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The Students of Cultural Anthropology Journal appears biannually, publishing written work from Utrecht-based anthropology students. The works published in this edition were written during the second semester of the academic year 2022-2023.

Core team

Mélissa Ainseba, Miriam van den Berg, Kirsten den Boestert, Marilyn Franken, Katinka Koselka, Chiara Lampis Temmink, Sanne Leenders, Rosina Lui, Pablo Bernardo López Basurco, Tamar Oderwald, Sunil Raj, Jonna Spek, Stan Zilver.

Selection committee

Karlijn van den Broek, Faye Oregon de Cordes, Paweł Godziuk, Annelinde Junte, Carmen Luke, Naomi Post.

Contact details

Email: info@scajuu.com

Website: www.scajuu.com

Our mission is to empower undergraduate and graduate students of anthropology in Utrecht to feel that their work matters. As such, we work to create a collaborative and independent intellectual space for all students.

Our goals

We strive to *facilitate knowledge exchange* by creating an accessible space equipped for learning new insights and skills. In addition, it is our goal to *foster student engagement*. Students are part of every step of our publication process. SCAJ thus reflects the efforts of Utrecht-based anthropology students through and through.

Our values

We operate in the pursuit of *inclusivity* as a means to further develop as a platform. Utrecht-based anthropology students of all backgrounds are included in our publication process and thus all these students of anthropology may appeal to this platform. For this to be true, we value *transparency* in all of our teams, selections and processes. As such, we strive to ensure that there is no mystery as to how we operate.

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Introduction

It is with great excitement and immense pride that I address you as the new Editor-in-Chief of SCAJ! As I take the helm of this incredible journal, I cannot help but reflect on my own journey through academia. Last academic year marked the culmination of my anthropology bachelor's degree, a bittersweet farewell to a discipline that has shaped my perspective on the world. Transitioning into the conflict studies master program here in our lovely Utrecht filled me with eagerness for new challenges, yet a tinge of sadness for leaving behind the world of pure anthropology. However, the pages of this journal bring me immense joy and a reaffirmation of what anthropology and SCAJ mean to me - the vision and worthwhile contributions of students. Sometimes I cannot believe the amazing works that we get to provide a platform to.

The four papers published in this eighth edition all offer various insights into aspects of the anthropological discipline and do so showcasing the breadth and depth of our perspectives.

The role of graffiti in Palestinian resistance and self and communal expression is explored in Craydon Maloney's paper. Graffiti is significant in various ways, including its role in political discourse and in resistance, which is discussed alongside the concepts of "traumascapes" and "resistancescapes". The anonymity of the graffiti artist and the "de-individualization" is also considered.

Tije Kleijn invites us to (re)consider the relationship we as humans have with pigeons, as a way to explore how humans interact with animals and their shared landscapes. The ontology of human superiority is discussed, and will make you question your own relationship to the shared spaces around you.

Michał Grabarek's paper explores the privileged position of the sense of sight in the production of ethnographic knowledge. The reduction of culture to something visual is discussed, and then juxtaposed with the notion of imaginative geography. Another way of approach the understanding of culture is analysed at the end of the paper; namely poetry.

Using different authors and perspectives, Annelinde Junte poses the question “Wie is de ‘Nederlander’?” (“Who is the ‘Dutch [person]’?”). In it an exploration of why some people are considered Dutch, and why others are not, is provided. Explaining that the aim of the essay is not to answer this question, but instead to make people think about their own preconceptions.

Considering the state of the world at the moment, it can be difficult to find things that inspire us and give us reasons to hope for a better future. However, looking at all those involved in this publication process, I am reminded of the amount good in this world. So, before I let you dive into the upcoming papers, I must express my gratitude to each member who has contributed to the success

of this journal. Their passion and commitment make my role all the more enjoyable, and I can't believe how fortunate I am to work alongside such a talented group. They are the reason why SCAJ is not just a publication but a thriving community of anthropological enthusiasts. I also want to extend my appreciation to everyone who made this edition possible—the authors, the reviewers, and our ever-supportive readers. Your engagement and support mean the world to us.

I am so proud to be able to present you this edition. Happy reading!

Miriam van den Berg
Editor-in-chief

Before reading

Before you start reading the papers that have been selected for this edition of SCAJ, we feel it is important to share a few comments. First, the core team of SCAJ would like to emphasize that both the content of the papers as well as the added motivation for producing the work (as quoted beneath the author's name), are completely written by the authors. Each work was checked for possible errors regarding spelling, grammar, and referencing. Any corrections were relayed back to the respective authors, who were then given the opportunity to revise their work accordingly. SCAJ's reviewers and editorial board have thus not made any alterations to the works you are about to read.

To elaborate, the papers in this edition of SCAJ have been selected by our selection committee from a broader range of submissions. This edition's committee consisted of six students of Cultural Anthropology from different years of study, as well as three members of our core team. During the process of selection, the committee was divided into three groups,

each led by one of our core reviewers. Each group used the same set of reading questions as a guideline for the selection process. These reading questions focused on readability, creativity, originality, and structure. However, every reviewer was given the freedom to deviate from these reading questions. We believe that the ability to discuss freely allows for dynamic analyses, providing more valuable insights than rigidly conforming to any guideline. Every group read a number of fully anonymized papers, of which they made a selection fit for publication. Afterwards, the three members of the core team discussed the results and considerations of their respective selection groups to make this final selection.

The order in which the papers are published in this journal is not based on our judgement of their respective qualities. Rather, we have tried to organize it in a way that is pleasant to read. This means we have tried to avoid placing papers with similar topics and lengths in sequence to each other. Other than that, the arrangement of papers is completely random.

The Art of Rebellion

An Anthropological Study of Palestinian Graffiti Art

Craydon Maloney

"Within the context of political activism, the "Free Palestine" movement has always been an active cause on campus and even throughout The Netherlands. This paper was written in an attempt to associate this cause with something else that I'm also passionate about- art. By analyzing graffiti on the Palestinian Wall of Segregation, I find an association with the Palestinian way of life, Sumud, and Foucault's de-individualization. This particular connection and further Foucaudian analysis of the art is something I find interesting, to say the least, and it is consequently one of the leading reasons for wanting to submit my work. Not to mention, I had an amazing teacher (shoutout to Shahana Siddiqui) who also suggested doing so."

Abstract

This paper examines Palestinian graffiti's role in resistance and self and communal expression. It investigates the transformative impact of graffiti on the Israeli "Segregation Wall" in the West Bank and how art has turned a symbol of division into a canvas for Palestinian identity and resilience. It explores the historical significance of such graffiti in the Palestinian liberation movement, its role in political discourse, and its connection to resistance against oppressive powers. The study also introduces the concepts of "traumascapes" and "resistancescapes," highlighting the use of symbolism in Palestinian graffiti to convey collective memories and cultures. The artists' anonymity as a form of resistance and "de-individualization" is discussed while contributing to the understanding of the purpose of art in resistance and cultural preservation in conflict zones.

Introduction

Hasan and Bleibleh (2023) tell us the story of a 28-year-old diaspora Palestinian, Yafa, who first encountered the Israeli “Segregation Wall” separating the West Bank of Palestine in 2010. At first, she was intimidated by an 8-meter-high monolithic concrete wall dividing the land she once called ‘home.’ However, as Yafa had begun to stare less at the wall and divert her focus towards the considerable graffiti on it instead, she saws images of her ancestors’ landscape, heritage, and history. The chants and slogans of the wall, such as “*Salam*” (peace) and “Free Palestine,” filled her with resilience. And within the 5-min brief journey along the wall, she experienced her ancestral pride and attachment to her Palestinian identity. (Hasan & Bleibleh, 2023; Toenjes, 2015) In other words, this wall simply became a way for the memories of war to be emitted into the public realm. With the help of Palestinian and international artists, the Segregation Wall became a giant concrete canvas for expressing the ongoing struggle and embodiment of the Palestinian identity and memory. In this paper, I hope to explore an ethnographic study of this wall (particularly in Bethelam City) and the use of graffiti to provoke dialogues in Palestinian trauma sites. This is done in an attempt to

claim back their rights to the city, by challenging the power of their oppressors (Hasan & Bleibleh, 2023). I would like to dissect this art of resistance from how it is used as a form of communicating the political views of the public and establishing agency through the use of anonymity.

Contextualizing the Segregation Wall

Historically, graffiti has played a vital role in the Palestinian liberation movement (Toenjes, 2015). An example of which can be seen during the first Palestinian intifada (1986-1993). During this time, one could find graffiti splashed on practically every stone wall in the area. This was a way by which the Palestinian community could think “out loud,” where graffiti tended to speak on behalf of the Palestinian political fraction (Peteet, 1996). There were many attempts to make these messages unreadable by spraying large blotches of white or black paint across them (Sa'di & Abu-Lughod, 2007).

