Exploring Materiality *and* Connectivity *in* Anthropology *and* Beyond

Edited by
Philipp Schorch
Martin Saxer
Marlen Elders

UCLPRESS

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Philipp Schorch, Martin Saxer and Marlen Elders
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Introduction: Materiality and Connectivity

Martin Saxer and Philipp Schorch

Things that move and thereby connect or, conversely, connections made through things have long been central to anthropology's concerns. From the Kula Ring (Malinowski 1922) and the role of the gift (Mauss 1923–4) to questions of dowry (Goody 1976), the theme of material circulation and exchange has featured prominently in anthropological understandings of the worlds in which we live. In recent decades, too, a renewed interest in things has informed a variety of scholarly endeavours. Arjun Appadurai's volume on *The Social Life of Things* (1986) inspired a substantial body of work on material culture in motion (Thomas 1991; Marcus and Myers 1995; Clifford 1997; Harrison, Byrne and Clarke 2013; Bell and Hasinoff 2015; Joyce 2015; Bennett, Cameron, Dias et al. 2016; Basu 2017). 'Things' continue to be rethought (Henare, Holbraad and Wastell 2007; Bennett 2009; Miller 2010; Bogost 2012; Shaviro 2014; Atzmon and Boradkar 2017), while a recent strand of anthropological work has shifted the focus from the 'social life of things' to the 'social life of materials' (Drazin and Küchler 2015; see also Ingold 2007, 2012).

At the same time, in the field of science studies, Bruno Latour's reflections on the parliament of things (1993) and his outline of Actor-Network-Theory (2005) problematised the notion of agency as something not exclusively human, inspiring new approaches to the study of science, technology and medicine. Interdisciplinary takes on infrastructure highlight both the stubbornness and the fragility of material interventions (Björkman 2015; Harvey and Knox 2015), and studies on transnational commodity flows provide us with a deeper understanding of global connections (Steiner 1994; Bestor 2001; Tsing 2015). New schools of thought are emerging around concepts such as perspectivism (Viveiros de Castro 2004, 2012), multispecies ethnography (Kirksey 2014), new materialism (Barad 2007; Bennett 2009; Dolphijn and van der Tuin 2012) and

object-oriented ontology and speculative realism (Bogost 2012; Harman 2010; Bryant, Srnicek and Harman 2011; Shaviro 2014), working across the big divides between human and non-human, nature and culture and subject and object, that once seemed to be taken for granted.

All of these approaches and themes – from the classics of anthropology to the bleeding edge of theory production – share a fundamental concern with things in motion and their role in forging connections. This volume – the outcome of two workshops and a symposium – aims to provide a new look at the old anthropological concern with materiality and connectivity. We do not understand materiality as a defined property of some-thing; nor do we take connectivity as merely a relation between discrete entities. Somewhat akin to Heisenberg's uncertainty principle (1927), we rather see materiality and connectivity as two interrelated modes in which an entity is, or, more precisely, is becoming, in the world. Just as things tend to become the things they are through the connections in which they are engaged, connections are often imbued with material qualities. The question, thus, is how these two modes of becoming relate and fold into each other to produce the realities we attempt to understand.

In order to find answers, we explore the forces and potentialities that underlie, constitute and mobilise these entities from ethnographic, historical, methodological and theoretical angles. More specifically, we follow the narrative journeys of things and the emergent ties through which what is commonly called 'material culture' comes into existence, bringing into focus the dynamic courses of material change, dissolution and decay. Thus, we do not see the value of this volume as emerging from a juxtaposition of two well-researched themes – materiality and connectivity – but rather from their deep and often surprising entanglements. Throughout the four-year research process that led to this book, we approached these issues not just from a theoretical perspective; taking the suggestion of 'thinking through things' (Henare, Holbraad and Wastell 2007) literally, and methodologically seriously, we dedicated our first two workshops to practical, hands-on exercises working with things. From these workshops a series of installations emerged, straddling the boundaries of art and academia (cf. Schneider and Wright 2006, 2010). These installations served as artistic-academic interventions during the final two-day symposium and are featured alongside the other, academic contributions to this volume. We will now begin by outlining this process of exploration, with all its pitfalls and outcomes, bringing it into conversation with the chapters and main themes of the book.

Thinking-by-doing

The aim of the first workshop in 2015 was to take stock of experiences with, stories of and reflections on things that move and thereby connect or, the other way round, connections made through things. The method employed was decisively simple: each participant brought three or four things to the workshop and prepared brief interventions – anecdotes about experiences, conceptual insights, questions, puzzles. These 'storied things' were then *put on the table* – metaphorically as well as physically – in order to create an arrangement of materials, field experiences, concepts, theories and histories. This simple exercise of thinking-by-doing[1] turned out to be highly productive, leading to a wealth of ideas that have since found purchase within our own work.[2] However, we also realised that, at least initially, putting things on a table led us down a well-trodden path that went counter to our original proposition of materiality and connectivity as two intertwined modes of becoming. The storied things on the table made us look for connections between them, which we quickly started to visualise with a red woollen thread, naming them with labels. Once more, we found ourselves in precisely the kind of universe of discrete things and their connections that we sought to transcend.

For the second workshop, in 2016, a different setup was attempted: instead of putting things on the table, we decided *to hang them from the ceiling* in order to create a three-dimensional playground. We rented an industrial space in Munich, Germany, and built a simple wooden frame covered by a fishing net. This setup, designed to further our thinking-by-doing, allowed us to hang and reposition things and walk the emerging landscape of thought, changing perspectives, identifying angles and observing parallax.[3] We invited participants to bring not just a handful of 'storied things' to the workshop but rather a 'thing-story' consisting of several items. While, again, productive and providing the seeds from which four of the five installations for the final symposium emerged, the setup posed new problems. First, the industrial space we had rented stubbornly invaded the evolving landscape, adding things like green exit signs to the fragile thing-stories we tried to put in context with each other. Second, many of the items brought to the workshop (a t-shirt, postcards, photographs) had clear front and back sides. Hung on the fishing net, they tended to turn round and, literally as well as metaphorically, turn their backs on us. And third, even more than with the things on the table, we ended up with something reminiscent of a model of the universe with stars, planets and asteroids – discrete material

entities held together by the connecting force of gravitation. In hindsight, we now see that, while the themes of co-emergence, transformation and dissolution were clearly present in several of the thing-stories brought to the workshop, the upside-down think-piece hanging from the fishing net still glossed over these qualities.

What our temporary playgrounds of things were missing was the dimension of time and its forces of growth, dissolution and decay. Rather than a model of a universe of things, we were after something more dynamic. To capture our initial proposition of materiality and connectivity as intertwined modes of becoming, we needed a different metaphor. Consider then, for a moment, a forest or *thicket*, where vines, roots, bushes and trees grow with and into each other. Their material form as well as their relations are inseparable from each other in the process of growth and decay. In a thicket, things are mostly also ties and ties are things. Rather than discrete entities (things) with relations between them (ties), there are *thing~ties*. We solicit the help of a tilde as a connecting grapheme between these terms that are usually taken as separate. Originally used as a mark of suspension, denoting the omission of one or several letters, the tilde later acquired a variety of meanings. It stands for approximation, a degree of equivalence or a possibly significant degree of error; as a diacritic, it indicates a shift in pronunciation and a number of languages deal with the limitations of the Latin script. The tilde implies movement and gesture where other graphemes suggest a more stable relation. While *thing-tie* may conjure up a hybrid, *thing/tie* might hint at the two sides of a coin and thingtie possibly suggests a new discrete entity, a *thing~tie* maintains the idiosyncrasies, uncertainties, movements and pragmatic decisions present in the history of its typographic use.

Meanwhile, we had issued a call for papers for our final symposium. Reviewing the almost 50 proposals received, we found that many of the most intriguing and convincing ones were concerned with the dimension of time and the forces of dissolution. We thus invited not only scholars working on things that become the things they are through movement and connections, but also archaeologists and historians looking at material traces and what they tell us about connectivity. We approached Tim Ingold, who had been a source of inspiration for our thinking from the outset. Regardless of his own scepticism about the term materiality (2007), he joined us for a short fellowship at the Center for Advanced Studies (CAS) at Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität Munich around the time of the final symposium, which took place in 2017. We invaded a neatly renovated villa in the posh Munich neighbourhood in which CAS

is housed. For the two and a half days of the symposium, five installations, or artistic-academic interventions, as we call them, provided the background for our conversations surrounding the papers presented.[4]

Two main themes emerged from this encounter of research-based papers and installations grounded in the practical thinking of the two earlier workshops: the manifold ways in which mobilising things and materialising connections fold into each other and grow together, and the connectivity afforded by ruination and dissolution. These two themes structure Part II, 'Movement and Growth', and Part III, 'Dissolution and Traces', respectively, of the present volume. Part I, 'Conceptual Grounds', consists of two chapters offering conceptual takes on things and ties – one from anthropology and one from archaeology.

Book outline

Part I: Conceptual Grounds

What we choose here to call *thing~ties* directly resonate with Tim Ingold's chapter, 'In the gathering shadows of material things'. Ingold traces the career of the term *assemblage* in the work of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1987). The English term *assemblage*, Ingold argues, is a translation of the original French word *agencement* – despite the fact that *assemblage* also exists in the French language. In current debates, an assemblage is normally a group of heterogeneous elements whose relations are exterior (DeLanda 2006) – reminiscent of the planetary metaphor alluded to above in highlighting the limits of our intellectual playgrounds. The original term *agencement*, Ingold notes, has additional connotations that were somewhat lost in translation. In a world of becoming, he shows, 'the focus shifts to the processes of material formation themselves and to how they go along together' (p. 18). While articulation is what produces an assemblage, Ingold suggests the term *correspondence* for this process of material co-becoming. The nexus formed in this process he calls a *gathering* (p. 18). Ingold's objective is not to replace *assemblage* with *gathering* as a better alternative; his goal is rather to point to the many contexts in which relations are not exterior to material entities but constitutive in their material genesis and decay.

The metaphor of a growing *thicket of thing~ties* as opposed to the image of a moving yet relatively stable planetary constellation directs our attention also to time and history. In Chapter 2, Philipp Stockhammer tackles the problem of understanding human–thing entanglements in

archaeology by suggesting three kinds of changes that things undergo over time. The first concerns changes in perception, which are closely linked to the routes along which a certain thing travels; the second relates to the process of wear and tear, of decay; and the third involves changes in the practices associated with a thing. In all three kinds of change, materiality and connectivity are tightly interwoven. Here, too, it makes little sense to see the shifting connectivities as external to the less than stable materiality in the course of a thing's history. The human–thing entanglements with which Stockhammer is concerned grow from the same variety of seed as Ingold's observations; things and ties, and their underlying materiality and connectivity, are integral rather than external to each other. Stockhammer argues that the work things do (their 'effectancy', he calls it) is closely related to their movement – their 'itinerancy' – which, of course, is central to the methodological underpinnings of archaeology. Itinerancy, as a less anthropomorphising alternative to biography, highlights movement and directly leads back to the old anthropological concerns about material circulation and exchange, and thus to the movement and mobilisation of materials.

Part II: Movement and Growth

Itinerancy is obvious in the theme of the gift, which frames the two opening chapters of Part II of this volume. In Chapter 3, Julia Binter examines the politics of the gift in the colonisation of British Nigeria. Gifts, 'shot through with claims to political, economic and cultural power' (p. 59), played a key role in struggles to maintain sovereignty and impose dependence. In nineteenth-century Atlantic Africa, against the background of the end of the slave trade and the rise of the palm oil economy, new trade agreements and protection treaties were forged with local elites. In this context, African rulers hosted European merchants in elaborate rituals that took place on extravagant war canoes in the Niger Delta. European merchants presented gold-laced hats, silver-headed canes, silk and embroidered coats to their African counterparts as a means to 'break trade' and start or maintain commercial relations. These gifts were used by African rulers to display their wealth and standing, and to facilitate their inland journeys to acquire palm oil. Blurring distinctions between gift and commodity, and imbued with the power of relations, these *thing~ties* were at the heart of commercial activity in a fragile political environment. Binter shows how the British efforts to replace them with stable treaties signed on paper were only partially successful. The 'material processes of becoming imperial were far from

teleological', Binter argues, and gift exchange remained 'invested with the potential to impose power as much as to forge alliances and generate resistance' (p. 67).

Catrien Notermans and Jean Kommers (Chapter 4) follow women from West and Central Africa living in Europe on their journeys to Catholic pilgrimage sites. Shopping for religious souvenirs and sending them home has become a central activity in the lives of these migrant women. The souvenirs, purchased in large quantities on expensive trips throughout Europe, are more than simple gifts for individual friends and family. They are distributed widely through the networks of churches back home and have become a form of 'religious remittance', the authors argue. Here, as in Julia Binter's case, gifts are a form of commodity that assumes a crucial role in the maintenance of transnational relations between Europe and Africa. Imbued with religious power, they are used to heal illnesses, protect against the dangers of witchcraft and strengthen the migrant women's social standing in their home countries.

In both cases, more than a century apart, the things in motion are more than mere symbols or tokens of ties. They *are* the ties – ties that directly stem from their itinerancy. Bought, sent, distributed, and used to heal and protect, things and ties constitute each other as entwined modes of becoming.

The ties in these *thing~ties*, however, are not necessarily singular or exclusive, and may indeed prove multivalent. Exploring the cultural and religious links between Cuba, Africa and the USA, Natalie Göltenboth's intervention (Chapter 5) provides an example of multiple connections layered in a *thing~tie.* Göltenboth tells the story of Barbie dolls brought from Miami to Havana and their elevation to become sacred figurines of West African deities called *orichas* – 'saints' – through rituals of consecration. The act of consecration, here, can be seen as a form of transformation of one set of ties – imaginaries of a luxury life outside Cuba imbued with transnational family relations – into another, systems of belief and religious power flowing from Yorubaland to everyday lives in contemporary Havana. These connections are layered and additive rather than exclusive: while becoming deities through consecration, they continue to speak of the dream-world of Ken and Barbie. In the Barbie dolls, then, a diverse set of beliefs, values, aesthetics and family ties are entwined. As *thing~ties*, they hold in view the many itinerancies in play.

The notion of itinerancy deserves further scrutiny in cases where things do not take the paths foreseen for them, where it requires effort to keep them on track or, in other words, where the ties in *thing~ties* are at risk of being abducted or re-forged into something new. Srinivas Reddy's

contribution (Chapter 6) on the trade of war horses between Europe, Africa, the Middle East and India in the early sixteenth century reveals one dimension of the efforts required to keep goods mobile. While South Indian empires flourished, Portuguese colonial enterprises attempted to seize control of maritime trade across the Indian Ocean. One of the most important commodities flowing into India at that time was stallions to equip the cavalries of rival empires. The war horses were crucial in these struggles of power. For the Portuguese merchants, this tremendously profitable trade came along with the inherent risk that rival empires could begin breeding their own war horses. One of the strategies employed to prevent this was a ban on the sale of mares, withholding the stallions from entering into reproductive ties on site and thereby keeping them as commodities. Reddy argues that the system established a type of membrane to keep a profitable dependence in place. Managing ties through this membrane can be seen as a strategy against the risk of abduction by keeping the reproductive ties between mares and stallions separate from the ties of exchange at the heart of the trade system.

Another example of this kind of risk, on a different continent and in the present, is the topic of Juliane Müller's contribution (Chapter 7). Müller traces mobile phones produced in Asia and imported into Bolivia via the special economic zone of Iquique in Chile by a network of informal traders. In this supply chain, large corporations like Samsung struggle to keep track of their products. Frequently, and for a variety of reasons, Samsung finds shipments destined for one Latin American market ending up in another, much to the dismay of the national branches of the company, which are looking to boost their performance indicators. To keep phones on track requires effort. Samsung has developed a system that not only establishes the authenticity of phones, distinguishing originals from fakes, but also tries to prevent parallel imports – diversions from the predestined path of distribution. To this end, the company introduced the new category of 'Samsung Plus Original!', marked by a silver hologram on the packaging as the certificate of a particular itinerancy. This form of 'branding' (in the original sense of the term) changes the value of the phones regardless of the fact that the product is exactly the same. While Samsung employees are trying to track down phones on the markets of La Paz and re-enter them into their database, traders engage in repackaging and relabelling in order to keep the possibilities of trade open and plural: between them they pursue an ongoing quarrel over things and ties between traders and a transnational corporation.

Things and ties in relation to mobile phones also form the topic of Anna-Maria Walter's intervention (Chapter 8), which explores intimacy

in northern Pakistan. Walter's work teases out how material qualities of life as well as intimate chats and phone calls between lovers and young married couples intersect and constitute each other in a context in which gender segregation structures and regulates everyday life. In other words, the phone as private and mobile item carried close to the body is more than just a thing and more than just a tool to facilitate telecommunication – it is a *thing~tie* at the heart of personal identity, relation-making and social subversion. The phone as thing and the intimate ties it affords allow young couples to test the boundaries of social norms and reinterpret – or abduct – cultural concepts. Virtual connections might be invisible, but they certainly have a tangible efficacy.

As the chapters and interventions outlined above attest, Part II is concerned with cases in which ties are clearly more fluid than things. When a *thing~tie* undergoes change, this change originates first and foremost in the transformation of the ties in which a thing is suspended. This is not always the case, however. Part III looks at instances in which it is rather the things that dissolve; their solid form evaporates while the ties remain strong and even gain in presence and relevance.

Part III: Dissolution and Traces

How connections may be forged through dissolution is brought into focus by Gillian Tan's contribution (Chapter 9), which explores a smoke-purification ritual in Tibet. Tan suggests that smoke both requires and enables us to think about materiality and connectivity in new ways. In smoke-purification rituals, burned juniper incense gains its potency for forging relations in the process of leaving its material form behind. Tan describes the ritual complex of smoke-purification as vital to the making and maintaining of relationships between ritual practitioners, pastoralists, 'worldly' local deities and the environment in eastern Tibet. It is through the ritual enactment of these relationships, Tan argues, that worldly deities come into being; they are not only fortified by smoky relations but also depend on them for their very existence. Burning incense – the dissolution of juniper into smoke – affects human practitioners and worldly deities in a mutual process of becoming and un-becoming (p. 149). In these smoky relations, it becomes clear that materiality and connectivity, underpinning things and ties, do not exist on their own but rather come into being through mutual constitution.

Marc Higgin comes to a similar conclusion in his reflections on his intervention (Chapter 10). Higgin collected water in the puddles of a busy road leading to the harbour in Aberdeen. He brought this water to

the symposium at CAS and put it into a humidifier. The vapour of King Street invisibly filling the fancy premises of the symposium highlights the 'surrounding vital quality' of things that are no longer things, Higgin suggests. Vapour invites us to reflect on modes of connectivity and materiality that usually remain unaccounted for, yet are intrinsic to human ways of becoming in the world. Similarly to the 'smoky relations' that Tan explores in the Tibetan context, it is the very transformation of the water from a puddle into humidified air that constitutes relational force.

Even less palpable than smoke or vapour is radiation, perhaps the ultimate un-thing overflowing with pervasive ties that shape the material world in the most profound and lasting ways. In Chapter 11, 'Apocalyptic sublimes and the recalibration of distance', Jennifer Clarke explores the aftermath of the 2011 earthquake, tsunami and nuclear meltdown in Japan. Between the plethora of strangely sublime post-disaster images and the national emphasis on the necessity to endure suffering (*gaman suru*), Clarke responds with a form of anthropology that seeks to generate knowledge not through retrospective analysis and writing but through the practice of art.

Materials left behind by processes of dissolution may re-emerge as *thing~ties* of a different kind. Like Clarke's account, Lorenzo Granada's contribution (Chapter 12) begins with an apocalyptic event – the 1985 avalanche that buried the city of Armero in Colombia. Granada seeks to understand the ways in which the radically changed landscape and the rubble left behind affect those who live in the Magdalena Valley today. While some of the things buried have become treasures unearthed and sold, others have the potency to haunt and bewitch. Some things emerging from the mud acquire different lives and become new *thing~ties* through the very process of ruination, burial and excavation; other items, such as a skull a friend of the author stumbles upon, retain their old ties, which, too strong to be cut, become dangerous. Granada responds to the negativity of this landscape and the surprising possibilities of debris with what he calls a fragmented ethnography, articulating the constellations of broken things that inhabit this unstable terrain.

Memories ingrained in things can loom large, and sometimes the only way to move on is to rid oneself of things. The Yanomami community that Gabriele Herzog-Schröder addresses in her intervention (Chapter 13) puts a tremendous effort into cutting all ties to a deceased person. After death, a person's body and all his or her belongings that could provoke remembrance are eliminated in an elaborate ritual process to rid the community of memory and whatever could linger and enchant. The body of a deceased person is transformed into ashes and finally eliminated by

consumption. Here, materiality needs to be obliterated in order to untie connections.

Tabula rasa, the blank slate, the empty wax tablet ready to be inscribed again, material erasure as requirement to reshape relations from the ground – this is also the idea that pushed modernist urban planners like the famous Mexican architect Mario Pani, whose work is the topic of Adam Kaasa's contribution in this volume (Chapter 14). Kaasa shows how the quest to make room for Utopia, for example by clearing slums in Mexico City, goes hand in hand with materials of another kind – the architectural journals, drawings, plans and visualisations that undergird urban planning and rewrap *tabula rasa* urbanism as technical necessity rather than political or aesthetic choice. The matter of erasure, Kaasa argues, is thus 'not only the rubble of demolition, but the matter of documents, bodies, photographs and architectural journals that legitimate demolition. These are, after all, materials of circulation and connectivity' (p. 216).

Chapter 15 adds yet another angle to the afterlife of things and the struggles that may arise around their narrative ties. Elia Petridou follows the afterlife of debris left behind by refugees on Lesvos (Lesbos), Greece. At the peak of the refugee crisis in 2015, life jackets and abandoned rubber dinghies piled up along the shores of the island. While artists like Ai Weiwei started using them for installations across Europe to highlight the plight of refugees, Lesvos saw itself confronted with a waste problem. Petridou traces several upcycling initiatives transforming the waste into designer bags with a story and providing refugees with opportunities for generating income. These artistic and social projects intervene in the nexus of things and ties, transforming piles of polluting waste into a resource, and the traumatic memories of crossing the sea into political statements or items of everyday use. The design and sewing workshops appear as places where people work not just on materials but on the remodelling of erstwhile connections.

In the final intervention, Lisa Rail's story of *tamga tash* (Chapter 16) deals with yet another kind of historical trace. *Tamga tash* is a stone in northern Kyrgyzstan inscribed with the Tibetan mantra *om mani padme hum*, hinting at a distant past of ancient inter-Asian connections. The stone itself is immobile, but the stories and materials (from travel blogs to books and prayer flags) emerging in conjunction with it travel far. At the symposium, Rail's installation was formed around a replica of the stone to highlight the multiplicity and inseparability of things and ties, and the ways in which they are re-presented or made present. A replica still staying conjunct with its original is, Rail infers, a co-constitutive

process of mediation in which both stone and stories are taking shape and leave traces in unexpected ways. After the symposium, the Center for Advanced Studies asked us to remove the stone from its garden. It now lies silently at the bottom of a tree in a nearby park – a trace not just of the story of *tamga tash* but also of our exercise of rethinking things and ties.

Conclusion

We began this introduction, and the research project that led to this book, with a proposition to explore the nexus between materiality and connectivity and the aim of offering a new perspective on an old anthropological concern.

Taking the notion of 'thinking through things' both literally, and methodologically seriously, we enacted it in practice, approaching our question through thinking-by-doing: putting things on the table, hanging them from the ceiling and curating academic arguments *in situ*. Our ultimate goal was not to formulate a coherent new theory. As seen, for example, in the much-debated conceptual trajectory from objects to things and materials, there is no shortage of theoretical reflections in this burgeoning academic field – theoretical reflections that inspired our curiosity and informed this volume's authors in their individual chapters and interventions in different ways. Rather than testing theories, however, we set out to experiment methodologically and trigger complications at the intersection of materiality and connectivity.

At times, we veered off course and almost lost touch with our initial intention of understanding materiality and connectivity not as defined properties of a thing but as two interrelated modes of becoming. In the process of editing this volume, joining and juxtaposing the chapters and installations presented at the symposium, there emerged the two lines of inquiry that now structure this book. It took two workshops, one symposium and ongoing discussions to arrive at the insight that things and ties appear as evolving *thing~ties* suspended in processes of growth and dissolution. As interrelated modes of becoming, materiality and connectivity make it necessary to coalesce things and ties into *thing~ties* – an insight towards which the chapters and interventions came from different sides, and one in which our initial proposition still shines through. Throughout the pages of this volume, we invite the reader to travel beyond imaginaries of a universe of separate planets united by connections, and to venture with us instead into the thicket of *thing~ties* in which we live.

Notes

1. See video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vLJnw267CFs&feature=youtu.be (accessed 29 August 2019).
2. For example, the notion of curation emerged as an enlightening lens – not as the expertise of individual curators, but closer to the original meaning of *curare* – to heal – although in a broadened yet specific sense of attending to, or taking care of, material environments (Schorch et al. forthcoming 2020; Saxer 2016).
3. Some impressions can be found here: https://www.flickr.com/photos/146280257@N06/sets/72157671668717391/.
4. The recordings of the symposium can be found at https://cast.itunes.uni-muenchen.de/vod/playlists/h0khPlzmxt.html.

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Part I
Conceptual Grounds

1

In the gathering shadows of material things

Tim Ingold

Whichever way you put it – whether as connecting materialities or material connectivities – the question comes down to this: *what does it mean to join things?* 'To join' is such a simple, everyday verb, but perhaps for that very reason it has largely passed under the radar so far as scholarship is concerned. Yet it is only because things are joined that the material world can manifest any kind of coherence, and only because of its coherence can this world be inhabited. Once you start looking for them, joins are everywhere, in such a bewildering variety of guises that it is difficult to know where to begin any systematic investigation. There are knots and bindings, ties and ligaments, seams and stitches, catches and couplings, clasps and fastenings, hooks and hangers, clips and pegs, bolts and screws, and so on and on. Turning from things to words, the vocabulary for joins and joining, in English as in any other language, is just as rich and diverse, if not more so. In the course of writing this essay I have looked up the meanings of a host of words in the *Oxford English Dictionary* – including 'add', 'accompany', 'apply', 'assemble', 'append', 'annex', 'attract', 'articulate' and 'adhere', 'aggregate' and 'associate', to list only those beginning with 'a' – and all include 'join' among their many meanings.

Underlying both words for joining and things joined, however, there does seem to be one fundamental contrast. To get at it, take a sheet of paper and a pencil, and draw a number of points. Then take a ruler and draw lines between every pair of points so as to create a network. The points are now connected *up*. But now suppose that each of these points be set in motion. As your hand moves the pencil, its point describes a line. How, then, might you join these lines? Think of them as threads. Like threads, you might gather them together, forming a knot or bundle

in which they are tightly tied in the middle, but with loose ends fanning out in every direction. You could say that the lines are joined with one another, into a nexus. So we have 'network' and 'nexus', both incidentally derived from the same Latin verb *nectere*, 'to bind', whence 'necessity'. Thus necessity, too, betokens the join. But is this the necessity of *predetermination*, in which everything is connected, or is it the necessity of *constraint*, in which things are so bound together that each, along its own way, participates in the fortunes of the others? Is it about joining *up* or joining *with*? In what follows, I shall seek to show that this contrast, between 'up' and 'with', gives us alternative ways of thinking about the join which are premised, respectively, on ontologies of being and becoming.

In a world of being, things have already precipitated out, as it were, from the processes of their formation and are available for connection as discrete parts or entities. Contemporary theorists, never shy of using long and complicated words when short and simple ones would do, like to speak of such connection as *articulation*, and of its more or less contingent, networked results as *assemblages*. But in a world of becoming, the focus shifts to the processes of material formation themselves and to how they go along together. For this going along together, or joining with, I use the term *correspondence*, and the nexus formed in the process is what I shall call a *gathering*. Thus articulation is to correspondence as assemblage is to gathering. And while I do not want to insist that joining is all one and not the other – that it is all *up* rather than *with*, or vice versa – I do think that an acknowledgement of the difference is an essential first step towards understanding how these two principles of the join moderate one another in the production of a world that appears on the surface to be full of entities and their connections yet in which everything takes time to build or grow and in which nothing, neither entity nor connection, ever seems to last.

The assemblage

Nowadays, the idea of the assemblage is very much in vogue, a must-have accessory for every aspiring theorist. The term has become something of a catch-all, denoting any collection of stuff, of any kind, contingently thrown together by force of circumstance. Just about anything and everything, it seems, can be one. 'Assemblages', writes political theorist Jane Bennett in this vein, 'are ad hoc groupings of diverse elements' (Bennett 2010, 23). The attraction of the idea lies in its appearing

to offer a compromise between the alternatives of supposing either, at the one extreme, that the elements in question sacrifice any individuality or autonomy they might once have possessed, on their own, to their membership of the whole of which they are now integral parts, or, at the other extreme, that their association does nothing for them at all, neither limiting nor enabling the capacities that each can bring individually to bear. In the assemblage, elements are indeed affected in what they can do by their association, while yet retaining their autonomy to break away and to combine with other things. The assemblage, then, is neither a whole that has fully incorporated its parts nor one that is finally reducible to them. In it, heterogeneous things are added together, but the sum, as Bennett says, is 'non-totalizable' (2010, 24). You can go on adding, or you can take things away, but as every sum is contingent on the event, there is no final answer.

