thread Initiative* has a mode of playfulness that might have some possible link to our workshop. "Playing" is one of the essential and primary approaches in our work, be it physical, vocal, or performative. The participant's intuitive self begins to activate and mobilize again and again in the workshop. The playfulness engages the person who is being opened and becoming responsive to what is within and around her. This led, in this instance, to the unknown trajectory of the thread initiated by Lembo (see Lembo, this volume). From a silent and unintentional impulse, the thread had triggered layers of creative possibilities, weaving and passing from person to person, flowing in/with nature (the wind); later on to find resonance and meaning via their personal associations and reflections.

While research has demonstrated a "significant link between walking and creative thinking" (Jones 2015), this intuitive walking holds the potential of being an *active* walk; "following the intuition, 'seeing' and 'hearing' from within, attuning to our heart...[it can] engage us within our vital life, leading us to a liberating and creative being." (*Sourcing Within* content /Gatt 2014) I wonder whether this walk can be disseminated not only in print, but if it can, and should, be constantly expanded through practice and play.

Play is always a matter of context. It is not what we do, but how we do it...In play, we manifest fresh, interactive ways of relating with people, animals, things, ideas, images, ourselves...To play is to free ourselves from arbitrary restrictions and expand our field of action. Our play fosters richness of response and adaptive flexibility...Play is an attitude, a spirit, a way of doing things (Nachmanovitch 1990: 43).

Perhaps only when the *Walking Thread Initiative* becomes an intentional act, comprising of bodily imprints of individual histories, memories and responses, can it be expanded into a communal shared experience. It is my hope that the team of *Walking Thread* delve further into the spirit of "play" and that the thread will continue to be unfurled unceasingly.

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Anthropological Renga

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What would an anthropological ‘thing’ (think parliament) look like, sound like, feel like if it emerged in the midst of engagement rather than as a result of retrospective analysis? What would be anthropological about it? Is “it” a helpful pronoun? Artefacts tend to be lively in many situations. Even assuming that an anthropological product may not be something living or part of the living, is itself an effect of the hegemony of scriptocentrism (Conquergood 2002) that modern academic institutions are founded upon.

Gey Pin Ang and I exchanged these sorts of questions, among many others, as part of the project called ‘Knowing from the Inside’ that led to us to organising the Sourcing Within Worksession in Aberdeen from which Walking Threads emerged. ‘Knowing from the Inside’ (KFI) is an ERC funded project based in the anthropology department, University of Aberdeen. Although the project is based in the anthropology department, the ethos of the project is ‘anti-disciplinary’. Not in the sense of foregoing rigour, but facing away from the separation of knowledge making into expert domains, cutting up the world a priori into separate categories of knowledge. KFI rather looks towards experimenting with an anthropology as ‘speculative enquiry’. Within this broader frame there are five sub projects, all of which in some way question perception, creativity, and skill. My own project is one of three in the sub project ‘Environments of Policy and Practice: the management of sustainability’. I am investigating performance training as an exploratory mode of inquiry. In conjunction with this I ask: How may performative enquiry together with anthropological ways of working lead to sustainable forms of academic knowledge production? The underlying aim of my project is to find ways to decolonise academic scholarship that transcend the apparent complacency that cultural critique has proffered (Escobar and Restrepo 2005). In resonance with Escobar and Restrepo’s “anthropology otherwise”, I am exploring a recrafting of what anthropologists *make*. This needs to include who they make it for, in other words who anthropologists are accountable to, as well as the expected ‘products’ of their scholarly endeavours.