As a result, a common theme of graffiti during this period was its use in cultural production as a form of sustained political contest (Peteet, 1996). Graffiti (also known as *shi'arat*) was to resist a repressive system, and it is deployed according to the constraints of this system. It is crucial to

understand that graffiti didn't just portray messages of defiance. Instead, it was used to contest power by communicating to multiple audiences (Hasan & Bleibleh, 2023; Debras, 2019). Since certain graffiti was erased or removed while others were left untouched, this can further add to the fact that these acts of vandalism are more than just physical degradation; it is an active attempt at political discourse and action (Debras, 2019). In this regard, graffiti was used as a tactic in intervening in the relations of dominance. Through writing and images, these acts of resistance aligned with various acts of civil disobedience, some of which included, the non-payment of taxes, flying the Palestinian flag or its colors, and the boycott of Israeli goods (Peteet, 1996). These demanded a running political commentary on the progress of the uprising (Peteet, 1996, 140).

Moving forward, on March 29th, 2002, the Israeli military invaded Bethlehem City for 44 days (*Devastations of Bethlehem District – POICA*, 2002). A siege was forced on even the Church of Nativity, a site so sacrilegious that it is thought to be the place where Christ was born. Israeli tanks had left bullet holes on the church's exterior, damaging narrow alleys within this section of the city (*Planning Policy in the West Bank*, 2017). Due to this invasion

and the consequent formation of the Segregation Wall, many Palestinians felt like they were held captive within their city (Hasan & Bleibleh, 2023). Living in this state of constantly having their narrative, identity, and heritage threatened has led to a need to safeguard their history and ongoing resistance. Resultantly, graffiti artists accomplish this need through the spatial testimonies present on the Segregation Wall (Gould, 2014).

Practicing Resistance through Resilience:

Sumud

Before we dive deeper into this form of resistance, we must first understand where it comes from. By dissecting colonial relations and how Palestinians create room for subjectivity in their politics, we begin to notice the cultivation of “*sumud*” or “steadfastness” (Hammad & Tribe, 2020; Richter-Devroe, 2011). This is a form of subjectivity integrated into politics, embodying dominant aspects of colonial liberal politics. It is not necessarily a definable practice, however, one of the many ways it can be characterized is by “resistance in existing” (Gould, 2014, 1). It can vaguely be thought of as a resilient form of resistance, and in the case of graffiti on the Segregation

Wall, it is representative of the cultural strategy of memorialization (Ryan, 2015; Salih & Richter-Devroe, 2014).

Traumascapes and the Use of Graffiti

Graffiti has always existed in various forms with numerous designs. Since the 60s and 70s, these illegally placed images have played a particularly crucial role in expressing the intense and impassioned emotions of artists and public authorities alike (Schacter, 2008). This can be further dissected through a study on resistance. Analyzing Foucault's (1978, 95) position, "[w]here there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power," leads to power in acts of existing (food, clothes, art, etc.) to consequently be considered resistance. And of course, by extension, graffiti is hence also a form of resistance (Salih & Richter-Devroe, 2014). These sediments have even been vocalized by Palestinians themselves. "Existence is resistance," says a Palestinian translator at the Balata refugee camp. They view the wall as an 'annexation wall,' or similarly, in Arabic-language commentaries, it is known as the wall of 'apartheid (*al-unsuri*)' (Gould, 2014, 1-2).

Within Hasan and Bleibleh's (2023) ethnographic study of graffiti on the Wall of Segregation, we get to study the context of this wall through the idea of "traumascapes". These can be described by the images of the concrete prison of a wall that tend to trigger memories of exile and war. Contemporary warfare, the clash of Israeli and Palestinian armies, and the shift from non-urban battlefields to violence in homes and streets have led to what is termed as "urbicide" (Hasan & Bleibleh, 2023, 2). In other words, it has led to Palestinians losing power over urban spaces, and it has resulted in more traumascapes that have restricted their everyday life (Hasan & Bleibleh, 2023). However, this does not mean that all hope is lost. Within the same paper, Hasan and Bleibleh (2023) coin the contrasting term known as a "resistancescape". This is a coping tactic used to survive the trauma of wounded cities. It is a form of everyday resistance, which directly and noticeably confronts oppressive powers through ordinary day-to-day practices. Particularly, people have regained agency through the symbolic, public, and collective artwork of the Palestinian narrative (Hasan & Bleibleh, 2023).

Reclamation and Resistancescapes

Part of the reason graffiti became so effective was due to its visibility. Due to these artists' ability to openly address injustices and inequalities while narrating the collective memory of local communities, they've been able to embrace values worth more than just aesthetics (Hasan & Bleibleh, 2023, 4). In these damaged cities, graffiti played a huge role in the symbolic interpretation of empowerment, survival, and lived trauma. These public spaces help Palestinians relive these experiences, tapping into the collective memory of these individuals. In this sense, graffiti is used for commemorating national figures or symbols that play a role in their resistance (Debras, 2019; Hasan & Bleibleh, 2023).

Examples of these images can be illustrated in detail through Hassan & Bleibleh (2023, 6). For instance, one of the integral symbols of this movement included the use of a home key. This key represented the Palestinian narrative of how they were displaced and forced out of their homes in 1948 (Sa'di & Abu-Lughod, 2007). As a result, its commemoration on the Segregation Wall is a primary example of the Palestinian collective memory of what home is to them and their right to return (Hasan & Bleibleh,

2023). A similar idea is seen with the imagery of an indigenous flower known as "*Shqa'eq Al Nu'man*" (Anemone coronaria) or the poppy anemone. This is a red flower known to only grow at high altitudes, in-between the cracks of rocks. And the delicate symphony of its color, leaves, and living environment is said to act as a metaphor for the hardships Palestinians have faced and a need to not forget their need for resistance (Hasan & Bleibleh, 2023). However, most often, these symbols do not even have to be just metaphorical. Political and cultural messages have also been spread through the images of Palestinian martyrs and leaders to commemorate their lives and sacrifices (Hasan & Bleibleh, 2023; Peteet, 1996).

Consequently, it is through this use of imagery that there is a form of visual communication between Palestinians. In a way, this mimics the form of symbolic and interpretative anthropology discussed by Nanda and Warms (2010). In other words, there are messages unique to Palestinians due to the shared sense of heritage and culture.

To Exist is to Resist

Julie Peteet (1996) talks about this form of resistance in detail, stating its use in claiming

places. As they put it, memories were central to graffiti. They embedded a desire to be recognized in a place where Palestinian existence had been denied (Peteet, 1996). Through this rebellious act, not only was the artist promised to be remembered, but their name would be circulated throughout time. Particularly, these entailed the works of artists using graffiti to make demands or support a political cause. "If my comrades return without me, mother, weep, for each tear is a drop of fuel that flames the light of freedom" (Peteet, 1996, 154) is an example of paying tribute and associating remembrance through street art. Perhaps hooks (2015) describes this need most effectively, stating: "The act of remembrance is a conscious gesture honoring their struggle, their effect to keep something of their own" (43). To these graffiti artists, these visuals are a form of resistance against predominant powers, consequently, it is a form by which they can do something of their own and be recognized for their view.

However, it should be noted that pride was not all these graffiti artists were working towards. Figure 1 shows hands raised and clenched in the hope of finding "freedom," a word etched into the bottom right-hand corner (Gould, 2014.). These are actions

characterized by "*sumūd*," and this defines the everyday nonviolent practices of resistance to Israeli occupation. In this regard, it particularly refers to inhibiting the planning practices of an Israeli state, e.g., creating settlements, walls, checkpoints, and roads. Though graffiti doesn't necessarily stop the direct occupation, it does help in resisting the establishment of traumascapes (Vasudevan, n.d.).

All of these philosophies can consequently be linked back to Foucault (1978)'s necessity for rebellion. Believing resistance can accomplish great things, Foucault suggested "legitimate social practices will arise after revolutionary struggles and experimentation" (Trombadori, 1981, as cited in Foucault, 1981). In particular, it is seen that resistance can be directly linked to the practice of self-creation. Since the 'individual' is a product of power, we must de-individualize by diverse means and combinations (Pickett, 1996, 463-464). This "de-individualization" can somewhat be seen through the separation of identity from graffiti. By delivering these messages anonymously, there is a power associated with them. This is power not provided by institutionalized establishments, instead, it has its agency through this Foucauldian sense of de-individualization.

Moreover, though not directly connected to Foucault's ideas of resistance, it is also worth understanding the sense of agency embodying this art. Since graffiti artists are not easily ethnographically recorded, we can instead come to understand their philosophies through their art (Schacter, 2008). As Belting (2005) would suggest, images can only gain agency "when one speaks of the image and the medium as two sides of a coin, sides that are inseparable" (304).



Fig. 1: An image on the Segregation Wall
Note: Wall in Palestine Flickr Collective, To Exist Is to Resist. Creative Commons.

Concluding Thoughts

With all that being said, I would like to believe that graffiti artists in the Palestinian West Bank have formed a culture of their own using symbolic and interpretive anthropology (Warms & Nanda, 2010).

Particularly through the teachings of Douglas, who believed that shared symbols help hold societies together (Douglas, 1970), we can see the use of communal symbols amongst graffiti artists in getting their message across. By sharing symbols, such as those of a home key or a Palestinian native flower, individuals can share the collective memories and cultures of others (Hasan & Bleibleh, 2023).

