

ISSUE

1

THE UR- MA- DICA ZINE



ISSUES | ARTICLES | IMAGES | PROJECT NEWS | REVIEWS | FILMS

THE ISSUE OF THE ISSUE

Presents, as will all other issues, issues at the core of the Urmadic project. It opens with looking at how progressive learning is represented at universities many parts of the world and argues for the need for a new kind of institution. The plight of designers who want to find a way to act critically and independently is considered next. Then a diverse consideration of the lived meaning of 'betweenness' is presented. They are followed by a review of an award-winning book and a photo essay – both will feature regularly in every coming issue. The final contribution is an introduction of the place of the audio-visual in the Urmadica project

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THE **URMADIC**



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THE URMADIC

ISSUE ONE WELCOME / EDITORIAL MESSAGE

URMADICAZINE IS THE PATHFINDER PUBLICATION OF THE URMADIC, A FUTURAL EDUCATION PROJECT IN THE PROCESS OF BEING CREATED.

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THE URMADIC IS A PLACELESS NOMADIC WAY OF LEARNING THAT FINDS WAYS OF ENGAGING THE HUGELY COMPLEX PROBLEMS THAT PUT LIFE AS IT IS CURRENTLY UNDERSTOOD AT RISK. RATHER THAN IDEALISTICALLY BELIEVING THAT THESE PROBLEMS CAN BE SOLVED BY TECHNOLOGY, GLOBAL MOVEMENTS OR BREAK-THROUGH IDEAS, THE URMADIC QUESTIONS THE VERY WAY PROBLEMS ARE DESIGNATED, UNDERSTOOD AND PRESENTED. DOING THIS REQUIRES A PROCESS OF RIGOROUS INTERROGATION. FROM THE KNOWLEDGE GAINED, APPROPRIATE MODES OF ENGAGEMENT ARE SOUGHT. THIS APPROACH CANNOT ASSUME THAT THIS WILL LEAD TO A SOLUTION, OR EVEN THAT A SOLUTION IS POSSIBLE. IT MIGHT MEAN THE ONLY OPTIONS ARE ADAPTATION, MITIGATION, OR ACCEPTANCE.

The Urmadic aims to especially counter those practices that claim to advance 'sustainability' on the assumption that the unsustainable is known and self-evident. Most frequently, due to lack of rigorous interrogation, it is *symptoms* of the unsustainable that stand in for the foundational problem. This critical perspective underscores the research and educational program development of *The Urmadic*, details of which will unfold over the coming months.

One of the fundamental ideas of the Urmadic is the redirection of existing practices so that they become futural. Knowingly and unknowingly so many existing practices – industrial, technological, scientific, agricultural, economic, cultural, political and military – defuture. Which is to say that they negate the possibility of a viable future for life, rather than secure the condition upon which life depends. All such practices beg critical examination. Those that are futural need support and advancement; others with *potential* for futuring require redirection. Everything else has to be eliminated. Economic pragmatics that refuse this imperative needs to be unambiguously named as irresponsible and profoundly unethical. The political costs of responding to this imperative are an unavoidable problem to confront.

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LA URMADICA ES UNA FORMA DE APRENDIZAJE NÓMADA Y SIN LUGAR QUE ENCUENTRA FORMAS DE ABORDAR LOS PROBLEMAS ENORMEMENTE COMPLEJOS QUE PONEN EN PELIGRO LA VIDA TAL Y COMO SE ENTIENDE ACTUALMENTE. EN LUGAR DE CREER DE FORMA IDEALISTA QUE ESTOS PROBLEMAS PUEDEN SER RESUELTOS POR LA TECNOLOGÍA, LOS MOVIMIENTOS GLOBALES O IDEAS INNOVADORAS. LA URMADICA CUESTIONA LA PROPIA FORMA EN QUE SE DISEÑAN, ENTIENDEN Y PRESENTAN LOS PROBLEMAS. HACER ESTO REQUIERE UN PROCESO DE CUESTIONAMIENTO RIGUROSO. A PARTIR DEL CONOCIMIENTO ADQUIRIDO, SE BUSCAN MODOS DE COMPROMISO ADECUADOS. ESTE ENFOQUE NO SUPONE ASUMIR QUE ESTO CONDUZCA A UNA SOLUCIÓN, O INCLUSO QUE UNA SOLUCIÓN SEA POSIBLE. PUEDE SIGNIFICAR QUE LAS ÚNICAS OPCIONES SON LA ADAPTACIÓN, LA MITIGACIÓN O LA ACEPTACIÓN.

El objetivo de *La Urmadica* es contrarrestar especialmente las prácticas que pretenden promover la "sustentabilidad" partiendo de la base de que lo insustentable es conocido y autoevidente. Frecuentemente, debido a la falta de un cuestionamiento riguroso, los *síntomas* de lo insustentable terminan sustituyendo el problema de fondo. Esta perspectiva crítica subraya la investigación y el desarrollo del programa educativo de *La Urmadica*, cuyos detalles se desarrollarán en los próximos meses.

Una de las ideas fundamentales de la Urmadica es la redirección de las prácticas existentes para que se conviertan en prácticas futurantes. A sabiendas y sin saberlo, muchas de las prácticas existentes – industriales, tecnológicas, científicas, agrícolas, económicas, culturales, políticas y militares – defuturan. Es decir, niegan la posibilidad de un futuro viable para la vida, en lugar de asegurar la condición de la que esta depende. Todas estas prácticas requieren un examen crítico. Aquellas que son futurantes necesitan apoyo y avance; otras con *potencial* para futurar requieren redirección. Todo lo demás debe ser eliminado. Las pragmáticas económicas que rechazan este imperativo deben ser señaladas inequívocamente como irresponsables y profundamente antiéticas. Los costes políticos de responder a este imperativo son un problema ineludible al que hay que enfrentarse.

...PLEASE NOTE THAT AS THE URMADIC PROJECT GROWS THE ZINE WILL BECOME INCREASINGLY MULTILINGUAL...

01

URMADICA

MENSAJE EDITORIAL / BIENVENIDA AL PRIMER NÚMERO

URMADICAZINE ES LA PUBLICACIÓN EXPLORATORIA DE LA URMADICA, UN PROYECTO EDUCATIVO FUTURANTE EN PROCESO DE CREACIÓN.

THE DEATH AND THE FUTURE LIFE OF THE UNIVERSITY

Tony Fry

Our project is a response to the failure of education, specifically higher education, to urgently and appropriately reconfigure itself in ways that can deliver research and educational programs able to address the depth of the relational complexity and criticality of those conditions now putting life on Earth at risk.

How a new and small project can make a difference to this situation will become clear in coming issues of this publication, and the project it heralds. Clearly our claim of the insufficiency of higher education requires being supported by substantiated critique, this will be done in two parts. Part one, as it arrives here, argues that the ethos of liberal education is being assaulted and abandoned. Part two will detail the end of the academy by its realisation in commodity sphere where its market position (ranking) and economic continuity (income) have acted to displace the fundamental pedagogic project that was the essence of the institution.

POST-ENLIGHTENMENT LIBERAL EDUCATION IS NOW TERMINAL. IT CANNOT BE CLAIMED AS A PERFECT SYSTEM, ITS PLURALISTIC DIVISIONS OF KNOWLEDGE WERE REplete WITH CONTRADICTIONS.