For the philosopher Manuel DeLanda (2006), a leading advocate of assemblage thinking in social theory, what matters above all is the *exteriority* of the relations between associated elements. They may adhere, aggregate or arrange themselves into ever more elaborate compositions, yet these compositions can just as easily fragment, only to be reconfigured in alternative permutations and combinations of elements. In whatever configuration they appear, however, the elements remain forever foreign to one another, arrayed in collage-like juxtaposition along the lines of their adjacency. In essence, if not in effect, they are given independently of their association, and remain unaltered by it. For were it otherwise – were they to enter into relations on the inside – they would immediately sacrifice any individuality they once had to a new and irreducibly different entity formed of the merger, as an alloy, for example, is formed of base metals. In short, assemblage thinking denies the possibility that entities can relate on the inside while yet remaining true to themselves. Everything there is thus exists, fundamentally, in itself, and it is as such – and not, for example, as a mere stand-in or place-holder for human intentions and purposes – that we should attend to it.[1] This is the founding premise of what many today have taken to calling the 'new materialism' – a somewhat hyperbolic brand-name for what is actually a congeries of approaches that have little more in common than the resolution to take material things seriously. And 'assemblage' is at the heart of it.

But the word has been around for a lot longer. Common to English and French, it has meant much the same in both languages.[2] For its earliest sense as a collection of diverse matters, the *Oxford English Dictionary* finds a precedent in John Locke's *Essay Concerning Humane Understanding* of 1690, where the assembled matters were in fact ideas.[3] Subsequently,

the term was taken up in geology, and specifically in palaeontology, to refer to the group of fossils characteristic of a geological sediment. And from there it entered archaeology, as a term for the association of prehistoric artefacts particular to a site or context. Though already used in this sense in the mid-nineteenth century by such pioneers of prehistory as Sir John Lubbock, the term did not really come into its own, in the field of archaeology, until the 1970s, in connection with new thinking about behavioural adaptation and deposition processes (Schiffer 1976). More than merely marking out successive strata in the occupation of a site, assemblages came to be seen as the lingering fall-out of intentional and structured human activities, subjected to varying degrees of erosion and decay (Joyce and Pollard 2010). Since the 1990s, the term has even found its way into the study of community ecology, where it has been defined as 'a taxonomically related group of species that occur together in space and time' (Stroud, Bush, Ladd et al. 2015).

However, the adoption of 'assemblage' by new materialists – archaeologists among them (Harrison 2011; Lucas 2012; Witmore 2014) – owes nothing to these precedents. Its roots lie in another lineage altogether, namely the vitalist tradition of continental philosophy that began with Henri Bergson and culminated in the writings of Gilles Deleuze and his collaborator Félix Guattari, subsequently promulgated in the 'assemblage theory' of DeLanda.[4] The irony is that Deleuze and Guattari, writing in their native French, never used the word 'assemblage'. Rather, it re-entered anglophone literature as the translation of another word that, in French, is of quite different etymological and semantic provenance, namely *agencement* (Nail 2017). The word is formed from the verb *agencer*, which my dictionary renders as 'to fit together' or 'to arrange'. Literally, then, *agencement* is something like an arrangement of things, a layout. Superficially, there may not be much to distinguish arranging things from assembling them, and to quibble over the translation might seem like splitting hairs. Philosophically, however, rather more is at stake than what appears on the surface. At stake, indeed, is the very question from which I began: what does it mean to join things? In the world of materials, what, exactly, is a connection?

This is a question at the heart of the sprawling meditations that Deleuze and Guattari compiled into their *Mille plateaux* ('A thousand plateaus'), a work that laid many of the philosophical foundations for new materialist thinking (Deleuze and Guattari 2004). It was in the translation of this work, a mammoth undertaking by philosopher Brian Massumi, that *agencement* became 'assemblage'. Although Deleuze and Guattari return to the term again and again, readers looking for clarity

on what they mean by it will be disappointed. In another work, however, they offer a comparison that can help us in thinking the matter through (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, 23). It is between the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle and those of a dry-stone wall. In the puzzle, every piece is precisely pre-cut so as to fit seamlessly with all the others into a total layout wherein, once completed, its original identity disappears. No longer an odd fragment of card with an irregular outline, it exists only as part of the layout. The wall-builder, however, takes stones as he finds them, improvising their layout as he goes along. And even when his work is done, each stone retains its own singularity. As a whole, then, the wall is a thing of fragments, a multiplicity, which coheres only thanks to an emerging settlement – one that could not be predicted – among the stones themselves. The wall, for Deleuze and Guattari, is an *agencement*.

The key point of distinction is that what counts in holding the wall together is the relations between its elements, and not, as in the jigsaw puzzle, the apportionments by which each is subsumed under the whole of which they are integral parts. In essence, the stones are untouched by their contact: each remains the particular stone that it is. Thus the relations between the stones are *exterior* relations. But is this really so? Deleuze and Guattari are in no doubt about the matter: 'Multiplicities', they say, 'are defined by the outside' (2004, 9). In their terms, this is what makes their integration 'machinic' rather than 'organic', for it is precisely in the mutual externality of its parts that the mechanism is distinguished from the organism. And theorists such as DeLanda, who have ostensibly followed in their footsteps, would agree (DeLanda 2006, 9). But if that were all, why should Deleuze and Guattari have bothered with an awkward word like *agencement*? Why not use 'assemblage' instead?[5] It would surely have saved us all a lot of trouble and confusion had they done so. As already noted, the word 'assemblage' exists equally in French and English, and in both languages it can be used to designate a collection of things found in proximity, in a certain context. Moreover, its usage in this sense, as in the fields of palaeontology and archaeology, is well established. It is hard to see what DeLanda's definition of the assemblage, as 'made up of parts which are self-subsistent and articulated by relations of exteriority' (2006, 18), or Bennett's, as an 'ad hoc [grouping] of diverse elements' (2010, 23), really adds to this.

Are the new materialists, in their infatuation with a certain genre of philosophical writing notorious for both its prolixity and its penchant for juxtaposing incommensurable elements culled at random from here, there and everywhere, merely bamboozling us with their verbose neologisms?[6] To a great extent, I think they are. For what they have done is

to take only one side of *agencement*, as if that were all there is to it. As a result, we have things jumping into arrangements with one another, as the agentive causes of their own emergent effects, in a world where nothing lives, moves or grows, and everything is locked solid (Ingold 2015, 16). This is a fossilised world, which can only be brought back to life through magical invocations of vitality to things in themselves. I want to argue, to the contrary, that there are two sides to *agencement*: an outer side that it reveals and an inner side that it conceals. On the hidden side lie the forces and energies that course through a world in which things and their properties do not simply emerge, *sui generis*, but are actively brought forth or produced. The power of *agencement*, I believe, lies in its capacity to effect a modulation from one side to the other, that is, from the assemblage to its negative, and vice versa. In what follows I want to show that the one always accompanies the other, as a thing and its shadow. I shall call this negative the gathering. Only by taking the two together, the assemblage and the gathering – the light and the dark sides of *agencement* – can we understand things not just in their arrangement, but in how they come into being, last for a while and then pass away.

The gathering

Let's return to Bennett's characterisation of the assemblage as a 'non-totalizable sum'. What does it mean, to sum? It means, of course, to add things up. The word implies both separation and articulation. For things to be added they must first be detached from each other, rendered discontinuous, as a prelude to their external attachment. In simple arithmetic, the addition is indicated by a plus sign. 'Plus' is the sign of articulation.[7] Thus the formula for the assemblage is $E_1 + E_2 + E_3 + \ldots$, where every E stands for a discrete element. In the formula, the elements may be utterly heterogeneous in nature, but the plus signs are interchangeable. One is as good as another. But suppose, as an experiment, that we invert the formula, by hiding every element behind an identical sign, while foregrounding the articulations. What is concealed behind the plus signs? It is of course the *work* of addition. For stones do not, of their own accord, add themselves up into a wall. In the experience of the wall-builder, the addition of every stone means selecting and retrieving it from the quarry and heaving it into place. Nor does the operation stop there, for the weight of the stone, as it settles, causes others in the vicinity to tilt until a new equilibrium is reached. And our stone, too, will likely tilt as the

builder adds more. Builders work, but so do stones, and they do so only in their bearing on one another.

It is this practical and productive operation, drawing the builder into a laborious engagement with the stones, and the stones themselves into forceful collaboration, that lurks behind the plus signs of our initial formula for the assemblage. Adding stone after stone in the construction of the wall, one such operation follows another, each different from the one before. For as no two stones are alike, nor are the operations of their addition. Thus as surely as every assemblage holds together, albeit contingently, as the serial but non-totalisable sum of its elements, it must also be accompanied by a second series, comprised of the operations involved in the summation. Perhaps we should write the series like this: $O_1 + O_2 + O_3 + \ldots$, where every O stands for a different operation. Each operation, in the second formula, would replace a plus sign in the first. The wall, then, would appear not as the sum of its stones, but as the sequence of the operations that put them there. It would be equivalent to what the great anthropologist of techniques, André Leroi-Gourhan, called the 'operational chain' (*chaîne opératoire*).[8] But given that we can have neither the wall without the labour of building, nor building without the material constituents of the wall, could we not simply merge the two series, by interpolating every operation of the second between each consecutive pair of elements in the first – thus $E_1\ O_1\ E_2\ O_2\ E_3\ O_{3\ldots}$ – so as to fabricate an assemblage in which both elements and operations figure together as alternating components of the mix?

This, I contend, would be a mistake. For there is a fundamental difference between the two series. It is that operations cannot be understood as discrete episodes that follow one another like beads on a string. They are more like the converging and diverging strands of a continuous braid. It is not possible, in practice, to specify at what point any operation begins or ends. For – to continue with our example of the wall – one could trace it back at least to the quarrying that released this particular stone, along with all the others, from its earthly matrix, and even beyond to the geological deposition of the bedrock. Equally, one could trace the operation forward into the stone's ongoing adjustments with its neighbours in the wall itself, for as long as it stands, or even as it collapses and gradually returns to the earth. Every stone has its story of how it came to be there, just as it is, and so does the builder, in whose experience it figures not as a sealed entity, in itself, but in its heaviness as a test of muscular strength, in its roughness as abrasions of the hands, and in its corners and edges as the friction of contact with other stones. For a while the builder's story and the stone's story go along together and are wrapped

up with one another, as are the stories of the stones themselves, from the time they are hewn from the quarry-face up to and beyond their coming together once again in the wall. Their relations, in short, are not *additive*, like the elements of the assemblage; they are rather *complicate*, as in the braid.

Literally, 'complicate' means 'folded together', and it is this literal sense that I invoke here. In fact the Latin language, from which this and so many other of our words for joining are derived, was already onto the distinction that I am concerned to highlight. It has given us the alternative prefixes: *ad-* (or its variants, in which the trailing consonant duplicates the lead consonant of the following syllable, as in *ap-* (in 'apply'), *at-* (in 'attend') and *ag-* (in 'aggregate')) and *con* (or its variants *com-* (as in 'comply') and simply *co-* (as in 'cohere')). The result is a succession of paired contrasts, including not only 'adjoin' versus 'conjoin', but also 'adhere' versus 'cohere', 'admit' versus 'commit', 'apply' versus 'comply', 'attract' versus 'contract', 'attend' versus 'contend', 'attribute' versus 'contribute', and 'aggregate' versus 'congregate'. Underlying all these contrasts is a fundamental distinction between *at*-ness and *with*-ness, perhaps even between space and time. Things that are at hand, for example, are up there with you, at this particular moment, in such spatial or contextual proximity that you can reach for them, and they for you. While everything has its story, its particular temporal trajectory, 'at' cuts transversally across them: it marks, in the felicitous phrase of geographer Doreen Massey, 'a simultaneity of stories-so-far' (Massey 2005, 9). But with 'con' we join *with* things in their passage through time, going along together with them, working with them, and suffering with them. That's how connection, to give another example, differs from annexation, and indeed the compendium from the addendum.

'Con', in short, is not transverse but longitudinal. It is about entering the grain of things and going along with them. Thus adherence is instantaneous, coherence endures; admission lets in, but a commission is carried out; application puts things situationally to use, compliance fits in with established usage; attraction entices, the contract binds; attention stretches towards things, but in contention we have to deal with them; attributes are assigned, but to contribute is to join in the assignment; in aggregate people form a crowd, but in the congregation they are gathered in the public enactment of a service. The operative word, here, is *gathering*. For what makes a gathering more than the mere juxtaposition of elements is the drawing together of the pathways along which its constituents have come into being, and the nascent anticipation of the ways they will tend to go. In the gathering, things are not severed, as they are

in the assemblage, from the lines of movement, growth and becoming that have brought them to where they are. When people are gathered in a congregation, each trails his or her life-story, and carries it on in the ensuing proceedings. When animals are gathered in a herd, they do not cease to move but rather move in concert, leaving braid-like tracks in the landscape. Crops gathered at harvest still betoken the earth from which they grew and the labour of the harvesters, and anticipate their milling and eventual transformation into bread. And cornstalks, whether gathered in a sheaf or as thatch on a roof, are laid in parallel and bound in the middle (Ingold 1993, 168–9).

And so it is, too, with stones gathered in the wall. Were we to imagine the wall only as an assemblage, it would be as if the stones were already *next* to one another: they could abut and adjoin, but not intermingle. But to imagine the wall as a gathering is to join *with* the story of each stone as it arrives and settles. In principle, as we have seen, these stories could be extended indefinitely, both back and forward in time. You could begin in the quarry, with the violence of separation in which the stone was hewn from its matrix; you could continue with its haulage to the site, its selection by the builder and eventual heaving into place. And you could ask, even after the wall is built, *what is going on between those stones?* For their settlement surely endures: it is not an instant affair, and will doubtless shift over time in response to weather conditions and the movements of earth and bedrock. In the wall's walling, in its carrying on, stones play host to lichens and mosses, the cracks and crevices between them allow plants to take root and insects to hide. In the experience of larger animals, the wall is not just a barrier to movement; it also offers shade from the sun and shelter from the wind. Thus lichens, moss, plants and animals both large and small – all are folded together, or complicated, in the gathering, becoming part of each other's stories. That's why you cannot put plus signs between them. Since no story can carry on save by entering into the stories of others, they are not *ad*joined so much as *con*joined.

Correspondence

When archaeologist Gavin Lucas insists on 'the proper meaning of assemblage as a *gathering or assembling* of things' (2012, 198, emphasis added), I venture to demur. My thesis, to the contrary, is that gathering and assembling are fundamentally different, just as complication differs from addition.[9] This is not to say that they are mutually exclusive: quite to the contrary, there can be no gathering without assembling, just as there

can be no shadow without that which casts it. On the dark side, however, things do not attach themselves from without, but are rather differentiated from within. Gathering, thus conceived, is a process of what I have elsewhere called 'interstitial differentiation' (Ingold 2017, 13). It is about splitting things from the inside, along the grain of their movement or becoming. Or to borrow a phrase from feminist theorist and philosopher of science Karen Barad, it is a 'cutting together-apart'. As Barad intimates, splitting apart and mingling together are two sides of the same coin: 'entanglings entail differentiatings, differentiatings entail entanglings' (Barad 2014, 176). Thus concealed behind the overt meaning of *agencement* as exterior arrangement or assembly lies another, more covert sense of interior differentiation. This might be rendered in English, albeit awkwardly, as 'agencing' (Ingold 2017, 17–18). This is not the same as acting. To act is to impart a certain direction to things from the outset and to follow it through. But with agencing one is always already inside what is going on, discovering from within the way in which things are going, and bending it to one's purpose (Ingold 2011, 211).

For the philosopher Erin Manning, who chooses quite explicitly to use *agencement* in this latter sense, it is specifically about the incipient directionality that opens up from within what she calls the 'cleave of the event', its internal schism, giving a particular twist or inflection to its unfolding (Manning 2016, 6). Here, it is every inflection, rather than every element, that counts as a singularity. To count things, then, is not to add them *up* but to join *with* them, to align one's attention to their ongoing, rhythmic movement. As in counting breaths or heartbeats, or bars of music, it is to mark time, not to measure space. This is the minor sense of *agencement*, as interstitial differentiation, concealed behind the major sense of assembly. What makes the idea of *agencement* so potent is precisely its capacity to effect a switch of perspective from major to minor, from the positive idea of the assemblage to its negative, of the gathering. This is not a negative, be it noted, in the sense of a photographic plate, or the mirror writing of type in the galley, before its imprinting on the page. What is entailed is rather a ninety-degree shift, from across to along, comparable to that between connecting points and bundling lines, in the case of the exercise with which I began. Hence, the relations constitutive of the gathering are not diametrically opposed, but rather orthogonal, to the relations that make up the assemblage. I shall now show that while relations of the latter kind are of articulation, those of the former kind are of correspondence.

Perhaps I could begin with a vignette from the architectural design theorist Lars Spuybroek. He tells of how, as he walks through a field,

his attention is drawn to a few stones lying next to one another. Nestled between them, a tiny plant has found root and flourishes. He likes what he sees. But then he wonders, 'what is that liking?'

> Clearly the stones are lying there in a certain correspondence, if not accordance, because the wind and water have moved them, rolled them over the ground and made them find an impression, create a little group, a little nest where a plant could start growing and be protected – but where does my liking fit in? Is it merely in me, subjectively enjoying the sight, or is it … an extended correspondence? I am with the stones and plant immediately, fitting in with them.
>
> (Spuybroek 2016, 112)

There are three points to note here. Firstly, what Spuybroek describes is far more than an 'ad hoc grouping of diverse elements' – to return once again to Bennett's characterisation of the assemblage. For in the shadow of the assemblage lie the actions of wind and flood in rolling the stones, as well as the seeding and subsequent germination of the plant, now protected by the stones from the very forces that brought them there. What is described is also a gathering. Secondly, Spuybroek immediately finds himself a participant. He *joins* the gathering, and for a moment at least, it is woven into the story of his own life – enough for him to be able to retell it later on. And thirdly, 'liking', in this context, is another word for this joining or fitting *with*. It is not a subjective state of mind, reflecting upon physical reality, nor is it an objective sensation that is merely thrown into the mix. It is rather what he calls a *correspondence*.

Literally, correspondence is a process in which things answer to one another. This implies nothing about intentionality or subjectivity; it simply means that in their growth, movement and formation – that is, in their gathering – things have a certain elasticity. They stretch and give way, expand and contract, tear and are torn, scrape and are scraped. In so doing, and so undergoing, they take into themselves something of the characters of the others to which they respond. The stones, in Spuybroek's account, are corresponding with one another in this sense, and he is corresponding with them. What flows in and out in this relation, he reports, is *feeling*. Not only does he feel the stones, but the stones, in their correspondence, feel each other. 'All relations', Spuybroek asserts, 'are *felt* relations' (2016, 112, original emphasis). He calls them relations of sympathy. This has nothing to do with personal psychology. It is not about the attribution, to ourselves or others, of such sentiments as warmth or compassion. Nor does Spuybroek's liking for the little group of stones,

with the nestled plant, imply any outpouring of affection towards them, or even any judgement of taste. It simply denotes an accord – a bringing into likeness – that comes from correspondence. The wall-builder doubtless feels the same, despite the backbreaking and possibly painful nature of his work. Sympathy is what happens when things enter into the processes of their mutual formation, or, in Spuybroek's words, 'what things feel when they shape each other' (2016, 109).

From this follows a point of capital importance for my argument. It is that in the sympathy of correspondence, in their feeling for one another, in their complication or folding together, things do not meet on the outside but enter into the formative process *from within*. Correspondent relations, in short, are relations of interiority. And in this regard, they are absolutely opposed to the articulatory relations of the assemblage in which, as we have seen, things remain ever outside each other. In a nutshell, *whereas the constitutive relations of the assemblage are of exteriority, those of the gathering are of interiority*. Now for a philosopher like DeLanda, interiority can only mean one thing: the loss of autonomy of parts as their identity is swallowed up by that of the whole (DeLanda 2006, 9). For him, and for the new materialists who have followed in his footsteps, the idea that things can retain their singularity, while yet joining with one another on the inside, is simply inconceivable. Interiorisation, in their philosophy, implies hierarchisation, the inclusion of pieces within a higher order of relations. And conversely, to flatten the hierarchy, to bring everything down to the level of the pieces themselves, means allowing them to come out from under the pressures that have forced them into amalgamation, whereupon they regain their singularity as elements that stand radically outside one another. The assemblage, by definition, is flat, it eschews hierarchy, and for this reason its relations are of exteriority. It is the non-totalisable sum of its heterogeneous elements.

But the gathering, as we have seen, is not produced through any process of summation. It is not that the addition of elements can never yield a total; rather – in the gathering – the elements are not addable in the first place. They are not addable because they are not yet formed but ever in the process of formation. And in this process, they enter into relations with one another *on their own level*, such that for each, these relations are enfolded in its own constitution. This is to say that they comprise an order that – to borrow a distinction from the physicist David Bohm (2002) – is *implicate* rather than *explicate*. In the explicate order, everything is outside everything else, and things make contact only at their exterior surfaces, leaving their inner natures unaffected. This is the order of the assemblage, and for new materialists it is the only order

there can be. In the implicate order, by contrast, every part continually arises as an enfolding of the entire field of relations of which it is the momentary manifestation. Enfolded structures, as Bohm puts it, rather than occupying their particular region of space and moment of time, interweave and intermingle throughout all of space and time, so that, ultimately, 'everything is enfolded into everything' (2002, 225). To our senses the world may appear 'chunked' into things that are solid, tangible and visibly stable, yet they are but the manifest envelopes of the underlying 'holomovement'[10] wherein everything is formed. In the implicate order, the surfaces of things do not separate their 'insides' from their 'outsides'. Rather, every surface is itself a crease or pleat in the fabric of the world, where inside and outside are folded into one another.[11]

To characterise the order of the gathering, however, I would like to go one step further. It is an order, as I have already intimated, that is not so much implicate as *complicate*. Whereas implication connotes a folding inward, as if from side to side, complication carries the sense of folding forward – that is, of things convoluting longitudinally, braiding or plaiting along the lines of their own growth and movement. This is an idea that would have come naturally to the Roman author Titus Lucretius Carus, in whose poem, *On the Nature of Things*, the world is depicted as a torrent of falling particles which, swerving ever so slightly from their vertical course, set up a cascade of eddies.[12] This same image lies behind Deleuze's depiction of matter in *The Fold* – his study of Leibniz and the Baroque – as a maelstrom of vortices within vortices, yielding an 'infinitely porous, spongy or cavernous texture … caverns endlessly contained in other caverns' (Deleuze 1993, 5). This is matter folding on itself as it goes along. As it does so it endlessly overflows any formal envelopes within which it may appear to our senses to have been temporarily pulled aside or detained. There is no limit, not because things will never add up, nor because they can be retotalled in ever-varying permutations and combinations, but because their materials slip through the cracks in the very work of addition. Thus, in the shadow of the material world, with its contingently assembled things, there lies a *world of materials* that is not so much created as perpetually in creation, forever surpassing itself through the correspondence of its particulars.[13] In a word coined by the philosopher Alfred North Whitehead, it is 'concrescent' (Whitehead 1929, 410). Addition, though it may create novel arrangements, or what Bennett calls an 'ever changing array of effects', can bring forth nothing that was not already there.[14] But concrescence continually brings forth a world, and only because it does so are there entities to be added.

Concrescence

If the assemblage, then, forms by the *ac*cretion of material from without, the gathering is formed through its *con*crescence from within. The first imagines a discontinuous material world – a world of chunks – in which increase can only be by way of the addition of extraneous matter; the second, running orthogonally to the first, imagines a world of continuous flux, in which things both grow and decay, take shape and dissolve, by way of the inner turbulence of their constituent materials. Now for an archaeologist like Bjørnar Olsen (2010, 158), the chunkiness of matter is self-evident; it is the way things are. 'Things', writes Olsen, 'are concrete and offer stability'. Not so, however, in a world of concrescence, where things are neither chunky nor stable but convoluted and prone to buckling, distortion and collapse (Ingold 2013, 102–3). It would be tempting to regard these worlds as, respectively, solid and fluid. Convention has it, however, that solidity and fluidity, along with volatility, refer to alternative states of matter rather than to the underlying condition of *all* matter. Indeed, mainstream physical science assumes matter by default to be particulate, and distinguishes solid, liquid and gaseous states by the relative tightness or looseness of articulations at the molecular level. By flux, however, I refer to an understanding of the condition of matter *alternative* to the particulate. For a world of flux is matter-full, not full of matter; it is a plenum, not a suspension in a vacuum. Its heterogeneities arise not from the multiple compounding of its particulate elements into ever more diverse and complex configurations, but from the folding and creasing of its sponge-like substance. In such a world, the conventional distinction between solidity and fluidity dissolves. Everything, in effect, is 'solid-fluid' (Simonetti and Ingold 2018).

Ironically, no material better illustrates this solid-fluid condition than that which latterly – in the nineteenth century, and in the Anglosphere – assumed the name of *concrete*. For as liquid-turned-solid, concrete holds the seeds of its own dissolution. The very binding reactions that cause it to harden also generate, as a by-product, a moisture-absorbing gel that, if left unchecked, eventually leads the material to seep and crumble from within. Indeed as Lucas (2013) explains, concrete is not really a fixed substance at all so much as a process: 'it is … a material which changes its nature over time'. In short, *concrete is concrescence*. Consider its ingredients: water, aggregate and cement. The order of the aggregate, as its name suggests, is explicate: it is, according to its dictionary definition, 'a body formed by the union of numerous units or particles; *an assemblage*'.[15] In concrete, the aggregate generally comprises a mix of sand and

gravel. But it is the cement that – when mixed with water – works as a binding agent, a kind of glue, which slips through the cracks between the particles of aggregate, so as to form a continuous and complicate weave. Whereas the aggregate is formed as an assemblage, it is the cement that performs the gathering. United in concrete is both the thing and its shadow, the assemblage and the gathering. Indeed the 'shadow-life' of concrete is even marked etymologically, in its designation in German as *Beton* (French *béton*), a word that links it with another binding agent of organic derivation – namely bitumen, or pitch.

Hiding in the shadow of the chunk, as Spuybroek (2016, 113) suggests, is the *bag*, a volume into the folds or cavities of which are brought together the innumerable threads that percolate the substance of matter and lend it coherence. A lump of concrete, then, is both chunky and baggy. And while the lump may be finite, the thread-lines bundled therein may extend indefinitely beyond it, flowing in and out, their loose ends tangling or knotting with other threads to form a continuous weave or mesh. All matter, in this sense, is at once chunked and woven, both mosaic and fabric.[16] The chunks give substance; the weave gives coherence. Consider, for example, an ordinary brick wall. Using a trowel, the builder applies a layer of mortar to each brick, both beneath and to one side, before pressing it into place and scraping off any surplus so as to leave an even seam of mortar between every brick and its neighbours, both above and below, and on either side. Adding brick upon brick, the builder works as a go-between, and the mortar – in its binding function – takes over from where the builder leaves off. What his work leaves behind is not just the assemblage of bricks but a continuous and intricately folded fabric of mortar, a gathering that fills the seams and makes it so that not only adjacent bricks adhere but also the wall as a whole holds together.

Should we think of the wall, then, as an assemblage of bricks, with mortar as the bonding agent, or as a gathering of mortar, interspersed by bricks? Does mortar fill the gaps between bricks, or do bricks fill the gaps of the mortar (Ingold 2015, 30)? Or suppose, to offer another example, that you are constructing a model from a set of parts, which are to be joined by gluing them together. Is the model an assemblage or a gathering? If it is to be regarded as an assemblage, then it is not obvious where the glue belongs. It cannot be just another part. Initially formless and fluid, yet solidifying on exposure to air, glue infiltrates the cracks and crevices where things don't quite fit, weaving a web of its own – a negative of the assemblage. Moreover, the way glue works is to seep into the surfaces with which it comes into contact. Material that looks solid and chunky to our eyes is not so to the glue which, at the molecular level,

encounters a surface of sponge-like porosity. Regular adhesives contain long protein chains which penetrate the material through its pores and bond with its molecules. In effect, what glue does is to join materials on the inside, so as to turn an otherwise explicate order into a complicate one. It converts exterior surfaces into interior folds, chunks into bags. Thanks to this, the construction coheres.

But what if there is no binding agent? It is time to revert to the dry-stone wall. In one of his later essays, Deleuze returns to the example of the wall to illustrate the idea of the world as a patchwork, an *agencement* of ill-fitting elements – 'Not even a puzzle, whose pieces when fitted together would constitute a whole, but rather a wall of loose, uncemented stones, where every element has a value in itself but also in relation to others: isolated and floating relations, islands and straits, immobile points and sinuous lines – for Truth always has "jagged edges"' (Deleuze 1998, 86). How can such a thing of shreds and patches ever stand firm against the winds of time? To what does it owe its strength and resilience? Not, surely, to the solidity of the stones, for a poorly built wall will fall at the slightest provocation, however hard the material. Its strength lies, rather, in *what is going on between the stones*. Place one stone of irregular shape upon another and it will come to rest at a minimum of three points. The pressure of stone on stone, concentrated at the points of contact, is diffused throughout their mass. In the compression of the material, each stone takes into itself its relations with the others. It is in the resultant complication of the stones' feeling for one another – their sympathy and correspondence – that the strength of the wall resides. In effect, the wall is self-binding.

In his disquisition on the assemblage, DeLanda (2006, 10–11) distinguishes between *properties* and *capacities*. The parts of an assemblage, he argues, have properties in themselves but capacities only in relation to the parts with which they may happen to interact. Raise a stone from the ground and place it in the wall: it is the same stone, with the same properties, but in the wall, in association with the other stones, it partakes of the capacity – for example – to hinder movement or afford shelter. Properties are given, capacities emergent. This might be easy to say, but it leaves unanswered the question of where the capacities have emerged *from*. All too often, in the writings of theorists, 'emergence' serves as a cover-up, a way of evading the question through a circular logic that reads into emergent effects the very agentive causes deemed to have given rise to them.[17] Thus the stones become the causes of their own effects. 'Look', exclaims the new materialist, observing the wall and its manifest effects on the surroundings, 'how the wall testifies to the collective, non-human

agency of stones!' (Ingold 2014a, 235). But what has happened to the builders? Does the wall not stand, rather, as testimony to their hard and relentless labour? After all, the stones can weigh upon one another only because the builders have put them there. It was they who hauled the stones from the quarry and heaved them into place. As they did so, their correspondence with the stones would progressively have given way to the stones' correspondence with one another. Thus *the emergent heft of the wall has its source in the effortful heave of its builders.* If the wall is an *agencement*, then heft is to heave as one side is to the other, assemblage to gathering. So next time you stop to admire a wall, spare a thought for the labours of those who made it, and whose ghostly presence still lurks in the interstices, amidst the deepening shadows of the stones.