Likewise, diving into a deeper analysis of this graffiti, we can come to understand how resistance is integrated into the Palestinian lifestyle through their practices of *sumud* or "everyday resistance" (Vasudevan, n.d.). These practices help create a "resistancescape" around the West Bank, which is a method that creatively utilizes resistance against the oppressor and confronts the challenges of the Israeli-imposed traumascapes. In essence, these are places that once used to traumatize Palestinians but are now full of hopeful resistance. And through the symbolic interpretation of the Segregation Wall, this resistancescape has inspired Palestinians to publicly express and commemorate their collective identity and memory (Hasan & Bleibleh, 2023).

In Foucauldian philosophy, where there exists power, there will also exist resistance. However, since individuals are a product of power, Foucault suggested that we must “de-individualize” to resist (Deleuze & Guattari, 1977, 16). I would like to think that Palestinian graffiti artists to some extent accomplish this “de-individualization” by separating their identity from their art. For the most part, this art is for creating collective memories through resistance escapes. Hence, it is no longer about just one “individual” but rather the memories of Palestinians as a whole (Hasan & Bleibleh, 2023; Pickett, 1996).

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The Urban Pigeon

Interspecies Contact Uncovering Human Mentality

Tije Kleijn

"I spend significant amounts of time at train stations waiting, and praying, for trains to show up. There is not much better entertainment to find at such places than watching the local wildlife (urban-life?) going about their day. Especially the pigeons. Some stay farther away around their nests, others can be seen harassing other waiting people on their platforms for food and such, and some get close to me. That's when I start wandering: This pigeon would fit perfectly in my hand, no? Why are you here? What happened to your foot? Why? And what does that tell me about human society? My reason for publishing this paper is to share it with those that want answers to these same questions."

Abstract

The pigeon is a staple of the modern cityscape, strutting about the streets bobbing their heads. It is virtually impossible to imagine the streets of any city without the presence of these birds as they constantly get in the way, pester people for food, and generally make a ruckus. As has been said by Levi-Strauss (1962), animals are "good to think with", and the pigeon is a prime example of that. In this paper, I analyse the dynamic of the historical uses of the bird and the present ways of thinking about them to give us a glimpse into the ways in which humans think about their interactions with animals and the landscapes they share. In this way of thinking we find an ontology of human superiority, the idea that humans are superior to other species and that they exist to serve us. This ontology justifies human control over the landscapes they, and other species, live in and allows for the use of biopolitics against these species.

Keywords: Affect, Biopolitics, Human, Landscape, Meaning-Making, Ontology of Human Superiority, Pigeon

Introduction

"Pigeons are gentle, plump, small-billed birds with a skin saddle (cere) between the bill and forehead. All pigeons strut about with a characteristic bobbing of the head." (Brittanica, T. Editors of Encyclopeadia, n.d.). Throughout the past decennia, the pigeon has become a staple of urban environments, strutting about in parks or train stations, looking for scraps of food left by humans. Pigeons have been a part of human societies for as long as they have been cultivating the land. Having originated from the rock dove, the pigeon is used to a habitat among rocky ledges and cliffs, with little forest and shrubbery, thus having no difficulty adapting to the urban environment (Jerolmack 2007).

Nowadays, most people are so used to the bird that they barely even notice their presence. And yet, for as long as the bird has existed, there has been interspecies contact between humans and pigeons. This record of interspecies contact can be examined to get a grasp of the human understanding of the human-pigeon landscape. According to Donna Haraway, it is through interspecies contact that humans must finally learn to ask fundamental ontological questions, such as "who are you, and so who are we?" and "here we are, and so what are we to become?"

(2008, 452). How then, can the human-pigeon connection help us answer these questions? That is what I aim to answer in this paper.

To be more specific, I attempt to find an answer to what the human-pigeon connection can tell us about the way humans think about animals and each other, and how they manage their landscapes, the sites where human-non-human contact takes place. To do this, I first take a look at the way in which the history of exploitation of the pigeon by the human, and the ontologies that are at the root of this exploitation, has impacted the way they think of the bird in the present. Second, I examine how human meaning-making of the pigeon is influenced by the landscape and the meaning of space. Lastly, I explore how these forms of meaning-making impact the way humans think of the landscape they live in, and how that results in the treatment of non-human others that reside within these spaces.

Historical Uses of the Pigeon

Historically, human-pigeon interspecies contact has been shaped by the ways in which humans exploited the bird for their own needs. The first recorded use for the wild pigeon was as a food source by hunter-

gatherers twelve thousand years ago (Jerolmack 2007, 79). The pigeon's use as a food source continued after they migrated to human settlements, attracted by the human cultivation of the land, so they could forage for grain (Ibid., 78). At that time, the pigeon became the first domesticated bird, and its excrement was used for the fertilisation of crops. With the increasing domestication of the bird, more information was found on its habits and traits, and the pigeon became a commodity. By then, the bird's most famous trait, its homing instinct, was found out by accident, and the bird became a messenger, most notably one used during war (Ibid., 82). Apart from these more practical uses, the pigeon was further bred for more leisurely purposes, being used in racing and for exhibition (Ibid., 85).

All these uses that humans have had for the pigeon are cases of interspecies contact which are shaped by human desires and exploitation. This has affected the birds themselves, as they have lived and died at the hands of their domestic master, but it has also had an effect on the species as a whole. Many different breeds have been created to enhance different traits that were beneficial for humans. Additionally, the species as a whole has been constantly relocating. Due to

trading, the sending of messages, and the dissemination of leisure activities, the pigeon has spread across the entire globe (Jerolmack 2007, 89).

Furthermore, these uses for the pigeon, and mostly their consequences, are a great example of the impact that human agency has on the world's ecological systems, in other words, they show the prevalence of the Anthropocene. The Anthropocene is defined as "a new planetary epoch: one in which humans have become the dominant force shaping Earth's bio-geophysical composition and processes." (Chua and Fair 2019, 1). While the Anthropocene is primarily meant to denote the effect that humans have had in terms of affecting the global ecosystem, and the subsequent warming of the earth, it is mostly used as an all-encompassing description for the entirety of the impact of human activity on the planet. In the case of pigeons, this impact is most noticeable in the decline of pigeon populations in Polynesia, as a result of hunting, habitat changes, and introduced pathogens (Steadman 1997). Such species decline, or even extinction, is also noted by Jerolmack (2007, 79-80), in the case of the passenger pigeon, which was killed in massive amounts for human consumption.

These examples of the domestication and exploitation of pigeons give great insight into the ways in which humans view this species. This way of thinking ties into the view of a rift between the human and everything else. A view where animals exist to serve human needs, and their suffering is inconceivable (Griswold 2014). Over time this view made way for an interest in nature, whereby increasing concern was raised about cruel treatment for animals. Such thinking took shape in the form of a dichotomy between animals that were exempt from this treatment, and which deserve human protection (think of pets), and animals that do not (think of vermin) (Ibid.). Throughout time, the pigeon has managed to find itself on both sides of this spectrum.

The urban pigeons we now know are the domesticated pigeons that have escaped, or been released, and become feral. The very fact that pigeons are present in cities all around the world is a consequence of the interspecies contact that took place millennia ago. Jerolmack (2007, 74) affirms that each new construction of the bird for a new purpose also cemented it with a role in human society, complete with symbolic and moral value. Now that pigeons are no longer 'employed', human views on the bird have

changed, and the feral pigeon is seen in a wildly different light than the domesticated pigeon once was.

Landscape and Meaning-Making

Human meaning-making of pigeons is influenced by the landscape in which humans interact with the animal. Within anthropology, landscape is seen as "an intrinsic part of, or even actor in human social and cultural lives, constructed by them both physically and symbolically and, reciprocally, helping to make and unmake relationships and identities." (Filipucci 2016, 1). As such, the landscape extends beyond the physical environment, including its history, the humans and non-humans dwelling together and their connections, and the meanings and values attributed to it. The meanings that landscape holds can be partially explained using the concepts of place and space.

According to Aucoin, "a study of place records how spatialized culture is lived: learned, experienced, conceived, contested, resisted, transgressed, remembered, or longed for." (2017, 398). Keeping this in mind, when we take a look at the urban cityscape we notice the ever-present pigeon, looking for scraps of food among the abundance of human trash and litter. As a human, one

might notice their coos, the funny way their heads wobble from one end to the other when they walk, and one might experience this bird as endearing. It is when these birds are perceived, and take on meaning due to interspecies interaction, that a generalised space becomes a place. Conversely, one might see them as a nuisance, noticing how they get in the way constantly when riding a bicycle, getting irritated at the mess they make when looking for food, or even finding the noises they make to be annoying. After all, 'place is multilocal and multivocal' (Aucoin 2017, 397), in the sense that different occupants have different experiences. In this way, the meaning ascribed to a place is both constructed and contested between different users.

A record of space, then, "examines how it is culturally organised and experienced – similarly or differently – by social groups." (Aucoin 2017, 397-398). To give an example, we can find a difference in the way pigeons are experienced by students rushing on their way to university as they are by elderly on their free day, who have taken breadcrumbs with them to throw to the birds. Furthermore, we can see how the social construction of pigeons is related to humans' own social lives. For example, Howell (2023) explains

how the pigeon has often been equated to other anti-social birds, such as the homeless or immigrants, perhaps due to the similarity of their (perceived) presence within the public sphere, being often seen as a nuisance. Additionally, we see how this is experienced differently by different social groups, as this similarity is not felt by the group of homeless and immigrants themselves, but rather a comparison made by the dominant social group. In this way, we see how space is organised and experienced along connections between humans and other humans, as well as humans and non-humans, and how it is used for the meaning-making and social construction of both groups.