Yet there was a notional attachment to academic freedom and a 'contest of Faculties'. Progressive voices could speak and be heard (sometimes). These characteristics of the institution have been under attack for some time and to a large extent, erased. This situation was signalled several decades ago, not least by Bill Readings book, *The University in Ruins* in 1996. The exercise of managerial control over what can be taught, how, and to what end, has been relentless, and structurally normalised for a whole generation of academics who have no idea about the exercise of academic freedom. They take compliance to performative

THE DEATH & THE FUTURE LIFE OF THE UNIVERSITY



direction and normative. **WHAT THIS MOMENT HAS MARKED IS A SHIFT FROM THE LIBERAL TO NEOLIBERAL MODE OF EDUCATION. THIS IS NOT A PROGRESSION BUT REGRESSION.** Neo-liberalism has its roots in nineteenth century classical economic 'free-trade' philosophy as conducted by the trading companies of the European colonial powers. Whereas liberal education was based on progressive plural ideas constituted especially in the arts and humanities and their intellectual culture. It's clear even from this brief account that the word 'liberal' invites confusion.

To support these statements two examples of a current political intervention in universities will be given. Both layer onto longer standing economic directive influences. The first is from Denmark, the second from the USA.

In June 2021 the Danish Parliament adopted a position to restrict what it called 'excessive activism in certain research environments' – this in reaction to political pressure, including a campaign against specific areas of research and teaching, such as race, gender, migration, and post-colonial studies. There was also an assertion that 'politics should not be disguised as science,' implying this is what was happening. In respond an open letter on academic freedom in Denmark was published that gained support from academics globally* (<https://politiken.dk/debat/debatindlaeg/art-8237629/ag-klart-afstand-fra-angrebet-p%C3%A5-forskningsfriheden.-Det-kan-f%C3%B8re-til-selvicensur?shareToken=zqntL7AAfNLg>)

WHAT THIS MOMENT HAS MARKED IS A SHIFT FROM THE LIBERAL TO NEOLIBERAL MODE OF EDUCATION. THIS IS NOT A PROGRESSION BUT REGRESSION.

More broadly there was criticism of academics working in the sciences and humanities engaging a whole range of areas, like climate, biodiversity, immigration, agriculture and inequality, able to be politicised. In adopting its position, the government was asserting direct political pressure on university leadership, legitimising attacks on individual researchers, further curtailing academic freedom, and weakening the already lowly status of Danish research within the European university research community. What is happening in Denmark reflects an emergent pattern in Europe. It runs counter to the view that Nordic countries are among global leaders in the exercise of social democracy. In Sweden, which has fostered its image as globally progressive nation with perfect welfare society, it is now being argued, for instance, that university gender studies departments should be cut and closed as they are 'useless and expensive' and of little value to the state.

NOW TO AMERICA

Ron DeSantis, the Governor of Florida, signed three bills in June 2021 that characterised progressive course content as political, ideological indoctrination, and curtailing free speech. In contradiction, two weeks prior to this he had banned teaching 'critical race theory' in line with demands being made nationally by the Trumpian right. This ban aims to exclude teaching the history of structural racism in American history, while allowing

white supremacists the right of free speech. It also prioritises a form of 'civics education' that extols patriotism, and presents communism and socialism as evil. The legislation also included a law that required all public university students, and their teachers, to complete a survey of their political beliefs. DeSantis, whose politics are like Trump's, but without the former President's excesses, is being viewed as Republican front-runner for the 2024 Presidential election.

THERE ARE NOW TWO OPEN QUESTIONS.

1 IS THE LIBERAL MODE OF HIGHER EDUCATION OF LIBERAL DEMOCRATIC NATIONS NOW ALMOST DEAD, AND WILL THE ATTEMPT TO DEFEND ITS LAST VESTIGES SPARK STUDENT PROTESTS? This might be so, but this would only come from a vocal minority. However, in regimes like Florida, of which there are many, this could well be met, as it was in the 1960s, with violence from the police and National Guard. This would bring the USA into line with other repressive regimes, like Myanmar, Hong Kong, Colombia, Russia, Pakistan, Nigeria and Syria. The official figure for 2020 was that globally eleven thousand students were killed as a result of the participation in political protests.

2 QUESTION TWO IS CAN A FORM OF PROGRESSIVE EDUCATION APPROPRIATE TO THE AGE OF CRISIS AND COMPLEXITY BE ENVISAGED. THIS IS THE QUESTION OUR PROJECT INTENDS TO ANSWER.

**POST-ENLIGHTENMENT
LIBERAL EDUCATION
IS NOW
TERMINAL**



Many designers recognize that the work they are doing is pivotal in sustaining the unsustainable; that they are facilitators of a system of production and consumption that, in its systemic planetary dominance, is progressively undermining the basis of human and non-human existence. Such designers live and work in a state of contradiction, attempting to minimise the impacts of their personal lives by reducing purchases, waste, fossil fuel use, and so on, while providing services to clients – styling, branding, packaging, graphics, images, stories, etc – all directed towards increasing consumption.

Australian designer, Niki Wallace interviewed many of these designers, exploring how they are negotiating the process of transitioning away from service provision to autonomous practice. She has presented her findings in several modes, including as composite first-person vignettes that reveal doubts, frustrations and insights. **WHAT IS MOST DISTINCTIVE ABOUT AUTONOMOUS DESIGN IS THAT WHAT IS TO BE DESIGNED IS DETERMINED BY THE DESIGNER RATHER THAN A BRIEF FROM THE CLIENT. THIS BRINGS CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES**, as we'll see. Reading Niki's research, as well as Adam Nocek and Tony Fry's recent book *Design in Crisis* (their words are quoted above) prompted the following thoughts.

Decades ago, designers who wanted to 'make a difference' tried to reduce impacts of products by specifying less polluting, and less energy-intensive materials and processes. But such approaches were, and still are, woefully inadequate. First, because they do not reduce overall volume and rate of destructive consumption. So you use less energy, save money and spend that on something else – this is the rebound effect. Second, trivial actions were, and still are, taken up and amplified by self-congratulatory corporations. 'Look, our Annual Report is printed on recycled paper!' 'Oh, we're even better, we only provide an e-version!'

THE BIG LEAP

Anne Marie Willis



DESIGN MUST BECOME UNRECOGNISABLE TO ITSELF



But hang on, is this all the fault of clients and corporate green-washers? No, that's too simple. Clearly, unsustainability is complex, systemic, material, immaterial, psycho-social, cultural, all-pervasive and naturalized. It is generally not seen as a pervasive totality because it is visualized and narrated in terms of discrete symptoms and effects – a flood here, wildfires there, a pandemic everywhere (such events are now so frequent that it becomes increasingly difficult to not see the connections; or so one would have thought).

AT THE SAME TIME, DESIGNERS CONTINUE TO BE PART OF THE PROBLEM WHEN THEY CANNOT SEE DESIGN AS ANYTHING BEYOND THEIR FAMILIAR SKILL-SET OF VISUALIZING, FORM-GIVING, BRANDING, CREATING GREAT USER EXPERIENCES, EMPATHIZING WITH STORYBOARD PERSONAS, ADDING VALUE BY PROVIDING COMMODITISED SOLUTIONS TO MICRO NON-PROBLEMS. While all acts of design have futural consequences, in practice, mostly this is defuturing. Design, as is endlessly reiterated, is about changing things. Yet this 'changing' is understood and enacted within anthropocentric and Eurocentric frames that impose a singular direction of development that eliminates difference or reduces it to gestural forms. The mantra is of making things more efficient, convenient, stylish, comfortable, fun; or in the contemporary rhetoric of faux seriousness, making things more engaging, authentic, and meaningful. Yet changing – think of it as directional change, or, redirection – does not have to be confined to the marketplace, nor to the standard repertoire of design skills **THE PROBLEM IS NOT BEING ABLE TO SEE BEYOND THE FAMILIAR, NOT BEING ABLE TO IMAGINE OTHERWISE.** This is because of lack of knowledge largely due to the nature of design education which adds up to induction into unsustainability as a profession. **IT'S NOT JUST DESIGN.** Contemporary universities offer a vast choice of study pathways towards mastering unsustainability – management, business and tourism studies; petroleum engineering ... you can add to the list.