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Notes

1. This tenet has been condensed into a maxim by Ian Bogost: '*All things equally exist, yet they do not exist equally*' (Bogost 2012, 11, original emphasis).
2. If much the same, the semantic resonances of 'assemblage' in English and French are not identical. In French the elements of the assemblage have a somewhat tighter connection, coming closer to what in English might be called an assembly (Simon Peres, personal communication).
3. *Oxford English Dictionary*, online, 'assemblage', n. 4.
4. Rodney Harrison (2011, 155–6) distinguishes thus between the 'first' and 'second' meanings of assemblage, while Gavin Lucas (2012, 193–4) tries to bring the two together under what he considers to be the proper meaning of the word: 'an assembling or gathering together of things'. Christopher Witmore (2014, 207) merely notes that with the new materialism, the notion of assemblage carries a 'different valence from normative definitions … within archaeology'.

5. One possible asnswer, of course, is that *assemblage*, in French, implies an organic integration of parts, whereas their connection in the *agencement* is looser and more contingent. Thus the distinction between *agencement* and *assemblage*, in French, maps onto that between 'assemblage' and 'assembly', in English. In neither language, however, is the distinction stable. The terms are notoriously slippery in use, and as we shall see, there is more to *agencement* than assemblage.
6. 'So what counts as things?' asks Witmore (2014, 206). His answer: 'Air and soil, rain and sea, wooden doors and stone orthostats, nitrogen-fixing bacteria and clovers, psychopolitical commitments to Rome and Hadrian's Wall, Corinthian perfume jars and dead Etruscans, mycorrhizae and maple trees, hoplites and the Athenian assembly, minke whales and lemmings, the Hudson River and steamboats, the god Apollo and the Pythia ….'
7. This may be true in arithmetic, but not in chemistry. Arguably, in the formula for a chemical reaction, the plus sign has a very different meaning, more analytic than synthetic. An excursion into chemistry is beyond the scope of this essay, but potentially it could offer a next step in thinking about materials that would take us beyond the problematic of the join to the metamorphoses of materials themselves.
8. This concept lay at the heart of Leroi-Gourhan's approach to the evolution of techniques, set out in his magnum opus, *Le Geste et la parole* ('Gesture and speech'), first published in 1964 (Leroi-Gourhan 1993, 231–4, 253–4).
9. Coming from a rather different angle, cultural anthropologist Anna Tsing also glosses over the difference. 'Assemblages', she writes, 'are open-ended gatherings.… They show us potential histories in the making'. They are 'lifeways – and non-living ways of being as well – coming together' (Tsing 2015, 22–3). In her terms, the parts gathered in the assemblage are comparable to melodic lines in a madrigal or a fugue. All this is entirely consistent with the idea of gathering, as elaborated above. Yet the consistency is blown apart by the question that assemblage thinking, Tsing says, provokes her to ask: 'How do gatherings sometimes become "happenings", that is, *greater than the sum of their parts?*' (2015, 23, my emphasis). We are brought abruptly back to the logic of summation, which is entirely inappropriate for musical counterpoint (Ingold 2017, 14).
10. This is also Bohm's term.
11. Bohm's *Wholeness and the Implicate Order* was first published in 1980.
12. For a wonderful reflection on the poem of Lucretius, which has profoundly influenced my own thinking, see Serres (2000).
13. On the distinction between the material world and the world of materials, see Ingold (2007, 14).
14. See Bennett (2010, 130 fn. 12). In this regard, addition is equivalent to what Bergson (1911, 48) called fabrication: 'even when it invents, it proceeds, or imagines itself to proceed, by a new arrangement of elements already known'. As with every shake of a kaleidoscope, you end up with no less or more than you started with. To this Bergson contrasted the creativity born of duration – a creativity that continually brings forth a world, leading to 'incommensurability between what goes before and what follows' (1911, 30 fn. 2). Astonishingly, Bennett contrives to cite these latter words of Bergson, by which he characterises the 'indivisible process' of creative evolution, to corroborate her view of the assemblage as a 'non-totalizable' fabrication made up of discrete parts.
15. *Oxford English Dictionary*, online, 'aggregate', B.n.1 (my emphasis).
16. See Spuybroek (2016, 114). Elsewhere, I have phrased this in terms of the combination of *blobs* and *lines*. Blobs have insides and outsides, but they also 'put out lines or swell from them, or are embedded in a linear matrix. It is by their lines that they can live, move and hold on to one another' (Ingold 2015, 16).
17. This circularity is endemic in new materialist writing on the agency of things. Of course, things have effects, thanks to their present existence. The situation would be different if they weren't there. But to say that things have agency, of which these effects are the results, is merely a roundabout way of saying they exist. For a critique, see Ingold (2013, 95–7; 2014b, 520).

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2
Doing/changing things/us[1]

Philipp W. Stockhammer

Appropriation and entanglement

In his famous 1986 article, Igor Kopytoff (1986, 67) remarked in a visionary way, breaking a path for current practice-oriented approaches to the study of intercultural encounters, '[W]hat is significant about the adoption of alien objects – as of alien ideas – is not the fact that they are adopted, but the way they are culturally redefined and put to use.' If an individual starts to appropriate a thing, a complex process is triggered. This process of appropriation finds no end but results again and again in ever new creations of functions and meanings as well as physical transformations through human practices engaged with the thing (Hahn 2004, 220; Hahn 2005, 106–7; Hahn 2008).

In my earlier work (Stockhammer 2012), I proposed a methodology for the study of archaeological evidence according to my theoretical approach. I suggested a model of different states of human–thing entanglements which structure the process of appropriation and its non-material and material outcomes, as this distinction is of crucial importance for archaeologists, who rely almost exclusively on material evidence. Following my previous approach, the process of entanglement starts with the *encounter* of a human actor with a thing. In the first moment of encounter, humans do not trigger a change in the thing, but the thing changes humans. Merely, its material presence changes perceptions of social space and of movements, and forces humans to modify their social practices (cf. Gibson 1986; Knappett 2004). As an immediate consequence, the thing becomes an object through classification/objectivation (cf. Brown 2001, 3–5). Now, humans attribute functions and meanings to it, and classify it according to, and following, their ideas

of the world. If they decide to incorporate, and therefore to appropriate, the thing, it becomes a personal good, part of social practices and, finally, a more or less important part of an individual life world (Hahn 2008). I define this moment as the state of *relational entanglement*. Relational entanglement is not a state of transformation of the thing in its materiality; the relationship to the thing changes as social practices and meanings are created anew. The process of entanglement does not have to end with the continuous emergence of new relational entanglements but can also trigger an act of creation. Only then does a basic transformation of the material thing in its materiality take place and *material entanglement* come into existence. Within this entanglement, the formerly differentiated categories are blended together to shape something new that one might also possibly term a new category, if this makes sense from an epistemological perspective. This material entanglement clearly arose from the formerly separated categories but cannot be separated into its origins. The shape of a material entanglement is significantly determined by the individual creativity of the human actor.

Changeabilities and effectancy of things

In order to understand the potential of things in these processes but also in general, a novel terminology is necessary. I want to introduce the terms *changeability* and *effectancy* in order to enable a better description and understanding of the potential of things. This potential also forms the basis for the potential of things to connect us/things with us/things in manifold complex ways. Moreover, I set out to overcome the long and rather fruitless discussion about whether things possess agency (cf. Emirbayer and Mische 1998; Knappett 2005; Knappett and Malafouris 2008). Many of these attempts run the risk of anthropomorphising things in a radical act of re-evaluating them after they had been ignored by many cultural and social sciences for a long time.

In the following, I conceptualise the *changeabilities* of things (due to perception, time and practices, and the combination thereof), and their *effectancy*, which relies on these *changeabilities* (cf. Stockhammer 2015). These terms do justice to the dimension of time and make becoming and connecting inherent attributes of things, as they shift the focus from things as entities to things as entangled processes and to the manifold ties between these material processes, which Martin Saxer and Philipp Schorch call *thing~ties*. I demonstrate the basis for this potential and illustrate my lines of thought with short examples. It is my aim to

create a vocabulary that enables us to differentiate and better describe the dynamics of things and their interaction with humans, as well as the related connectivity, by acknowledging the permanent transformation of their substance (cf. Ingold's *materials*; Ingold 2011; Ingold 2012), their being in, and shaping, our worlds (cf. Olsen 2015), their *obstinacy* and unnoticed existence (cf. Hahn 2013; Hahn 2017), and the complex interrelation and dependency between them and humans (cf. Hodder's *entanglement*; Hodder 2011a; Hahn 2011b; Hahn 2012). However, my understanding of *changeability* and *effectancy* first requires a definition of the *substance(s)* and *materialities* of a thing.

Substance and materiality

Substance has been defined in many different ways but has not attracted much interest in material culture studies until recently, when its importance began to be increasingly emphasised (Olsen 2010). Several alternative terms were proposed, for example *materials* instead of *substance* (Ingold 2010; Ingold 2012), or *material substance* (Weismantel and Meskell 2014). I follow the definition of Hans Peter Hahn und Jens Soentgen (2011), who understand *substance* as the material a particular thing consists of. At first glance, substance seems to be without any shape. However, every substance has a micro structure which is most important for the possibilities of shaping other substances and being shaped at the same time. Substances can be raw materials (like water, stone, metals) or the result of human practices (like alloys or rubber; cf. Soentgen 2015). Therefore, substance is the physical and chemical quality of a thing or part of a thing. *Substance* is shaped into *materiality* by cultural practices (Thomas 2007, 15).

A thing can consist of different substances – a necklace made out of different pearls, a car, a house, etc. From an analytical perspective, a thing can be subdivided into its substances. The things that surround us enter our awareness from time to time in different ways and intensities. In the moment of perception, a *thing* is classified and becomes an *object* (cf. Brown 2001, 3–5).[2] I define *materiality* as the physical presence of a thing within the material world, which is perceived by a human individual at a particular moment. Therefore, *materiality* is inseparably connected to perception, and especially our perception of things. The same is true for the intrinsic relationship between practice and perception. I follow the notion of *Wahrnehmungshandeln*[3] (Frers 2009, 188; Hofmann 2016), which emphasises that practice and perception cannot

be separated, and that practice is always perception and vice versa. Thus, *Wahrnehmungshandeln* helps us to think human–thing entanglements as it emphasises the complexity of the connection between humans and things.

The first changeability

When we think about things or interact with them, we usually perceive them as stable and static. However, Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1966; cf. also Olsen 2006) pointed out the dynamics of the perception of things, which is always in flow. Because our perception of things is permanently changing, the thing itself changes – even if just in our perception. I would like to call this phenomenon the first *changeability* (*Wandelbarkeit*) of the thing. This changeability is not related to a change of the physical or chemical constitution of a thing, but only refers to its perception, i.e. its perceived materiality, which happens in ever new ways during practices with the thing. The first changeability is, therefore, only a perspective change. It is only a virtual change of the thing. An important reason for the relevance of the first changeability is the character of the first perception of a thing: in this first moment of perception, we often do not see the thing in its particular existence, but we look *through* the thing and only perceive a general class or type of object, to which we automatically attribute the singular thing in this moment without much or any reflection. Therefore, the individual thing takes something like an intermediate position, in the sense of becoming a virtual object and remaining a material thing. The objectivation of the thing – its attribution to pre-existing mental categories – is the crucial first moment in the encounter with a thing (Strawson 1972; Miller 1985). The categorisation of the other or new is a classic human behaviour that happens permanently and more or less unconsciously. However, even if we start reflecting about things, do they still stay or become a category rather than an individual object? Lambros Malafouris and Colin Renfrew put it in a nutshell: 'Things are very good-to-think-*with* or *through*, but not so good-to-think-*about*. The more time you spend thinking *about* things the less of a thing and the more of an object or category they become' (Malafouris and Renfrew 2010, 1).

The potential of the first changeability becomes evident in the standard archaeological practice of evaluating things: even if archaeologists possess more or less sophisticated systems of classification, they generally do not reflect on the particularity of a thing in the first moment of encounter, but just see the type or category to which they attribute the thing (for an

instructive example see Holtorf 2002, 57–8). This is due to the immediate perception of characteristic features, which is crucial for the classification of a thing. Our brain automatically completes the overall picture, before the eyes are able to perceive missing or contradictory features (see Smith and Muckli 2010; Scharinger, Bendixen, Herrmann et al. 2016).

All categories of objects are also adorned with a particular name, which often already communicates a particular function and/or meaning. If we name a vessel *cooking pot*, function and meaning are inseparably connected with the specific object in its designation. Through repetitive designation of a thing as *cooking pot*, this interpretation becomes so natural and self-understanding that we do not reflect any more about a possibly much broader range of further functions and meanings. It becomes part of our life world (Schütz and Luckmann 1979; Habermas 1981). By using function- and/or meaning-specific categories, we ignore the fact that functions and meanings are processes rather than states and only constituted through social practices. It is the moment of encounter with a new or foreign thing that forces us to give it a name, and this name influences our subsequent perception of the particular object until we decide to give it a new name. If we find out that an already classified thing does not fit in the respective category, we (the human perceiving the thing) are puzzled, sometimes even angry, and we are often reluctant to accept this change of perception. The thing irritates and affects us; it has an effect.

Thing itinerancies

The change of perception of a thing is closely associated with the routes a thing was brought along, i.e., its itinerancy. These routes have long been discussed within the framework of *object biographies* (e.g. Kopytoff 1986; Meskell 2004). This bio metaphor has recently been criticised for running the risk of again anthropomorphising the object, and *itinerary* has been suggested as an alternative in order not to introduce the notion of the living and dying of objects (Hahn and Weiss 2013; Hahn 2015; Jung 2015). *Itinerary* should solve the issue that things do not move on their own in most cases. Their ways are determined by humans at least most of the time. However, *itinerary* supposes that the mobility of things is deliberate and target-oriented. The complexity of these itineraries of a thing in its substances and materiality has not been sufficiently thought through in the literature on this topic. As a slightly modified alternative, I will use the term *itinerancy*, which better includes factors like chance for the mobility of things. Moreover, I suggest differentiating between

the itinerancy of the materiality and the itinerancy of the substance(s) of a thing. Both itinerancies are entangled and constitute the itinerancy of the object. However, these itinerancies can also be contradictory and thus lead to conflictive perceptions of a thing. Nevertheless, the itinerancy of the thing opens up its potential to connect different spaces, times and actors in complex entanglements.

The necessity of this analytical differentiation becomes most evident through an example, namely a wedding ring made of gold. There is no doubt that the materiality of the wedding ring has the potential to evoke positive memories, especially in the moment of conscious feeling and observing the object, at least as long as one is happy with one's partner. The ring becomes a material manifestation of the partnership, which becomes material in the presence of the ring. The materiality of the ring creates the co-presence of the (potentially absent) partner, who is present as *weight* and evocation (see Latour 1996). What happens, however, if one finds out that the gold from which the ring was made was stolen from victims of World War II, whose dental gold was removed after their murder and sold on the market? Whereas the problematic history of this gold has been extensively studied (Strzelecki 1994; Häussermann 2009; Hahn 2014, 25–6), the impact of its potential changeability has not. If the bearer of the ring hears about this horrible history of the substance, a negative itinerancy of the substance gets into conflict with a positive itinerancy of the materiality. Will the wearer of the ring be able to forget the itinerancy of the substance and replace it with the positive associations of the itinerancy of the materiality? Or will (s)he remember the itinerancy of the substance as a bad omen in the case of a divorce? Both itinerancies are inseparably entangled within the object. Depending on the particular situation, the two entangled itinerancies unfold their effect by raising memories while one is feeling or observing the object. They continuously generate the perception and meaning of the object, as well as its value (Stockhammer 2016). Even a substance like gold, which is endowed with a ascribed particularly high value in all known societies of the past and present (Hahn 2015), can lose some of its value because of such an exceptional itinerancy.

The second changeability

During the itinerancy of a thing, its shape and substance can also change without any human interference (see Ingold 2011; Ingold 2012). I call this phenomenon the second changeability of the thing: with time, the substance(s) and features of a thing change, get lost or are added. Food

deteriorates and changes its quality: it becomes inedible, sometimes even poisonous, or acquires a unique taste or an alcoholic component. Ian Hodder pointed to the dependency between a mud brick wall and humans, who are continuously endangered by the permanent decay of the wall and the possible subsequent collapse of the building (2011a; 2011b; 2012). A great amount of care is necessary to delay or stop the permanent change of the thing. Functions and meanings can change along with the thing and its features. Some practices become impossible and others become possible only at this moment. Meanings and memories that are bound to a specific feature can get lost, for example if a particular smell, colour or shape is lost over time. The second changeability is no virtual changeability like the first one. Rather, here the thing changes in its materiality or substance, or both. It forces us to care for it; it has an effect and evokes practices and emotions. As all our world views are views on the world, inasmuch as our perception of the world shapes our thinking (Robertson 1992, 69–77; Maran 2012, 63), the second changeability also has the potential to shape and transform our world views. One may think of deteriorating cities like Venice or Havana, or the efforts to preserve what we perceive as cultural heritage from decay.

The third changeability

Already within the first and second changeabilities, the perception of an object and the practices with an object are closely interwoven. I have argued above that I follow the concept of *Wahrnehmungshandeln*, which emphasises the basic entanglement of practice and perception. This intrinsic dependency of practice and perception becomes most relevant in the context of the third changeability, which is based on these practices with the thing. I define the third changeability as the transformation of things in the course of human practices. Things become worn; they bear traces of their use, sometimes only very fine scratches, sometimes very obvious cracks, chips, holes or other markers of their use. Just like the second changeability, the third is not a perspective change of the object: the substances and their shape(s) change. Whereas the transforming power, the effectancy, of the second changeability is time, the relevant factor for the third is the human actor. These traces of use have the potential to become witnesses of past times and anchors of memory, which can serve as a basis for the creation of meanings and histories. A spot of red wine on the light-coloured carpet not only has the potential to become a permanent nuisance, it can also remind us of glittering parties. The holes in a

piece of clothing, torn into the fabric during heavy physical work, remind us of these past efforts and refresh our memories of the past when we feel the holes while wearing the garment. They connect our present with our past. At the same time, traces of use also call for our care and reaction: we polish scratches, mend holes or cracks and take care of things. Again, things have an effect on us, they possess an effectancy.

Effectancy

I have just defined three different changeabilities of things; the first is based on the continuously changing perception of the things in the framework of *Wahrnehmungshandeln*; the second is the change of things through time on the itinerancies of their substances and materiality without human interference; the third is the transformations of things which are due to human practices with them. All three changeabilities are entangled with each other, because the relevant factors for their transformation – perception, time and practice – constitute each other. All three changeabilities can force humans to act. They are the basis for the potential of things to connect us/things with us/things over space and time. They constitute a thing's effectancy. Things have an effect on us and we do not have to associate their potential with any kind of intentionality. They do not act, in the sense of Max Weber (1962), in any kind of intentional way, which would be the prerequisite for endowing things with agency. Things rather enable and hinder human action. They structure human action in a physical and psychical dimension due to their changeabilities, because our action is always *Wahrnehmungshandeln*.

Case study: Minoan conical cups from Tel Beth-Shemesh

In order to show the potential of my approach, I will present a case study from the Eastern Mediterranean Late Bronze Age. Between the fifteenth and twelfth centuries BC, the societies of the Eastern Mediterranean came into contact with a hitherto unknown intensity and the exchange of goods and mobility of people reached a global scale (e.g. Feldman 2006; Leidwanger, Knappett, Arnaud et al. 2014). This exchange has been extensively studied in terms of widely distributed things, be they raw materials, works of art, transport vessels or feasting dishes. However, the focus has long been on the origin and distribution of these things. Most scholars have interpreted the appearance of objects of the same type

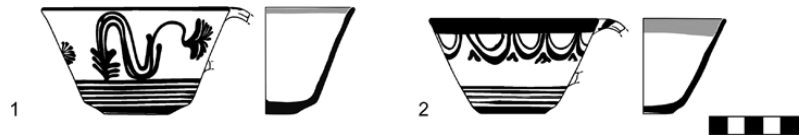

Figure 2.1 Minoan conical cups from Tel Beth-Shemesh, Level 9 (Bunimovitz et al. 2013: 1. p. 56 fig. 4; 2. p. 55 fig. 3; with the kind permission of the authors).

over a wide region as an indicator of a homogenisation that accompanies globalisation. Only recently have scholars focused on the transformative dynamics of the appropriation of things and ideas from afar in the Eastern Mediterranean Late Bronze Age (e.g. Voskos and Knapp 2008; Maran and Stockhammer 2012; Knapp and van Dommelen 2014). The following case study covers the first half of the fourteenth century BC, i.e. the time of the earliest, and still very rare, ceramic imports from the Aegean, which mostly came from Crete to the Southern Levant.

Similarly to all other early Aegean-type imports to the Levant, conical cups are rarely found at the Levant – recently, two such vessels were excavated at Tel Beth-Shemesh in present-day Israel (Figure 2.1). In the last few years, a nineteenth-century-BC palace (Level 9; LB IIA) that can be attributed to the queen Bēlit-labiat was excavated at the site (Bunimovitz, Lederman and Hatzaki 2013). The building was destroyed by fire, which resulted in the preservation of the non-organic furnishing of the palace on its floors. In one of the rooms, two Cretan conical cups were found close to each other. The vessels were most likely produced in or near the palace at Knossos on Crete in the early fourteenth century BC, which enabled us to determine the place of origin. The excavators therefore interpreted them as royal gifts from the ruler of Knossos to the queen of Tel Beth-Shemesh (Bunimovitz, Lederman and Hatzaki 2014). In the case of Tel Beth-Shemesh, we have an indication that early Aegean-type imports – most of them of Cretan origin – were appropriated by local elites and used along with their own feasting dishes. Before reaching Tel Beth-Shemesh, the cups had a complex itinerancy, from their production in a pottery workshop near the palace of Knossos on Crete, their selection by local actors as gifts to be sent to distant lands, their transportation on a ship either along the coast of Asia Minor and Cyprus and then to the south, or from Crete straight over the Mediterranean Sea to the coast of Libya and from there to Tel Beth-Shemesh.[4]

It remains unclear if or how much knowledge about Knossian practices with cups of this kind was also transmitted to the Southern Levant and transformed through translation. In the Aegean, we have indications that

drinkers sat in pairs opposite each other, consuming beverages from pairs of nearly identical drinking vessels (Stockhammer 2008, 297–307). Thus, for the Aegean gift-giver, it was common to send such a pair of vessels as a present. Bēlit-labiat kept the cups together as a pair as well. Drinking from cups, however, was not a common practice during feasting in the Levant. By examining the two cups closely, I was able to identify that on both cups the handle had probably been chipped away. In other words, the users of the cups had transformed them into bowls. This fits well with common drinking practices in Late Bronze Age Southern Levant, where drinking bowls were held in the palm of the hand (Yasur-Landau 2005, 172, 174; Yasur-Landau 2008, 356). Thus, the use of foreign drinking vessels and the idea of using a pair of almost identical vessels were appropriated by the users. The users manipulated vessels by transforming them from cups into bowls in order to fit them more closely into what they perceived as the correct embodied social act of drinking. Here we have reached a particular state of relational entanglement: the cups were transformed through manipulation, but nothing completely new was created. The cups are not material entanglements, because they are not the product of a creative process of combining the formerly foreign with the local (as, for example, the local production of a bowl or cup inspired by the Aegean style would be). Their materiality was transformed, whereas their substance was not: they were now perceived in a different way because of the different way of holding the bowls; their substance, however, the fired clay, was not altered. Rather, their potential arose from their effectancy, which arose from their changeabilities: during the process of appropriation, a human actor (of unknown status and background) had the thought that only the handle distinguished the cup from the more useful shape of the bowl. It was the flexibility of the perception of the thing, the first changeability, which was the prerequisite for its subsequent transformation. The removal of the handles also left traces of the former shape, and these traces could serve as a basis for narratives that kept in the memory the origin and itinerancy of the cups/bowls. They could surprise a new user who was accustomed to being given standard bowl shapes and (s)he could be stimulated to speculate or ask about the specific history of the thing. Here, the third changeability of the object could unfold its potential.

It is interesting to note that the destruction of the palace of Tel Beth-Shemesh took place several decades after the production, and probably the appropriation, of the cups by the queen. The itinerancy of the cups continued in the palace after their arrival. The Aegean-type sherds from the mud-brick walls of the palace are younger (ca 1380/60–1320/10 BC, ceramic phase LH IIIA2 in the Aegean) than the Minoan cups (ca

1430–1380/60 BC, ceramic phase LM IIIA1 in the Aegean). Before they were embedded in the walls of the palace, these LH IIIA2 vessels had to be transported to Tel Beth-Shemesh, and then used and broken, in order to get mixed with the clay used to mend the walls of the palace, which had deteriorated over time and required some repair (cf. the second changeability). Therefore, the Minoan cups were probably used for several decades. Moreover, they were still in use after 1380/60 BC, when the mass importation of Aegean-type pottery to the Levant started, which led to a severe devaluation of these vessels and a loss of interest among Southern Levantine elites in these later imports (Stockhammer forthcoming). In contrast to the overall mass of Aegean-type pottery, the two cups had not lost their particular value, probably because of their specific itinerancy and their already established use in drinking practices within the palace.

Epistemological potential

Having presented my case study, I want finally to raise the question of whether I could not equally have reached my archaeological interpretation without any of the concepts defined in the first part of my contribution. The value of every new concept or approach depends on its epistemological value, that is, the range and importance of additional insights that become possible only after the conceptual or the methodological innovation. It is indeed possible to get very similar insights without applying any of my terms or any of the related concepts and approaches of Ingold, Hahn, Olsen and Hodder. However, as I stated at the beginning, the lack of a sufficient vocabulary has resulted in ignorance of crucial aspects of the potential of things. It was my aim to create a vocabulary that enables us to differentiate and better describe the dynamics of things, their interaction with humans and their potential to connect. With the vocabulary presented here – the notion of the changeabilities of things (due to perception, time and practices, and the combination thereof) and the differentiation of the itinerancies of the materiality and the substance of things – I aim to supplement the existing approaches, which will enable us to refine our understanding and expand a diachronic perspective on things. Moreover, *effectancy*, as a novel term for the description of the overall potential of things and as an attempt to replace *agency*, helps us to avoid the anthropomorphisation of things and apply a thing-specific vocabulary which does better justice to them.

In everyday archaeology, the introduction of the changeabilities and their integration into the established protocols for the evaluation of

archaeological finds forces us, first, always to reflect on our own categorisation of the findings and the implications which we create by applying a specific term. The acknowledgement of the first changeability (referring to the changing perception of things) should be an incentive to avoid use-specific nomenclature like *cooking pot* or *hairpin*, and therefore the hasty attribution of a specific function or meaning to a thing (and thereby ignoring the third changeability and the related dynamics of functions and meanings, and their permanent (re-)creation in the framework of human practices). The realisation of the itinerancies of the materiality and the substance(s) as well as the second changeability, in the archaeological analysis, sharpens our focus on the inherent dynamics of a thing and its changes over time, which is crucial for its momentary perception and appropriation. The second changeability (referring to the transformation of things through time without human interference) emphasises that such processes of transformation are not only a post-depositional phenomenon, but of crucial relevance during a thing's previous itinerancies. The third changeability (referring to traces of use on things as a consequence of human practices with things) aims to strengthen our interest in micro-remains in/on a thing, (micro-)traces of its former use, and modifications of the materiality or substance in the framework of past human practices. Even though the study of micro-remains, use-wear and related traces of human practices with things has recently attracted increasing interest in archaeology (e.g. van Gijn and Lammers-Keijsers 2010; Vieugué 2014), we are far from having established a standard protocol for their analysis, and they are still overseen or neglected most of the time.

To sum up, having in mind current theoretical models in material culture studies as well as the deficits of the current evaluation of finds in archaeology, the concepts presented above (changeabilities, effectancy, itinerancies, materiality, substance) have the potential to sharpen our theoretical reflections and our daily practice in archaeology, as well as our understanding of the connectivity between us/things and us/things over space and time.

Notes

1. This study is part of Philipp Stockhammer's ERC Starting Grant project 'FoodTransforms: transformations of food in the Eastern Mediterranean Late Bronze Age' (ERC-2015-StG 678901-FoodTransforms), funded by the European Research Council.
2. We have to be aware that the differentiation between *substance* and *object* can be challenging, as, for example, a particular pearl of a necklace can be understood either as the *substance* of the object 'necklace' or as an object of its own: the necklace would then be an object among

objects with specific substances. The differentiation of *substance* and *object* is only possible from a heuristic perspective and should always be question-oriented (Strawson 1972).

3. It is difficult to translate *Wahrnehmungshandeln* into English, as there is no equivalent compound in which the first part (perception) determines the latter (practice, action) and vice versa.
4. We cannot exclude even more complex itinerancies, for example that the cups were originally sent as gifts to a different member of the Eastern Mediterranean elite (e.g. in Egypt) and then travelled, through further gift giving, to Tel Beth-Shemesh.