Reflecting on the aspect of temporality, within this urban landscape which houses both humans and pigeons, meaning-making is still influenced by remnants of the past. Particularly the uses, the domestication, and the previous interspecies contact between humans and pigeons have an effect on the way pigeons are still perceived today. In this way, the pigeon has been used by humans for metaphors and symbolic meanings (Jerolmack 2007, 76). For example, due to its monogamous habits, and its high fertility and reproduction rates, it has historically become

a symbol of fertility and sex. A perhaps more well-known symbol that the pigeon has become is that of the bringer of peace, based on its gentle appearance, and its use in the war effort (Ibid., 81). Interestingly, within human association, a distinction has been made between the (usually white) dove, which has come to represent all of the pigeon's favourable qualities, and the (usually grey) feral pigeon, which has come to represent all of its unwanted features, and has become the recipient of revulsion. This distinction is purely social, as the pigeon and dove have the same ancestor, the rock dove, and vary next to none biologically (Ibid., 82). One could extrapolate this arbitrary distinction to the construction of certain human social groups as unwanted as well, which aptly ties into the perceived similarity between the homeless and the pigeon observed above.

Another form of meaning-making is expanded upon by Rheana Salazar Parreñas (2012), who speaks of affect. Affect is then the feelings that are produced during direct interspecies contact, the non-discursive, non-linguistic engagement between the human and the animal. This idea of affect is based on the idea that one cannot read the face of the non-human other, nor

communicate with it in any way. Taking an example from everyday life, it is impossible to convey to the pigeon that it should move out of the way lest it be run over, similarly, the pigeon is unable to tell an old lady that it wants to eat the breadcrumbs that they are holding, the only thing we can do is generate feeling or touch, and thus create affect. Parreñas (2012, 675) further mentions the 'inequalities of vulnerability' that are made during affective encounters, as they are loaded with power differences. The result of these inequalities will be readily made clear.

The Pigeon as a Nuisance Species and Biopolitics

Through the meaning-making constructed by the landscape, and the ontology of human superiority, the way that humans manage urban landscapes lends itself to the use of biopolitics. Michel Foucault explains biopolitics as a form of management of the population by the state, carried out through statistical analyses of the population, technologies of knowledge and practices of security (Means 2022). As such, this concept of biopolitics refers to a form of population control by the state through the use of biopower, where the state decides who is allowed to live, and who is not (Foucault

1978). Foucault used this concept to expose the state's authority over its human inhabitants, but it can be applied to its non-human inhabitants as well. These biopolitics are for example used to control the amount of pest animals that reside within the city.

As a matter of fact, pigeons themselves are often seen as pests, and so are under the effect of biopolitics by the state (Skandrani et al. 2014). We see biopower in the ways pigeons are treated by humans. For example, pigeons are subject to population controls by means of aggressive methods, such as culling or sterilising, but also by reducing the ecological resources available to them (Skandrani et al. 2018). Another way of reducing the pigeons' presence is through the use of hostile architecture. Many cities are filled to the brim with anti-pigeon spikes that stop pigeons from perching and brooding on these places and defecating on what is beneath them. This hostile architecture once again shows the relation between pigeons and other unwanted human social categories in the case of the homeless. In this way, 'anti-homeless spikes', metal spikes planted in spaces where homeless people would sleep, are used as a method of discouraging these people from being there (Petty 2016). In being so visible, this hostile architecture

shows how the pigeon is seen as unwelcome in mainstream thinking.

This language of welcoming is rooted in an anthropocentric view of the ontology of human superiority. Based on this ontology, the idea that humans are more exceptional than other creatures, and that all other creatures live to serve us, humans see the world as their property. Thus, the urban landscape is viewed through a lens of hospitality, it is an 'approach to the world that makes "us" the hosts and others, permanently, guests in our space, by our grace.' (Van Dooren 2019, 119). Van Dooren then explains how the act of 'welcoming', or rather unwelcoming, is an act of attribution of the landscape to the human, which by extent grants them the right to control who is allowed to be in it, and who is not, ultimately leading to the use of biopower to control the pigeon population.

Building on this language of hospitality, there are various reasons why the pigeon is seen as unwelcome, and consequently why the use of biopower is seen as justified. Taken broadly, the pigeon is seen as a nuisance species, or in other words a pest (Skandrani et al. 2014). Pigeons for example defile the landscape which holds significant meaning for its human inhabitants by defecating on

important historical buildings. Furthermore, nuisance species are seen as a potential threat to native species (Ibid.). The pigeon, having been spread around the world by humans, and with its incredible adaptability, then becomes a threat to other native species. Being constructed as a nuisance species, or as vermin (as well as its category as feral, being neither completely wild nor completely domesticated), the pigeon occupies the space of a social taboo, which leaves them vulnerable to increased social scrutiny (Leach 1989). Occupying the category of a pest, the pigeon is seen as the 'enemy of mankind, and liable to the most ruthless extermination' (Ibid., 157). Lastly, pigeons are also seen as a threat to humans through their status as disease carriers, much like other nuisance species such as rats and cockroaches. Although there are few cases where pigeons have transferred diseases to humans (Haag-Wackernagel and Moch 2004), due to their social construction as vermin they are still feared and avoided for this reason.

All the above reasons lead to the interpretation of the pigeon as a nuisance species, a pest, or as a vermin, and subsequently lead to the justification of the use of biopower to control the population or

exterminate it altogether. Within this use of biopower we notice the 'inequalities of vulnerability' that Parreñas (2012) used in her analysis of affect. Ultimately, the management of pigeon populations is an affective encounter where the pigeon is much more vulnerable than the human actor. While the pigeon is seen as a threat to humans, by virtue of its status as a disease carrier, the harm that it might inflict on humans is next to none compared to the harm that humans inflict on it in turn. Once again, the ontology of human superiority becomes clear, where animals' suffering is nearly inconceivable, or at least not as important as the human subjugator.

Conclusion

Through this exposition of the interspecies contact between humans and pigeons, it becomes clear that Animals are indeed "good to think with" (Levi-Strauss 1962). After all, how we connect with animals can tell us a lot about how we connect with each other.

In this paper, I have shown how humans have historically thought about the human-animal connection through the ways in which they have exploited it. Most notably, the pigeon has been used for the purpose of food and to send messages. Humans have

thought of the bird in terms of its uses. This shows how humans think of the interspecies connection in terms of an ontology of human superiority where there is a rift between the human and everything else.

I have further used a frame of landscape to expose the meaning-making of pigeons by humans, using the concepts of space and place, I show how this meaning-making is connected to the landscape in which humans themselves live. In this way, we see how meaning-making is influenced by the experiences of interspecies contact, for example through the experience of affect, as well as how it is influenced by the historical and current symbolic meanings that the pigeon possesses.

Lastly, I have shown how these processes of meaning-making, and the constructions of meaning that have been generated from there, as well as the ontology of human superiority have led to the use of biopolitics and -power against the pigeon, in an attempt to regulate their populations as part of the human (urban) landscape. Here, the pigeon is subjected to biopower through culling, sterilising, and the use of hostile architecture, which shows the similarity between the treatment of pigeons and that of other 'anti-social birds', such as the homeless. The

employment of this biopolitics is justified using the language of hospitality. Pigeons are then constructed as nuisance species, which are deemed unwelcome within our urban settlements, and are subsequently exterminated. This biopower that humans hold shows the inequalities of vulnerability that are present between humans and pigeons.

What this tells us about the human-animal connection is how the human desire to manage and use spaces in accordance with their desires, can lead to the great suffering of the non-humans that inhabit these spaces. Huw Griffiths laments that "presence of wild nature in the city signals a loss of control, just as nomads cross lines which mark secure, predictable and commodified categories of urban space. The realisation of an ordered city, like removing bodily odour or staying young, is an impossible project." (2000, 71). If it is impossible to control fully, then an alternative approach may be more suitable.

Donna Haraway (2008) reflects on the way human nature is often viewed as constant, while at the same time making and remaking others. She reimagines human nature as one that shifts together with interspecies relationships. Perhaps this is the key to shifting the view of human-non-human

relationships away from one of human superiority. After all, the way humans treat animals is partially reflected in the way they treat those of different social groups. Giving animals rights equal to ours, based on their capacity for suffering, rather than their use or emotional closeness to us (Singer 1979), may take us one step closer to a world where the homeless person living on the street is treated just as well as the businessman crossing it.

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Reductive Vision, Oppressive Imagination and Poetic *Praxis*

Michał Grabarek

"It is often the case that the very foundations of anthropologists' ways of making sense of culture remain the most difficult for us to notice. The notorious usage of sight in ethnographic research seems to be such an unconscious abuse in our field. The essay seeks to reject the paradigm that seeing a culture immediately means taking a step towards understanding it. After highlighting the problematic links between the act of seeing and modern forms of colonial oppression, the paper considers a different mode of ethnographic knowledge production, namely poetry. Thus, questioning the self-evident grounds of anthropological theory and practice while exploring the alternatives, was the strongest inspiration for writing this text."