DESIGN MUST BECOME UNRECOGNISABLE TO ITSELF

DESIGNERS WHO SEEK TO REDIRECT THEIR PRACTICES TOWARDS SUSTAINMENT NEED TO ACQUIRE A DEEP UNDERSTANDING OF UNSUSTAINABILITY AS SYSTEMIC, AS WELL AS LETTING GO OF CERTAIN DISPOSITIONS AND INSTRUMENTAL KNOWLEDGES. This can be unsettling: 'then I will no longer be a designer,' say many, wistfully. Some cannot or do not want to imagine how they could design outside of a service-provider model of client and brief, of projects with clear beginnings, endings and tangible outcomes. There are other uncertainties to confront in leaving the familiar space of service provider, such as reduction in income and loss of recognition. And there are new challenges. **AN AUTONOMOUS DESIGNER CANNOT BE JUST REACTIVE; THEY NEED TO BE ABLE TO INITIATE PROJECTS.**

MAKING THE TRANSITION FROM COMMERCIAL TO AUTONOMOUS DESIGN TAKES TIME, REQUIRES PLANNING, AND LEARNING TO TAKE ON NEW ROLES SUCH AS FACILITATOR OR ORGANIZER,

as Niki Wallace acknowledges. It needs to be grasped that such roles are not inferior to 'designing', **THEY CAN BE ACTIONS THAT DESIGN, NOT MERELY INSTRUMENTAL AND PROCEDURAL.** Facilitation is a crucial part of collaborative designing with non-designers and with communities of common interests. And 'organize' can take on the political meaning it once had, of labour organizing against exploitation. This is powerfully evoked in some of the lines of the 'Ballad of Joe Hill' recorded by Paul Robeson, Joan Baez and others:

**I DREAMED I SAW JOE HILL LAST NIGHT
ALIVE AS YOU OR ME
SAYS I, BUT JOE, YOU'RE TEN YEARS
DEAD
I NEVER DIED, SAYS HE
I NEVER DIED, SAYS HE**

**THE COPPER BOSSES KILLED YOU, JOE
THEY SHOT YOU, JOE, SAYS I
TAKES MORE THAN GUNS TO KILL A MAN
SAYS JOE, I DIDN'T DIE
SAYS JOE, I DIDN'T DIE**

**AND STANDING THERE AS BIG AS LIFE
AND SMILING WITH HIS EYES
JOE SAYS, WHAT THEY FORGOT TO KILL
WENT ON TO ORGANIZE
WENT ON TO ORGANIZE**

....

And there's much to be (re)organized. As Nocek and Fry say: '... the way in which designers have been educated, professionalised, and rewarded for their work, is precisely what needs to be undermined and rooted out at every turn.'

And as Niki Wallace says: **EVERY PRACTICE IN TRANSITION WILL LIKELY EXPERIENCE THE NEED TO SAY NO SOMETIMES TO THE KINDS OF PROJECTS THAT MAY HAVE HISTORICALLY DEFINED THEM IN ORDER TO CREATE SPACE FOR THE KINDS OF PROJECTS THAT WILL DEFINE THEM IN THE FUTURE.** It is in this metaphoric space that a designer becomes empowered and enabled. Projects do not exist in this space, rather it is open and held, filled only with possibility.'

THE PROCESS IS UNDERWAY.

References

Niki Wallace, *Designers Dilemma*, unpublished, 2020.

Adam Nocek and Tony Fry (eds), *Design in Crisis: New Worlds, Philosophies and Practice*, Routledge 2021.

**DESIGNERS
WANTED**

**FACILITATE
ORGANIZE**

OF INBETWEENNESS

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4A

Of In betweenness

KNOW IT OR NOT, in the contemporary world of unsettling crises, geopolitical tensions, intercultural complexity, and old and new modes of inequity, **ALL OF US IN SOME WAY EXIST IN A CONDITION OF INBETWEENNESS.**

IT DEFINES WHERE WE ARE AS BEING BETWEEN, WHERE WE CAME FROM AND WHERE WE ARE GOING. Likewise, it also defines the nature of so many of our uncommitted relations and is evident in our epistemological differences as we exist in intersections of knowledge and world views. Inbetweenness denotes the current state of our Urmadic project as it has begun, but is not yet realised.

Out of this condition of betweenness we are creating a borderland, a conceptual and material space, of exchange constituted by our commonality in difference, both for ourselves and for others. **ESSENTIALLY, THE URMADIC IS A BORDERLAND PROJECT WITH GENERATIVE INTENT, AGENCY UNFOLDING AS LEARNING ENVIRONMENT PLACED BETWEEN THE UNIVERSITY AS IT IS AND AS IT WILL BECOME.**

THE FOLLOWING TEXTS

Are the product of an automatic writing exercise (a regular exercise of the group). A topic is named and you write whatever comes into your head in five minutes.



COSMOTECHNICS

I feel myself between a capitalist realm tramp and a world made of multiple worlds, a world where life in difference, but also in commonality is possible. I'm situated in the middle of isolation and the desire of being interwoven with other singularities: a possible encounter that makes possible the display of difference in solidarity.

In this sense, since I grew up from an "Illustration" point of view (the one that absolutely believes in rationality a modern one), I feel that I am between that faith in modernity and the birth of a plural world which is communicated by solidarity, love, care and respect for life and its immanent difference.

I am in the middle of the established way of thinking and revolution, the revolution of the Commons; the Commons not only understood as from human diversity, but also from diversity of life in a broad sense.

In a more particular way, I've been always in the borderland of disciplines: personally, it is very difficult for me to define and identify myself with any current recognized discipline. I love philosophy but I also consider myself making art and design, and I don't feel good saying that I'm a philosopher, artist, or designer because I believe all of them are parts of a larger thing.

Recently, I read about the Cosmotechnics concept of Yuk Hui that refers to understanding technique within a cosmic realisation: an ontology, a way of understanding life. The way we make the world answers to the non-rational as Hui says; it is something close to the idea of being in Heidegger's philosophy. Then, I feel myself in that borderland: the one that can be seen as a crosslink, the encounter of thinking-making-being, the one where I could define myself in a better way than these current understanding of knowledge as many specializations ignoring the ontological foundations that animated them.

AURA

WHAT AM I IN BETWEEN?