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Part II
Movement and Growth

3

Becoming imperial: the politicisation of the gift in Atlantic Africa

Julia T. S. Binter

> Sir, I have the honour to inform you that the King of Cabinda has declined to receive the presents. … I was told … that the King could not receive them … without a written declaration from the captain that they were 'for nothing'. … I immediately wrote to say, he would get them 'for nothing': that he had signed a Treaty and the Queen of England had sent him presents; but received in answer that he could not accept them.[1]

This disagreement about an anti-slave-trade treaty between King Mongoya of Cabinda and Lieutenant Need of the Royal Navy in 1855 is emblematic of the ways in which African rulers on the coasts of West and Central Africa and Europe's imperial agents (traders, consuls and navy personnel) forged and contested economic and political relationships in the nineteenth century, a highly volatile and crucial period of imperial contact. It points to different notions of contract – a concept of contract via gift exchange versus a single, signed piece of paper – and highlights the central role of gift exchange in constituting and challenging relationships in Atlantic Africa. In this chapter, I argue that a focus on such gifts and their acceptance, refusal and reciprocation can yield new insights into the constantly shifting power relations that shaped the transition of the transatlantic trade in enslaved people into the so-called 'legitimate trade' in natural resources (1807–67) and subsequent colonisation (1884–1914). A focus on gifts, their particular materiality and the struggles over their meanings allows us to look at the connecting and disconnecting qualities of material culture in imperial contact. In other words, it sheds light on the material processes through which

people established cultural, political and economic relationships, forged identities, struggled to maintain sovereignty or impose dominance and drew themselves and others into relationships of dependence.[2] Hence, it allows new insights into the processes of becoming imperial.

Gifts in Atlantic Africa

Marcel Mauss's seminal *Essay on the Gift* (2016), which discussed the importance of gift giving, receiving and reciprocating for the social cohesion of non-capitalist societies, has inspired several major strands of anthropological debate: a specialised literature on regional differences in gift exchange and related notions of personhood in the Pacific (Munn 1986; Strathern 1988; Weiner 1992; Gregory 2015), a growing body of literature on the central role of gifts in capitalist and neoliberalist societies (Godbout and Caillé 1998; Graeber 2001; Tsing 2013), and a broader discussion at the intersection of economic anthropology and material culture studies about the biography and transmutability of things, that is, their properties and the encoding of value in exchange (Kopytoff 1986; Appadurai 1986; Gosden and Knowles 2001; Kingdon and Bersselaar 2008). Moreover, Nicholas Thomas (1991, 14) has drawn attention to gift exchange as social and political process and as acts of 'consumption and personification' in the colonial contact zones of the Pacific. However, in most of these debates ethnographic examples from Atlantic Africa, with a few notable exceptions (Guyer 1993; Apter 2005; Piot 2009), remain conspicuously absent. A main reason for this omission could be that Atlantic Africa does not lend itself to dichotomous interpretative models such as commodity economies versus gift economies, understood as individualistic, money-based exchange systems of alienable products and collective systems of prestations and counter-prestations that establish mutual dependency and reciprocity respectively. As Karin Barber has highlighted, economic exchange in Atlantic Africa 'cannot be described as the articulation of two preexisting sets of relations, capitalist and non-capitalist', but rather as 'workable systems that *originated* at the interface of local and European commerce' which 'spawned idiosyncratic artistic genres' (Barber 2013, 112) and forms of cultural expression.

Studies of transcultural economic activities in Atlantic Africa have, thus, rather focused on things that helped to translate between radically different regimes of value and served as 'the vehicle for the creation of new interpersonal obligations' (Pietz 1988, 115), one example being the 'fetish' or *nkisi* in early Portuguese–Kongo relations, or on commercial

transactions more generally (Guyer 2004). In her ground-breaking study on the logics of Atlantic African economies, Jane Guyer rejects the idea of equivalence which, according to her reading of Mauss, has been fundamental to the theory of both gift and commodity exchange. Instead, she stresses that, although African economies have been monetised for centuries, it is not fixed ratios (equivalences) between money and things that allow the turning of a profit, but rather the deliberate maintenance of asymmetries of value that allow for conversion across thresholds and thus for making gains. According to this economic logic, pricing takes into account the social, cultural and economic capital of all actors as well as the particular context and conditions of a transaction. Gains thus accrue for both sellers and buyers. However, Guyer's focus on currencies and 'marginal gains' disregards the crucial role that gifts play in these exchanges. I seek to bring back the gift, understood as a thing 'of exchange in which parts of the giver are embedded, extending social relations beyond the transaction' (Tsing 2013, 23),[3] into the discussion of economic exchange in Atlantic Africa. Following Andrew Apter's line of argument (2005, 122–76), I will show that gifts were part and parcel of translations between regimes of value and of conversions across thresholds. In addition, I will trace the ways in which rituals of gift exchange, which had been developed in the context of transatlantic commerce, subsequently played a crucial role in the forging of political relations during processes of colonial encroachment. In order to understand this 'politicisation' of the gift, it is necessary to look at the trading rituals that developed at the 'interface of local and European commerce' (Barber 2013, 112), taking the Niger Delta 'in the very eye of the Atlantic trade' (p. 117) as a foil for discussion.

Trading rituals and transvaluation

The Niger Delta, in today's Nigeria, extends for roughly 450 km from the Bight of Benin in the west to the Bight of Biafra in the east, and lends itself, with its many creeks and islands, to small forms of organisation. In the west of the delta, the Kingdom of Warri (Itsekiri) traces its monarchical roots back to the Kingdom of Benin. In the central delta, city-states made up of lineage-based houses, or 'canoe-houses', such as Bonny, Brass and New Calabar (Ijo) and, in the east, Old Calabar (Efik), developed their hierarchical social organisation in dialogue with the transatlantic trade in enslaved people, which started in the sixteenth century and peaked two hundred years later. These highly hierarchical social organisations

were 'geared toward individual achievement, i.e. … self-aggrandizement or self-making … through the recruitment of a diversity of people, with opportunities for extreme and rapid social mobility' (Barber 2013, 117). In other words, recruiting people, through marriage, pawnship or slave raiding, into relationships of dependence (Lovejoy and Falola 2003) resulted in 'wealth-in-people' (Guyer 1993). This 'wealth-in-people', in turn, was based on, and added to, 'charisma' (p. 253), which was achieved by 'the cultivation of [the] singularity of persons', encompassing 'personal beauty, strength, skill and general worth' (p. 259). At the Atlantic coast, this charisma depended heavily, I argue, on the ability to establish trustworthy and gainful relationships with European trade partners, one particularly valuable manifestation of these gainful relationships being personalised gifts such as staffs and hats embellished with the name of the African merchant in question. Countless portrait photographs of African merchants from the end of the nineteenth century testify to their significance in self-fashioning (for example Figure 3.1). But what made these gifts so valuable to their recipients? To answer this question, we have to look at the trading rituals that had been developed during the Atlantic commerce.

Figure 3.1 Unidentified photographer, *Chief (Prince) Egbe of Warri with relatives,* ca. 1895. © Unilever Collections, Unilever Art, Archives and Records Management, Port Sunlight (UAC/1/11/10/3/2/1).

Travel accounts of the period of the trade in enslaved people (Adams [1823] 1966; Landolphe and Quesné 1823), memoirs of the 'legitimate' trade in natural resources (Cardi 1899; Harford 1899; Cotterell 1910) (palm oil in the case of the Niger Delta) and oral history that I conducted in the delta in 2015 and 2016 suggest that the basic patterns of trading rituals remained relatively stable till colonial encroachment. Particularly the memoirs of Harry Cotterell (1841–1913) and Charles Napoléon, comte de Cardi (1844–1906), European traders active in the delta from the 1860s to the 1890s, give insights into these rituals and the attitudes and mutual perceptions with which the European and African middlemen conducted the trade.

Above all, the European merchants had to conform to the elaborate trading etiquette of their African 'customers' (Cotterell 1910, 21), which consisted in officially hosting them on their ships, sharing a sumptuous meal, and 'shake-hands' (Cardi 1899, 446), a term in the trade vernacular of the coast denoting the presenting of gifts to the ruling African traders and their retinue. Already at the beginning of the century, 'these presents chiefly consist[ed] of gold-laced hats, silver-headed canes, pieces of rich silk, and embroidered coats and waistcoats' (Adams [1823] 1966, 123). These ceremonial gestures of hospitality and goodwill made it possible to 'break trade' and start the actual commerce, which included the payment of the 'comey' (Dike 1956, 43) – that is, export duties levied on European traders – and the fixing of exchange ratios – between fictional units of account (such as the 'trade ounce' and the 'pawn') and palm oil. Once the prices and the range of goods that the African merchants wanted to procure were fixed, European traders advanced these goods on trust to the African middlemen, who then travelled to the hinterland to exchange them for palm oil.

Like their European counterparts, the African middlemen had developed specific rituals for receiving their guests. They set out to welcome their European visitors in their war canoes, pulled by up to eighty paddlers, accompanied by the rhythm of their talking drums, their flags flying in the wind (Cotterell 1910, 25; Lander and Lander [1832] 1965, 232–3). Moreover,

> on such occasions the Chiefs would rig themselves out in the most grotesque costumes one can imagine – full suits of cast-off Livery, Naval and Military Uniforms, and even Dress Suits were used to improve their appearance, and to show respect to their visitors.
>
> (Cotterell 1910, 81)

Figure 3.2 Jonathan A. Green, *Chief Charles Horsfal's canoe, Degema, 1902*. © Unilever Collections, Unilever Art, Archives and Records Management, Port Sunlight (UAC/1/11/10/3/2/1/14).

It was an extravagant, multisensory way of communicating their wealth and power to their European visitors, though some of the intended messages seem to have been lost in translation. While Africans on the shore and trade partners in the hinterland would immediately recognise the appellations with which the talking drums praised the owner of the canoes,[4] most European traders heard 'savage music' (Cardi 1899, 445) and beating 'tom-toms' (Cotterell 1910, 25–6). The flags adorning the bows or sterns of the canoes were easier to recognise and gave proof of a trader's name, accomplishments and commercial and political alliances (Figure 3.2). Hence, the disembodied extension of a trader's presence in the form of drum language and iconographic flags not only testifies to the multisensory qualities of the trader's performance, but also alludes to his varied target audiences and channels of communication.

Similarly, the international fashion style that the African middlemen donned for the occasion disturbed and impressed the European visitors in equal measure. Whereas African traders seemingly tried to show off their success in the palm oil trade and their knowledge and idiosyncratic interpretation of European festive costume and regalia, many British traders were not sure how to cope with forms of self-expression that 'confounded the fundamental alterity of the African' (Apter 2005,

134). Despite ridiculing these forms of African fashion, traders like Harry Cotterell and Charles de Cardi, who spent decades trading in the delta, forging commercial relationships and familiarising themselves with local customs, often learned to appreciate these products of cultural arbitration as a sign of mutual 'respect' (Cotterell 1910, 81). They sensed that the African merchants were keenly aware of their position in the transatlantic economy and had developed ways of 'seeing and acting beyond local environments' (Prestholdt 2008, 88). Jeremy Prestholdt calls this positioning in the globalising world a particular form of 'African cosmopolitanism' (see also Mbembe 2005; Northrup 2002; Getz 2013) or 'vision of globality' (Prestholdt 2008, 89) that was as much formed by transatlantic encounters as it itself shaped these encounters.

The trade rituals mediated these encounters. They highlight the processual quality of coastal trade, where people and things – ships, canoes, commodities and gifts as well as the fluid landscape of the Niger Delta – intertwined in ever-changing formations, testifying to Tim Ingold's notion of a 'world of incessant movement and becoming' (Ingold 2011, 141). Following Ingold's processual vision of life, the commercial transactions and cultural arbitrations can be interpreted to have formed 'knots … woven from the countless lifelines of its manifold human and non-human constituents as they thread their ways through the tangle of relationships in which they are … comprehensively enmeshed' (Ingold 2011, 141). This meshwork, though, was shot through with claims to political, economic and cultural power. Looking at these enmeshments from a Marxian perspective, which plays close attention to power relations, Andrew Apter defines them as a form of transvaluation, or, more precisely, as a 'mediation of economic and cultural oppositions through commodity exchange, whereby sign-values and exchange values, givers and receivers, sellers and buyers, achieve formal commensurability' (Apter 2005, 123). Apter stresses the fact that canoes were more than 'merely … symbols of wealth and power' (123) and emphasises the transitive and transformative quality of the canoes as key sites of political, economic and cultural arbitration. Read against the backdrop of Anne Haour's (2013) argument that trade between West Africa and Europe created liminal spaces specifically dedicated to accommodating strangers and brokering cultural differences, the middlemen's war canoes and European trading hulks can be identified as such liminal spaces, in which political, commercial and cultural values were negotiated and contested.

Gifts played a key role in all of these forms of transvaluation. The giving and receiving of gifts at the beginning of trade rituals recognised the sovereignty of all the parties involved. They were the prerequisite

to 'breaking trade', materialising commercial interests and alluding to potential future gains. Gifts were also crucial to the forging of identities and establishing more binding and longer-term connections between the various actors at the coast. The connecting quality of gifts formed a part of the logic of trade which consisted in advancing goods on trust and – in the period of the trade in enslaved people – often receiving a member of the middleman's family as a pawn in return. Despite this mutual dependence, the only certain signifier of a trader's economic success, and thus his trustworthiness, was his ostentatious display of wealth in the form of dress, European-style architecture and furniture, and lavish entertainment (Ikime 1969, 59). Moreover, a large fleet of trading canoes manned with paddlers as well as armed forces, all of them bonded, manifested his wealth-in-people. The middlemen's idiosyncratic interpretation of international fashion and their taste for European furniture and architecture showcased their cosmopolitan connoisseurship and can be read not so much as a consumption but as an 'investment, a performative conversion, a devotion of present income to the hope of future gains' (Guyer 2004, 99). However, personalised gifts in which 'parts of the giver were embedded' (Tsing 2013, 23) distinguished those African middlemen who had been able to forge not only commercial ties based on the exchange of commodities, but also longer-term personal relations with European trade partners. Gifts were thus the ultimate material testimony of a person's cosmopolitan reach, the decisive addition to a person's charisma in the Atlantic trade.

Gifts forging contracts

If European traders accepted and adapted to these trading rituals, how can we explain the various misunderstandings and conflicts which gift exchange engendered, such as the encounter between Lieutenant Need and King Mongaya of Cabinda mentioned at the beginning of this chapter? The historical record suggests that such disputes over gifts emerged when new imperial agents, such as the Royal Navy's West Africa Squadron, entered the Atlantic interface and tried to redefine the meaning and value of certain gifts and, consequently, power relations. Let me give a brief overview of the new actors and changing conditions with which African middlemen were confronted during the nineteenth century.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, littoral rulers could rely on established trading ties with European and especially British trade partners in order to continue their trade in enslaved people while

simultaneously establishing their trade in palm produce (Latham 1974; Jones 1989; Lynn 1995, 1997). By the middle of the century, palm oil and palm kernel were among the most sought-after trading goods of the Victorian era, being used as lubricant for industrial machinery and railway stock, and as an essential ingredient in the manufacture of soap and candles (Lynn 1997). Driven by the prospect of a lucrative trade, a new wave of British traders tried to enter the palm oil trade in the 1850s. These new traders pushed to establish themselves with factories on the shore, and attempted to circumvent littoral middlemen by using steamships to penetrate the hinterland. These moves 'from ship to shore' and 'from sail to steam' (Lynn 1995, 68) increased the competition in the Niger Delta and slowly but steadily modified British-Nigerian relations.

From the perspective of British imperial politics, the abolition of the transatlantic trade in enslaved people and the growth in the palm oil trade were interdependent. As 'every stolen slave was not only a lost producer of goods for export but also a lost consumer of goods from countries such as Britain' (Huzzey 2012, 137), British abolitionists propagated 'legitimate' forms of commerce like the palm oil trade as a 'remedy' (Buxton 1840) for the trade in enslaved people. In the first half of the century, the British government did not advocate colonial rule but founded the Royal Navy's West Africa Squadron in 1808 with the aim of capturing slave ships and signing anti-slave-trade treaties with West African rulers. But it was not until 1849 that the Foreign Office stationed a consul off the Niger Delta on the island of Fernando Po who was to mediate the ever-changing relations at the coast and soon established courts of equity where European and African traders were supposed to settle disputes over, among other things, pricing and outstanding debt. Subsequently, the West Africa Squadron (and, from 1867 onwards, its successor, HM's naval forces at the Cape of Good Hope and the Coast of West Africa) began to provide military protection for British traders and missionaries and, at the end of the century, military prowess to break the sovereignty of the coastal people.

The dispute between King or Mabouk Mongoya of Cabinda, in today's Angola, and Lieutenant Need of the West Africa Squadron in 1855 is particularly revealing of the ways in which the Royal Navy's practices interrupted long-established rituals of connecting and binding people. Whereas the gift exchange of trade rituals allowed for continuous renegotiations of commercial relations and a reaffirmation or dissolution of relationships of trust, the Royal Navy's insistence on a single signed treaty sought to halt this process. Mabouk Mongoya's refusal of Lieutenant Need's gift, as well as the encounters which preceded it, highlights the

fact that this introduction of a new form of contract was fraught with conflict. Like many other middlemen along the coast of West and Central Africa (cf. Latham 1973), the Mabouk sought to continue the trade in enslaved people, and claimed that in the previous year another agent of the West Africa Squadron, Officer in Command Wilton, had tricked him into signing the treaty in the first place. The commander had offered to take charge of the education of one of his sons. The written consent that he signed for this purpose turned out to be the anti-slave-trade agreement that the Mambouk had previously refused to sign. After Wilmot's 'Machiavellian triumph … the Cabinda leaders protested in a letter to the Portuguese in Luanda, asserting their recognition of the Portuguese flag and calling on the Portuguese [who no longer officially supported the trade in enslaved people at this time, but tolerated it] to give them protection' (Martin 1972, 147).

This episode illustrates several important factors in the shifting power relations of the African Atlantic. It points to the sometimes 'Machiavellian' methods that the Royal Navy used to change the 'moral economy' of the transatlantic trade, 'which legitimate[d] the production of social inequality [and] the management of the rent of dependency' (Bayart 2000, 252). It also draws attention to the readiness of African elites to forge alliances with imperial powers if that served their interests (Bayart 2000). Most importantly for the discussion of the gift, it shows that the written treaty as a form of contract did not entail the same potential to build and negotiate relationships of trust. The processual notion of contract via gift exchange suited the 'unpredictable, fluctuating and competitive world of individual self-creation' (Barber 1995, 217) of the Atlantic interface. Signed treaties, in contrast, sought to fix relations to a particular point in time at which power relations, once established – for example by the show of military might – could not be renegotiated. Yet, as we will see in the following section, gift giving retained its central role in the negotiation of relationships during colonial encroachment.

Socio-political transformations, cosmopolitan self-fashioning and imperial gifts

The transition from the trade in enslaved people to one in natural resources was not accompanied only by an increasing presence of imperial agents such as consuls and the Royal Navy on the coasts of West and Central Africa. Coastal societies also had to cope with internal economic and political transformations. Hence, various new actors sought to

'thread their ways through the tangle of [Atlantic] relationships' (Ingold 2011, 148). Especially towards the end of the nineteenth century, these relationships were of not only an economic but also a political nature. Despite the introduction of written treaties, gifts continued to shape the meshwork of Atlantic relations, in which the presence of new imperial actors as well as internal socio-political transformations afforded unforeseen alliances as well as fierce conflicts.

The most significant internal transformation was the growth of domestic slavery. Even though slavery had been an integral part of many West African societies, rising demand in the labour-intensive production of and trade in palm oil led to an increase in domestic slavery in societies that sustained the trade (Dike 1956; Ikime 1969; Mann 2007; Falola and Heaton 2008). The demand for bonded labour was in large part met by the long-established system of pawning, in which women and children in particular, as well as criminals, were given as pledges for outstanding debt. However, the pawn system allowed considerable social mobility, and successful unfree traders were able to buy their freedom and found their own trading businesses.

In the Kingdom of Bonny in the eastern Niger Delta, in the 1860s, the social mobility of people of slave status enabled a war of succession to be fought out between the so-called 'head slaves' of the ruling 'canoe houses'. These canoe houses were cooperative, family-run trading units which acted as local government institutions and consisted of a trader's family and their enslaved people (Alagoa 1970; Cookey 2005; Jaja 1991; Dike 1956). As head slaves of their canoe houses, Jubo Jubogha (abbreviated as Jaja) and Oko Jumbo had gained wealth, and thus power, as traders in the palm oil trade, and were now in a position to influence local politics. In their struggle for supremacy, the two men also sought assistance from rival British traders, who supported their party of choice with armaments (Dike 1956, 194). Jaja (1821–91), with several other leading canoe houses seceded from Bonny and founded a new settlement upstream on the River Ikomtoro in 1869. He named his new settlement Opobo after the legendary king Opubu of Bonny, who ruled at the beginning of the nineteenth century and re-established religious traditions that had ceased to exist in Bonny because of the influence of Christian missionaries (Dike 1956; Cookey 2005).

Jaja also sought to consolidate his new-found position by diplomatic means, aligning himself politically with the interests of the British Empire. When, in 1873, the Royal Navy enquired whether the rulers in the Niger Delta would provide military support in the fight against the Ashanti, in today's Ghana, the king and chiefs of Bonny initially declined.

> It appears to us that the authorities at Cape Coast have been misled, as to the nature of this country. We are not a warlike people having been brought up to peaceful pursuits, and our trading business finds employment for all the [men here] … But should Jaja supply some [soldiers], it will only be just that we would do so also.[5]

Jaja did comply and sent 50 (probably bonded) men. The king and chiefs of Bonny followed suit.[6] After the successful conquest of Kumasi, the Ashanti capital, Commodore William Hewett of the Royal Navy presented Jaja of Opobo with a golden sword as a sign of gratitude for his services. Such presentation swords had come into fashion in the late eighteenth century for recognising the achievements of Royal Navy personnel for the expanding British Empire (McGrath and Barton 2013, 76–82; McAleer and Petley 2016, 1–2). One of the earliest recorded prestations of such swords occurred in Barbados in 1757, when the assembly of planters awarded Captain Middleton (later First Lord of the Admiralty) '100 pistoles … to buy him a sword for taking a French privateer infesting the coast of the island'.[7] Many more prestations for similar skirmishes and colonial suppressions in the West Indies were to follow. The presentation sword was thus the quintessential imperial gift, testifying to, and drawing Jaja into, the imperial relations of the British Atlantic. However, the interpretation of the sword within Opobo society might have been quite different. It probably added to Jaja's charisma and signified his ability to mobilise and tap into the ever-increasing British relations in the delta. Today, the sword serves as a 'symbol of royal authority' of Opobo's founding figure, 'commemorat[ing] the role of Opobo's peace-keeping force in Ashanti, Ghana (Gold Coast), a friendly African Kingdom' (Jaja 1991, unnumbered page).

However, Jaja's assistance in extending imperial relations in other parts of West Africa did not deter the British from dismantling his own sovereignty, once European interests in the African continent changed more generally. Jaja's rule (1869–87) came to an end at the time of the 'scramble for Africa', in which Britain was rethinking its strategy of an 'informal empire' (Lynn 1999) on the continent and, in the case of the Niger Delta, started to extend its spheres of influence via the signing of protection treaties. Since the involvement of the West Africa Squadron, written treaties had become a common diplomatic tool for negotiating the terms of trade, and African middlemen had begun to use them to reinforce their interests in the ever-shifting economic and political landscape at the coast. Yet negotiations about treaties had to comply with the rituals of gift giving developed during the transatlantic trade. This was also true

of the negotiation of protection treaties from 1884 onwards. Lengthy correspondences between the consuls in the delta and the Foreign Office in London attest to the plethora of things that coastal rulers were given in order to start negotiations over the status of protection. Among them were a Japanese sword for the King of Brass, a musical box for the King of Bonny and a telescope for the Duke of Calabar.[8] Additional gifts were silks, cottons, damasks and satins of various qualities (manufactured in India, China and Britain), tapestries of Persian and European manufacture, a court suit and a navy uniform, several rocking chairs, mattresses and pillows, mirrors, silver plates, goblets, bowls, scissors, an accordion, a melodeon, two magic lanterns, two chromolithographs of the Queen, several breech-loading guns, cartridges, knives, tobacco and rum. The presents for Jaja of Opobo have not been reported, but they probably complied with his cosmopolitan taste and facilitated this new step into colonial dependence.

On the other side of the delta, the 400-year-old Kingdom of Warri (Itsekiri) had to accommodate similar internal transformations under mounting external pressure. An interregnum (1848–1936) shifted the trading, and hence the political authority, away from the royal lineage to the most successful traders of noble and chiefly descent. In order to negotiate trading conditions with the Itsekiri, the British fell back on the well-established authority of the 'Governor of the Benin River' or *gofine*, a political post comparable to that of a finance and foreign minister. As sign of the *gofine*'s power, the consul ordered a 'Stick of Office'[9] in the form of a gold-headed staff from the Foreign Office in London.

Staffs in many different forms and materialities had been omnipresent in Atlantic Africa, generally serving as signs of office, position and power (Picton 1991). For example, the Yoruba in today's Nigeria used dance staffs as an extension or 'portrait' of ritual specialists (Drewal 1990). The rulers of Dahomey, in today's Benin, used ceremonial staffs as mnemonic devices (Blier 1991). For members of the *Ekpe* society in Old Calabar, east of the Niger Delta, the *ofo*, a small, unadorned wooden staff, served as a 'vital instrument for the classification of persons, for the differentiation of roles … and empowered their performers for social and moral control' (Ejizu 1986, 144). Concurrently with their high local value, staffs became sought-after gifts in the transatlantic trade. In the Niger Delta, they mostly consisted of a wooden handle and a silver top, often engraved with the name of an African merchant, reflecting the close ties between trade partners. Britain's political agents realised their significance and used staffs to confer or recognise power, drawing African rulers into a web of imperial relations.

As was the case in the Kingdom of Warri, the consul used the staff of office not only to recognise the *gofine*'s position, but also to challenge it in case the office holder 'disgraced it'[10] in the eyes of his European trade partners. A particularly severe 'disgrace' or infraction was the blockage of trade, a strategy that middlemen used to ascertain their position in trade and protest against falling oil prices. Nanna Olomu (1852–1916), the fourth and last Governor of the Benin River, also employed this tactic, refusing British traders access to the hinterland markets – a right that, like Jaja of Opobo, he had successfully negotiated in the protection treaty of 1884. With the breaking of his staff of office in 1890, the British consul marked the official end of Nanna's political career in the Oil Rivers Protectorate (Ikime 1968). Yet there were another four years of diplomatic skirmishes before the British Empire used military force to end Nanna's sovereignty, with the Royal Navy attacking his town, Ebrohimi, looting it and burning it to the ground. Like Jaja of Opobo in 1887 and Oba Ovonramwen of the Kingdom of Benin in 1897, Nanna Olomu was sent into exile, in his case to Accra, in today's Ghana. Thanks to the continued efforts of one of his British trade partners, George Neville, who petitioned Parliament in London, Nanna was the only ruler of this region to return to his homeland alive, founding a new settlement and rebuilding parts of his trade business in 1906 (Neville 1915). Moreover, Neville procured the upper half of the broken staff of office from the wife of former consul Claude MacDonald and sent it to Nanna with a note saying, 'a memento of the old times'.[11] The former symbol of power had become a nostalgic mnemonic device.

In February 1915, one year after the Southern and Northern Nigeria Protectorates had been amalgamated into the new colony of Nigeria, Nanna Olomu received another gift. On his tour through the colony, Frederick Lugard, first Governor-General of Nigeria and author of the highly influential 'The dual mandate in British tropical Africa' (1922), which laid out the system of indirect rule in the British Empire, paid Nanna a visit in his new town Koko. They shared a meal and Lugard presented Nanna with a gift, a newly patented water filter from London.[12] This gift not only testifies to the high value of new technologies in Atlantic Africa and the influential position that Nanna seems to have retained in the colony; it also highlights the continued, albeit altered, use of gift giving in colonial Atlantic Africa. Whereas during the period of the transatlantic trade gifts were used to recognise the sovereignty of African rulers and forge successful commercial ties, they had now become a means to recognise their position in the system of indirect rule. Gifts had thus played a crucial part in the processes of becoming imperial.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued that, once we overcome the dichotomy of gift versus commodity economies, gifts can be a valuable analytical category with which to understand the ways in which people negotiate relationships across political, economic and cultural thresholds. Atlantic Africa, as the 'interface between local and European commerce' (Barber 2013, 112) and the prime site of 'colonial contact' (Clifford 1997; Pratt 1992), particularly lends itself to such an analysis. The focus on the materiality of gifts, understood not only as the material qualities but also as the underlying forces and potentialities of things of exchange 'in which parts of the giver are embedded' (Tsing 2013, 23), has allowed insights into the always dynamic struggles over sovereignty and the power of interpretation. By tracing the giving, accepting, refusing and reciprocating of gifts, from trading rituals to the signing of protection treaties and diplomatic visits in the colonial state, I have demonstrated that gift giving shifted from acknowledging the sovereignty of African rulers to drawing them into relationships of dependence. This politicisation of the gift attests to the connecting and disconnecting qualities of material culture and what Philipp Schorch and Martin Saxer have termed *thing~ties*. Gift exchange in Atlantic Africa cannot be comprehended in a notion of exchange of discrete entities (things) with relations between them (ties). Rather, relations were embedded and materialised in gifts while simultaneously constituting them. The *thing~ties* of gift exchange were inherently processual and open-ended. In other words, the material processes of becoming imperial were far from teleological. If nothing else, the struggles and misunderstandings about the meaning of gifts highlight the fact that gifts had the capacity to establish unforeseen and contradictory relationships, opening up potentially new ways of resistance and collaboration. Hence, the act of gift exchange was invested with the potential to impose power as much as to forge alliances and generate resistance.