Abstract

Building on Johannes Fabian's critique of visualism, the paper explores the privileged position of the sense of sight in the process of understanding culture. The primacy of sight is seen here as a form of reduction, which diminishes culture to an object of passive, visual contemplation, disembodied cultural phenomenon from its material praxis and depriving the ethnographer of the endeavour of confronting the Other. The reductive nature of sight is juxtaposed with Edward Said's notion of imaginative geography. Using the example of the Napoleonic campaign on Egypt, the paper shows how the coloniser's dream of displaying culture objectively through different visual means actually entangles itself in various forms of epistemic oppression. Towards the end, a different way of producing ethnographic knowledge, namely poetry, is analysed. Using Paul Friedrich's poem as an example, forms of recording ethnographic insight are sought which, instead of relying on the contemplative sense of sight, would provide researchers with confrontational means of coming into contact with the Other.

“After all, we only seem to be doing what other sciences exercise:

keeping object and subject apart.”

Johannes Fabian, Time and the Other, 1983, XI.

The departure point of this essay is a critique, following the work of Johannes Fabian, as to the place that the sense of sight has occupied in Anthropology from the very beginnings of this field. The aim of the paper is to show that the sense of sight, although undoubtedly useful in Anthropology, is also a tool which distances the ethnographer from the Other. This distance stems from the existence of power relations between the seeing/knowing subject and the seen/unknowing object that emerge when ethnographers prioritise the sense of sight above other means of understanding. The primacy of sight is then a form of reduction, which diminishes culture to an object of visual contemplation, disembodied cultural phenomenon from its material *praxis* and depriving the ethnographer of the endeavour of confronting the Other.

As will be shown, Western thought has long been preoccupied with the act of looking understood as the noblest method of understanding. Alongside this, there was a particular interest in visual forms of

representing foreign cultures. These include above all various maps, graphs, tables, or the textual character of Anthropological reflection in general. The overall tendency to privilege the sense of sight and spatial forms of representation while encountering the Other is what Fabian (1983) refers to as visualism. This incredibly strong attachment to the order of vision is considered here a distancing device responsible for improperly placing the seen on an equal footing with the understood.

The aforementioned critique of visualism will be juxtaposed with Edward Said's (1978) notion of imaginative geography. Recognising that a natural consequence of a knowledge system built around the sense of sight means identifying the complex dependencies that occur between Anthropology and constructing the Other in spatial terminology. To illustrate the links between visualism and imaginative geography, *Description de l'Égypte* will be recalled. It is a multi-volume work depicting Egypt through the gaze of the scholars who accompanied Napoleon on his unsuccessful campaign. Certainly, the critique of this work is not representative

of the critique of visualism present in contemporary ethnography. The *Description*, however, provides a crowning example of the links between the glorification of vision and the creation of Other in imaginative spatial terms. The monumental attempt of the Napoleonic *Institut d'Égypte* to understand the Orient had profound consequences on the shape of modern Anthropology (Godlewska, 1995) and for this reason deserves attention.

Lastly, the essay proposes poetry as a form that holds the potential to transcend the oppressive ways in which visualism represents other cultures. It will be shown that what Fabian understands by a confrontational approach in ethnography is echoed in the poetry of Paul Friedrich, whose work explicitly opposed positivist (and therefore visual) attempts to capture culture or language in general. It must already be said, however, that in this work the poetic form by no means exhausts the confrontational potential of ethnography. The idea is not to close our eyes, stop mapping the territories, and start writing poetry. Instead, Paul Friedrich's work is presented solely as one of the possible *praxes* of confronting rather than

contemplating the Other. This, in turn, has the potential to bring Anthropology closer to the demanded coevalness.

Triumph of the gaze

Fabian's critique concerns primarily the issue of denying the Other coeval time. He nonetheless recognises that the distance between the ethnographer and the Other exists partly due to the visual bias of the former. It is, he argues, impossible to consider the problem of time independently of the problem of space (Fabian 1983). In fact, the visual attachment to the problem of space is one of the reasons for Anthropology's problems with time. After all, as Fabian (1985, [1991]) notes, "the significance of time can be eliminated altogether by its reduction to space" (pp. 198). To reflect, then, on the problematic nature of spatial representations, it is necessary to first analyse the character of the anthropological gaze.

Initially, it is important to briefly illustrate the ubiquity of the visual approach in scientific discourse. The inquiry, however, does not come down to a genealogical endeavour. Concurrently with historical analysis, it is worth noting

the particular implications that visualise approach brings to ethnographic research. After all, this essay takes the position that aligning the visual representation of culture with the understanding of it has two fundamental and intertwined dimensions: the creation of distance and power relations between the observer and the observed.

To recognise the ubiquitous triumph of sight as the utmost cognitive metaphor, one does not have to go far back. It is enough to look at the phrases "see the truth", "see the error" or at the frustrated professor shouting "can't you see it?" or, in fact, the phrase "look" contained in the very beginning of this lengthy sentence. Wherever one looks, the act of looking seems to be the first resort on the path to understanding or is often simply equated with the act of understanding altogether. The prevalence of this condition had many influential figures behind it. Fabian (1983), for example, recognises John Locke who spoke firmly about the primacy of vision over the rest of the senses: "The perception of the mind is most aptly explained by words relating to the sight" (1689, pp. 227). Vision is here situated as the most helpful sense. Beyond that,

Locke's quote is fully indicative of the approach which aligns together the three crucial elements in the process of cognition: the seen, the description, and the relationship between them which comes down to strict correspondence, or, to that of truth.

Fabian's quest, however, can be considerably extended by seeing the first links between the sense of sight and the construction of systematic knowledge already in Aristotle. Indeed, the opening sentence of *Metaphysics* follows: "All men by nature desire to know. An indication of this is the delight we take in our senses; for even apart from their usefulness they are loved for themselves; and above all others the sense of sight" (*Metaphysics* I, 1). The primacy of sight, therefore, emerges from the very first attempts to formulate systematic science. It is then since Aristotle that we can already speak of the correspondence between seeing and knowing. As early as here, one finds the classical division between the seeing subject and the seen object. Importantly, the formation of knowledge, according to Aristotle, is placed entirely on the side of a seeing subject. We thus have a

seeing/knowing subject and a seen/not-knowing object.

The Aristotelian dichotomy is crucial in the sense that it indicates a primary power relation present already in the very approach to constructing any knowledge based on the sense of sight. It is not to say, however, that the act of seeing itself is a form of violence and oppression. Nor that reporting on what is being seen is equivalent to dominating the Other. As Fabian (1990, [1991]) puts it: "to be dominated it takes more than to be written about. To become a victim the Other must be written at (as in 'shot at') with literacy serving as a weapon of subjugation and discipline" (pp. 213). One, therefore, should claim that the sole division between the observers and the observed may merely conceal a certain asymmetry of power and that only the systematic forms of knowledge and representations built specifically around this visual bias can constitute severe means of oppression toward the Other. Those forms of domination are particularly evident in the next section, where the links between visualism and imaginative geography are presented.

Nonetheless, our critique of the primacy of sight has even further implications. Vision, as Fabian (2001) notes, "requires distance from its objects; the eye maintains its 'purity' as long as it is not in close contact with 'foreign objects'" (pp. 30). Thus, it can be seen that the relation of power between subject and object is intensified through distance, the assumption of which is inscribed in the very existence of the sense of sight. Distance is then not seen as an argument against the accuracy of the representation of the Other but, on the contrary, as a guarantee of objectivity and of full understanding of the situation.

The mentioned distance is also contained in the very form of transferring knowledge that was gained through the eyes. Indeed, alongside the problem of attachment to particular senses, there was the very issue of effective forms of representation, or more precisely, of teachable forms. Fabian (1983) argues that, at least since the Renaissance, scholars have consciously chosen visual forms of cultural representation, partly because they provided an easier means of transmitting knowledge. Knowledge reduced to sight was therefore favoured as

it was easier to contain and pass on to future generations of scholars. There existed, therefore, a strong attachment to visual forms of storing knowledge: tables, graphs, maps, or structures as well as its transmission: text in a book or on a board. What's important here is that "methods, channels, and means of presenting knowledge are anything but secondary to its contents" (Fabian, 1983, pp. 116). The teachable character of visual representations is therefore by no means innocent. The very notion that cultural phenomena, or any part of it, can be reduced and represented in sterile and visual form is, in addition to being a pragmatic solution, a device of asserting dominance. The reductionism, so strongly embedded in the visual approach, is highly indicative of power relations that can frequently occur between the seeing/representing subject and the seen/represented object.

The relation of power and the distance between subject and object are responsible for the final effect of visualism, which amounts to the alienation of the ethnographer researching the Other. The supposed purity of sight and the distance present in solely visual ethnographic

research result in the detachment of the ethnographer from the material reality of culture. The ethnographer is then no longer in touch with the bodies and the overall material embodiment of the cultural phenomenon. Instead, as Fabian (1983) puts it:

"No provision seems to be made for the beat of drums or the blaring of bar music that keeps you awake at night; none for the strange taste and texture of food, or the smells and the stench. How does the method deal with hours of waiting, with maladroitness and gaffes due to confusion or bad timing? Where does it put the frustrations caused by diffidence and intransigence, where the joys of purposeless chatter and conviviality?" (pp.108)

From this romantic quote, one can grasp that the visual representation of culture is extremely reductionist. Studying culture solely through the prism of vision is understood similarly to studying a distant planet through a telescope. Recognising vision as the noblest way of understanding

means forgetting that on the other side of the gaze is a living, material entity. The visual method thus makes the cultural phenomenon an object of sterile contemplation, depriving the ethnographer of different modes of coming into contact and confronting the Other.