I am in between many things, the most obvious is disciplines – I have betrayed all the disciplines I was formally attached to and none of them were ready to ever admit me. I am transcending disciplines and not merely applying the method of one discipline to another. This is already unacceptable in the university as it is now. I am in between geopolitical worlds and none of them accepts me, lets me belong, but then I never wanted to belong to any of the worlds entirely. Indigenous cosmologies attract me, especially my own indigenous tradition. But western education cannot be undone, so I am in between them – neither/nor or both/and. I am in between ages – not young, not old, in a vague grim zone of indeterminacy. Ethnically, culturally the border runs inside me, cuts through me, I am in between my several selves. I am in between languages. I dream at night in English but when I am delirious, I speak in Russian, in the colonizer's tongue that almost erased my Circassian language that I never learned. I am constantly negotiating different entanglements of belonging and non-belonging. And physical borders of quite real countries remind me of the materiality of political borders which reject unwanted bodies like mine. So, I am stuck but this stuckness also paradoxically gives me freedom to reside in the floating borderlands of permanent temporariness, of an open peripatetic process of changing and becoming, and at least imagine a different world.

MADINA

DISPLACEMENT

I visualize a scenario of relation. There I find myself, at the border that I am, because everything I see, maybe others (including the others I am becoming) see it as well, but it will never be the same, nor will it be in the same place. I am in the midst of everyday gazes, including my own. What I am in between, what I go through and what goes through me, is more than a duality or a specific environment. I am between what I see and what I hear, touch, taste, feel ... and there are moments in which nothing corresponds. There are moments in which nothing is coherent because I am also in the middle of imaginaries and prejudices. I think that this version of anthropomorphic body is not a deposit of me, but rather, a dimension of the multiplicity that we are at infinite scales, that makes me feel in the middle of interconnected organs sustaining one and millions of life forms at the same time. Knowing that I am not in a single place, in a single body or mode of existence, makes me feel uncomfortable, multiple and unstable, but it puts you, me and it, in equal conditions (because we find ourselves uninhabited and mutual).

HECTOR

TRANSLATE OR?

One is the translator and the other the one who has to translate herself, maybe this is not only a matter of languages ... realities require translations but it seems that without calm we only manage to translate them to our being on the surface, to our shell that without care is only a hollow ... I tend to think everything in layers, in the familiar one perhaps deeper than the others, I feel between the now and the after that will always be marked by the before that is always present. The ruptures of time and presence are frightening, because it is not known if they are good or bad or if they can be "judged"; in this way. In another layer, perhaps more external, there is the country, territory that is entailed by me and that entrails me, but as a living body it is violent and in constant change, we live in an uncertainty that stabs us deep inside, we live in between a state of peace and constant war, perhaps more of war than of peace, a border that we never cross definitively neither for one side nor for the other... or do we? a state where death is around all the time and although not directly affects, it always affects. What affects and what does not? They say that if it doesn't affect our own flesh, it doesn't affect you, but what about the emotional health of the whole country? Where does that leave us? In the layer that I assign to the Urmadic I feel as if I am in between a dream that is feasible but that is and will be immersed in many realities that although the borderland sometimes seem untranslatable, perhaps this is one of the aims, to generate diverse, translations, felt at all layers, to expand the borderline that manages to cross us all, so that the world that we have destroyed can be for all beings that we want to stop destroying.

CAROLINA



BORDERLANDS

Asked to write something on what borderlands means to me my first response is to think of borderlands as in-between spaces, places of neither one or the other, and then I recoil as I sense an affinity with 'liminality', a much loved and exhausted thematic within literary theory, which often reduces to crises of alienated bourgeois subjects. Just yesterday, the liminal appeared on my screen as an invitation to a Humanities seminar in which a postgrad student on 'Classics' was going to speak on the value of liminality for reading certain figures of ancient cultures. It was actually more complicated than this – inserting another theory or theorist between these two objects. Just one more example of disciplinary decadence. OK, so 'borderlands' doesn't have to be this.

Where 'liminal' rolls off the tongue (the tongues of some native English speakers) beginning and ending with in a blur, 'border' is hard, its start and finish as decisive as the finishing line of a race or a territorial border – a line of inclusion or exclusion, political through and through. Add 'lands' to 'border' and ambiguity returns, and it gets closer to the vagueness of liminality but with none of its lyricism. Refugees, asylum-seekers, people not recognized by any nation, exist in a state of not being able to move forward or backwards—not necessarily spatially, more so temporally – lives suspended in time. The borderland is not a chosen condition, it is a place, but more like being 'emplaced' by impersonal forces of power.

— ANNE-MARIE —

VOICES OF OUR DIFFERENCE

As inbetweenness comes to mind, I hover between where I was and where I want to be – which is a place that I have never arrived at. Obviously, this is not a spatial problem, but an existential one. The place I came from (socio-economically, culturally and in many ways materially) no longer exists. It has been erased, except for the memory of it as my own retained fragment of a lost world. A world that was taken away by the crushing of its culture and a covering over by cack-handed gentrification.

Hovering, hovering – the future is not going to be a future I desire, my future, the future. The past is such a powerful pull. It pulls-up the loss I have lost. At the same time, the detritus of past world-making is thrown into the future. From there it arrives in the present. It's violent arrival exposes and reduces our time as finite. Ever between utility and simplicity – valued value – and the complexity of unwanted excess. Here is a wanting more that is less.

'Between the devil and the deep blue sea', the long-time unheard. Why remembered? Why now? What does this indeterminate non-sense of uninvited coming to mind mean? Sounds like the song of a being in-between words that are out of place.

Hovering in condition of place-less-ness, I know that I am not of one nation, culture, class, discipline, voice, age, moment. I am in between.

— TONY —



MU TAN TE BORDERLAND

Diseño Detonante

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The infinite knack of creating concepts, naming and assigning them a unique meaning, the knack of believing these inventions and wanting to pass them over to the lives of others and one's own life. Thus maps and territories have arisen and with them the borders that with their pretended unique meaning have pretended to cut territories as if this were possible, territories countries, territories -bodies, territories -minds, territories-feelings. But not even herself believes her own adjudicated sense and prefers to feel and be a viscous liquid that slides everywhere, crossing us in different ways. **BUT... IF SHE CROSSES US, IT MEANS THAT WE ALSO HAVE THE CAPACITY TO CROSS HER, TO BE FLUIDS AND TO CROSS AND JUMP OVER HER, TO INTERWEAVE AND CONSTELLATE HER.**



Only those who have never approached a physical border or who are not aware of other borders that cross us on a daily basis, can believe the stories of fragmentation; That a magic line painted on a map, a wall, a fence, a barbed wire, another body, a "different" "reality" already means a definitive separation and an irreconcilable existence of their own, while, those who live there or who are aware of the existence of the multiple viscous borders, know that this is never the case. That the border itself in its viscosity, is full of cracks, leaks of joints that pass over and under, that mock the walls of all the "geographical" borders but also of the other existing borders, those of our "outside" and our "inside".

WHAT IS OUTSIDE? WHAT IS INSIDE? IS THERE A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN WHAT WE THINK AND WHAT WE ARE? WHAT WE FEEL AND WHAT WE DO? THE STRUCTURES WE BUILD AND THOSE THAT BUILD US? ONE SIDE AND THE OTHER? A PERSON, AN ANIMAL, A MUTANT AND A MUTUANT?*

And what are we, the inhabitants of these countries that are forcibly mestizo/mixed, if not permanent inhabitants of the borders, inhabitants of all the sides that conform them. We are, as Anzaldúa says; hybrid people, possessors of a multiple identity and as such cross-borderers, in permanent movement, mutants who as such are seen and treated from the prejudice of those who believe themselves pure and static, who hold the power/s.