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Notes

1. Lieutenant Henry Need to the Admiralty, 30 January 1855, ART/10/1, MS65/134, National Maritime Museum Manuscripts, Royal Museums Greenwich.
2. Because of its limited length, this chapter focuses on gifts given by British imperial agents. Yet African elites often reciprocated these gifts and used them as a means of building political, economic and cultural relations. For a detailed discussion of gifts from Atlantic African elites in European museum collections see, amongst others, Kingdon (2018) and Kingdon and Berselaar (2019); for East Africa see Bennett (2018).
3. Anna Tsing writes of 'objects of exchange'. In accordance with the theme of this volume, I use the term 'thing of exchange' instead.
4. From an interview conducted by the author with J. O. S. Ayomike in Warri, Nigeria, in 2015.
5. The King and Chiefs of Grand Bonny to Consul George Hartley, 22 October 1873, CALPROF 4/1, Vol. 3, National Archives of Nigeria, Ibadan.
6. Captain James Nicol, SS *Biafra*, to Consul George Hartley, 30 October 1873; King and Chiefs of Grand Bonny to Consul George Hartley, 3 November 1873, CALPROF 4/1, Vol. 3, National Archives Ibadan.
7. Victoria and Albert Museum, Sword, museum number: M.17&A-1978, http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O97757/sword-unknown/, last update 12 February 2018 (accessed 1 September 2019).
8. Correspondence between Consul Edward Hewett et al. and the Foreign Office, 22 May 1884 to 8 November 1885, FO 84/1939, National Archives, London.
9. Arthur Mivay to Charles Livingstone Esq. 9 December 1870, CALPROF 2/1, Vol. 22, Foreign Office Despatches to the Consuls, No. 35, National Archives Ibadan.
10. G. Clarke, Chair of the Court of Equity to Consul G. Hartley, 6 September 1875, CALPROF 3/1, National Archives Ibadan.
11. George Neville to Nanna Olomu, 19 August 1915, no accession number, Nanna Living History Museum, Koko.
12. From an interview conducted by the author with Anthony Nanna in Koko, Nigeria, in 2015.

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4

How pilgrimage souvenirs turn into religious remittances and powerful medicine

Catrien Notermans and Jean Kommers

Introduction

Religious travelling and souvenir shopping are interrelated movements: pilgrims travel to sacred sites where they shop for site-specific things that are brought back home to offer as precious gifts to close relatives and friends. While investigating the Marian pilgrimages of Catholic migrant women from West and Central Africa who now live in Paris, we found that many of them had become experts in souvenir shopping and gift giving.[1] In the fall of 2015, we met the 55-year-old Congolese woman Emmanuelle in her Parisian residence. She used to make regular pilgrimages to different Marian sites across Europe and to Marian sanctuaries in Paris. She told us that she spends easily half of her pilgrimage time and a third of her travel budget on the acquisition of souvenirs like Marian statues, candles, rosaries, bottles filled with holy water and house decorations. Her apartment was transformed into a chapel-like place, the walls and cabinets decorated with images of Mary and other Catholic saints. The souvenirs were not there for decoration, but for protection. By intensifying and expanding her devotion and souvenir shopping (exploring new pilgrimage sites, learning about more rituals and discovering new souvenirs), she gradually assumed the position of Mary's intermediary, transferring her protective power to others, in both her Parisian environment and her homeland. She uses her stock of holy water to bless visitors, friends and relatives, and sends her supply of hundreds of small and transportable souvenirs as gifts to relatives and parishes back home in Congo, to protect and heal them.

Emmanuelle shares these activities with her African sisters (relatives and friends) in Paris and with the larger group of Catholic African migrant women whom we interviewed. These women are middle-aged, have West and Central African backgrounds (coming from Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Congo-Brazzaville, Congo-Kinshasa, Guinea, Ivory Coast and Senegal) and migrated to France for reasons of marriage, education or medical treatment. Being raised as Catholics in postcolonial francophone Africa, they share their devotion to Mary as well as an understanding of religion as a protective healing strategy to combat misfortune and evil forces. In this chapter, we take Emmanuelle as the protagonist and continue listening to her story in order to explore how, in processes of travelling and connecting, cheap mass-produced pilgrimage souvenirs get new meanings and alternative uses. Exploring the narrative journeys of pilgrimage souvenirs, we will show that these souvenirs start their social life at the souvenir market as commodities of little economic value, and are then set in motion by female devotees who change the value of these little things by imbuing them with divine power and giving them symbolic value. Passing through the case of Emmanuelle, we explore the conditions under which the souvenirs 'circulate in specific cultural and historical milieus' (Appadurai 1986, 4). We follow the things-in-motion in order to understand what meanings are reinscribed in their forms, uses and trajectories. By 'thinking through the things', this study supplements the limited knowledge, noted by Hillary Kaell (2012), about why and to whom women give souvenirs.

Women's gifts, as Aafke Komter states (2005, 77), 'are not exclusively friendly acts, springing from sympathy or love, but may also be vehicles to exercise power'. Power indeed matters a great deal in women's souvenir gift giving, not only in their relationships with the recipients of their gifts, but also in their relationship with the divine world. Kaell similarly argues that women, by imbuing pilgrimage souvenirs with divine presence, create powerful tools for asserting 'soft' authority at home (2012, 134). We continue to observe the aspect of power in women's gift giving by studying how women tap into Mary's power and subsequently exercise and receive power by donating and sending pilgrimage souvenirs. What we add to Kaell's analysis is the dimension of migration and transnational kin networks.

When we noticed that the pilgrimage souvenirs crossed large distances, not only across Europe but also between continents, thereby connecting the female senders with their homeland and the relatives living there, we decided to look at them from the perspective of remittances. Consistently with Lisa Cliggett's (2005) study on Zambian 'gift remittances', we distance ourselves from the predominantly economic approach to remittances in migration debates. We rather stress the social dimension of transnational gift giving, the reciprocity that is involved and

the symbolic values attached to the pilgrimage souvenirs by both senders and recipients. Leaving behind the exclusively monetary approach to remittances, we aim to find out what use the sending of small, cheap and mass-produced souvenirs can be to recipients who are often supposed to be primarily in need of money and consumer goods.

By studying the social and symbolic dimensions of remittances, we aim to make a valuable contribution, as, to date, religion has hardly been considered in the debate on remittances (Dannecker 2015). Our study deliberately focuses on the importance of religion, not only to the senders but also to the recipients, and shows that religion contributes much to the shaping of material connectivities. The pilgrimage souvenirs appear to connect in different ways, corresponding with various stages in women's connecting work. As commodities on the souvenir market, they are bought and prayed upon to establish *transcendental connections between the migrants and the spiritual world*, in particular Saint Mary. As precious gifts, imbued with Mary's power, they are donated to African migrant women in the metropolis to establish *connections within the community of fellow travellers and Marian devotees*. And finally, as religious remittances, the pilgrimage souvenirs establish *transnational connections between the migrants in Europe and their African homelands.*

Central questions in our analysis of the pilgrimage souvenirs were: which pilgrimage souvenirs are bought to be sent back home, what new meanings are attached to them along their trajectories and what are the effects on both senders and recipients in terms of power? Before we go back to Emmanuelle's story, we turn to the wider group of African migrant women we studied. We then present how our study responds to the existing literature on gift giving and remittances, and how we combine the different insights to understand the power in women's gift giving. On the basis of Emmanuelle's experience, we will develop our argument that pilgrimage souvenirs are set in motion as religious remittances and become powerful medicine through which migrant women heal and protect themselves and their relatives in a transnational network.

A specific group of African Catholic migrant women in Europe

The focus in this chapter is on women, as they were the main actors at the pilgrimage sites we studied; the few men we met there pointed to their wives as the experts whom they followed on their journey. Women were also the ones devoted to the souvenir shopping; their husbands, if present, patiently waited for them in an outdoor café. Emmanuelle

straightforwardly said: 'Only women do the shopping; I've never seen one single man making this sacrifice.' Gender clearly plays a role in these pilgrimage activities, because the travelling, shopping and gift giving are exclusively done by women (see also Kaell 2012; Komter 2005; Miller 1998).

When, in the course of our analysis, the special relevance of the acquiring and sending of pilgrimage souvenirs became clear, we selected Emmanuelle for our case study in 2015. Emmanuelle's religious practices are emblematic of the wider group of Catholic migrant women that we studied: all travel frequently to Marian sites across Europe and share with each other information, souvenirs and stories, thus expanding their social-religious network along the way. The sites which Emmanuelle visits are crucial gathering points for the women who participated in the research (see also Notermans 2012). Emmanuelle was followed during three pilgrimages to San Damiano, which, together with the visits at her Parisian home, resulted in a particular intimacy with her. This greatly facilitated informal communication and offered the opportunity to compare verbal accounts with observed practices.

Emmanuelle may be considered representative of a specific group within the wider category of African migrants in Paris: female, middle-aged, middle-class, educated migrant mothers having French citizenship and travelling along the routes of an extended network of Marian sites. The Marian sites most frequently visited by them are Lourdes (southern France), Fatima (Portugal) and San Damiano (Italy), but Banneux and Beauraing (Belgium), and Lisieux and Montligeon (northern France) are also favourite destinations. Women's *Wanderlust* comes from profound feelings of being disconnected. Having one's family around is not a matter of course in the metropolis, which contrasts sharply with social life in the communities of origin. Conjugal relationships often lack confidentiality and (spatial and emotional) intimacy, while relationships with (especially) maternal kin are vital for their security and wellbeing: having one's kin around makes women feel safe, strong and respected. The loneliness in Paris is due to the fact that close relatives either stayed behind in their homelands or settled in other parts of the Parisian metropolis, France or Europe, while conjugal relationships do not grow close and intimate in the diaspora. Besides the threat of loneliness caused by absence of relatives, women may also experience threats coming from relatives in their homeland. Not all relatives support migrants in their migration endeavours; some express jealousy or make heavy demands on the migrants' monetary remittances.

The different threats that women face in Paris explain why they look so eagerly for ways to protect themselves. They also create new families

by sharing pilgrimage activities and Marian devotion with other Catholic African migrant women in the Parisian diaspora (see Notermans, Turolla and Jansen 2016). Missing the crucial figure of their mother to turn to for solace, they take refuge in powerful Mary, who herself is considered a (transnational) mother who never abandons her children around the world. To merit Mary's protection, the women in our study developed such an intense programme of religious travel that their mobility became a kind of lifestyle, vital in framing their new lives. 'I'm so in love with Mary,' Emmanuelle said when she expressed her happiness at leaving her apartment with some cash in her pocket to spend in the souvenir shop adjoining the chapel of Rue du Bac in Paris.

Gift giving and remittances united in religious remittances

Since the classic *Essai sur le don* by Marcel Mauss (1923–4), the concept of 'gift' has been prominent in anthropological theories of exchange. The pilgrimage souvenirs are characterised by the main qualities of 'gift': they are bought with the intention of being donated, and comprise relations of debt and dependency, moral dimensions like honour and respect, and the dynamics of status. By using the concept of gift in our analysis of women's souvenir practices, we are able to pay attention to the two different modes of reciprocity involved, the transcendental and the transnational. Concerning the first one, the gift giving relates closely to an investment in building a close and profound relationship with Mary. By intensifying their devotion, and by buying and distributing all kinds of souvenirs, the women honour Mary and expect to receive Mary's graces in return. When their investment in Mary is rewarded with an abundance of blessings, which makes the women feel strong and self-confident, they start to act as Mary's intermediaries and spread her blessings to others.

When Emmanuelle got her French citizenship and received many other graces in her post-migration life, she felt that she was appreciated by Mary and could count on her in all her prayers. She recounted:

> Now that I know how to approach Mary and to deal with her, I can be her intermediary. When someone explains his or her specific problem to me, I can transmit it to Mary in such a way that she will respond. I know how to make the correct prayers and sacrifices. I can stand in for that person because Mary and I know each other very well and she will never leave me unheard.

Women like Emmanuelle do not do their devotional work for Mary or for other people only; they also strive for a change of status for themselves. Praying for loved ones and donating the souvenirs to them is not just an altruistic act, but also a way to reposition themselves as confident Catholic migrant women and to climb upwards and closer to the power of the heavenly saints. The status which Emmanuelle achieves finds expression in her room-sized home shrine. Amidst the pictures of popes, and Mary and other saints, there are two portraits of herself. 'Indeed, that's me,' she explained. 'I deliberately put myself there.' As we will read in Emmanuelle's story later on, she expects to get much in return, not only in terms of empowerment from Mary or respect from her friends in Paris, but also from the recipients of her gifts in Congo.

When women send pilgrimage souvenirs to their relatives in Africa, they reinscribe new meanings to the gifts, which we therefore might call 'religious remittances'. Extending the meaning of the concept 'remittance' from money transfers to the sending of religious things is in line with other proposals seeking to widen the economic scope of the concept, like the notion of 'social remittances' introduced by Peggy Levitt (1998; Levitt and Lamba-Nieves 2011), and that of 'gift remittances' introduced by Cliggett (2005). Religious remittances highlight the social basis of gift giving and 'investment in people' (Cliggett 2005, 36) rather than their monetary value. While the term 'remittance' implies a unidirectional flow, the focus on pilgrimage souvenirs as gift remittances draws reciprocity and mutual benefits into the debate. In our case it may help to rectify a widely held 'gender myth' in the literature on gender and remittances (Kunz 2015, 209). This myth represents women as primarily altruistic compared with men, and ascribes women's altruism to their so-called 'traditional gender roles' (e.g. Blue 2009, 65–7; Abrego 2009, 1071–2). This is relevant because the women are as keen on their own interests as on those of the people to whom they send the souvenirs. Interestingly, in their verbal accounts, the women in our study enthusiastically confirmed their altruism and 'traditional' caring gender role; however, they also articulated the benefits and power that they gained in their accounts and practices with the pilgrimage souvenirs. They did not remit pilgrimage souvenirs because their traditional gender role would have them do so. Instead, they creatively adjusted and re-signified their gender roles and reinvented this particular kind of gift giving as an answer to the specific problems they encountered in their post-migration life. In many ways, the women benefited from the sending of religious souvenirs, as will be illustrated by Emmanuelle's experiences and actions.

Emmanuelle: an expert in souvenir shopping and remitting

Emmanuelle described her first years as an illegal immigrant in Paris as characterised by loneliness and insecurity. In 1996, her precarious situation reached a climax when her only daughter fell seriously ill and was on the verge of dying. At this moment of despair, Emmanuelle discovered the renowned Marian chapel in Rue du Bac where she bought a miraculous medal and put it on her daughter's ailing body. When, two days later, her daughter recovered, Emmanuelle realised that she had been saved by Mary. She also recognised that she could use Mary's power to get a grip on her situation, and even heal and act as a mediator.

Emmanuelle started making weekly visits to the chapel in Rue du Bac, which is by far the most popular shrine in Paris. According to its foundation legend, the Virgin Mary appeared to the nun Catherine Labouré in 1830 in order to offer the world a miraculous medal (Figure 4.1). Reproductions of the medal are oval, usually of small size (1 x 1.5 cm) and meant to be attached to a necklace or pinned to the inside of one's

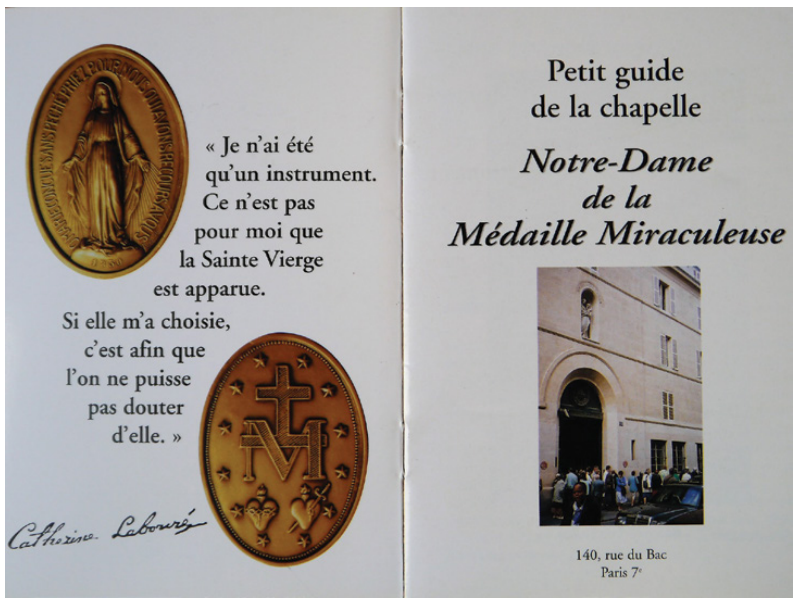

Figure 4.1 The Miraculous Medal, in a pilgrim's guide to the Rue du Bac chapel in Paris, entitled 'Chapelle Notre-Dame de la Médaille Miraculeuse'. Private collection of the author.

Figure 4.2 The Green Scapular, on top of the accompanying information leaflet provided by the Rue du Bac chapel in Paris. Private collection of the author.

garments. One side of the medal shows Mary standing on half a globe, her hands raised level with her hips, and her fingers sending out rays of light. The reverse shows a cross (representing Christ's sacrificial death), an M (representing Mary) and two hearts (the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary). In the souvenir shop adjacent to the chapel in Rue du Bac, Emmanuelle soon discovered another powerful gift: the green scapular (Figure 4.2). The scapular (3 x 4 cm) is made of a rectangular piece of green cloth and shows a full standing image of the Virgin Mary with the radiant Immaculate Heart on one side and the burning heart of Mary, pierced by a sword and with drops of blood falling down from it, on the reverse side. A loop is sewn onto the green cloth to pull a green cotton string through, or to pin it, like the medal, to the inside of one's garments.

Emmanuelle started to buy the medals and scapulars to send home, believing they would grant Mary's protection to those wearing them. She also expanded her travel to other Marian pilgrimage sites and became an expert on the souvenir markets in Lourdes and San Damiano. Similarly to what Kaell (2012) found in her study of women buying Holy Land souvenirs as gifts, we too noticed that souvenir shopping was not seen as pleasurable recreation time but as hard work; some women even missed crucial rituals because, as they said, 'they had important work to do'.

From cheap mass-produced commodity to precious gift

On her pilgrimages to Lourdes, Emmanuelle always takes bottled holy water home, as it is a crucial item in her protective healing work. Besides the small bottles to be sent to her home country, she collects large containers of holy water to be distributed among friends and relatives in Paris. The souvenir market in San Damiano is Emmanuelle's favourite one for bulk shopping. She is well informed about price fluctuations and always able to negotiate a deal. During her pilgrimage in 2012, Emmanuelle bought about 300 rosaries and 500 white handkerchiefs to be shipped home. As lengthy prayer sessions in Latin are an outstanding characteristic of the ritual programme in San Damiano, Emmanuelle bought lots of prayer leaflets to be sent and distributed with the rosaries. Pearly-white handkerchiefs, too, are a local souvenir speciality of the Italian site. Emmanuelle buys many to send to Congo, often as complements to the miraculous medal and scapular from Paris, and small amounts of holy water from Lourdes or San Damiano.

By default, the souvenirs are not imbued with power; the items have to be consecrated to hold Mary's power. Only then do they turn from commodities into precious gifts. Officially, this work is reserved to priests. Though Emmanuelle always asks the priests to bless her merchandise, she also acts with authority, knowing there is more work to be done. Besides getting the priestly blessing, she places them for a while next to the Blessed Sacrament in church, puts them at the feet of Mary's statue in the chapel of Rue du Bac, rubs them against the grotto in Lourdes, exposes them to the sunlight in San Damiano or articulates (Latin) prayers over them. These are all ritual animations of the 'little things', the mass-produced, not yet enchanted commodities, turning them into 'media of presence, used to act upon the world, upon others, and upon oneself' (Orsi 2005, 49). After this, Emmanuelle keeps the gifts at home until she has enough stock, and enough savings, to ship them to Congo.

Not all souvenirs that are turned into precious gifts will continue on their way as religious remittances and gain the power to protect and heal across borders. Though the women we studied usually buy all kinds of pilgrimage souvenirs (including postcards, bookmarks, mugs, key rings and various house decorations), they consider only a particular set of souvenirs suitable for sending home. These are the small holy water bottles from Lourdes, the miraculous medals and green scapulars from the Rue du Bac chapel in Paris, and the rosaries, pearl-white handkerchiefs and prayer leaflets from San Damiano. These souvenir-remittances are often sent in particular combinations in order to join their powers and make them heal and protect.

From precious gift to religious remittance and holy medicine

The souvenirs that are appropriate for sending home have three corresponding characteristics: they are light and thus transportable, they can easily be worn, carried or applied to the body, and their material allows the owner to feel or touch them repeatedly. To understand the changed meaning and uses of the souvenir gifts as religious remittances, we first turn to Emmanuelle's experience of remitting miraculous medals.

When Emmanuelle's nephew, the then 10-year-old son of her younger sister, had declining school results because of vision problems, Emmanuelle sent money for glasses, together with a miraculous medal. After two months, the boy did not need his glasses any more and performed well in school again. This rapid healing was, to Emmanuelle, a sign that her nephew had been cursed by a jealous person who envied his success at school and the financial support he got from his aunt in Paris. According to Emmanuelle, when a medal works so promptly it means that the problem was caused by black magic, performed by someone who wanted to hurt and obstruct him in school. A delay in a medal's working would show that it is a normal malady, to be cured by doctors in hospital. 'When it is a magic malady,' Emmanuelle explained, 'Mary will waste no time and heal instantly.'

She told other, similar stories about miraculous medals. An interesting example concerns the medal she sent to her father, who fell seriously ill in 2002. Being in France, Emmanuelle could not directly intervene, but sending him a medal was a way of taking care of him across borders. While she expected the medal to help him, it killed him instead. Emmanuelle said that the medal was apparently too powerful for him. When it was put under his pillow, he dreamt there was a Lady showing him that he was going to burn. Emmanuelle explained that the rays of light coming from Mary's hands are 'blessings for us' but 'fire for those who do wrong' (Figure 4.3). Her father admitted that he did wrong to people by blocking their luck. At first he promised to stop doing evil, but as soon as he resumed his bad behaviour he died. Though he died because of the miraculous medal, Mary could not be blamed for that. He was apparently not a good person, but caused a lot of trouble to people.

Emmanuelle's assertion that her father died because of the miraculous medal is a strong statement in many ways. It testifies to the strength of her faith in the powers of the medal, it proves that she could work with the medal over long distances, and it shows her faith in the justice of Mary's

Figure 4.3 Statue of Saint Mary in the Rue du Bac chapel in Paris. In a pilgrim's information booklet, 'Catherine Labouré: la sainte du silence'. Private collection of the author.

actions even when they killed her own father. The 'little things' had become religious remittances, charged with Mary's power, and useful to intervene in family matters and bring about change. As it concerns European Marian power as well, it is deemed stronger than the spiritual powers at home, such as the evil powers of witch doctors and the hidden powers captured in amulets. The imbued Marian medals are considered so potent that they can act on their own, waging their own war under Mary's direction.

Emmanuelle describes the medals' protective and healing power as chasing or destroying the devil and releasing someone's luck. She does her transnational healing work by using Marian power to unblock what has been blocked with magical power. As a religious healer, she helps her relatives at home to overcome illness and misfortune by defeating evil spirits in the name of Mary. From an African perspective, religious power ('witchcraft') can be used for both healing and killing. This recurs in Emmanuelle's

way of working with Marian souvenirs: in order to heal with Mary's divine power, she has to remove obstacles and even allow Mary to kill the people who cause these obstacles. Emmanuelle adopted the idea of Mary combating witchcraft while also attributing killing forces to her.

The religious ideas of immigrants are often the product of missionary work done in the past (Levitt 2007, 14). To understand the meanings that both senders and recipients attach to the pilgrimage souvenirs as religious remittances, we should consider the historical missionary discourse concerning African cultures (see also Levitt 2007, 196ff.). European missionaries saw religious power in terms of a dichotomy between good (related to God) and evil (related to the devil). This contrast fundamentally deviated from African religions, which lacked such strictly dualistic notions. Ironically, in their attempts to adjust Christianity to local customs and make their work understandable and acceptable, they unintentionally integrated those elements which they wanted to eliminate. Instead of witchcraft being replaced by Christianity, witchcraft became a major aspect of African Christianity (see also Merz 2008; Meyer 1999). African Christians adopted the Christianity-versus-witchcraft opposition to distinguish benevolent from destructive divine powers, a duality we now see recurring in the Parisian context: migrant women employ Mary's power to combat African witchcraft (see also Notermans 2019).

As the women in our study and the people in their communities of origin share an ideology that 'resonates with a global religious identity' (Levitt 2007, 84), they not only share transnational connections but also constitute transcendental communities. This implies that they and the recipients of the souvenirs have in common a religious idiom, certain moral standards and an epistemology based on elements of a shared religious worldview. They act within a shared 'religious space' (Levitt 2007), comprising (global) Roman Catholic ideas as well as (local) African ideas that illness and 'bad luck' come from jealous people using witchcraft or black magic (Mbiti 1991).

The particular pilgrimage souvenirs that Emmanuelle deploys as religious remittances have gained, through her pilgrimage work, the power to heal and protect. The miraculous medal, the green scapular from the Rue du Bac chapel in Paris and the white handkerchief from San Damiano all have curing and protective power, although they work in slightly different ways: the medal, for instance, protects against the devil while the scapular is used for exorcism. The pearl-white handkerchief is said to cure when ailing body parts are stroked with it. An accompanying bottle of holy water is used to wet the handkerchief and make its working stronger. 'It only works', Emmanuelle says, 'when the illness comes

from the devil. When the devil isn't behind it, none of the objects, neither medal nor scapular, blessed water or handkerchief will work.'

According to the problem or illness Emmanuelle has to heal, she sends particular souvenirs in particular combinations together with meticulous instructions for use. In the same way as medical doctors prescribe different medicines to be taken differently, Emmanuelle prescribes for each particular illness a specific combination of souvenirs to be applied differently. Sometimes, at the time that the person would use the medicine, Emmanuelle performs a novena (nine-days prayer) in a Parisian church to accomplish her work.

The special effort Emmanuelle makes for some relatives contrasts strongly with her refusal to care for others. Those who blame her for not sending enough money and envy her for being a successful migrant in Europe do not share in her generosity. Rather than giving in to their demands and sending them the religious medicine for healing or protection, she uses it to protect herself. From the migrants' perspective, the extended family is not a harmoniously supporting network. That is why migrant women like Emmanuelle differentiate between those who are reliable and those who are not, and only donate to the first group.

For her huge investments in travelling and remitting pilgrimage souvenirs, Emmanuelle never wants to be directly compensated. 'They are gifts, not business,' she explains. She nevertheless admits that she receives much respect and appreciation in return. Following the successful healings she has produced, her status in the family as an international healer has become established. Emmanuelle finds herself in the position of a powerful intermediary, buying and distributing Mary's souvenirs, imbuing them with divine power and producing all kinds of healings. This work also imbues her with Mary's power and empowers her to act on behalf of Mary.

The way Emmanuelle combines different souvenirs to give them the extra power of medicine reminds us of Tim Ingold's thinking on how materials correspond (Chapter 1 in this volume). He states that things are not ready to use; they rather become something in the process of making. When materials correspond, he states, they become something new together. This we recognise in Emmanuelle's creative practice of combining souvenirs for new uses. She improvises and joins with the world of pilgrimage souvenirs in order to make something completely new: a set of souvenirs whose materials correspond through absorbing, including or expanding each other. She makes the souvenirs correspond to join their powers and transform them into an exceptionally powerful healing power.

Directed and undirected religious remittances

At this point in our effort to go deep into the little things-in-motion that the migrant women sent home as religious remittances, it is relevant to distinguish the abovementioned 'directed gifts' from another group of religious remittances, the 'undirected gifts' (a distinction also mentioned by Kaell 2012, 138, 147). The directed gifts are precious gifts that are sent as religious remittance and holy medicine to specific relatives at home. Emmanuelle sends them only to relatives with whom she has good relations. We asked Emmanuelle to explain the difference between money and pilgrimage souvenirs as directed gifts and remittances. She said:

> Money can be sent to everybody, the souvenirs cannot, you carefully select for each person something special. Besides, relatives easily spend the money on one single thing while the blessings they receive from the souvenirs may give them manifold things that will last a long time.

By sending close relatives religious rather than monetary remittances, she is able to help them in the long term and in multiple ways. Moreover, she remits on her own conditions rather than responding to monetary claims made by others. Nevertheless, Emmanuelle also sends money to selected close relatives, for medical treatment, surgery in hospital or school fees. Living close to a big Parisian market, she regularly buys clothes, shoes and accessories for them, but these are remittances of another and less valuable kind than the religious ones.

The undirected gifts are those bought in bulk and distributed widely among associates. The bulk items Emmanuelle sends consist of rosaries and prayer leaflets; they are directed to prayer groups, priests and parishes at home. First, these items are sent to a beloved sister or friend in Kinshasa, who then personally distributes them among prayer groups and parishes, and recipients are told to pray for the sender. With all the prayers and blessings she gets in return, Emmanuelle finds her work more than rewarding: 'By sending gifts, the good will come back to me. It will open new avenues, unblock the things in my life that have been blocked.' As an example of this 'unblocking', she mentions that she expects soon to receive a positive response to her prayer for grandchildren to fill her empty house.

To her, the most precious return gift is the fact that the recipients praise her and speak positively about her. Recognition as a successful and

generous migrant in Europe is one of the best things a migrant can get after all the suffering of making a living there. Another crucial reward in return for the bulk shipments is a welcome at home (see also Cliggett 2005, 44). Sending the rosaries to prayer groups and parishes is a way of securing accommodation when returning one day. A kind of upward mobility is also achieved: when she returns, she will not be just with her family but with religious mediators like herself, and her status will be equivalent to the status she has gained in Europe.

Significant in Emmanuelle's account is that she not only attributes higher powers to Mary vis-à-vis evil spirits, but that she accordingly gives herself a higher position vis-à-vis the people at home who lack the knowledge and methods to evoke those powers. People respect her, she says, 'because she is so close to Mary and Jesus'. Herewith she upgrades her position in her transnational social field.

Conclusion: pilgrimage souvenirs and their multiple connectivities

Our study focused on a variety of small, cheap and site-specific souvenirs that a particular group of African Catholic migrant women in Europe select from the material culture of European Marian pilgrimage. We studied them as things-in-motion that get new meanings and uses along the way. Some of the pilgrimage souvenirs turn into precious gifts (to people in Paris), others act as powerful medicine (to those in Africa). Besides the medicine that is sent back home as a directed gift to heal and empower close relatives, women also send undirected bulk-gifts to parishes and prayer groups to enlarge the blessings and status appreciations that they will get in return.