It seems perfectly understandable, then, that the critique of visualism in *Time and the Other* is preceded by the opening quote of Marx's and Engel's "Theses On Feuerbach" (1886): "The chief defect of all hitherto existing materialism (...) is that the thing, reality, sensuousness, is conceived only in the form of the *object or of contemplation*, but not as *sensuous human activity, practice*, not subjectively." In view of this claim, the ethnographer who acknowledges the primacy of vision in understanding culture is merely in a superficial encounter with the Other he constructed through the means of visual representation. He only seemingly operates in the material realm of events, whereas, in reality, resembles a visitor of a museum whose sterile and distant gaze is used as a contemplation tool to observe the displayed object of his choice.

Oppressive imagination in *Description de l'Égypte*

The purity and immateriality of the gaze is an unattainable dream of visualism. As Edward Said (1978) notes, spatial forms of cultural representation are filled with imaginative and poetic forms of domination. For what is seen and represented in sterile visual terms is always charged with surplus meaning. Supposedly objective space, in turn, "acquires emotional and even rational sense by a kind of poetic process, whereby the vacant or anonymous reaches of distance are converted into meaning for us here" (Said, 1978, pp. 55). This load of signification, which goes beyond the objective representation of a territory, is defined by Said (1978) as imaginative geography. A closer look at *Description de l'Égypte* will serve as a case study for the presence of imaginative forms in spatial representations of cultures. *Description de l'Égypte* will be treated here as an example of literacy which was referred to above as "a weapon of subjugation and discipline" (Fabian, 1990, [1991], pp. 213). It will be claimed that beneath the avowed objectivity of visual representation as a

'mirror of nature', there exists a reservoir of oppressive, colonial imagination.

Between 1798 and 1801, the Napoleonic campaign in Egypt took place. Although ultimately unsuccessful, at its peak the expedition captured the vast majority of the country's modern borders. As well as a military undertaking, it was also a major scientific campaign involving more than a hundred scholars. The aim of the expedition was to produce a total account of Egypt from such diverse scientific perspectives as Anthropology, Art History, Geography, Economics, and Natural History. The result of the work was a 10-volume work published between 1809 and 1829 symptomatically named *Description de l'Égypte* (Godlewska, 1995).

The effect of the work of Napoleonic scholars is a testimony to the power of representing the Other, which is put on a par with both understanding and dominating. Representation present in *Description de l'Égypte*, as Godlewska (1995) notes, was based on three fundamental forms: map, text, and image. The Egypt expedition was, from a scientific perspective, an attempt at a visual-textual portrayal of Egypt in which the project of mapping the territory in exceptional detail

is particularly noteworthy. As Joseph Fourier himself, then secretary of the *Institut d'Égypte*, recalls in the preface to the work: "We [the scholars] were many times obliged to replace our weapons with geometrical instruments and, in a sense, to fight over or to conquer the terrain that we were to measure" (Godlewska, 1995, pp. 7). Indeed, throughout the *Description*, there exists an attempt to systemically reduce Egypt to an object that could be measured and represented. The extremely meticulous mapping and cataloguing of the area, even taking into account individual property lines [Fig. 1], was an endeavour previously unseen in European Academia (Godlewska, 1995).



Fig. 1: An excerpt from a map representing Cairo present in *Description de l'Égypte*. A meticulous representation of the area can be seen, along with the allocation of property lines. (Godlewska, 1995, pp. 16)

The mapping process was a form of expressing control and dominance. One only has to look at the theoretical foundations that sanction every cartographic endeavour. To map a certain territory, cartographers need to adopt an objective position, as it were, 'from outside' the represented reality, thus aspiring to a divine view from nowhere. This project of mapping the terrain by viewing it from nowhere also resonates with the alienation of the ethnographer characterised in the previous chapter. Further, the constructions of maps bring back the discussed dichotomy between the seeing subject and the seen object, and thus the concealed power relation present through the constitution of knowledge. In this context, Fourier's words about replacing weapons with tools of geometric measurement become meaningful primarily through the context of oppression.

The *Description*, however, reveals not only the visualism's attempt to achieve objectivity but also the presence of imaginative geography mentioned at the beginning of the chapter. If we focus on analysing the power relations, which the visual approach has a great potential to

carry, we can recognise the imaginative layer that is strongly present in the pictorial representation. For example, all cartographic representations of major sites in Egypt included a measure of reference to Paris (Godlewska, 1995), which strongly underlines the oppressive nature of the whole endeavour creating a narrative of dependency between the periphery and centre or Orient and Occident. The visually examined object, although presented out of nowhere, necessarily exists in relation to the constituting subject. One can thus see the conclusion, already reached by Said (1978), that the Orient is disallowed to exist independently in the Western means of representation. Instead, it can be constituted solely in dependency on both 'stronger' and 'more knowledgeable' Occident.

The dependency between the pure gaze of visualism and the oppressive character of imaginative geography is further visible if one looks at the graphic representations in the *Description*. As Godlewska (1995) notes, there existed "the propensity to self-portraiture in the 'Antiquities' plates" (pp. 20). This fact is noteworthy because it reveals to us how

the scholars who observed Egypt imagined the place they occupied in the fieldwork. The following engraving, for example, shows the scholar closely observing the monumental statue of the Colossus of Karnak, sketching in his notebook [fig. 2]. This is a classic example of the approach aimed at understanding culture through its visual representation. The actual oppression that takes place in the graphic is betrayed by the very posture of the scholar, who freely places his foot on the leg of the Colossus. This is a clear symbol of the dominance and supremacy of the seeing subject over the seen object, reflecting the essence of interdependent relations between visualism and imaginative geography. The deployment of the pure gaze to observed Egypt situates the scholar in the realm of imagined grandeur over the reality he comes to contemplate. The usage of sight and fantasising about greatness go hand in hand here. Thus, the gaze moves beyond its promised objectivity, falling into the realm of imaginative oppression towards the observed Other.



Fig. 2: The image from Description de l'Égypte depicting a scholar observing the Colossus of Karnak and symbolically placing his foot on the statue. (Godlewska, 1995, pp. 21)

The last example from the *Description* comes from exploring the tension that occurs between visualism and imaginative geography. Whereas the former promises cognitive certainty and clarity, the latter leads us towards reducing the Other to an irrational and unknowable entity. Indeed, the *Description* is replete with convincing oneself of knowing the Other while concurrently fantasising about the

unknown present in them. This phenomenon is noted by Said (1978) as he writes about the “vacillation between the familiar and alien” (pp. 72) present in both wanting to incorporate the unknown into knowable categories but at the same time recognise the irrational dimension in what is being seen. This dialectic seems to be embedded if one considers visualism and imaginative geography as strongly linked. Indeed, this tension is reflected in many images found in the *Description*. If one looks, for example, at the graphic depicting a scientist shielded from the sun making sketches of the observed reality. Behind him, an unknown woman, lying seductively by the horse, perhaps turning over with impatience [fig. 3]. What can be seen here is a clear attempt to present the culture in question as captured by sight and thus understood while at the same time exoticising it. The image betrays the dialectic that occurs between the dominance that the scholar inflicts with his gaze and that which he inflicts through fantasy. As visualism directs us towards the desire to know, imaginative geography seeks to hold the Other in terms that escape the field of visual comprehension. Once again, it is evident that the visual

representation of culture is unable to escape its imaginative burden.



Fig. 3: The image from Description de l'Égypte depicting an observing scholar with an unknown woman seductively lying behind him. (Godlewska, 1995, pp. 22.)

Poetic *praxis* in confrontation with the Other

Description de l'Égypte is, of course, an extreme example of an ethnographic project that was driven by visualism and imaginative geography. The functioning of certain mechanisms, however, is best studied in its extreme forms. Further, one cannot argue that contemporary ethnography no longer places a strong emphasis on the sense of sight in the process of cognition, while also marking the space it observes with emotional meaning. Thus, towards the end of the work, it is worth considering one

alternative to the hegemony of visualism, namely, the poetic *praxis*.

Fabian himself is not in any way an advocate for poetry. In the essay on "Ethnographic objectivity" (2001), however, he acknowledges an urgent need to experiment with different usages of language, which transcend its mere referential function. He notes that "only part of what members of culture know is "informative" in the sense that it can be elicited and produced as discursive information. Much more is performative: it can be done, acted out, put on" (pp. 29). This remark is reminiscent of the charge of reductionism quoted above which Fabian formulated against visualism already in *Time and the Other*. Now, however, he focuses on language as a main platform for further critique. Those investigations are briefly ended with an indication of "the place where *poesis* should be seriously considered as being involved in knowledge production" (Fabian, 2001, pp. 29).