Exploring how to develop a collaborative anthropology project is one way in which I am interpreting our overall project’s aim: Knowing from the Inside. In order to be genuinely collaborative, the project needs to be designed as well as followed through in tandem (Lassiter 2005). This includes adapting along the way if any of the parties collaborating shifts. While this implies less freedom for the anthropologist than previous instrumental types of ‘rapport’ with field participants, it does mean that what the anthropologist proposes is hierarchically indistinguishable from the contributions of their collaborators. Importantly in this approach the anthropologist’s stance is *not* primarily that of the apprentice (Agar 1996). The main point here is to assume that the anthropologist should be contributing or risking to the same degree as their collaborators. In 2013 Gey Pin Ang and I decided to try and work out how such a collaboration could work between our two practices – hers theatre and mine of anthropology. The preparation for the collaboration began slowly – I participated in two Worksessions led by Gey Pin, and she visited me in Cambridge, where we spent three intensive days discussing our respective work and hopes for future work and collaboration. Then as the project got going we exchanged our writing, specifically draft chapters for publication, draft PhD chapters and other texts, such as funding proposals, to read and carried on discussing via skype and email. Due to the iterative nature of collaboration, our collaboration did not run along conventional anthropological research project lines with three separate blocks; preparation, fieldwork and analysis and writing up. Rather the nature of the project required all three strands of work to be kept going simultaneously. It meant dedicating moments to reading and preparation for an upcoming event, dedicating others to writing, analysis and reflection, as well as participating in Worksessions, another form of fieldwork, while simultaneously keeping up my own daily theatre training.¹ In the context of the KFI project the conventional block approach would not make sense anyway. If the project’s aim is to attempt to move away from the concept of the ethnographer who returns from fieldwork, armed with data to be analysed and written up, and instead hopes to generate insights for the carrying on of life, then the conventional three block approach to research also needs to be revised.² When

¹ See Lucas (2006) for what he calls a plaiting approach.

² The type of knowledge the scholars in KFI are attempting to generate is anthropological rather than ethnographic (Ingold 2015), and anthropological rather than documentary in Marcus (2009).

these three blocks are shaken up, where moments of fieldwork intertwine with presentation of work done so far, even if only from a short period of work, and further merge in purpose with preparation for future moments of fieldwork, then the possibilities for collaboration become both more complex and simpler, since the anthropologist is not tied to a rigid timetable.

In January 2014, I participated in two Worksessions organised by Gey Pin, one in Portugal and one in Barcelona. In each, although the structure of the Worksession remained recognisable, there were specific changes. In Portugal I ran an experimental exercise on two afternoons, and in Barcelona after her performance, Gey Pin invited me to respond with her to the audience's reactions. In addition, Gey Pin shared her thoughts that I interpreted as arising from some of our previous activities and discussions in the Worksessions. We had always imagined organising a Worksession in Aberdeen and this came about in March 2014. The previous two encounters were essentially Gey Pin's 'Sourcing Within Worksessions' with certain adaptations to introduce our collaboration, to allow for my experiments and a latent change in our ongoing thinking processes. Unlike these previous Worksessions the Aberdeen gathering was considerably different, the Aberdeen event needed to be adapted for anthropologists rather than for the professional actors Gey Pin normally works with. The aim of the Aberdeen Worksession was manifold but we also did not try to pin down these aims too explicitly. A clear aim for Gey Pin was to carry on her own theatre research through a Worksession, as with all her Worksessions. I had a similar motivation: to participate in the Worksession as part of my own enquiry through training. However, I also wanted to share the way Gey Pin and I were working with my colleagues in Aberdeen, as well as with others who have participated in similar workshops I have organised in the past. In fact, all the participants in Walking Threads, except for Brian, were people I met through previous theatre and anthropology workshops that I either organised or participated in. The Worksession in Aberdeen was therefore one of the iterative nodes in an anthropological project that aims to interweave preparation, fieldwork, reflection and presentation. The Worksession presented the work Gey Pin and I had been doing together over the last few months. Through the discussions held at various points in the event, we included space for shared reflections on our work and the work of the others who presented their resonant experiments (Paola Esposito, Brian Schultis, Valeria Lembo). It was definitely fieldwork in at least two senses: 1) I carried on my training and collaboration with Gey Pin, and 2) observed how anthropologists respond to the tasks of perception and awareness proposed by Gey Pin. Finally, it was preparation for future fieldwork, future experiments in bringing together the skills of anthropologists and performers.

The Worksession was an experiment, a laboratorium in Ssorin-Chaikov's (2013) terms, producing the unknown. Participating in life's ongoing formation not only through participant observation but also by using the anthropologist's skills to propose possibilities. When we consider the anthropologist as an equal member of a team (Gatt 2005) and therefore not as *the* ethnographer or documenter, their role is that of one who offers, one who gives as well as receives. In my case, I offer my collaboration with Gey Pin (this is great deal of what anthropologists make after all, we create relationships Das nd), my personal anthropologically informed and motivated training in theatre, and finally, the anthropologically versed meta-attention to the form of collaboration itself. This experiment dips into what theatre makers and performers work towards, and that is this offering while simultaneously receiving, the virtue/skill of performance is action that is doing and listening simultaneously. Here I deliberately do not use the common binary pair of active/passive as listening is never passive. The performer receives and offers simultaneously, proposes and absorbs, proposes only because they absorb. When a performer does not listen either to the other performers or to the audience, or both, the particular spark that brings a performance to life is missing, the performance felt as stilted. The skill of this 'doing-listening', I hope, offers a way of scholarship and anthropology that is not only attentive and observant but simultaneously imagines futures and participates in constituting our common world.