4B

Mutante Borderland

While those of us who know ourselves to be multiple are illegal, viscous, changeable, and disobedient, because what more does an accepted concept, created and fed by those who hold power ask for than blind and absolute obedience. **WE ARE THE SUBALTERNERS IN REBELLION.**

SO, IF THERE ARE NO BORDERS, EVERYTHING IS A BORDER, EVERYTHING IS AN INFINITE LEAK, water drips, blood drips, if there are no drops there are bullets, there are wires that bury themselves in our bodies or in our feelings, in our stories. Blood in itself is not war, it is life that flows and runs and pulls, as the sayings of these places would say. Living blood is a permanent movement. Thus we go from the implosion to the explosion, from the explosion to the implosion, an infinite and permanent surge. It is our most internal emotions that cross the first frontier which is that of our own intimacy and with them we build the armor with which we develop in external dealings, whether with the street or with the others ...

MUTANTS ARE ALL OF US, WE, THE BORDERERS, WHO WITHOUT CHOICE ARE A MIXTURE FROM EVERYTHING TO EVERYTHING, although only a few of us proudly declare ourselves to be so, between the nobodies and the mutants, we stick with both, carrying an infinite oppression on our backs, the oppression of obedience to the duty to be one, unique, without folds that have secret hiding places, much less with unfoldings of any kind.

MUTANTS WE ARE WHEN WE DISOBEY AT FIRST BY INSTINCT AND BY GUTS, THEN BY CONSCIENCE.

Maturana says that the rational is mediated by the emotional and so it is. In principle we feel it, that itch of not being, not belonging and not wanting to respond or fit in, an itch that becomes a rarity, that is externalized and generates discomfort as well as internal and external violence, until that itch, fearless of what people would say or with fears but without remedy, becomes a mutation, a strange part of us, but an internal part that is entailed, desired.

Afterwards, internal and external judgments and incomprehension will come, but, **IF WE WALK CALMLY AND CAREFULLY, WE WILL KNOW WE ARE INHABITANTS OF THE INTERSTICES OF THE FRONTIERS OF WORLDS, GENDERS, SPECIES, IDEAS AND FICTIONS AND WE WILL LOVE, HONOR AND LICK EACH MUTATION LIKE ANIMALS, WE WILL MAKE IT MUTUAL MUTATION WITH OTHERS AND THEN THAT BORDERLAND WILL BE MORE POWERFUL, IRRADIANT, EXPLOSIVE...**

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MUTUANT

Concept coined by Diseño Detonante, referring to a mutation carried out through a mutual process, essential for its existence.

WHAT'S IN A NAME

Tony Fry

Review: David Diop, At Night All Blood in Black, (trans. Anna Moschovakis), London: Pushkin Press, 2020

Like many people, when I walk into a bookshop without the intent to buy a specific book, I often first go to new works by authors I am familiar with and like. A few months ago, wandering into an airport bookshop in Sydney to pass time while waiting for a flight home to Tasmania, the name David Diop caught my eye on a shelf of new fiction. This was not because he was an author that I recognised but because the name Diop resonated with me.

It's a famous name in Senegal, with its origins in I discovered in the Peacock clan, and familiar to me as one of Senegal's most celebrated sons, Cheikh Anta Diop (1923-1986). He was an extraordinary and controversial man, a polymath who had studied in Paris with a significant reputation in history, linguistics, politics, science and philosophy. Many tales can be told about him, one in particular strikes a chord with me. In 1949 he arrived in Paris to commence a doctor of letters thesis on "The Cultural Future of African Thought" under the

direction of Gaston Bachelard, a leading French intellectual of the time. Diop completed the thesis in 1954, albeit with another supervisor and with another title. However, no examiners could be found for it, so the degree was not awarded. Undeterred by this setback, Diop continued with the project of gaining recognition for the historical significance of African thought and civilisation throughout his life.

The author of the book I bought was David Diop. The book, *At Night All Blood in Black*, was first published in France in 2018 (and translated into English in 2020). A few weeks after buying it, it was announced that it had won one of the most prestigious literary awards in the world – the Booker Prize.

David Diop was born in Paris in 1966. His mother was French, his father Senegalese. At the age of five the family returned to Senegal, where he spent his childhood. In 1984 he came back to Paris as a student and eventually gained a position as a university lecturer in 18-th century French and African literature. By 2009 he was teaching at the University of Pau and heading a research group studying the representation of Africa and Africans in European literature during the Enlightenment. Diop now heads the arts, languages, and literature department at that university.

I mention the history of the two Diops who are clearly related in more than just spirit as its trace marks the book's narrative. Central to the story is the friendship between Alfa Nduaye and Mademba Diop, who he describes as 'my more-than-half-brother'. Both are soldiers fighting in an African regiment in France during the First World War. They are viewed by the Germans as savages, a savagery that France needs. Fear, as well as violence, in various forms permeates the book.



*Tirailleurs Sénégalais - Edmond Lajoux- 1930

Tirailleurs Sénégalais





The decisive event for Alfa is when Mademba is hit in the stomach with shrapnel from an exploding shell while crossing no-man's-land in an assault against the German line. He is laying in mud with much what was once inside his body now hanging on the outside.

Knowing that he is going to die, he pleads with Alfa to end his life. But Alfa fails to do so, and thereafter is racked with guilt for allowing his friend to die in pain. To assuage his guilt and exact revenge for the death of his friend, he ventures out into no-man's-land night after night to commit a specific act of savagery. Consequentially, the 'savages' of his regiment end up fearing his savagery, and the symbol of it he returns with each night. Thus, Alfa becomes the other of the other.

While the language of the book is simple and poetically repetitive it travels with an invitation to reflect. So said, it was significant that it was Diop laying in the blood and mud of no-man's-land ripped asunder.

This took me back to Chiekh Anta Diop. He occupied a borderland between civilisations, the cultures of the global North and South – which is another kind of no-man's-land. Diop was one of twentieth-century Africa's most influential thinkers; he was also criticised for how and what he thought. He was certainly no respecter of disciplinary boundaries. In setting out to prove that ancient Egypt was a black society of black Africans, with knowledge and cultural achievements that predated, and crucially influenced, Greek thought, he attracted the ire of classicists and other Western scholars. For them African culture, in its difference, was deemed to be more violent, depraved, primitive and uncivilized than that of the West. This was not just a nineteenth-century notion. It seeped into the twentieth century to underscore race theory and remains alive among white supremacists of the twentieth-first.

***THE VIOLENCE, MADNESS AND HORROR OF AT NIGHT
ALL BLOOD IS BLACK IS NOT HELD IN THE MOMENT IN
WHICH THE BOOK IS SET, NOR IN ITS PAGES.***

An incidental postscript.

The all-black U.S. Army 369th Infantry Regiment (known as the Harlem Hellfighters) fought in France during World War One. But because they were black, the U.S. Army did not allow them to fight alongside white troops, so they were placed under French Army command. Returning at the end of the war as the most decorated (by France) of all American troops, they marched through New York city to a heroes' welcome. Yet were still not publicly officially recognised. This had to wait ninety-six years, until when President Obama awarded the Medal of Honor posthumously to the Regiment's Henry Johnson for his combat bravery in 2015.