The suggestion made by Fabian is worth building on. Of course, poems can be written in all sorts of ways. Bearing in mind the critique outlined above, the ethnographic poetry one seeks would

have to be confrontational, in opposition to contemplative. It is, therefore, poetry that recognises the subjectivity of both sides of the ethnographic inquiry, abolishing or at least severely weakening the Aristotelian dichotomy between subject and object. Moreover, it should affirm the material reality on which culture is grounded. It implies, therefore, seeing in the Other a living being whose life consists of a material dimension. Finally, it is also about moving away from the primacy of sight when describing experienced events, allowing for a more irregular flow of insights resulting from the confrontational approach. In this way, ethnographic poetry would romantically resemble a space of free-floating experiences and perceptions, circulating between subjects, embedded in material reality.

One can argue that a good deal of conditions outlined above are met in the poetry of Paul Friedrich who strongly opposed positivist aspirations of strict correspondence between language and reality it means to reflect. Reading Friedrich's poetry, one gets the impression that its starting point is precisely a strong rejection of the referential function of language. Instead, an emphasis is put on

recognising the plurality of both realities and perspectives present in the ethnographic fieldwork. An example of such a poem is "Supper in Zamora" from Friedrich's fieldwork in Michoacán, Mexico:

Supper in Zamora

The cat in the tulips stalks its prey:
a sparrow, a rat, another cat, perhaps,
imagined by the young artist on the bus,
her sketch pad under her arm, herself
a sketch by Michelangelo — seeing past
the cat the asymmetrical reflections,
the shimmering fleur-de-lis of the lake,
into the alley below her hotel window
that Sunday afternoon in Zamora, Mexico;
hearing, again, that ineradicable
cry of the boy vendor from the plaza
as the barber's two assistants laugh,
snatching his last cake of the tray.
(Friedrich, 1986, pp. 334).

In a way, the poem resembles the romantic space of free-flowing events sought above. The unusual aspect of this piece is that it seems to free itself from the heavy forms of representation associated with an Aristotelian vision of proper sciences. Certainly, it ceases to carry the informative aspect of the fieldwork and moves towards conveying the elements of culture with which a formal description

seems entirely incompatible. Of course, to a considerable extent, the form sought above remains wishful thinking. After all, we continue to deal with a certain observer of events and the transmission of elementary information by them. This does not mean, however, that the distance between the ethnographer and the Other they encounter did not shrink and that the weight of the whole endeavour has not shifted from information to expression. This shift, in turn, may prove to be a window into a potential confrontation with another, partially free from contemplative distance.

These considerations lead us to one of the main objections to the poetic form, namely, its closed nature. After all, poetry as a form has the potential to create certain closed, self-sufficient worlds in which the culture under discussion becomes the object of romanticisation. This allegation is similar to the problem Fabian identifies with cultural relativism, following Maurice Bloch, of reducing common material reality into the "Gardens of Culture" (Fabian, 1985, pp. 44). Each culture is then seen as consisting of an enclosed system of signs. This monadic entity is then impossible to penetrate in

any other way than by recognising its absolute autonomy in relation to any exterior phenomena.

In the critique, one must search for confrontational poetry, in opposition to the romantic creation of poetic monads. One seeks poetry which acknowledges the external realm of events. Poetry which in content goes out, as it were, to the outside, enabling the recipient to witness a confrontational praxis towards the Other. As Fabian (2001) puts it, ethnographic knowledge can only occur once "it encounters resistance in the form of incomprehension, denial, rejection, or, why not, simply Otherness" (pp. 25). Confrontational poetry should therefore be agonistic in the sense that through it the poet seeks relation with that which is exterior, namely the Other.

Interestingly, doing the opposite, that is moving towards the inward, was precisely the main error of imaginative geography. It was the graphic from *Description de l'Égypte* depicting a scholar with a seductive unknowable woman behind [fig. 3], that constituted a form of poetic monad which should be avoided if one adheres to Fabian's claims. Poetic imagination has therefore considerable

potential to oppress the Other if used in a non-confrontational manner.

Returning to Friedrich's poem, one can recognise that, contrary to imaginative geography, it tries to capture culture directed precisely toward the exterior. Friedrich is not trying to depict the evening in Zamora as an incomprehensible and enclosed series of events. The reader, instead, is left with the impression that he has learned something about the city, although he cannot say exactly what. Further, after reading the poem, one experiences both curiosity and insatiability concerning life exhibited in the poem. Acknowledging the limitations of representing culture through words and images, Friedrich leaves the reader with a genuine urge to confront the city's evening life on their own and thus experience the Other in the form of "incomprehension, denial, rejection", or, why not, simply confrontation.

Conclusion

This essay explored both the assumptions and implications of the critique of visualism offered by Johannes Fabian. Given the omnipresence of the sense of sight in the act of understanding the

Other, it sought to draw attention to the reductionism that is inevitably linked to this approach. The idea that seeing a given phenomenon can be equated with understanding it seems wholly misguided, especially given the power relationship that tends to appear between the seeing subject and the seen object. Moreover, the primacy of the visual description of culture has the effect of alienating the ethnographer from the reality they are investigating.

Subsequently, it has been shown that the desire for objective knowledge gained through sight is at great risk of falling into what Edward Said calls imaginative geography. The space represented through visual means would then acquire an emotional dimension for the subject who conjured it. Frequently, as happened in *Description de l'Égypte*, those imaginary and visual-spatial forms of representing the Other served as a tool of domination.

Keeping in mind the criticisms above, the subversive potential of ethnographic poetry was explored. Paul Friedrich's poetry was presented as a form of poetic expression that has a clear potential to transcend the rigid forms of visual and spatial representation, thus weakening the

Aristotelian subject/object dichotomy. In contrast to imaginative geography, Friedrich's poetry is agonistic, that is, directed towards the exterior, thus possessing a genuine confrontational capacity.

Finally, it is important to recall the remark from the introduction that the thoughts above are not focused on the normative dimension. At stake was not the issue of indicating what should be unquestionably done in ethnography or what should be forbidden. Instead, the aim was to explore the assumptions, limitations and possibilities underlying different forms of coming into contact with the Other. However, after recognising the deeply problematic and restrictive nature of representing culture in visual-spatial terms, the essay sought to show that there are forms of portraying cultural life that attempt to transcend the informative and oppressive character of sight-oriented ethnography. This can be tackled by seeking to express what cannot be reduced to vision and represented in space, inevitably tempting the reader to confront the Other beyond the sphere of what merely meets the eye.

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Wie is de ‘Nederlander’?

Annelinde Junte

“Ik wist nog niet wat de conclusie van mijn essay zou zijn toen ik begon met schrijven. Na het schrijven van dit essay, kwam ik erachter dat ik geen eindconclusie kan leveren. Ik kan namelijk nog steeds mijn eigen vraag niet beantwoorden. Wel ben ik door het schrijven van dit essay dieper en kritischer gaan nadenken over wat het woord Nederlander voor mij betekent. Ik hoop dat door mijn essay andere mensen ook bij zichzelf gaan nadenken over waarom ze het woord Nederlander definiëren zoals ze doen. Dit kan misschien klinken als een klein en onbelangrijk onderwerp, maar het is zeer definiërend voor hoe we nadenken over onze medemens en grote debatten zoals migratie en de asielcrisis.”

Abstract

“Wie is de ‘Nederlander’?” lijkt in eerste instantie misschien een makkelijke vraag, maar het is een lastigere vraag om te beantwoorden als we gaan nadenken over wie we als Nederlander zien. Met behulp van Essed en Trienekens (2008), Wekker (2017), en Guadeloupe (2022) geef ik meerdere perspectieven die kunnen verklaren waarom we sommige mensen als Nederlander zien en anderen niet. Essed en Trienekens (2008) gebruiken het begrip Europism om aan te tonen dat mensen met een Westerse achtergrond vaak sneller worden geaccepteerd als Nederlander dan mensen met een niet-Westerse achtergrond. Wekker (2017, 23) geeft een ander perspectief en zegt dat witte migranten door het leven kunnen gaan als Nederlander, terwijl dit voor gekleurde migranten veel lastiger is. Guadeloupe (2022) zegt daarentegen dat klasse de belangrijkste rol speelt bij de vraag of een persoon wordt gezien als Nederlander of niet. Naar mijn mening is er geen juist antwoord op de vraag “Wie is de ‘Nederlander’?”, maar ik hoop de Nederlandse inwoner aan het denken te zetten over hun eigen antwoord op deze vraag.

Introduction

Wat betekent het woord 'Nederlander'? Wie zijn 'Nederlanders'? Tijdens debatten over migratie in de Tweede Kamer wordt vaak gesproken over 'de Nederlander'. Kijk bijvoorbeeld naar de uitspraak van Emiel van Dijk van de PVV tijdens een debat over asiel en migratie in 2020: 'Wij zullen niet rusten totdat het kabinet de Nederlanders weer op de eerste plaats zet' (Van Meenen en Tielens Tripels 2020). Ook minder rechtse partijen gebruiken de term Nederlanders tijdens hun pleidooien, zoals mevrouw Kuiken van de PvdA. Zij praat over de bezorgdheid van Nederlanders over migratie (Van Meenen en Tielens Tripels 2020). Maar wie valt onder deze term, 'Nederlander'? Iedereen met een Nederlands paspoort? Of alleen mensen die geboren zijn in Nederland? Of alleen mensen die Nederlandse voorouders hebben? Tijdens het antiracisme debat in 2023 in de Tweede Kamer heeft Gideon van Meijeren van Forum van Democratie het over een zwerm negroïde primaten die een blanke jongen mishandelt (Anon 2020). In het artikel op de site van Forum van Democratie wordt de groep jongens in plaats van negroïde primaten een groep buitenlanders genoemd. Waarom zijn deze jongens opeens negroïde primaten en buitenlanders en geen

Nederlanders? Wanneer heb je het 'recht' om een Nederlander te worden genoemd? Mijn doel met dit essay is niet om de vraag 'wie zijn Nederlanders?' te beantwoorden, maar om de Nederlandse inwoners aan het denken te zetten over waarom we sommige mensen behandelen als migranten of buitenlanders en anderen niet.