Women's remitting appears to be far from altruistic. The migrant women sought ways to re-signify their gender obligations and to adapt these to the new migratory context. In many ways, the women benefited from buying and circulating those trifling things that may appear 'worthless' to the outsider. Besides helping the family at home, they used the souvenirs to protect themselves against unforeseen circumstances in the migratory context and against malicious relatives in Africa. They received respect in the family, and a good reputation as successful migrants in the society at home. They acquired power by giving souvenirs, a power they used to intervene in family matters at home and which enabled them to remit on their own conditions. Finally, through remitting the souvenirs,

they also worked on their own empowerment. The more competent they were at working with the religious gifts, the more control they gained over their life in the new environment, and the closer they grew to Mary and to becoming her intermediary. The women sought the opportunity to be charged with Mary's power in order to use this power for others but also for themselves.

Besides all this, perhaps the most relevant contribution this study offers to the existing literature on women's gift giving and remitting practices lies in demonstrating the religious meaning and the 'magical effect' (Haldrup 2017, 58) of the souvenirs: they generate cross-border healing and protection, they eliminate evil powers as well as the people using these, and make bodies invulnerable. The women send religious gifts that actively interrupt and intervene in family worlds, helping them to produce change in unwanted situations. These migrant women creatively integrate the newly found pilgrimage souvenirs into pre-existing worldviews and healing strategies. In Africa, healing powers are assumed to increase significantly with the movement of healers and medicines (Dilger, Kane and Langwick 2012). These powers now seem to escalate with women's travelling to and across Europe. The centre of their religiosity is not the home but the European pilgrimage sites which become re-entangled with the missionary discourse on 'Christianity-versus-witchcraft', this time with new actors and new motivations, and radiating power to the migrants' communities in Africa. Adding the notion of religious remittance to the existing notions of economic and social remittances makes clear how the sending of the religious things and the evolving *thing~ties* (Saxer and Schorch, Introduction to this volume) result in forms of empowerment that help women to care and connect, to overcome the difficulties they meet as migrants and to re-identify themselves as European Catholic Africans.

Note

1. To follow the things-in-motion, multi-sited fieldwork was conducted between 2009 and 2015 among Catholic (West and Central) African migrant-pilgrims in France and Italy. The women were followed along their religious routes in Paris, France and Italy, and visited at their homes in Paris. The fieldwork consisted of participant observation combined with informal conversations and semi-structured interviews: 40 in Lourdes in France, 40 in San Damiano in Italy, and 15 with (some of the same) women in their Parisian residences. The information on the West and Central African social-religious contexts of women's lives and gift-giving practices in Paris is based on the long-term (1992–2006) research of one of the authors (Notermans) on women, religion and kinship in francophone Cameroon. The fieldwork was done by Catrien Notermans in collaboration with Maya Turolla, MSc (see Notermans, Turolla and Jansen, 2013, 2016). This text was written by Catrien Notermans in cooperation with Jean Kommers.

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5 Intervention
Invoking the gods, or the apotheosis of the Barbie doll

Natalie Göltenboth

Dolls on display

Four old-fashioned Barbie dolls lift their arms skywards. Their frozen gestures evoke a dancing pose, an invitation or a plea. Erected on white pedestals, they are almost at eye level with the audience. Their prominent position attracts attention.

The dolls vary in style and dress. There is a red-haired one with feverish eyes staring at the piece of charcoal in front of her. Next to her stands an elegant dark-skinned Barbie lady surrounded by some rusty iron tools. The gentle blonde wears a dress in white and blue. Her face is mirrored in a bowl of water. And finally, the fourth one is a princess in a colourful lace dress with a glass of honey at her feet.

The Barbie dolls appear as powerful beings, each one with an echo of the past in her glance. They dominate the room with their gestures and silent waiting for something to begin. The materials – honey, water, charcoal and iron – are awaiting their activation. A screen is illuminating the scene with its constantly changing images: a surgery, a beauty salon, a gym, firefighters, junkyards, a fashion show, a spa, burning woods and the sea – extending as far as the horizon – alternate every other second. The video images spread their artificial light over the Barbies' faces in a never-ending loop.

The installation is inspired by the Afro-Cuban religion Santería and its ideas and concepts, which moved from West Africa to Cuba and as far afield as Munich, disentangled from their familiar icons, appropriating new objects, images and cultural fragments. Playing with the Assumption of the

Figure 5.1 Ochún, Orícha of sweet water, love and beauty. Installation by Natalie Göltenboth, Symposium Connecting Materialities/Material Connectivities, Munich 2017, LMU Center for Advanced Studies. Photo by Vivien Ahrens.

Figure 5.2 Yemayá, Orícha of the Sea. Installation by Natalie Göltenboth, Symposium Connecting Materialities/Material Connectivities, Munich 2017, LMU Center for Advanced Studies. Photo by Vivien Ahrens.

Virgin Mary, it mirrors the elevation in Santería ritual practice of the Barbie dolls, which had been ordinary toys for children before they were brought all the way from Miami to Havana to become sacred figurines representing West African deities called 'Oríchas' or 'Saints', who, in turn, had travelled all the way from Yorubaland to Cuba. Thus, dolls, and especially Barbie dolls, serve as a platform of connection for the most diverse belief systems, cultural values, family ties and aesthetic systems.

Concepts: dis-connections and fractions

Even though the history of the Afro-Cuban religions and their material figures is largely about disruptions and fractions, it is also about the (re)making of connections. New traces and ties have been woven around dolls and saints. But let us first consider the situation of fractions before we follow the pathways of connectivity. One question that will concern us here is: how can a Barbie doll become a sacred figure on an Afro-Cuban Santería altar?

People from different regions in West Africa were transported to Cuba during the transatlantic slave trade, which started at the beginning of the sixteenth century; slavery itself was officially abolished in Cuba in 1886 but continued until the end of the nineteenth century. A variety of West African religious concepts and sacred entities accompanied the slaves in their imagination. In their homelands, these sacred beings had been visualised through carved sculptures and wooden masks that decorated, and still decorate, the Vodou altars in Nigeria, Togo and Benin (Lawal 1996).

It is remarkable that the material culture of the Vodou adepts of West Africa did not survive the transfer into the 'New World' (see Brown 1993; Ramos 1996). During the 500 years of the transatlantic slave trade, traditions of skilled manual work, such as carving and painting, were re-adopted in Cuba on only a very few occasions (see Ortiz 1973). One reason was the prohibition of any kind of African religious expression, whence the need for camouflage tactics that led to the Afro-American syncretism – the fusion of Catholic iconography with religious contents from West Africa (see Palmié 1991). Thus, during the first centuries of Spanish colonial rule in Cuba, the sacred beings of the Yoruba pantheon – the Oríchas – were addressed in the figures of Catholic saints. Another reason is given by anthropologist David Brown, who argues that the process of creolisation is accompanied

Figure 5.3 Changó, Orícha of fire, virility and power. Installation by Natalie Göltenboth, Symposium Connecting Materialities/Material Connectivities, Munich 2017, LMU Center for Advanced Studies. Photo by Vivien Ahrens.

Figure 5.4 Ogún, Orícha of blacksmith and iron, cutting and separating. Installation by Natalie Göltenboth, Symposium Connecting Materialities/Material Connectivities, Munich 2017, LMU Center for Advanced Studies. Photo by Vivien Ahrens.

by the adoption of precious status symbols of the dominant culture, which in colonial times were, first and foremost, colourful images of Catholic saints and porcelain Madonna statues (see Brown 1993, 44–87). In the times of Ken and Barbie originating from the USA, these dolls, among other things because of the values they represent, have replaced the saints and Madonnas, followed by ordinary plastic dolls which also suit the purpose. At this point, we can state that at least three different sets of ties are involved in the creation of Afro-Cuban Oríchas: concepts of West-African religious entities, Catholic iconography and glamorous dolls stemming from US mass production.

The disentanglement of images or figures from their original significance in the context of Afro-Cuban religions creates a situation in which the eye, which we thought to be a useful tool in the distinction of religious objects from everyday things, leaves us disoriented. Entering a house in which the Afro-Cuban religion Santería is practised, the visitor might stumble upon a cuddly toy or cheesy souvenir which is introduced as 'Yemayá, the goddess of the sea' or Changó, 'the Orícha of virility' (see Göltenboth 2003, 2006). One feels that the aspect of camouflage is still present, and that images and material figurines often do not show but merely hide their meaning. The sacredness of objects in Afro-Cuban religious contexts is not inherent in material figures and images per se, but almost every material thing, even the simplest item, can be chosen to be made sacred, charged in a ritual process, and so change its position from a playroom, a shop or the waste bin to an altar. The selection criterion in the process of choice is the ability of the everyday thing to evoke or trigger the concept of the Orícha (Göltenboth 2006).

Sacred objects in the context of Afro-Cuban religions function as ideograms through which content becomes tangible and accessible. At first glance, there is no accordance between form and content. Catholic saints, souvenirs taken from industrial mass production, dolls, including Barbie dolls, are found on Santería altars today as representations of the sacred beings of the Yoruba. We have to understand a situation in which an image, such as the statue of the Catholic St Barbara, is invoked as Changó, the Yoruba deity of virility, fire and royal power. The decisive factors that enabled the fusion were similarities in their iconography: the red colour of their garments and a combative stance symbolised by a sword. Above all, these similarities where sensory material connotations encouraged Afro-Cuban syncretism (Lawal 1996). However, similarities in representation do not point to similarities in content. In this sense, the Catholic saint and the Barbie dolls function as a kind of disguise for the concept of the Orícha. Once arrived in Cuba, the Oríchas were sacred beings that had been stripped of their 'bodies' of representation and therefore developed a strong need to be visualised again in new material objects.

Materiality: connecting bonds

The existence of Oríchas is not limited to conceptual layers, however. The vital force of the sacred beings is directly linked to certain materialities. Honey, sea- or freshwater, blood and iron, and certain plants and stones, can be understood as carrier materials of the Oríchas' specific vital power – *Aché*. Changó is associated with fire and its remains. Ochún is the Orícha of love and beauty, and honey is the material most associated with this female deity of freshwater. Yemayá is said to live and work in the sea, and Ogún, the Orícha of blacksmiths and iron, is invoked by assemblages of iron tools (Ramos 1996). Another habitat of the Oríchas is specific environments as areas of their activities and labour (*trabajo*): beauty salons, fashion shows and freshwater spas for Ochún, the sea and ships for Yemayá, body-building studios and fire departments for Changó, and junkyards and surgeries for Ogún, whose specific ability is to cut and separate. These examples show the connections that have been established through materials, activities and particular sites, forming a direct link to the specific vital forces of the sacred entities.

Most of the objects that decorate the altars of Santería adepts in Cuba have been adapted to the actual lifestyle in Cuba, including contemporary ideas of beauty and desire. Most of them are souvenirs from all over the world, as well as toys and refuse gathered in rubbish dumps, playrooms and shops. However, Barbie dolls are a particular case; they are commodities acquired in stores in the USA and sent as gifts by relatives. As commodities and gifts, they mirror family ties that for decades have connected Cuba and the USA, countries that have been politically separated since the Cuban revolution in 1959. In addition, Barbie dolls are not only saturated with the sacred aura of the Oríchas; they are simultaneously encrusted with a fine texture of Cuban dreams of consumption and the feverish delirium of departure. Like Catholic saints, Barbies are figurines which are highly charged with their own narrative: the story of Ken and Barbie in the US glamour world, a story of success, power and consumption. In this sense, as mentioned above, Barbies represent a desired lifestyle, and their fusion with the sacred Afro-Cuban entities creates new powerful sacred objects. That is what the Oríchas are about: they are supposed to provide their adepts with power that enables them to achieve their goals and realise their dreams, be they capitalistic or of another sort.

The dolls have to undergo a transition process to become part of an altar installation. Dolls that appear on altars have been subjected to a ritual washing ceremony with decoctions of herbs, associated with the Orícha's vital power, which allows them to bear the *Aché* of the sacred beings. A bundle of herbs and other substances has been placed inside their bodies.

Throughout these preparations, nothing has changed the outer appearance of the doll, which preserves its fashionable style and smile. What has been changed or replaced is the connecting ties, and, with them, the idea of the object and its place; the Barbie is now part of a sacred altar installation.

The installation of juxtapositions: '… beautiful as the chance meeting on a dissecting table of a sewing machine and an umbrella …'

The creation of a new paradigm in the making of sacred objects in Cuba can be interpreted as an act of cultural creativity, which forms part of the creolisation processes typical of the Caribbean. The shift from manual fabrication to the creation of a new idea for a prefabricated or found object (*objet trouvé*) is especially interesting from an artistic point of view. I do not want to mix up spheres, but I think we could get some inspiration from the history of contemporary art if we consider the radical change from traditional painting and sculpture to conceptual art, starting with Marcel Duchamp in the 1920s, which put into question the conventional concept of art, together with its related aspects, materiality and skill. The art philosopher Arthur C. Danto explained it as the transition from the appearance of an object to what he calls its 'aboutness' (Danto 1981), which might be translated as a thing plus a concept, which, of course, is invisible to the eye.

The most famous example in the area of contemporary art is Duchamps's 'Fountain' from 1917, a urinal that was only distinguishable from other urinals in public toilets precisely because it was not located in a public toilet but in an art show.[1] Following Danto's method of developing his art theory by inventing specifically designed examples (Danto 1981), we could imagine a show of several Barbie dolls which would all appear equal. Invisibly to the eye, only one of them would have achieved the status of a material thing plus an idea or concept about it that goes beyond its function as a simple doll. This Barbie could be an art object or a sacred art object.

In the domain of the Afro-Cuban religion Santería, we have two possible approaches towards materiality and connectivity. The first is a conceptual layer, where the significance differs from the figure or image that we see with our eyes. The striking issue in that case is the idea, or concept, which has been created for the figure and implemented within its material confines. As a complement to the conceptual layer, there is also a material one, which is characterised by direct connections between certain materialities as part of the environment and the spiritual entities.[2]

The installation reflects the movement of ideas, things and materialities that – after their involuntary dislocation – established new connections, new ties and thus new significances. This juxtaposition might, at first glance, have some similarity to what the French writer André Breton called the surrealist dislocation, quoting the French writer Comte de Lautréamont in *Les Chants de Maldoror*: 'beautiful as the chance meeting on a dissecting table of a sewing machine and an umbrella' (Lautréamont 1978).

The poetic spark that emerges in this process has fascinated me since my first contact with Afro-Cuban altars, and I tried to visualise it in the installation: the dolls might be purchased at a flea market or taken from an altar. The exposed materials could come from waste or a kitchen. Their origins do not matter. Informed by the idea implemented in the arrangement of the installation, figures and materials start to talk their own language.

Notes

1. Society of Independent Artists, Grand Central Palace, April 1917, New York.
2. For the distinction between thing and concept, see also Holbraad and Pedersen 2017.

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6
Stallions of the Indian Ocean

Srinivas Reddy

Introduction

The magnificent South Indian empire of Vijayanagara reached its apex in the early sixteenth century. Nestled among the imposing granite boulders of the Deccan plateau in South-Central India, the empire's capital city of Vijayanagara (modern-day Hampi in Karnataka State) was considered the 'best provided city in the world … as large as Rome, and very beautiful to the sight' (Paes in Sewell 1972, 256–7). The leader of this prosperous kingdom was one of India's most celebrated monarchs, Krishnadevaraya of Vijayanagara, a warrior, statesman, philosopher and poet whose twenty-year reign from 1509 to 1529 is remembered as a golden age in pre-modern South Indian history. It was a dynamic and exciting time that witnessed a renaissance of classical Indian knowledge systems alongside an expanded awareness of India's growing global connections (Rao, Shulman and Subrahmanyam 2004). Just as Krishnadevaraya was ascending the throne of Vijayanagara in 1509, Portuguese colonialist enterprises were quickly taking control of almost all maritime trade in the Indian Ocean. This ancient and thriving trade network, transcontinental and multicultural, was now under the centralised control of the Portuguese empire, bringing about a new form of imperial connectivity that linked Europe, Africa, the Middle East and Asia. With ports, ships and trade routes under their command, the Portuguese effectively controlled the dynamic flow of critical material resources into south and central India. For a shrewd leader like Krishnadevaraya, then, developing trade ties with the powerful Portuguese empire was of critical importance.

For the South Indian and Deccani empires of this time, the most essential imported commodity was the warhorse. These foreign animals of war were in fact the critical factor in determining the outcome of pre-modern Indian warfare. The equation was simple: whosoever had the largest cavalry would prove triumphant in battle. As Eaton observes, 'Heavy warhorses were in special demand, since in the Deccan, as in India generally, state power rested ultimately on units of mounted archers' (Eaton 2005, 59–60). This essential commodity, however, was not readily available to Indians locally. Although some 'country-breeds' of horse were present in India (Nuniz in Sewell 1972, 381), the bulkier, more rugged breeds needed for battle demanded the constant overseas importation of foreign horses from bustling entrepôts like Hormuz in the Persian Gulf. At the centre of this dynamic geopolitical trade network were the enterprising Portuguese, who cleverly pitted Indian empires against each other as they exploited this most sought-after material resource. In this chapter, I hope to explore the transcontinental connections of this medieval horse trade as a 'commodity ecumene', an 'extremely complex and interrelated' formation of 'structures and dynamics starting around 1500 CE' that tied 'together many diverse parts of the world' (Appadurai 1986, 36). In this particular story, the central element in the sixteenth-century Indian Ocean commodity ecumene was the horse, a living, breathing material resource that determined the fate of empires.

But what form of materiality/connectivity can we assign to members of the animal kingdom? Should we, unlike actors in the pre-modern Deccan, view these horses as subjective beings? Is there an existential difference between humans and animals, and if there is how has our evolving socio-commercial relationship with animals shaped such perceptions? These questions can be explored productively in the context of 'biosocial becomings', the way beings move and grow in an environmental 'zone of interpenetration' and through a 'meshwork of materials endowed with properties of vitality and movement' (Ingold and Palsson 2013, 18). As the various chapters in the collection edited by Tim Ingold and Gisli Palsson (2013) demonstrate, all life is both social and biological; it is dynamic, never static, and ontological boundaries between humans, animals and the environment are best viewed as porous, mutually constitutive and relational. Furthermore, the volume develops themes of flux and flow, encouraging us to think not of what creatures are, but what they do, to explore the how and why of what they do (or have done to them), and ultimately to see them not as beings but becomings (Ingold and Palsson 2013, 7–8). In the context of the present volume, materiality and connectivity can be seen from a similar perspective such that both

concepts are not the qualities of a being, but *potentialities* of multiple interrelated becomings. From one thicket of these becomings emerges the medieval warhorse as a *thing~tie* through time and space. What I mean here is that a horse's materiality, its biological constitution, is not a fixed, bounded or unchanging quality, but rather a field of potential becomings that evolves as the horse moves and grows. Similarly, connectivity, or a horse's social constitution, maps his/her dynamic range of capacities for potential interactions. Thus, just as all life is biosocial, so too is all life imbued with the kinetics of becoming (and unbecoming) a *thing~tie*.

In this sense, materiality and connectivity both represent 'trajectories of movement and growth', 'pathways of biosocial becoming' and the ever-changing potentialities of a being's becoming (Ingold and Palsson 2013, 8, 18). One theme which I will develop in the forthcoming historical analysis is the notion of permeability, the state or quality of a material or membrane that allows things to pass through it. As Ingold states, biosocial becomings 'are brought about through fluxes and exchanges of materials across the membranous surfaces of its emergent forms' (Ingold and Palsson 2013, 9). More specifically, I use this idea not only to characterise various porous elements in the horse-trade ecumene, but to use it heuristically as a means of better understanding the ways in which the horse in Vijayanagara came to be a commodity of connectivity via multiple intersecting trajectories. As Anthony Leeds notes, 'A high degree of permeability, however, does not mean the absence of boundaries. … It means, rather, a fluidity … that functions as a boundary-maintaining mechanism for nodes or nodal networks' (Leeds 1994, 181). For the horse trade network of the early sixteenth century, this permeability of borders did not imply a free and unbounded flow of materials, but rather a complex set of factors that regulated, moderated and ultimately defined the terms of exchange. In other words, permeability modulates the materiality and connectivity of beings and their networks; it encodes not only what kinds of things are let into a system, but also what kinds of things are kept out.

Before we proceed to a detailed analysis of the historical archive, it is important to discuss the historiography of Vijayanagara scholarship and my methodological approach to these materials. The most significant contribution to the study of Vijayanagara history was Robert Sewell's 1900 publication of *A Forgotten Empire (Vijayanagar): A Contribution to the History of India*, which provided, for the first time in English translation, the eyewitness accounts of two Portuguese horse merchants, Domingo Paes, a trader in the company of the nobleman Cristovao Figueiredo, who visited Vijayanagara around 1520 during the reign of

Krishnadevaraya, and Fernao Nuniz, who, a decade later, spent three years in the capital city trading in horses. Both these chronicles provide historians with a wealth of information about Vijayanagara, its history, people and administration. In addition, I draw on Joan-Pau Rubiés's 2002 *Travel and Ethnology in the Renaissance: South India through European Eyes*, a remarkable compendium and analysis of almost four centuries (1250–1625) of European travel literature on South India. As the title of Sewell's book indicates, historians had forgotten about the empire of Vijayanagara. Like the empty ruins of the kingdom's capital city in modern-day Hampi, empirical knowledge of the empire was lost; all that remained was the vague memory of a bygone era, perpetuated by legends, myths and vernacular imaginations.

For locals, this indigenous memory was embedded (1) orally in local performances, songs and recited verses (Narayana Rao and Shulman 1998), and (2) textually in literary works that often blended empirical historical data with poetic metaphor. For this reason, much of this medieval literary corpus was not viewed as valid source material for historical analysis. The need to revisit the vernacular archive, however, was felt as early as 1919, when Krishnaswami S. Ayyangar published *Sources of Vijayanagar History*, a dry and non-analytical compilation of Vijayanagara source materials that included pertinent excerpts from Indian literary texts. With regard to Sewell's work, Ayyangar comments: 'Excellent as the work was for the time, and for the sources and historical material at his disposal, it suffered from the neglect of the evidence available in various forms in literature which go a long way towards filling up … many gaps' (Ayyangar 1919, 1). And in respect of Ayyangar's project, Sir George Grierson, the celebrated British civil servant and linguist, wrote: 'I cordially agree with you in the importance you attach to casual references in non-historical Indian literature. These have too often been neglected by students, and they not uncommonly afford historical data which cannot be found elsewhere' (Ayyangar 1919, v). Clearly, Indian literature did have a contribution to make to historical inquiry; it just needed to be read in the right way.

This issue of historicity in Indian literary texts has been the subject of much discussion (Nayarana Rao, Shulman and Subrahmanyam 2001; Ali 2002; Talbot 2001; Inden, Walters and Ali 2000). Velcheru Narayana Rao, David Shulman and Sanjay Subrahmanyam compel us to reread these texts by feeling for their texture, that is, to discern the different layers of history and myth that are interwoven throughout these texts. Of particular importance to this study is a great poem (*mahākāvya*) written in classical Telugu by the king Krishnadevaraya himself. His *Āmuktamālyada* is

a long and ornate epic of almost one thousand verses that takes the story of a Tamil saint as its narrative kernel. Like all *kāvyas*, however, the text ranges over a variety of subjects and is filled with descriptive verses on cities, villages, seasons, flora and fauna. One of these sections is particularly unique and relevant to the present study. It is dedicated to *rāja-nīti* or political theory/ethical governance. Here, in some eighty verses, the king poetically describes his personal advice on how to be a good king. This was lived wisdom from a seasoned statesman: 'no arm-chair pontificating but a largely practical synthesis reflecting the political, economic and institutional changes of the early sixteenth century' (Rao, Shulman and Subrahmanyam 2004, 605).

Below is an example of the kind of verse that reflects this new, historically rooted political consciousness:

> Promote trade by providing for ports and encouraging the sale
> of horses, wild elephants, jewels, perfume, pearls and more.
> When foreigners arrive plagued with drought, disease or disaster,
> shelter and provide for them according to their station,
> But only gift lands, stables and mines to your most trusted allies.
> (*Āmuktamālyada* IV.245)

Insightful verses on state policy like this one illustrate many of the problems, concerns and challenges faced by a pre-modern Indian king; they also provide a first-hand account of how Krishnadevaraya approached and dealt with such critical matters of state. In the poem above, for example, the issue of maritime trade is highlighted, and we get a clear sense that the king was keen on developing such trade by supporting foreign (i.e. Portuguese) merchants.

By revisiting these sources and integrating the 'hard' chronicles of the Portuguese merchants with the 'soft' literature of Krishnadevaraya, I hope to move beyond the issue of empirical historicity, towards a discourse of relational historicity. That is, how do sources interact with each other? How do they reinforce, contradict and complicate our understanding of history? In contrast to European colonial powers, pre-modern India had a very different sense of history and historiography, but this does not alter the fact that Indic literary sources can, and should, be plumbed for richer and more inclusive historical perspectives. With this view in mind, the most significant result of returning to the literary archive is the recovery of 'forgotten' Indian voices. Drawing on this wide array of source materials, I propose to explore the sixteenth-century Deccani horse trade from both sides of the commodity exchange, to glean intentions, agendas

and policies from both native and foreign perspectives, and, ultimately, to deepen our understanding of the mechanisms by which new expressions of maritime connectivity interacted with the kinetic materiality of vital resources like the horse.

Revisiting the historical archive

The early sixteenth century was a period of remarkable dynamism: enterprising Portuguese ships were crisscrossing the world, capturing critical ports along established trade networks in Africa and the Middle East, and effectively linking disparate peoples and lands into a new, centralised order of global connectivity (Correia-Afonso 1981; Pearson 1981; Crowley 2015). Here it is important to bear in mind that the Portuguese presence in the Indian Ocean did not create a new trade network. Rather, it streamlined an already thriving system dominated by Arab merchants and consolidated it into a single, widespread but centrally administered trade ecumene (Pearson 2008, 11–12). The key to the Portuguese's success was their rapid seizure of key port cities like Malindi on the east coast of Africa, Hormuz and Aden along the Arabian Peninsula, and Goa in India. These nodes of Indian Ocean maritime trade were permeable and enduring at the same time. Even after their seizure by the Portuguese, these ports continued to thrive and bear witness to the constant in- and outflow of ships, commodities and merchant communities. In this regard, the Portuguese, unlike other European colonial powers to come, were a coastal empire of ports and shorelines. These littoral lands, as Heesterman avers, 'forms a frontier zone that is not there to separate or enclose, but which rather finds its meaning in its permeability' (Pearson 2003, 38). This new meaning defined the Portuguese empire as an 'ocean power' – robust and wide-ranging, but also dependent on the 'land power' of inland kingdoms to drive its imperialist commercial designs.

For example, after the capture of Goa in 1510, the Portuguese needed to make connections to Indian polities further inland towards the east. This brought them to the Deccan, a large, arid plateau located in south-central India. This expansive, elevated region is flanked by the twin mountain ranges of the Eastern and Western Ghats that rise from India's coastline. It is a dry and landlocked region that required constant connectivity with coastal communities to bring in key imports like the horse. Akin to the dynamism of ports and littoral communities, the medieval Deccan was a geo-cultural frontier zone. At the crossroads of the subcontinent, it was a region marked by a startling diversity of languages,

religions and social customs (Gribble 1896; Sherwani 1985; Eaton 2005; Eaton and Wagoner 2014). By the early sixteenth century, five distinct kingdoms (Ahmadnagar, Berar, Bidar, Bijapur and Golkonda) had splintered off from the disintegrating Bahmani superstate, the Gajapatis of Orissa were making inroads into the eastern Deccan, and further south the Vijayanagara empire was conquering large swathes of lands covering almost all of peninsular India. It was a volatile political environment, to be sure, but one permeable enough for the Portuguese to make their foray into Deccani politics.

Amongst South Asianists, there is a heated debate about the indigeneity of the horse in South Asia (Nath 1961, cited in Danino 2014; Leach 1990; Bökönyi 1997; Danino 2014). The empirical evidence suggests that there was a horse (or horse-like creature) present in India for thousands of years. This horse, which Nuniz would later call a 'country-breed' (Nuniz in Sewell 1972, 381), does not, however, seem to be the horse that was sought after for use in battle. Warhorses from West Asia, particularly Balkh and Herat (*AM* II.39), were constantly being imported into South Asia, first over land via the north-west passages into the subcontinent, and later by sea when maritime trade had blossomed. As Richard Eaton explains:

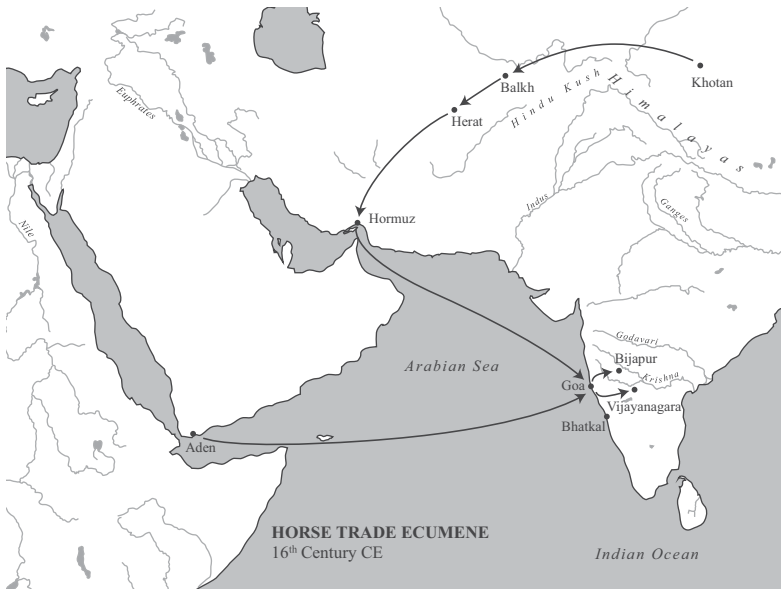

Figure 6.1 Map of sixteenth-century horse trade ecumene. Map by Zachary Culbreth and Srinivas Reddy, 2018.