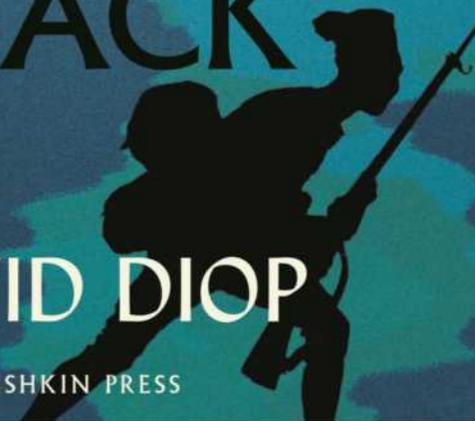
"Extraordinary... full of sadness, rage and beauty"

SARAH WATERS

AT NIGHT ALL BLOOD IS BLACK

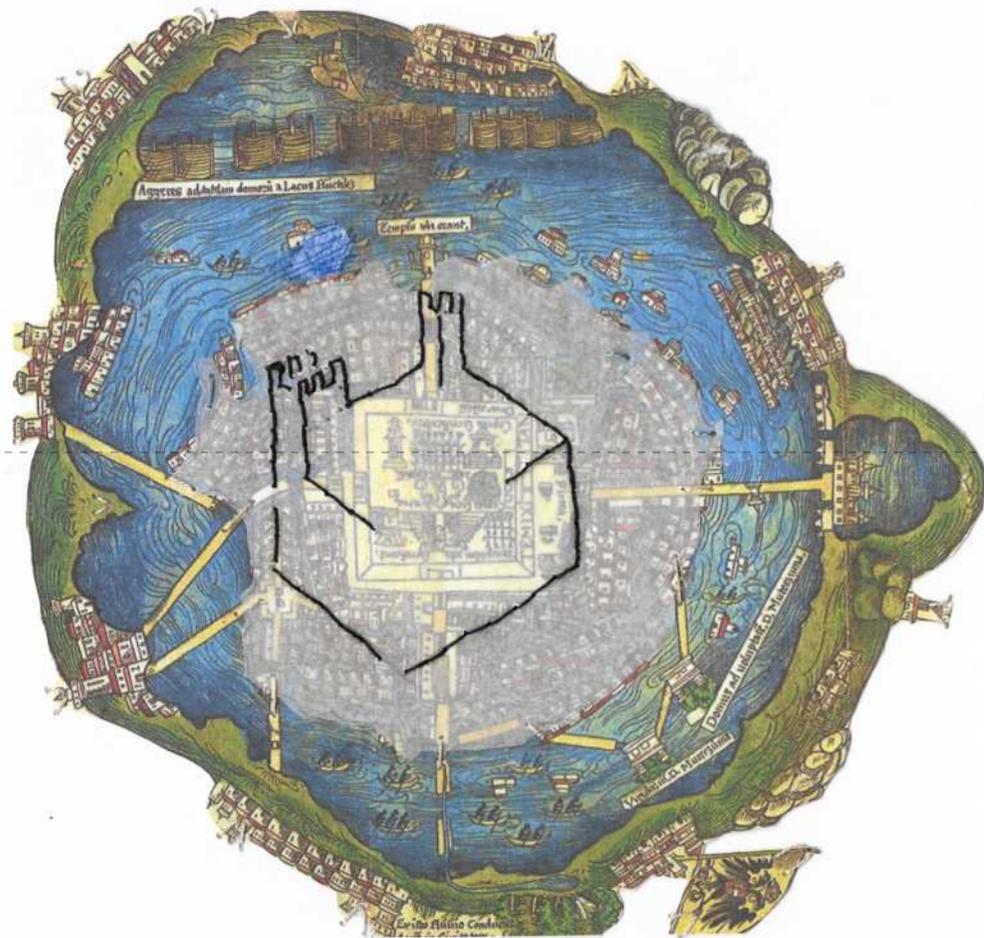
DAVID DIOP

PUSHKIN PRESS



THERE ARE CENTERS THAT ARE BORDERLANDS: THE STORY OF A LAKE

Aura Cruz Aburto



HAY CENTROS QUE SON FRONTERAS: HISTORIA DE UN LAGO

ALTHOUGH IT IS TRUE THAT THE BORDER IS A CONCEPT ASSOCIATED WITH THE GEOPOLITICS, IT IS ALSO TRUE THAT EVERY TERRITORY, AS THE TENSION BETWEEN THE IMAGINARY AND THE CURRENT TRANSFORMATION OF THE LANDSCAPE, IS A SPACE THAT CAN BE BORDERED.

The basin where today Mexico City sits is, in this sense, a border area. Two imaginaries collided from the Spanish conquest: one where they lived in relation to the lacustrine vocation of the territory, another where water had to occupy a territory clearly differentiated from the humans ... Thus began the process of drying out an extensive system of lagoons and with it, the forgetting of a way of inhabiting and being in relation to the non-human forces of the territory, which would be superimposed on the image of a European city.

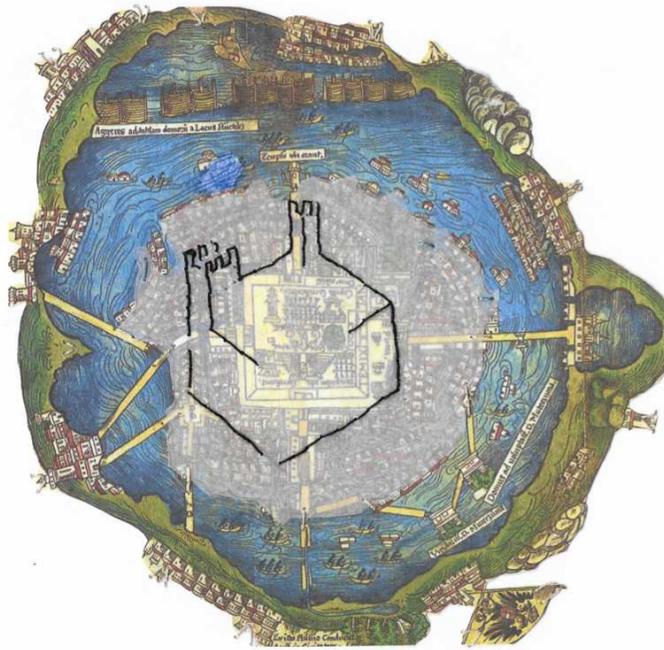
However, from time to time, the rivers return in the form of city floods and, in other more rebellious places, the desire for a city of canals survives: a lacustrine city where border is potential.

SI BIEN ES CIERTO QUE LA FRONTERA ES UN CONCEPTO ASOCIADO A LO GEOPOLÍTICO, TAMBIÉN TODO TERRITORIO, EN TANTO LA TENSIÓN ENTRE IMAGINARIO Y TRANSFORMACIÓN ACTUAL DEL PAISAJE, ES UN ESPACIO QUE PUEDE SER FRONTERIZADO.

La cuenca donde se asienta la hoy Ciudad de México es, en este sentido, un espacio de frontera. Dos imaginarios chocaron cuando la conquista española: uno donde se vivía en relación con la vocación lacustre del territorio, otro donde el agua debía ocupar un territorio claramente diferenciado del humano... Así comenzó el proceso de desecación de un extensísimo sistema de lagunas y con él, el olvido de una forma de habitar y ser en relación con las fuerzas no humanas del territorio, al que se sobrepondría la imagen de una ciudad europea.