The Worksession in Aberdeen therefore was an experiment, proposing a way of working – a method of doing anthropology drawn in collaboration with theatre. I had no idea, and deliberately/accidentally did not attempt to imagine what might come out of this experiment, except for a hope that the sort of attention Gey Pin works with and offers participants of her Worksessions might be taken up by some or any of the anthropologists who participated. In fact, Walking Threads fulfils this hope. A group of anthropologist who are also performers, and a performer who also reads anthropology, began and sustained an engagement through the Worksession. It took many years for this to be possible, I believe. No Walking Threads or anything similar emerged after previous theatre and anthropology workshops I was involved in organising or giving. Many years, or many months in some cases, for all of us involved to develop their own work, and our engagement together with performance and anthropology. Walking Threads, I would suggest, was not a single event, not

just a group of anthropologists and performers who made with their watchful, listenful “drifting” through a park in Aberdeen in order to analyse their observations into discrete moments of data. Rather, they created a gently tensing cat’s cradle of thread and thoughts. In serious play (Bateson 2000 [1972]: 14, 191), they experimented further with this ‘method’ of doing anthropology. But what was most unexpected to me was the ongoing engagement between the walkers that carried on past that week in Aberdeen. Their thinking work now laced through by their doing/listening, even their dreams (Esposito). The ongoing engagement between them, even if not metrically proximate to each other, sings through the resonances in their writings, with Deleuzian and Ingoldian concepts participating in shaping their engagement. Knowing the walkers, I also know that these were resonances they held in common before their threading through Seaton Park and one of the reasons I felt they would be happy to participate in the Souring Within Worksession. And yet, many scholars read Delueze and Ingold without coming together to produce anything like the ongoing team thinking, “teem thinking”, that Walking Threads gave us a glimpse of. A hive mind perhaps? I am referring to Parikka’s notion of communication drawn from his study of insects, where “anything can become a medium” (2010: xviii), thus allowing for environs to be incorporated into the thinking and the making of beings. The parallel cooperation in a hive mind is embedded in its environment drawing on what ever materials may be to hand to communicate, and therefore to be/become. Yet the beings driving the Walking Threads did not become a hive mind in the sense that the persons were swallowed, subsumed. Maybe a more helpful analogy is the practice of renga? A form of early Japanese collective poetry writing, a form of writing that is alive, collective and non-linear – performative – offering anthropologists a way of writing that is not trapped by associations of fixity otherwise afforded by text in academic contexts. Permutations of renga offer another way that writing can have recursive publics (Kelty 2004). Online composition, argues Kelty, allows real-time engagement, publics folded into the production of anthropological text because of the ease and speed of those publics’ access to anthropological writings. In this particular case the Internet, that forms the basis of Kelty’s insights, also facilitated not only my collective thinking work with Gey Pin but also the collection of writings of Walking Threads. I meandered along Lembo’s embroidery through a link sent to me by email.

A challenge does appear here though. Who do anthropologists want their recursive publics to be? How can experiments like the Aberdeen Souring Within Worksession and Walking Threads unfold beyond the circles of the university? What sort of renga can be crafted between anthropologist and what were once considered informants? Why and when would ‘others’ be interested in working with anthropologists? I believe that is only answerable in practice, each research project wondering how to collaborate, how to co-produce ‘things’ valuable to all the parties involved, how to establish between them what rigour or ‘quality’ will mean for each granular experiment. And yet, these questions, although open ended, are vital for these sorts of experiments in order to retain in Ingold’s terms that ‘sideways glance’ (2008). And to conclude, here my reference to the sideways glance is not intended as an invocation of anthropology’s historical dependence on alterity or ‘otherness’, but rather a constant reminder to look beyond what is familiar, what is already known, in other words to experiment.

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