> large warhorses … had constantly to be imported from outside. Moreover, regular trade between the Deccan and north India had virtually ceased ever since the Bahmanis revolted against their former Tughluq overlords a century earlier. As a result, horses could no longer be brought to the Deccan overland from Central Asia and north India, but had to be shipped across the Arabian Sea.
>
> (Eaton 2005, 60)

This raises an interesting point about how regions connect. In the Deccan scenario, it was decreased permeability on the Deccan–North India land border that promoted maritime trade in the Indian Ocean along channels that were becoming increasingly permeable. By the medieval period, then, when the importation of warhorses had developed into a lucrative trade system, the horse, which was now synonymous with military might, also determined the fate of empires. Throughout this long history, one element has remained constant: the horse in India has served as both a symbolic and a physical manifestation of political power. It was never a common labour animal like the ox or water buffalo; rather it was a rare and prized animal commodity confined to elite and royal circles. Or, as Giovanni da Montecorvino, the fourteenth-century Italian missionary, succinctly tells us, in India 'horses are scarce, reserved for the king and lords' (Rubiés 2000, 60).

There are several examples from medieval European travel literature that support the thesis that Indians were not well versed in horse care, particularly in regard to their diets. Marco Polo, for example, remarked that Indian horses were poorly fed with 'boiled rice and boiled meat, and various other kinds of cooked food', and that, with no proper fodder, 'they all die off' (Polo 1903, 345). Later, the Russian traveller Athanasius Nikitin commented that 'horses are fed on peas; also on kichiris [rice with lentils] boiled with sugar and oil' (Major 1857, III/10). Perhaps it was the great respect that Indians had for horses that prompted them to feed them with cooked food, that is, food good enough for humans. As the fourteenth-century Persian historian Wassaf comments, 'It is a strange thing that when these horses arrive there, instead of giving them raw barley, they give them roasted barley and grain dressed with butter, and boiled cow's milk to drink' (Polo 1903, 351, note 17). From the court annals of the great Mughal emperor Akbar, we learn that imperial horses were fed two pounds of flour daily, one and a half pounds of sugar, and an additional half a pound of ghee in winter (Polo 1903, 351, note 17). This practice does not seem to have changed over the years, for much later the civil servant Dr Caldwell noted that 'Rice is frequently given

by natives to their horses to fatten them up, and a sheep's head occasionally to strengthen them' (Polo 1903, 351, note 17). By all accounts, the prescribed Indian horse diet seems to have been the same as, if not better than, that of their human handlers. Here then is another form of permeability, one in which human food items and habits were passing into the diet and care of horses. With regard to this aspect of the human–animal interface, it is clear that a heightened reverence for the horse and its consequently prescribed royal diet led to an extreme and unconventional form of equine care that sadly curbed the very health, growth and fertility of the horse in India.

This lack of dietetic expertise, however, seems to have been counterbalanced by a kind of intuitive bond developed in India between man and horse, something that Portuguese explorer Pedro Cabral suggests when he writes, 'In this kingdom there are many horses and elephants because they wage war, and they have them so taught and trained that the only thing which they lack is speech, and they understand everything like human beings' (Rubiés 2000, 183–4). Here we also get an indication that once the horses were bought and placed under local trainers, they moved from an exploitative commercial relationship to a more typically domesticated one, and perhaps even one marked by intimate care and concern. But even this congenial atmosphere does not seem to have been enough for fruitful breeding to take place. Therefore, it appears that a lack of proper fodder, or perhaps the incorrect understanding of the best type of fodder, was the key reason for the perpetual need for the importation of horses into the subcontinent. In addition, the harsh Indian summers and the quickly following monsoons seem to have caused environmental troubles for the horses. Here, Joan-Pau Rubiés summarises the situation that Marco Polo witnessed first-hand: 'revenue is spent buying horses, which do not breed in India and must be continuously imported. They do not know how to keep them, and the merchants exploit the situation' (Rubiés 2000, 60).

Polo's remark about the mercantile exploitation of the Indian scenario is critical here, for in the early sixteenth century the Portuguese would capitalise on India's disproportionate equation of high demand and low supply. For example, Afonso Albuquerque, the celebrated admiral and governor of Goa, strategically pitted the Deccani empires of Bijapur and Vijayanagara against each other, for he knew that both empires would do whatever was necessary, that is, pay whatever exorbitant price was asked of them, because the acquisition of warhorses was such a crucial factor for both parties' claim to military might. Or, as recorded in his *Commentários*:

> Afonso d'Albuquerque always laboured to make each one of these lords understand that he desired to have peace and friendship and the trade in horses with him, which was what they claimed; for, whereas he held the key of their position at Goa, he desired by means of this artifice to sow dissensions among them.
>
> (Albuquerque 2010, III, 38)

This artifice would be launched from various locales, but Albuquerque's seizure of Goa in 1510 would make this critical port city the Portuguese empire's central base in India. In a letter to King Manuel dated 1 April 1512, he wrote: 'Goa in your power will make both the kings of Narsinga and Deccan pay tribute … because the king of Narsinga, in order to secure … the supply of horses to his lands, will have to do whatever you request' (Rubiés 2000, 191–2, fn 64). And a year and a half later, in a letter dated 4 December 1513, Albuquerque wrote to his king again, this time with an unabashedly explicit description of his imperialist intentions:

> I have determined that the horses from Arabia and Persia should all be in your hand … first, in order to favour the port of Goa with the high duties paid by the horses … and also because the king of Narsinga and those of the Deccan will desire and strive for peace with you, seeing that it is in your power to give them victory over each other, because without doubt whoever has the horses from Arabia and Persia will win.
>
> (Rubiés 2000, 191–2, fn 64)

If Krishnadevaraya was going to be forced into Albuquerque's trade game, he was determined to win. Indeed, the rapid rise of the Vijayanagara empire, its veritable becoming, was inextricably connected to the acquisition and deployment of foreign warhorses. Sometime around 1519, Krishnadevaraya laid siege to the hotly contested fort of Raichur, a key stronghold in the Krishna-Tungabhadra doab that was constantly changing hands between Bijapur and Vijayanagara. Unable to penetrate the high ramparts guarded by skilled archers, Krishnadevaraya camped outside the fort walls and was settled in for a long siege when, seemingly out of the blue, a Portuguese horse trader named Cristovão Figueiredo appeared with several musketeers in tow. Figueiredo proclaimed 'that the whole business of the Portuguese was war' (Nuniz in Sewell, 1972, 343) and duly aided Krishnadevaraya in his victory. In return for this great service, Krishnadevaraya invited Figueiredo and his men (including Domingo

Paes) to join him as his guests at the imperial capital. It was likely that the experience in Raichur made Krishnadevaraya believe that the Portuguese were his allies, and since he already knew of their conquests in and around Goa he made many efforts to treat his guests well and secure their support in supplying him with warhorses. He also knew that he had to display the power and wealth of the Vijayanagara state in order to outshine the Bijapuris. Paes describes their lavish reception at court:

> here he [Krishnadevaraya] commanded us to be lodged in some very good houses; and Figueiredo was visited by many lords and captains. … The king said many kind and pleasant things to him, and asked him concerning the kind of state which the king of Portugal kept up; and having been told about it all he seemed much pleased.
>
> (Paes in Sewell 1972, 252–3)

A passage from Krishnadevaraya's *Āmuktamālyada* appears to capture the very same moment, as the king describes imperial protocol with regard to foreign visitors:

> Merchants from distant lands,
> who import elephants and warhorses,
> should be kept in imperial service at the capital.
> Treat them with prestige
> and provide them with towns and mansions.
>
> (*Āmuktamālyada* IV.258)

The similarities between Paes's travelogue and Krishnadevaraya's poem are striking, and reveal but one of many fascinating parallels between European chronicles and Indian literary sources. Juxtaposing native and foreign accounts strengthens the case that both parties were well aware of the importance of this burgeoning trade relationship.

Cognisant of this high-demand/low-supply scenario, the Portuguese under Albuquerque's command went to great lengths to ensure their monopoly. The Italian traveller Ludovico di Varthema comments that 'you must know that a horse is worth at least 300, 400, and 500 pardaus, and some are purchased for 800 pardaus, because horses are not produced here, neither are there any mares found there, because those kings who hold the seaports do not allow them to be brought' (Varthema 1863, 126). Thus, not only were the Portuguese charging a handsome

Figure 6.2 Horses with Portuguese merchants. Panel from Vitthala Temple complex (Hampi, Karnataka, India). Photo taken by the author in 2018.

sum, they were also restricting the import of mares that would allow for local breeding. They were effectively restricting a stallion's materiality – his ability to procreate, his generative potential, and his vital power to continue being. This practice highlights the permeability of the horse trade ecumene and the ways in which the flow of commodities is regulated through strategies of both inclusion and exclusion. As the arbiters of this bio-economic trade permeability, the Portuguese only deepened India's dependence on foreign horses through their ban on the import of mares. And although Indians seem to have tried to breed imported stallions with country-breed mares, Marco Polo observed that this was never very successful:

> Another strange thing to be told is that there is no possibility of breeding horses in this country, as hath often been proved by trial. For even when a great blood-mare here has been covered by a great blood-horse, the produce is nothing but a wretched wry-legged weed, not fit to ride.
>
> (Polo 1903, 342)

Apparently, this was another type of biological barrier that could be crossed, albeit with less than favourable results.

Nuniz describes another rather perfidious practice that further exploited the Indian buyers: 'He [the Vijayanagara king Narasimha] caused horses to be brought from Oromuz and Adeem into his kingdom and thereby gave great profit to the merchants, paying them for the horses just as they asked. He took them dead or alive at three for a thousand pardaos, and of those that died at sea they brought him the tail only, and he paid for it just as if it had been alive' (Nuniz in Sewell 1972, 307). The

idea here is that even when the Portuguese were trying to make a quick profit, Vijayanagara kings were willing and financially able to indulge in the inflated offer. As the king clearly states in *AM* IV.258, 'Purchase their goods at a high price and ensure that your enemies are deprived of such resources.'

Once these prized imported horses were in the king's possession, he seems to have made every effort to look after their maintenance and care. But in many ways it appears that, like the horses themselves, knowledge about equine care needed to be imported as well. Krishnadevaraya's chief horse master, for example, was one Madanarque, who appears to have been a skilled horse trainer of Muslim origin (Nuniz in Sewell 1972, 381). Unfortunately, we have no further information about Madanarque's background or his set of specialist skills, but a corroboratory verse from Krishnadevaraya evidences the king's insistence on employing such skilled caretakers: 'Entrust the care of finely bred horses and elephants, only to skilled and loyal servants, never to your lords' (*AM* IV.226).

Another quote from Marco Polo makes it clear that, like the restrictive ban on mares, the permeable membrane of the horse trade did not allow for the movement of skilled horse trainers, farriers or groomers.

> The reason why they want so many horses every year is that by the end of the year there shall not be one hundred of them remaining, for they all die off. And this arises from mismanagement, for those people do not know in the least how to treat a horse; and besides they have no farriers. The horse-merchants not only never bring any farriers with them, but also prevent any farrier from going thither, lest that should in any degree baulk the sale of horses, which brings them in every year such vast gains.
>
> (Polo 1903, 340)

With regard to this kind of knowledge barrier, Arjun Appadurai discusses 'the peculiarities of knowledge that accompany relatively complex, long-distance, intercultural flows of commodities', and states that 'as distances increase, so the negotiation of the tension between knowledge and ignorance becomes itself a critical determinant of the flow of commodities' (Appadurai 1986, 41).

Even with limited foreign expertise, Krishnadevaraya, with all the resources available to him, seems to have lavished great care on his horses. In *AM* IV.226 he declares: 'Protect your stables at all times, and keep them well stocked with the best fodder.' Furthermore, Nuniz describes the variety of labour that went into the care of these prized

possessions, and the lengths to which Krishnadevaraya went in order to keep track of their welfare.

> This King has … sixteen hundred grooms who attend to the horses, and has also three hundred horse trainers and two thousand artificers, namely blacksmiths, masons, and carpenters …. … To the six thousand horsemen the King gives horses free and gives provision for them every month.
>
> (Nuniz in Sewell 1972, 381)

Clearly, Krishnadevaraya held the horse in great esteem, but its significance for the empire went beyond its role as an instrument of war, for it also served as a powerful symbol of imperial wealth, splendour and might. And so for the king, the significance of a horse's materiality was derived not only from its sheer physicality and deployment in battle, but also from its correspondence with Indic conceptions of power and sovereignty. The paradox that resulted from high esteem coupled with poor care, mitigated as it was by low stocks, the ban on mares and limited expertise in horse care, demonstrates how modalities of inclusion/exclusion created permeable materialities/connectivities, and ultimately engendered the stallion's new becoming in early sixteenth-century South India.

Closing thoughts

Another way in which we can employ permeability to help us understand the workings of the sixteenth-century horse trade is by using it as a lens to interrogate the materiality of the horse itself. As a living, breathing commodity, the horse defies easy categorisation: it is neither a human nor an inanimate object, neither a manufactured product nor a static marketable commodity. It is a dynamic, organic, living organism that comes into being in the interstices of such categorisations. In that sense, the dynamic materiality of the horse compels us to move through these boundaries and appreciate the permeable nature of the human–animal interface as a fluid field of biosocial becomings.

Even within a framework in which the horse is a mere object of sale, a commodity item, the fact remains that these stallions of war played a critical role in the geopolitical upheavals of medieval South Asia. It may be argued that horses had no agency in this relationship, but I suggest that their very being in the equation of imperial transactions embroils them in the charge of human history. Here I concur with Ingold that 'the domain

in which human persons are involved as social beings with one another cannot be rigidly set apart from the domain of their involvement with non-human components of the environment' (Ingold 2000, 61). Ingold's proposed 'biosocial correspondence' links humans, flora, fauna, land and sea into an interactive field of relationships in which all components are contributing towards a unified simultaneity of becoming. He continues: 'The distinction between the human and the non-human no longer marks the outer limits of the social world, as against that of nature, but rather maps a domain within it whose boundary is both permeable and easily crossed' (Ingold 2000, 76). This permeability is precisely what I believe reveals a being's materiality, as well as its potential to connect to other beings, or, in the parlance of this volume, its *thing~tie*-ness. In this sense, the materiality and the connectivity of a *thing~tie* are dynamic potentialities of an interlinked becoming; changing one changes the other, and they both change because of their own unique permeabilities. Thus, the materiality and connectivity of a *thing~tie* are best seen when states of being permeate into potentialities of becoming.

The early sixteenth century was a time when war, trade, land and sea were all inextricably connected via multiple intersecting pathways, all flowing through their own particular nodes and membranes of permeability with the all-important horse at their centre. As Ingold remarks,

> Wherever there is life and habitation, the interfacial separation of substance and medium is disrupted to give way to mutual permeability and binding. For it is in the nature of living beings themselves that … they bind the medium with substances in forging their own growth and movement through the world.
>
> (Ingold 2008, 8)

This 'mutual permeability and binding' can best be viewed when things are moving, for 'things-in-motion … illuminate their human and social context' (Appadurai 1986, 5). Indeed, I argue that these multiple layers of permeability are critical factors that engendered, fostered and fuelled the remarkable connectivity of this time. In the Indian Ocean horse trade ecumene of the early sixteenth century, stallions were one of many 'things-in-motion', and their transport, sale and deployment as instruments of war in South Asia provide a unique perspective on the ways in which materials moving through permeable membranes can connect disparate peoples and places.

To conclude, the horse was a critical component of the South Asian eco-political currency of the sixteenth century that demanded constant

material connectivity with distant empires and maritime networks. The dependence on this commodified *thing~tie* spawned important trade relationships between South Asian empires and the Portuguese empire, which in turn brought new people, cultures and systems of knowledge to the subcontinent. Trade practices also kept some knowledge (horse care and maintenance) and some materials (mares) out of the equation, which did nothing but deepen this material dependency. This inextricable link between human and animal returns us to Ingold's notion that

> human beings do not so much transform the material world as play their part, along with other creatures, in the world's transformation of itself …. nature is not a surface of materiality upon which human history is inscribed; rather history is the process wherein both people and their environments are continually bringing each other into being.
>
> (Ingold 2000, 87)

This journey to sixteenth-century Vijayanagara via the historical archive has attempted to see this remarkable period of history as a 'bringing into being', much as I believe Krishnadevaraya saw himself and his magnificent realm. He well understood the complex world in which he lived and ruled; he kept a close watch over the politics, military, art and economy of his kingdom; and he reigned with both tact and sagacity. To close, below is one final verse from Krishnadevaraya's sage advice to future kings:

> When the king keeps his treasury filled
>
> and his stables stocked with horses and wild elephants
> he diffuses potential disasters
>
> by showing both wisdom and strength.
>
> (*Āmuktamālyada* IV.232)

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7

Labelling, packaging, scanning: paths and diversions of mobile phones in the Andes

Juliane Müller

Introduction

At the end of November 2017, I became interested in a batch of twenty Samsung smartphones auctioned by the National Customs Authority of Bolivia (Aduana Nacional de Bolivia, ANB). They formed part of the customs authority's fourth internet auction of confiscated contraband. Over a period of three months, 2,240 lots (containing several items each) were sold to the highest bidder in successive individual auctions that lasted six to eight days each (ANB 2017). As I clicked on the slot with the phones, I could access bits of information; a rudimentary picture of each of them could be opened. It showed the phones from the front, turned on so that the Samsung Galaxy J1 Ace name and technical data about the camera, the size and the battery were displayed. The phones were also described as new and manufactured in Vietnam. In contrast to another twenty Galaxy J1s auctioned several days earlier, which I had also followed, this time the phones' individual international mobile equipment identities (IMEIs) were given. However, when I went to www.samsung.com.bo to test the IMEIs, none of the phones were authorised by Samsung Electronics Bolivia. Although the information and the logo I saw in the pictures indicated original Samsung phones, the IMEIs seemed to contradict that.

This setting of an internet auction is untypical for Bolivia. The situation of individualised, anonymised buyers, and goods that cannot be touched and tested, is in stark contrast to how phones normally change hands in Bolivia, namely through face-to-face interaction, a close look at

the goods, and bargaining. Whereas in the auction phones are presented unpacked, in the market they are offered in brand-named boxes, as this imbues them with quality and authenticity. The peculiar setting of an internet auction changes the commodity situation of the phones. The price-setting process becomes anonymous and competitive (best offer), while the identity of the phones to be purchased is more ambiguous than in Bolivian marketplace exchange, as the commodities are withdrawn from direct contact. The scene also exemplifies the intricacies of commerce in electronic equipment in Bolivia, where traders, customs and manufacturers have multiple agendas and pull the commodities in different directions. While the phones, in this example, were relieved of their status as contraband and temporarily removed from traders' hands, they remained invisible to the manufacturer as they were 'parallel imports' or had not yet been re-registered for the Bolivian market.

In this chapter, I aim to unpack the trajectories and identities of mobile phones as they circulate in Bolivia and beyond, within the environment of the South-Central Andes. Once the phones reach the South and Central American shores at the dockside free-trade zones of the cities of Iquique (northern Chile) and Colón (Panama), they leave the official track. They get diverted as they enter traders' networks. They are unpacked, re-bundled and disattached from the manufacturers' databases. Once in Bolivia, the international manufacturers such as Samsung try to regain ownership of the phones by registering and scanning them.[1] I show that Bolivian commerce is constituted by incessant material practices to cut relations of ownership of things in order to build new ones. Traders and manufacturers have different notions about ownership that I will also explore throughout the text. Moreover, the mobility of mobile phones stands out in comparison with that of bulkier electronic equipment; trade in phones has remained small-scale, whereas ovens, stereo systems and large LED televisions are driven in quantity from the Pacific coast towards the highlands and over the Andean plateau. Although nearly all electronic equipment is contraband in Bolivia (contraband tends to be socially legitimate), there is a difference between bulkier things that are increasingly 'technical contraband' (moved on false documents and via bribes), and phones that continue to enter entirely 'black' (*a la negra*). In addition, the proliferation of different types and classes of smartphones heightens traders' combinatory options to mix phones, boxes, accessories and warranties, and create ambiguous identities. Phones are working tools for traders, officers and corporate employees; they are interface devices that connect Bolivian people to the extending broadband network built under the state-centred government

of President Evo Morales. His time in office (2006–19) coincided with a spectacular increase in sales of mobile phones throughout the country and unknown levels of investment from international electronics corporations, especially East Asian multinationals Samsung and Huawei.

In a trading world in which things continually get diverted, manufacturers are forced back towards a historically rooted type of branding. Through this perspective, corporate labelling and scanning is first of all the continuation of a material practice of creating standardised goods and ownership relations through the physical act of leaving a tangible trace on things (nowadays through a hologram or a barcode). Sketching the contours of this type of 'brand economy', prevalent in Andean commerce, enables me to address critically certain legal commercial categories and tropes ('parallel imports'), to think about the multiple mobilising forces beneath the transnational movement of goods, and, in resonance with the conceptual focus of this edited volume, to address phones as devices whose identity, value and ownership are constituted through quarrels over connections and 'itinerancies' (Stockhammer, Chapter 2 in this volume).

The chapter is based on long-term, multi-sited fieldwork in Bolivia, Chile and Peru. The description of the phones' journeys and classifications builds on my own observation and ongoing conversations and interviews with traders, manufacturers' employees and customs officers. Interviews have also been conducted with distributors in the free-trade zone of Iquique. Through research at the marketing office of Samsung Electronics Bolivia, I was able to tour the La Paz markets with employees, accompanying them in their daily activities and their interactions with traders. I observed and spoke to Bolivian customers of electronic equipment and made a survey in order to assess purchasing practices and vernacular classifications of phones. Throughout my research stay in Bolivia, I was attentive to news and stories about traders, customs and multinational corporations (MNCs) with a view to unbundling the web of trade in electronics.

The social life of things reconsidered

Since the publication of Appadurai's *The Social Life of Things* in 1986, numerous studies have given examples of changes in meaning, commodity status and legal definition as things move through different social 'contexts' (Thomas 1991), 'regimes of value' (cf. Meyers 2001) and 'spaces of regulation' (Schendel and Abraham 2005). The status of a thing as a commodity in market exchange is never a given but must be constructed and maintained by interested parties. From this perspective, mobile phones are 'commodities

by destination' (Appadurai 1986, 16), which means that they are manufactured – in the case of the Galaxy J1, in Vietnam – as goods for market exchange. However, the phones are only activated as commodities in certain social settings or 'social arenas' (Appadurai 1986, 15). Phones in the hands of customs officers (after confiscation and later in storage in customs warehouses) have had the status of 'commodity' temporarily removed.[2] Seen from a spatial-temporal axis, as things in motion, they have been diverted from the commodity path (Appadurai 1986; Ferguson 1992).

Most diversions of mobile phones and other electronics in Bolivia, however, do not deny their commodity status. The phones are framed, classified and marketed differently in a customs-organised internet auction like the one described above than in a face-to-face exchange situation, and in urban marketplaces differently than at rural fairs, but they are still treated as exchangeable commodities with a market value. So how do we discern the commodity path of mobile phones? I argue that in a world in which the digital economy encounters vast amounts of contraband trade, customs agents become market players, and corporate employees are continuously stamping and scanning things to get an overview of traders' stocks, diversion of phones from their intended commodity path means that they are disconnected from state and corporate databases. They are temporarily or permanently undocumented. The initial moment of becoming diverted is marked by an act of repackaging that prepares the phones for cross-border movements.

This resonates with modalities of long-distance trade, past and present. To close and seal a package has historically meant to guarantee the quality and quantity of certain things, and to mark ownership; opening a package disrupts this prior relationship of ownership. It potentially influences the transactional properties of the goods (Fanselow 1990). As Bolivian traders master bundling and packaging during the entire journey of the phones and the transactions that follow (between various wholesalers, retailers and final clients), corporate employees interfere through practices of relabelling and registering in order to regain control over the phones. I interpret these acts as material practices of branding.

Etymologically, branding means burning; later it came to mean leaving a visible trace on a thing, on livestock or on a person. It is a physical act of marking something (or somebody). Historically and cross-culturally, branding has been about stamping, burning or engraving a recognisable identity into the materiality of the thing: a name, an acronym or a graphic. This sense differs from what is conventionally seen as branding in entrepreneurial marketing. Large-scale corporations are said to sell an image instead of the material thing, not a product but a brand

that appeals to the customer's identity and status aspirations (Klein 1999; De Waal Malefyt 2009). Global players like Samsung and Huawei rely on image creation to compete against emerging phone labels that offer practically the same technology at lower prices.

Yet branding is not just about the image. I argue, to the contrary, that branding can be most comprehensively described as a material practice. Archaeological studies share this material culture approach. Histories of commodity branding go far back in time, at least to economic systems that included some form of standardisation of goods and labour (Fanselow 1990; Wengrow 2008). David Wengrow argues that sealing and standardised packaging were central to 'the emergence of the world's first large-scale economies' (Wengrow 2008, 8). This perspective accounts for widespread branding practices in the past and acknowledges that branding is not necessarily a purely capitalist endeavour. It invites us to recognise the existing plurality of commodity branding in the contemporary global economy, and to engage in detailed ethnographies of its materiality (Miller 2008).

This perspective allows me to reframe the analysis of 'paths and diversions'. These terms, as embedded in Appadurai's 'social biography of things' approach, have mainly been interpreted as spatial-temporally shifting cultural conceptualisations of things, their value and their exchangeability (Appadurai 1986; Ferguson 1992). Relatively little attention has been paid to material traces of former ownership, or material resistances to the change of status and identity (Lowell Gudmundson, cited in Wengrow 2008, 12). In this chapter, I define the physical movements of phones through traders' networks as diversions from the route laid out by the commodity path. These networks are enacted and maintained through the circulation of things among people (cf. Munn 1983). Put differently, the commodity path is but one 'itinerancy' among many, a modality of moving and connecting phones that endangers the ways in which phones are mobilised and classified among traders.

Telecommunication infrastructure and mobile phones in contemporary Bolivia

The Bolivian government of President Evo Morales (which came to an end in November, 2019) followed a a state-centred policy of resource and infrastructure development. The party, 'Movement towards Socialism', which grew out of a convergence of indigenous peasant labour and urban neighbourhood movements against neoliberalism and US interference,

led policies to reconstitute a 'strong state' and move beyond 'colonial dependence' (Postero 2016, 141–2). A prime macroeconomic goal was to become an energy exporter through the industrialisation and commercialisation of hydrocarbons, hydroelectric power and renewable energies. Large-scale, potentially interconnected material structures were key issues in reaching this goal. Telecommunication was another priority. Better and faster telecommunication infrastructure was part of the government's political promise to increase people's access to information and communication technologies and reduce Bolivia's 'digital gap' with other countries in the region and the world (CEPAL 2016, 35–6).

Although stark differences between the cities and the countryside persist, Bolivian people's increase in internet access via smartphones has been above the average in the region. The mutually reinforcing tendencies of infrastructure development and sales of electronic devices were especially strong, as the country started from lower levels of phone ownership than the bigger and more urbanised South American economies. Sales in broadband-enabled phones have skyrocketed since 2010 because of the transition from 2G to 4G cellular network technology concomitant with the growing purchasing power of the population. Bolivia is among the four Latin American countries with the highest overall growth rate in internet access between 2010 and 2015, and the country with the biggest decline in consumer costs (CEPAL 2016, 5–10).[3] At the end of 2015, 96.7% of all connections in Bolivia were made from a mobile device, i.e., a smartphone or a tablet (Ortuño Yáñez 2016). In January 2018, 93% of the Bolivian population above the age of 14 owned a mobile phone, and 92% had cellular network access through a pre-paid plan (IBCE 2018).

The heightened pace and growing volumes in the electronics trade constitute profits but also challenges for the manufacturers, above all Samsung and Huawei. A large number of their phones sold in Bolivia have remained undocumented. 'Real' sales are therefore not reflected in their databases. Phones are second-hand or 'parallel imports'; they change hands outside of any inventory control. This affects national sales statistics, makes supply chain management more difficult, and, not least, hinders the promotional hopes of the Bolivian corporate staff.

Diversions

At the moment mobile phones leave the factory of an international corporation, such as Samsung or Huawei, most often located in mainland China or South-East Asia, they have an unequivocal destination. As my

interlocutors at Samsung formulated it, 'each country has its portion of the [world] market'. At the factory, the phones are destined for a specific country in Latin America. But the phones are not transported to all these countries directly, especially not to land-locked Bolivia. Instead, the phones for Bolivia are shipped to the port of Iquique, where they are received by a handful of official distributors. These distributing firms, of various sizes and national origins – middle-sized family firms from Chile, merchant migrant businesses from India and Lebanon, US multinational Intcomex Corp. – receive the merchandise and store it at their warehouses in the free-trade zone of the same city of Iquique. Up to this moment, the phones follow the commodity path laid out by the manufacturers. They are properly labelled and packed for Bolivia. A silver hologram tag is attached to the packages, stating 'Samsung Plus' and indicating special software for the Bolivian market. In recent years, some models, the Samsung J5 and J8, have arrived in specially designed boxes showing emblematic Bolivian landscapes and folkloric costumes. This is an example of how MNCs market their goods in specific countries. Samsung Bolivia advertised them as specifically made for Bolivia, responding to national feelings about unique Bolivian culture. In the free-trade zone, where Samsung and other manufacturers hold an office to assist and supervise the distributors, the product barcode is added to the boxes. Samsung knows which loads of goods are entering the free zone at what moment, and to which of the distributors, but they lose oversight as they are sold to Bolivian traders and moved towards the Andean high plateau.