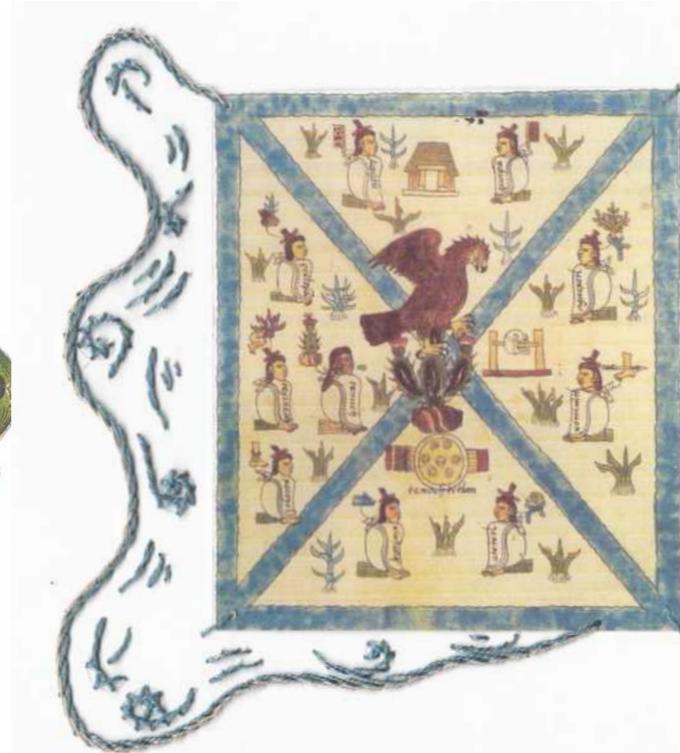
Sin embargo, de cuando en cuando, los ríos regresan en forma de inundaciones ciudadanas y, en otros lugares más rebeldes, sobrevive el deseo de una ciudad de canales: una ciudad lacustre donde la frontera es potencialidad.

A FORMER LANDSCAPE, A CULTURE WITHIN WATER/ UN VIEJO PAISAJE, UNA CULTURA DEL AGUA



Bordado sobre papel. Imagen base extraída del Mapa de Nüremberg (1524)

Embroidery on paper. Original image extracted from Nüremberg Map (1524)



Bordado sobre papel. Imagen base extraída del Códice de Mendoza (1542)

Embroidery on paper. Original image extracted from Mendoza Codex (1542)

2 IMAGES, 2 CONCEPTIONS OF THE TERRITORY AND THE WAY OF RELATING WITH IT.

The first image, which shows the founding of Mexico-Tenochtitlan by the Aztecs in 1325 (where today Mexico City is located), is also the first image of a codex - a type of document that implied a whole form of registration of its own, eminently iconographic. This city would be founded, according to the myth, where an eagle was found devouring a snake, which would be seen on a small islet in the center of a large lake in the Basin of Mexico. México-Tenochtitlan would be born as a lacustrine city, consisting of artificially created islets with the help of a harmonious technique with the nature of geography.

By 1519, the Spanish groups that were determined to conquer the lands, would arrive to the city. One of the first steps they made consisted in destroying the city and, with it, the entire water regulation system that allowed it to coexist in harmony with the hydrology of this aquatic environment. The city would never be recovered, the knowledge of territorial management would be lost and would be supplanted by new drying infrastructures.

This geography, which, at the same time, was a very peculiar cultural landscape, would gradually dissociate itself from non-human forces, which was an imposition of the European logic, as it is clearly seen in the curious map of Nüremberg. This map, although it sought to locate the territories of the “discovered” city, also had represented it with an eminently European sense and expression.

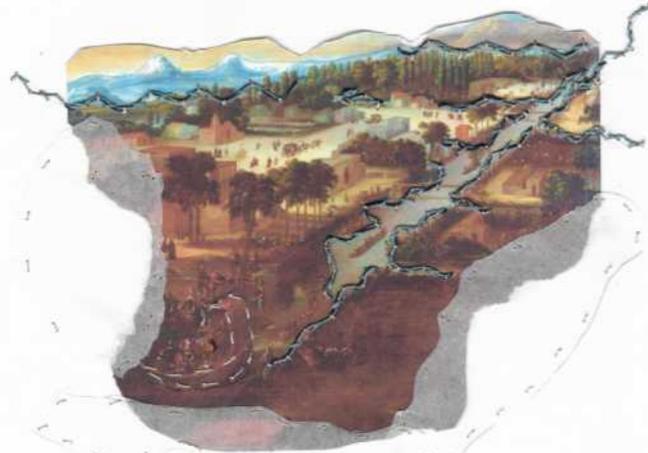
2 IMÁGENES, 2 CONCEPCIONES DEL TERRITORIO Y DE LA MANERA DE RELACIONARSE CON ÉL.

La primera imagen, que muestra la fundación de México-Tenochtitlán por los aztecas en 1325 (donde hoy se sitúa la Ciudad de México), también es la primera imagen de un códice—un tipo de documento que implicaba toda una forma de registro propia de Mesoamérica, eminentemente iconográfica. Esta ciudad se fundaría, de acuerdo con el mito, ahí donde se encontrara un águila devorando una serpiente, que sería encontrada en un pequeño islote al centro de un gran lago en la Cuenca de México. México-Tenochtitlán nacería como una ciudad lacustre, creando islotes artificiales con una técnica armónica con la naturaleza de la geografía.

Para 1519, llegarían a esta ciudad grupos españoles decididos a conquistar esas tierras. Uno de los primeros pasos consistió en destruir la ciudad y, con ello, todo el sistema de regulación del agua que permitía convivir de manera armónica con la hidrología de esta ciudad situada sobre el agua. La ciudad jamás se recuperaría, los saberes de gestión territorial se perderían y serían suplantados por nuevas infraestructuras de desecación.

Esa geografía que, a su vez era un paisaje cultural muy peculiar, se iría disociando de las fuerzas no humanas viviendo la sobreposición de lógicas europeas, tal como sucede en el curioso mapa de Nüremberg, que si bien buscaba localizar los territorios de la ciudad “descubierta”, también la representaba con una expresión eminentemente europea.

A STORY OF UPROOTINGS AND RESISTANCES/ UNA HISTORIA DE DESARRAIGOS Y DE RESISTENCIAS

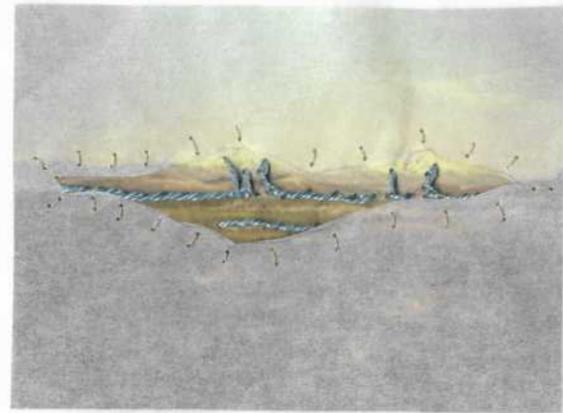


Bordado sobre papel. Imagen base Paseo de la Viga con la iglesia de Iztacalco , Pedro Villegas (1638 o 1642)

Embroidery on paper. Original image De la Viga Promenade with Iztacalco Church , Pedro Villegas (1638 o 1642)

The process of drying out of the Basin of Mexico has continued to the present. Little by little, this beautiful city of canals would see its water tributaries diminish and with it, the ecological niches of its territory has undergone a radical change: it has become a dried up, dusty and modernized territory. Increasingly it has been the expression of a frontier of dissociation and uprooting where geographic forces would be seen as a threat to be eliminated or at least subdued.