Academici zoals Essed en Trienekens (2008), Wekker (2017) en Guadeloupe (2022) praten over racisme in Nederland. Met behulp van deze auteurs wil ik graag praten over hoe de Nederlander wordt afgebeeld in onder andere de Tweede Kamer, maar ook in het dagelijks leven. Als eerste begin ik met het bespreken van het begrip *Europism* dat wordt behandeld door Philomena Essed en Sandra Trienekens (2008). Dit begrip verklaart gedeeltelijk waarom Europeanen, waaronder Nederlanders, zich offensief opstellen tegenover niet-westerse migranten. Ten tweede behandel ik een paradox van Gloria Wekker (2017) over migratie. Dit paradox laat zien dat de offensieve houding tegenover migranten vaak helemaal niet terecht is en dat racisme vaak gebaseerd is op huidskleur. Ten derde behandel ik Francio Guadeloup (2022) zijn positie als niet-witte Nederlander en zijn perspectief op de concepten Wit en Zwart.

Guadeloupe's (2022) ideeën geven een nieuw inzicht over racisme op basis van klasse. Ten slotte sluit ik af met een korte conclusie.

Philomena Essed en Sandra Trienekens (2008) leggen in hun artikel over *Whiteness* het begrip *Europism* uit. *Europism* gaat over Europa's defensieve en naar binnen gerichte houding tegenover, eenvoudig gezegd, alles wat niet Europees is. Het idee dat Europa dominant is komt voornamelijk door het idee dat Europa modern, vooruitstrevend en superieur is (Essed en Trienekens 2008, 56). Niet-westerse mensen zijn een bedreiging voor de westerse superioriteit door bijvoorbeeld de zogenaamde seksistische houding van veel niet-westerse islamitische mannen (Essed en Trienekens 2008, 55-56). Essed en Trienekens (2008, 58) benadrukken dat we huidskleur als een racistische baken niet moeten onderschatten ondanks dat in Nederland, en de rest van Europa, er meer sprake is van cultureel racisme dan biologisch racisme. De Europese eenheid bouwt op het idee van culturele hiërarchieën, wat resulteert in het idee dat het onmogelijk is om bijvoorbeeld tegelijkertijd Europees en moslim te zijn (Essed en Trienekens 2008, 57). De focus tijdens debatten over migratie in de Tweede kamer ligt dan ook vaak op het

feit dat migranten niet kunnen integreren in de Nederlandse samenleving door de cultuurverschillen, terwijl, zoals Gloria Wekker (2017) zal aantonen, Nederland helemaal niet zo homogeen is.

Gloria Wekker (2017) schrijft in haar boek *White Innocence* over een paradox tussen migranten en Nederlanders. De paradox luidt: Nederlanders willen zich niet identificeren met migranten terwijl tenminste 1 op de 6 Nederlanders een migratieachtergrond heeft (Wekker 2017, 6). Wekker (2017) gaat hier verder op in, om zo te verklaren hoe het kan dat veel Nederlanders zichzelf niet zien als een migrant. Ze zegt dat dit onderscheid voornamelijk afhangt van de huidskleur van de migrant. Vanaf de zestiende eeuw migreerden er al mensen naar Nederland, maar deze migranten waren voornamelijk afkomstig uit andere Europese landen zoals Engeland, Spanje, Frankrijk en Duitsland. Dit zorgde ervoor dat tot halverwege de twintigste eeuw de Nederlandse bevolking grotendeels wit was. Na de Tweede Wereldoorlog kwamen er meer migranten van oud-Nederlandse koloniën, arbeidsmigrant van het gebied rond de Middellandse Zee en Oost-Europa en vluchtelingen uit onder andere Afrika en het

Midden-Oosten naar Nederland. Hierdoor kwamen er meer mensen met een gekleurde huid naar Nederland. Wekker (2017) vindt dat de term migrant problematisch is in de Nederlandse context, doordat de term migrant per persoon langer wordt gebruikt vanwege hun land van origine. Mensen afkomstig uit bijvoorbeeld Turkije of Marokko worden aangesproken met migrant terwijl ze vierde generatie migrant zijn. Mensen met een migratieachtergrond en witte voorouders zijn in staat om door het leven te gaan als Nederlanders, maar mensen met een migratieachtergrond en een gekleurde huid blijven migranten (Wekker 2017, 23). Kijk bijvoorbeeld naar Katja Schuurman en Geert Wilders (Thole 2016). Katja Schuurman heeft een Surinaams-Chinese moeder uit Curaçao, wat Katja Schuurman een tweede generatie migrant maakt. Geert Wilders zijn moeder is geboren in het voormalige Nederlands-Indië, wat ook Geert Wilders een tweede generatie migrant maakt. Beide personen hebben een witte huidskleur en veel Nederlandse inwoners, waaronder ikzelf, hebben nog nooit stil gestaan bij hun migratieachtergrond.

Francio Guadeloupe is een voorbeeld van een gekleurde migrant. In zijn boek *Black Man in the Netherlands* gaat Guadeloupe

(2022) in op hoe het is om in Nederland te leven als een gekleurde man van Antilliaanse afkomst. Guadeloupe (2022) vertelt dat veel inwoners van de Antillen blij zijn met het bezitten van een Nederlands paspoort, maar dat de inwoners van de Antillen meer gerechtigheid en gelijke erkenning willen voor de gekleurde mensen en de armere arbeidersklasse (xxiv). Om deze reden roept Guadeloupe (2022, xxvi) op tot een transformatie waarbij er geen ideaalbeeld is van hoe een Nederlander eruit zou moeten zien (xxvi). Volgens Guadeloupe zal deze transformatie helpen met het bestrijden van anti-zwart racisme. In het eerste hoofdstuk van zijn boek gaat Guadeloupe (2022) hier nog verder op in. Eenmaal in Nederland woont Guadeloupe in een multiculturele wijk van Helmond. Hij komt hier in contact met mensen van vele verschillende achtergronden. Hij komt daardoor ook in aanraking met veel racisme. Hij realiseert zich dat in de media heel veel dingen geframed worden als Marokkaans geweld wanneer er mensen met een Marokkaanse achtergrond betrokken zijn. Guadeloupe (2022, 8) reageert hierop met dat Nederlandse Marokkanen ook gewoon Nederlanders zijn. De multiculturele samenleving in Nederland is voor Guadeloupe (2022) een belangrijk en

sprekend onderdeel van wat Nederlanders zijn.

Guadeloupe (2022) spreekt in zijn boek over Wit en Zwart met een hoofdletter. Guadeloupe (2022, xxxii) gebruikt de termen Zwart en Wit als concepten om de hiërarchische positie van mensen binnen het kapitalistische systeem aan te duiden. Iedereen die onderdrukt en uitgebuit wordt, is Zwart en iedereen met een meer geprivilegieerde positie, is Wit. Guadeloupe (2022, xxxii) zou mensen als Virgil van Dijk en Jay-Z categoriseren als Wit en Poolse migranten als Zwart. Guadeloupe (2022) beweert dus dat klasse een heel belangrijk deel uitmaakt van hoe een persoon wordt behandeld en dat huidskleur hier een kleinere factor in speelt.

Ik begon dit essay met de vraag 'Wat betekent het woord 'Nederlander'?. Ik geloof niet dat ik hier een antwoord op heb gegeven, maar ik hoop de Nederlandse inwoner hierover wel aan het denken te hebben gezet. Waarom zijn de gekleurde groep jongens uit de inleiding buitenlanders en zijn Virgil van Dijk en Geert Wilders Nederlanders? Essed en Trienekens (2008) zullen zeggen dat het voornamelijk komt door hun wel of niet-westerse achtergrond, Wekker (2017) zal zeggen door hun

huidskleur en Guadeloupe (2022) zal zeggen door hun klasse. Dit is een vraag die iedereen anders zal beantwoorden, maar dat betekent niet dat het niet belangrijk is om hierover na te denken. Het is belangrijk dat we nadenken over hoe we deze vraag beantwoorden en waarom we die beantwoorden op de manier dat we doen. Ik hoop de Nederlandse inwoner aan het denken te hebben gezet over hun eigen positie in het Nederlanders zijn en hoe zij deze vraag beantwoorden. Ik geloof dat dit het begin is om het beeld dat wij hebben van de 'ideale Nederlander' te transformeren, om in de woorden van Francio Guadeloupe (2022, xxxvi) te eindigen.

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