By the mid 20th century, the rivers would be intubated and the channels would disappear, leaving only a place called Xochimilco as a remnant.



Bordado sobre papel. Imagen base Vista del Valle de México desde la Sierra de Guadalupe , José María Velasco (1901)

Embroidery on paper. Original image Mexico Valley viewed from Guadalupe Mountains , José María Velasco (1901)

El proceso de desecación de la Cuenca de México continuaría hasta el presente. Poco a poco, esta hermosa ciudad de canales vería disminuir sus afluentes de agua y con ello los nichos ecológicos de su territorio sufrirían un cambio radical: un territorio desecado, polvoso y modernizado sería cada vez más la expresión de una frontera de disociación y desarraigo donde las fuerzas geográficas serían contempladas como una amenaza que eliminar o, cuando menos someter.

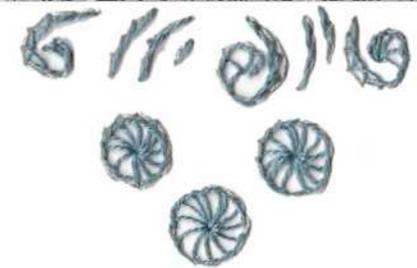
Para mediados del siglo XX, los ríos serían intubados y los canales desaparecerían, quedando como remanente un lugar llamado Xochimilco.

AN SPACE OF DISSOCIATION AND UNSETTLEMENT/ UN ESPACIO DE DISOCIACION Y DESARRAIGO



Currently, Mexico City rarely reveals its watershed nature: air pollution hides the mountains that surround it, the asphalt, the water channels that underlie it (although increasingly dry)... **TALKING ABOUT DISSOCIATION IS NOT A METAPHOR, IT IS A DAILY SENSITIVE EXPERIENCE FOR THOSE WHO INHABIT THIS PLACE.**

Hoy la Ciudad de México raramente revela su naturaleza de cuenca: la contaminación atmosférica oculta las montañas que le rodean, el asfalto, los canales de agua que le subyacen (aunque cada vez más secos)... **HABLAR DE DISOCIACIÓN NO ES UNA METÁFORA, ES UNA EXPERIENCIA SENSIBLE COTIDIANA PARA QUIENES HABITAN ESTE LUGAR.**



HE TERO TOPIAS

In Xochimilco, particularly in the Cuemanco ecological reserve, not only does the system of canals and chinampas (artificial light islets of pre-Hispanic technology) survive, but it is also a space of resistance of the inhabitants of this part of the city, who defend a form of being in the world and to relating communally, including the non- human.

It is a heterotopia, a border where the ancestral tradition of a lake culture coexists with the appropriation of inhabitants who came from the West. In what other ways can this city border and lead to more potentials?



**WHAT REMAINS OF LACUSTRINE CITY/
LO QUE QUEDA DE LA CIUDAD LACUSTRE**



En Xochimilco, particularmente en la reserva ecológica de Cuemanco, no sólo sobrevive el sistema de canales y chinampas (islotos ligeros artificiales de tecnología prehispánica), sino que es un espacio de resistencia de los habitantes de este sitio de la ciudad, quienes defienden una forma de ser en el mundo y de relacionarse comunamente, incluyendo a lo no humano.

Se trata de una heterotopia, una frontera donde cohabita la tradición ancestral de una cultura lacustre con la apropiación de habitantes que llegaron de Occidente

IN WHAT OTHER WAYS COULD THE CITY BORDER TO OPEN UP NEW POTENTIALS? WHAT OTHER ENCOUNTERS CAN OPEN THE POSSIBILITIES FOR OTHER WORLDS?



¿DE QUÉ OTRAS MANERAS PODRÍA FRONTERIZARSE LA CIUDAD PARA ABRIR NUEVOS POTENCIALES?

¿QUÉ OTROS ENCUENTROS PUEDEN ABRIR LAS POSIBILIDADES PARA OTROS MUNDOS?

Unwary, we adopt screens of all kinds, and although they seem like creepers that expand without permission and reach even the most unexpected corners of our home / everydayness / life. What is really worrying is that we are also the ones who allow them to invade every moment of our everyday life, almost orbiting around them and not around our own life and its manifestations. Although it may give the impression, this is not a writing against screens, even less knowing that it will be read through one; however, **WE WRITE FROM THEIR ALMOST OMNIPRESENCE, ASKING FOR A STOP AND A LEAP, ASKING, INSINUATING, INCITING AND HOPEFULLY DETONATING A DIFFERENT USE, CONSUMPTION, REPRODUCTION, PRODUCTION, ECHO, REFLECTION AND RESONANCE, A STOP AND A LEAP THOUGHT, RETHOUGHT, SENSED, FELT AND EVEN THOUGHTFUL ... RESPONSIBLE AND CAREFUL.**

These screens bring us a constant bombardment of stimuli of all kinds, to which we are subjected, almost

without being subjects, where there is not only what we "perceive" but also what we do not perceive, or at least we do not perceive so easily, that is, the underlying logics. Along with wonderfully enhancing the imagination, creation and dreams, they can easily be of consumption logics that as such demand voracity and discard, all framed in a logic of speed.

THE IDEA OF RETHINKING AND RE-FEELING EVERYTHING THAT SURROUNDS US IS URMADIC, AND NOT JUST THAT, BUT EVERYTHING WITH WHICH WE INTERACT AND WHICH IN TURN MAKES US.

Therefore we propose to immerse ourselves through this and other writings to come, in a leap that allows us to feel and reason the audiovisuals as abysses, one and infinite latent abysses, not only present around the corner, but at the click that commands a screen, or the step that immerses us in the black hole that is a cinema, border abysses, places and non-places at the same time, in which

reality (s) and fiction (s) exist and not ... yet, precipices where everything becomes nuance outside the duality of reality/fiction. Where what other beings closer or farther away conceive as reality, are in themselves possibilities to submerge us and thus place us, even if only for a few minutes, in what we could be if we were others ...

VITAL ABYSSES TO OPEN OUR FEELINGS AND MEMORIES, TO DEVELOP AND NURTURE IN US A CAPACITY TO CONNECT BOTH STORIES AND REALITIES, FEELING THEM AS VITAL NUANCES, WINDOWS, DOORS, ROADS AND PATHS TO OTHER REALITIES OR TO OTHER VIEWS OF THIS SAME REALITY, WITH THE CAPACITY TO GIVE US ALL THE POSSIBILITIES OF TIME AT THE SAME TIME. TO MAKE US SO UNCOMFORTABLE THAT WE FILL OURSELVES WITH QUESTIONS, THOSE THAT ONLY ADMIT MOVEMENT AND TRANSFORMATION TO LET US LIVE.

COMMENTS For screens to open paths, it is necessary to establish a friendship with technique; it is worth remembering that techniques are not merely useful, but are the concretization of what we once dreamed of being beyond what is already given. For screens to be transduction of our desires, for us to walk with them in new forms of existence, we cannot be reduced to being neither their operators nor their spectators. It is necessary to articulate our modes of operation and create a new one with them. It is necessary to put ourselves in the perspective of the recreation of ourselves and of everything; this includes the screens and thus be able to open the space for the dislocations of capitalist realism as Mark Fisher said. It is indispensable to open ourselves to a conflict that only admits the creation of new affections and existences.

Think of these words as a bombing that summons the beginning of new and infinite paths to walk-open together.

AUDIO VISUAL ABYSSES

Diseño Detonante

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