Bolivian petty importers and wholesale traders of electronic equipment are typically middle-aged and work as married couples, such as Patricia Choque and Freddy Mamani. I met them at a carnival party where they were more inclined to speak about their business than on a workday, but I also visited them at their stall. They are in their forties and started their family business after marriage. Choque and Mamani specialise in smartphones and tablets. They hold a stall at one of the indoor permanent fairs for phones and tablets, colloquially named warehouses (*galpones*) because of their spaciousness and wide range of goods. They are located in the popular commercial area of Max Paredes, north-west of the centre of La Paz, in the vicinity of other streets and fairs where electronics are sold. All these markets, a mixture of street trade and permanent fairs with retail shops and galleries, are known by their street names: Buenos Aires, Huyustus and Eloy Salmón. The warehouses, though only rudimentary brick-walled buildings with thin aluminium roofs, are the main regional logistical hub for mobile phones and tablets. They are the place where smuggled phones arrive and are sold to wholesale and retail traders from

surrounding neighbourhoods, to the few high-end retailers from other parts of La Paz, to traders of the nearby city of El Alto, and to traders from other Bolivian provinces and the Peruvian high plains. Phones come and go in all directions. They might be ordered via DHL directly from Miami, where Hispanic resellers offer products not originally destined for South America. Phones might also be imported from the free-trade zone of the port city of Colón (Panama), therefore diverted from their Central American jurisdiction and brought into Bolivia via Peru. At the free-trade zone in Iquique, right next to the official distributors and the multinational offices, unauthorised resellers are also offering 'parallel imports' which they have previously imported from elsewhere in Latin America, the USA, the Arab world or Asia.

In Bolivia, this technical term (parallel imports) gets vernacularised as 'parallel products', products that do not represent sales and fail to generate the numbers necessary for the manufacturers' analysis of 'real' commercial movements to and in Bolivia. Yet these multiple diversions of phones exceed the notion of 'parallel imports' and, as I argue, cannot be adequately captured by the conventional term of grey market goods. This latter term is used internationally to define things outside the trade channels authorised by the manufacturers as intellectual property right owners (INTA 2015). According to this definition, all goods that have passed through the hands of one of the official distributors at one of the free-trade zones or in Miami should be authorised. 'Parallel imports', in contrast, refers to the circulation of trademark-protected commodities outside authorised geographic units – Iquique-bought phones for Bolivia ending up in the city of Juliaca in highland Peru, for example. In Latin America, however, as in the majority of regions and countries worldwide, parallel imports are not prohibited by state law unless the products have been modified or damaged – in other words, unless they are 'materially different' (INTA 2015, 2). Latin American countries apply 'international exhaustion of rights', which means that once the manufacturer has put the commodities on the market in any country, the company loses its trademark rights over the goods everywhere else in the world (INTA 2015, 2). Accordingly, traders' practices are not illegal except under private commercial law.

But, how can these phones reasonably be named 'parallel imports' in the first place? The term evokes the image of two lineal movements of things that never cross, that keep the same distance between them. In the Andes, as elsewhere, there are no 'straight' channels that can be kept separate from other trading networks; routes constantly cross each other; phones follow the commodity path laid out by the manufacturers

but get diverted at some point. 'Parallel imports' also implies that there are authorised distributors in the country, who secure quality standards and warranties, whereas unauthorised sellers do not (INTA 2015). In highland Bolivia there are hardly any large department stores that sell smartphones. The three telecommunication companies operating in the country (state-owned Entel, and the multinationals Tigo and Viva) started to sell phones a few years ago, but do so only seasonally, and exclusively to customers who get into a contractual relationship with them, something very few Bolivians do as everybody uses pre-paid plans.

Moreover, the practices that sustain 'parallel imports' in the Andes are not just isolated acts of marginal traders that arbitrage between different price levels in neighbouring countries with a limited amount of goods (INTA 2015). Rather, the misrecognition of private regulations of intellectual property owners is one of the founding pillars of the vitality of trans-Andean commerce. Traders make use of different currency values and fluctuating exchange rates, but in addition engage in economies of scale as they trade beyond the borders of relatively small national markets; mobility is a strategy to broaden their base of clients and suppliers. Popular importers and wholesalers rely on the fiscal exemptions and massive offers in the free-trade zones. Many usually buy in Iquique, but if a Colón or Miami-based distributor calls and makes a good offer, phones and other equipment are ordered and brought over from these places further away. Not least, traders do not consider their commodities to be parallel or secondary. They claim ownership of, and authority over, the goods that they have purchased lawfully.

Journey 1

Whereas Mrs Choque manages the business at the warehouses and relations with customers and manufacturers, Mr Mamani travels to the free zone of Iquique once a week. He buys phones tax- and duty-free from the mainly Chilean, East and South Asian and Arab resellers and distributors based in the free zone. After purchase, Mamani has to unpack the phones to bring them to Bolivia. Phones, boxes and accessories are sent separately. Repackaging is first of all about wrapping and bundling things for transport and border crossing. But it is also an ownership claim. Mr Mamani has bought the phones, and from now on he and his wife decide how to handle and transport the phones, and to dismantle and reassemble them if necessary. They have the conviction that it is their right to decide how, when and where to sell their merchandise. 'You sell what

Figure 7.1 Advertisement for phones at Huyustus Fair, La Paz. Photo taken by the author in 2017.

you want,' as Mrs Choque decisively exclaimed in my presence. 'This is what we defend; this is the free market.'

After purchase, Mr Mamani decides about logistics and how to transport the phones. He usually gives phones, boxes and accessories to different *piloteros* ('pilots'), truck drivers and other carriers of things to be brought over the Chilean–Bolivian border. These are Bolivian co-nationals who hide them between more bulky merchandise or carry phones on their bodies and in bags and suitcases. Packages, for example, are bundled in robust black plastic bags that are used to carry tools

and food bought and sold loose. Mamani also carries some phones with him on his way back on the bus to La Paz, a journey that takes 10–12 hours and ascends more than 4,000 metres in elevation. He normally travels between Thursday night and Saturday evening, when the customs officers are said to be more relaxed, and because of a fortnightly cross-border fair celebrated in the early hours of Friday and Saturday at the border town of Pisiga, between Chile and Bolivia. In the early morning when the fair is on, the movement of goods and people is so incessant that he and his bags full of the newest mobile phones go unnoticed. His merchandise reaches La Paz the same Saturday. He and his wife arrange the delivery of phones, boxes and accessories, reassemble some at their home or warehouse and leave those that had been pre-ordered disassembled.

Traders who pre-order phones often come from Peru. The phones are not necessarily sold in Bolivia. The petty traders I approached at a permanent indoor fair in the Peruvian city of Juliaca close to the shores of Lake Titicaca, four hours from the Bolivian border and eight hours from La Paz, had all bought their merchandise from Bolivian wholesalers in the Max Paredes area, such as Quispe and Mamani. The vendors affirmed that this was more feasible for their small-scale business than ordering from distributors based at coastal Lima. Many of these highland Peruvian traders travel to La Paz every week or two and bring small numbers of mobile phones across the border. Again, phones, packages and accessories are transported separately and then reassembled. At one of the stalls in Juliaca, a Galaxy J5 package with Bolivian folklore costumes was visibly displayed. It became clear to me that at this point the J5 phone had been ultimately disconnected from the commodity path. It had entered what Samsung Electronics Bolivia considers a different jurisdiction. Although transacted on wholesale markets in La Paz, it had not entered the databases of Samsung's national office. It had remained out of inventory control and was an example of a phone whose barcode, attached in Iquique to register sales in Bolivia, 'had been lost', as my Samsung interlocutors expressed it. This J5 was one of the products that, as corporate employees also say, 'escaped'. Others 'go away' to Argentina. Still, ever more phones are actually registered and sold to final clients in Bolivia, a process incentivised by the manufacturers' national offices.

Branding

Journey 2

Those phones that Choque and Mamani reassemble at their home or warehouse are individually boxed in their package, ready for the next Monday, when corporate employees tour the markets of Buenos Aires, Huyustus and Eloy Salmón to oversee and register new merchandise. Mrs Choque is regularly visited by a Samsung 'chain specialist' who re-registers her phones with the corporation. At that point, the adventurous journey of the phones has hardly left any visible traces despite the fact that boxes have been opened and might show some small damage.

In Bolivia, as described above, where neither logistics nor market transactions are managed or overseen by the manufacturers, corporate employees tour the market daily to get access to information on stocks, prices and customers' preferences. They engage in small talk, visit the same traders again and again to comment on the ups and downs of supply and demand, and do quasi-ethnographic surveys. In 2017, 29 people worked for Samsung Electronics in this area of La Paz alone. The official technical service subcontracted by the multinational had no more than five technicians. This shows that access to information on transactions and stocks is the top priority behind Samsung's policies and the new category of the 'homologised' phone (see below).

In order to register products upon their arrival in La Paz, corporate channel specialists enter traders' warehouses and put an official stamp, 'Samsung Bolivia', on the warranties. Only through this stamp is the warranty activated for Bolivia. Employees attach a barcode to the packages even though they already carry the product barcode attached in Iquique. This new barcode serves two purposes: first, it identifies and registers those phones destined for Bolivia that actually entered the Bolivian market; second, it enables their further itinerancy to be traced. Samsung wants to know if a phone will really be sold retail in Bolivia, to whom and when. Thus, the second barcode is detached from the product and withdrawn by the vendor upon the sales transaction. As soon as the vendor hands their physical list of barcodes over to Samsung, normally once a week, they get a bonus payment. If traders use the maximum barcodes given to them per week, 200 for phones in 2017, the bonus payments can add up to significant amounts of extra income. In the premium category, including the newest smartphones, the bonus is 4–5% of the sale price for each phone. Once the list is handed in to Samsung and the barcode scanned, information on the phones' date of arrival in the market and

date of sale is in Samsung's inventory databases. The first barcode from Iquique has not been 'lost' but reactivated and reaffirmed through another one. Through these successive material branding practices, the phone has changed its classification. It is now not just an authentic brand-name phone, but 'homologised' for the Bolivian market.

Mobile classifications

People in Bolivia make a basic distinction in electronic equipment between an *original* ('original') and a *chino* ('Chinese'). This classification is heard again and again at the marketplaces and in everyday conversation. You buy a brand-name phone from Samsung, Huawei, Sony, LG or the like, or a *chino*, which can mean a 'fake' (*trucho*), a clone (*clonado*) or an unknown Chinese label. In fact, however, vendors might offer you a 'half-original, half-Chinese'. 'Clones' are rather easy to identify,[4] but these hybrids are not. The proliferation of new models, and the multiple ways of modifying phones so that they are slightly 'fake', mean that detection is not an easy task even for urban, more experienced buyers. 'Refurbished' phones, where certain parts are taken out, changed and rearranged, are being sold as new.

According to my observations, conversations with customers and the survey I conducted, clients overwhelmingly trust in the veracity of the vendor's explanation and the shop's reputation. Traders decorate their shops and stalls with the logos of the brand-name companies to convey authenticity. During sales transactions, they stress that their products are original and offer some reliability in the form of their own warranties of several months to a year. Many shops and even stalls have a personalised repair service which they subcontract to local workshops. For customers, the most common way to assess the status of an original on the spot is to touch the phone, switch it on to check the software, and check the package. One visible difference between the half-and-half, refurbished or simple second-hand phones and the original ones is that the originals have a package that matches them, while the others have not. Only very few customers, however, compare the IMEI of the package with the IMEI of the phone. Vendors think that the majority of clients just do not know about IMEIs and technical issues. Moreover, as I experienced myself when I was looking for a new phone, verifying the IMEI questions the trustworthiness of the vendor, might be answered with suspicion, and potentially harms the vendor–buyer relationship. A vendor at a tiny stall in the entrance of one of the commercial galleries in the retail

area Eloy Salmón got annoyed when I insisted on comparing the IMEI of the Samsung J5 that he offered me with the IMEI of the box. Another seller in the same gallery, in contrast, offered me an LG phone with 'real warranty'. She stressed, 'Look, it says so on the silver sticker attached to the box.' Whereas the man had most likely offered me a 'parallel product', she had offered me a 'homologado'.

In recent years, another distinction has become prominent, introduced by the manufacturers, that between original and 'homologado' ('homologised'). The abovementioned traders Choque and Mamani stress that they sell phones 'for all kinds of pockets' ('*todos los bolsillos*'). They emphasise that they serve people with different economic possibilities as they sell 'Samsung and Huawei homologised and chinos'. The phones and tablets from Samsung and Huawei they sell are nearly all homologised as 'these are what people ask for'. Although the homologised ones are not technically better in any way than the originals – both types are technically unaltered brand-named phones – homologised have become popular among urban middle- and upper-class Bolivians since 2016. They cost $10–20 more than simple originals. For this higher price, customers receive an effective manufacturer's warranty in Bolivia, special sales and entertainment offers and preferential treatment. All these extra services can be offered because homologised phones are re-registered with the company.

Clients face similar challenges in identifying a homologised rather than a simple original phone. During sales transactions, they continue to rely on the word and responsibility of the vendors. Some additionally look for the stamp on the warranty and switch the phone on to make sure the software application 'Samsung Plus' is installed. It is only after purchase that they eventually approach Samsung's showroom, where employees check the so-called 'software code' that verifies whether the phone was originally destined for Bolivia. This software code is the most recent invention for identifying phones destined for Bolivia, as IMEIs are too often forged and 'cloned'. Information about this national code, and how to access it in the software, seems to be kept secret; even traders do not know about it. Vis-à-vis the vendors and the final clients, the manufacturer insists that the hologram on the package should be used to distinguish homologised phones. The silver glittering hologram is considered to be very difficult to copy. It has already been attached to the boxes at the factories in Asia. As the number of hologram-stamped boxes is therefore limited, possibilities for ambiguous mixings of boxes and phones become more limited. In a series of newspaper advertisements for the new Galaxy S8 and Galaxy S8+ in August 2017, Bolivians were encouraged to 'Search

Figure 7.2 Retail shop at Huyustus Fair, La Paz. Photo taken by the author in 2017.

for the hologram' in order to identify 'Samsung Plus Original!' In sum, the package, although incessantly treated by traders, continues to imbue phones with official authority, and is a corporate ownership claim against traders' handling and manipulation of the boxes.

Conclusion

In the South-Central Andean Highlands, mobile phones are incessantly moving through the myriad networks of small-scale traders and drivers. These journeys ignore the jurisdictions of both nation-states and multinational corporations, and usually remain outside of customs control and corporate oversight. Even if phones get confiscated, they remain invisible to the manufacturers; those phones classified as homologised are hardly ever taxed, no duties have been paid, no sales taxes are added. Trans-Andean trade in mobile phones is made up of trading routes and practices that defy nation-state borders and fiscal regimes, as well as corporate private law concerning 'grey market goods' and 'parallel imports'. In Bolivia, where sales in mobile phones have increased enormously since 2010, corporate employees' ambitions and MNCs' international standards are being challenged. 'Parallel imports' are troublesome, not because they

offer lower quality or are potentially harmful, but because they are out of corporate logistics and sales control. As traders contest manufacturers' jurisdictions, they continue to freely handle, transport and sell brand-name phones, and demand economic compensations if they adhere to the manufacturers' wishes.

The multiple diversions that phones take on their way from the factory to the market disattach them from the commodity path envisioned by the manufacturers. The routes the phones take across the Andes leave intangible, yet relevant, traces. They are classified differently according to the journey that they undergo. The same objects made in the same factory at the same time are sold as different phones according to the route they take towards the Bolivian market. Their movement through space alters their market value. If the Samsung Galaxy J1 travels from Vietnam to Iquique through the hands of the authorised distributors and then across the border to the warehouses in La Paz to be registered, it becomes a homologised phone. If the same phone continues to be diverted upon arrival in Bolivia to be sold in Juliaca, it remains a simple original. A J1 brought to Bolivia from Colón cannot be homologised even though it is sold in La Paz close to the manufacturer's gaze. Mobile phones are put in different product categories according to their 'itinerancies' in Latin America and the Andes.

The effectiveness of these paths and diversions, the continuous change of status and ownership of phones, depends on physical acts of branding. Thinking through phones' mobility and connectivity has enabled me to develop an understanding of branding as a material practice. Whereas traders' acts of de- and repackaging phones cut prior relations of ownership, the manufacturers aim at regaining inventory control through relabelling and scanning. Labels and codes are more effectively attached to the boxes on a plastic tag than inscribed into the phones' software. The plastic sticker with the hologram – like the new-old brand in its high-tech, optical form evoking three-dimensionality – acquires a seal-like quality in a contraband economy in which boxes have always been already opened. The hologram is an attempt to accomplish a standardisation process, and an ownership claim, that is notoriously unstable in Andean commerce.

Likewise, the barcode, standardised under the ISO-normed Universal Product Code (UPC), is, in this sense, a commercial stamp of digital capitalism that continues to rely on material connections, while being deployed as a socio-technological device for supply-chain management (Tsing 2015). As highlighted by global commodity-chain analysis (GCC) (Bair 2005), control over the distribution of consumer goods from production

sites in Asia to markets worldwide is increasingly exercised by the manufacturers and mass retailers. A trading environment in which goods continually enter and leave the status of 'legible inventory' (Tsing, 2015, 70) exposes the tension over logistics and distribution that emerges at the interface of big corporations and other market agents. In Bolivia, where categories of 'parallel imports' make little sense (as literarily all the phones in the market are purchased at best offer from various free-trade zones in the region and moved as contraband over a rough mountain range and a vast plateau), phones are hardly ever 'pacified' (Çalişkan and Callon 2010) in the sense of being ultimately standardised, qualified, priced, and disconnected from existing networks. Certainly, phones are high-tech commodities produced from materials (precious metals, rare earths, etc.) that have often been violently disentangled from their primary environments. Yet, as they move over long distances, across seas and mountains, being variously labelled, boxed and diverted in the process, mobile phones show their Janus-headed potentiality to connect. As technological devices, they connect traders with other commercial agents, clients, telecommunication infrastructures and databases. As material entities, phones are always on the verge of 'escaping'; they are pushed and pulled in different directions through acts of branding and rebranding. The directionality and speed of the phones' movements and their transactional value are facilitated and constrained by material practices – the recombination of phones, boxes and warranties, as well as the attaching and detaching of labels and holograms. As long as mobile phones continue to be repackaged and relabelled on their way to the market, and eventually be disconnected from digital databases to be related and classified differently, trading worlds are kept open and plural.

Notes

1. Throughout the text, when I refer to Samsung I mean the South Korean multinational electronics corporation of that name, but indirectly *also* the other international manufacturers that are branding their phones in Bolivia, namely Chinese Huawei, Korean LG and Japanese Sony. Samsung is the company that is investing most in Bolivia's popular markets, but the others do similar things, only on a smaller scale, with fewer employees and a smaller budget. The manufacturers copy each other's strategies. Actually, Huawei claims that the 'homologised' category is its invention. Therefore, Samsung started its 'plus' label. Customers refer to all original products with an official warranty for Bolivia indiscriminately as *homologados*, a practice I have taken up in this chapter.
2. Some confiscated things remain de-commodified. Laptops, printers, cameras and DVD players have been distributed to rural peasant and indigenous organisations loyal to the government within the so-called Pact of Unity (*Página Siete*, 6 April 2016, http://www.paginasiete.bo/nacional/2016/4/6/gobierno-repartio-afines-mercaderia-incautada-aduana-92315.html, accessed 31 December 2017). Sometimes, customs controls in border areas lead to the burning of entire truckloads, as traders and drivers destroy merchandise rather than hand it over to the officers, a telling practice with regard to the claim of ownership.

3. Despite a spectacular decrease in prices, Bolivia is still the most expensive country in the region in terms of the cost of internet access in relation to average salaries (CEPAL 2016, 21). By the end of 2018, it is estimated that 67.5% of Bolivians will have stable internet access, which is slightly above the Latin American average (Internet World Stats 2018, last modified 13 February 2018, https://www.internetworldstats.com/stats10.htm (accessed 3 October 2019)).
4. People notice differences in overall quality, software, touch, memory, and casing. Also, phones with space for two SIM cards are deemed to be Chinese.

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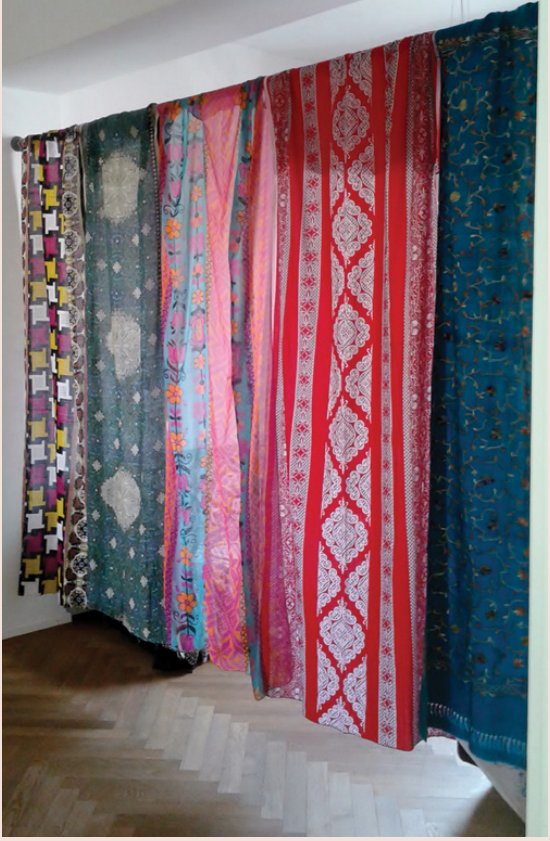


8 Intervention

Establishing intimacy through mobile phone connections

Anna-Maria Walter

This chapter seeks to tease out the relationship between the material perception of human life and virtual connections made through mobile phones. In both spheres, knowledge is fabricated through experience, in the first, through the body, in the second, it would seem, rather through the mind. Showing how love relationships materialise through mobile phones, I argue for a means of overcoming this epistemological dichotomy and show how users embody virtual experiences. Through the presentation of fieldwork findings, I tackle the question of how we can conceptualise virtual connections and how they redefine interpersonal relationships, thereby affecting established norms and values. While many social scientists have emphasised the affective dimensions of human bodies (cf. Csordas 1990; Desjarlais and Throop 2011; Grosz 1994; Ingold 2000), the *virtual* is generally associated with mere mental imaginations. The philosopher Brian Massumi, famous for his work on experience and affect, describes the virtual as devoid of sensible qualities but, more importantly, identifies it as 'fleeting' (Massumi 2002, 133), thus offering endless potential: 'new thoughts may be thought, new feelings felt' (Massumi 2002, 141). This chapter recognises the potentialities of young couples' virtual phone chats. The emotional and embodied effects[1] of mobile phone connections are exemplary of a *thing~tie* (Saxer and Schorch, Introduction to this volume) that transcends the concrete thing. What counts is not the material quality

Figure 8.1 Curtain of veils shielding off private space from public workshop area. Installation by Anna-Maria Walter, Symposium Connecting Materialities/Material Connectivities, Munich 2017, LMU Center for Advanced Studies. Photo by the author.

Figure 8.2 Peeking through the flexible wall of veils into a separate private sphere. Installation by Anna-Maria Walter, Symposium Connecting Materialities/Material Connectivities, Munich 2017, LMU Center for Advanced Studies. Photo by the author.

of the handset;[2] rather, the mobile phone derives its meaning from the connections it facilitates.

Through a curtain of veils and the snapshot of a wedding ceremony, my intervention seeks to show the ways in which gender segregation determines social life in the high mountain areas of Gilgit in northern Pakistan and continues in conjugal relationships. The obstructive wall made of Pakistani headscarves (see Figure 8.1) materialises the cultural practice of *parda* (literally meaning curtain), which stands for gendered life-worlds and veiling.

Although the colourful barrier gives a cheerful impression, many people walking past it do not notice what is hidden behind; its material presence invokes restraint and serves its function of seclusion well. Only those who dare to peek carefully through or push aside one of the veils discover the comfort and cosiness of a private room. Often it was just a slight movement of the light fabric by the wind or a passer-by that piqued people's curiosity and drew their attention to the permeability of the wall (see Figure 8.2).

In addition to providing a welcome refuge from the busy workshop environment, the privacy of the room also propels visitors to a semi-private family setting in the Gilgit area. The moving images of a wedding ceremony (see Figure 8.3) show a self-conscious couple sitting in the midst of their extended kin, feeding each other different foods to express mutual care. In accordance with local norms and expectations that the other gender is generally avoided, the bride feels particularly embarrassed at the display of conjugal affection in front of others.

When alone, however, the couple are much more at ease with each other. They had been in touch via mobile phones for about a year before this wedding ceremony. After the arrangement of their marriage by their families, the individuals themselves fell in love, exchanging messages, holding long phone conversations and organising the fiancé's occasional visits to the girl's family. Before the introduction of mobile phones, even spouses whose marriage had already been arranged were expected to avoid each other until they were fully married. Lacking the possibility to meet in private, they could not establish an intimate relationship, either emotional nor physical. Figure 8.4, however, shows a fairly explicit excerpt from a sexually charged SMS chat between newlyweds, who study at universities in different cities. Despite older stereotypes of spousal avoidance, their intimate thoughts, affection and desires are manifest in these messages.

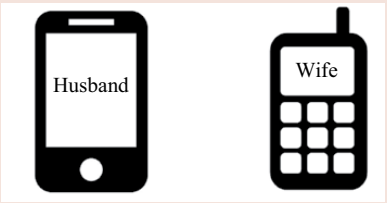
The erotic conversation also challenges local scepticism towards female emotional expressions. In the Gilgit area, women cover themselves for various reasons, such as religious observance and fashion, but most importantly to conform with a highly embodied form of modesty (Walter

2016). *Parda*, as a performative social practice as well as as an expression of morals and values, serves to regulate interactions between women and men, especially strangers, imposing on them distance and reserve. Leaving behind the public arena, only men who are family members enter the women's domain of the private household. Among close relatives gender segregation is relaxed, but elements of distance and reserve continue to characterise female–male interaction. Because conjugal intimacy is directly associated with sexuality, even married couples avoid displaying their mutual affection in front of others. For women it is therefore extremely important to assess where one *literally* stands to know how to behave in a certain place, whether in private or public. To engaged couples or newly-weds, the new medium of mobile phones guarantees privacy from surveillance and enables progressive familiarisation to build up conjugal intimacy even before they move together into their future family home.

Many of my interlocutors emphasised that mobile phone connections take place in an obscure, in-between site, one that is uncoupled from the material characteristic of sensory perception. As one young woman explained to me, 'It feels like a *third space* ... a mobile world. In this space, only voices meet and faces appear in the mind.' Facilitating invisible links between places that are conventionally distinct potentially disrupts spatial segregation and transgresses the binary of inside–outside. In telecommunication networks, voice and mind can travel over geographical and social boundaries but are still rooted in on-site experiences. An 18-year-old female college student from Gilgit describes the virtual encounter:

> When I write messages and, for example, have to laugh, the other's face comes to my mind. If the other person says that I'm here or there, in a shop, or eating apricots, or whatsoever, I can picture them without seeing; ... that she would be laughing like that, they might be sitting in the shop like that and so on.

The young woman imagines the people she is talking to on the basis of shared experiences. Even if she has never seen the location where the other one is, she can still draw from a cultural repository to fill in missing details, such as imagining the busy life in a hardware shop. She does not have to encounter her interlocutor in person to 'meet' her or him on the phone. Although these meetings in mobile space include little immediate sensory stimulation, they still affect users on an emotional level, influence their physical presence and leave a mark on existing relationships (Livholts and Bryant 2013, 163). In fact, the content of these messages has an impact on the emotional state of all involved. An SMS in a joking style might cheer up a friend and transmit



I miss you, darling, it would be so much fun if I was there,
I would also do some naughty things.

Too bad, darling. If I was there. What naughty thing would you do, darling? Anything in mind?

Hahaha, you're right. I would hold you from the back, put my hand down and *kiss*.

You slut. I swear by you that I dreamt last night that you were in front ... hahaha

Do you swear? What happened?

The way I was at my sister's once. Hahaha. Yes. You know what, I was in great pleasure.

Do you swear? Did you enjoy it?

Yes, darling, very much.

Ummmmahhhhh [Onomatopoeic kiss].

a sense of connection and intimacy, as well as making the sender happy as she can picture the recipient laughing at the message sent.

What the sociologist Christian Licoppe introduces as 'connected presence' (Licoppe 2004, 135) does not necessarily describe the bridging of distance, the virtual travel of one interlocutor to the other (Archambault 2012), but rather captures the meaningfully shared experience that takes place in the virtual space of mobile phone connections. On the other hand, it might be the lack of non-verbal clues through one's tone of voice – together with the lack of gestural clues from face-to-face encounters – that is responsible for heightened expressions of feelings in SMSes. Although a female lover would never say such things out loud, she frequently types 'Ummahhh' (for kiss) or 'januuuuu' (darling). This way, mobile phone connections allow the testing of boundaries and penetrate social norms and values. Both examples – the above quote from the young woman from Gilgit as well as blunt sexting – exemplify users' capability of inhabiting an abstract space of fleeting, folding and vanishing images (cf. Massumi 2002, 133) which challenges older presumptions that the virtual lacks sensible qualities. Mobile space is experienced and defined through affective dimensions of the body, such as hearing the other's voice, imagining her face or being emotionally moved by the words in a message. At the same time, the lack of somatic qualities defines interactions in space, which are, however, not completely detached from social values in place.

To grasp the immediacy of the mobile world, we need a reconceptualisation of the virtual and the material. I agree with the anthropologists Heather Horst and Daniel Miller that 'the virtual is more a new kind of place rather than a form of placelessness' (Horst and Miller 2012, 27), and suggest that social scientists draw attention to material characteristics that permeate the virtual. As Licoppe observed, communication in such virtual spaces radically revolutionises our understanding of social interaction that takes place face to face. Mobile phones allow users to build and tend to their links without ever meeting, thereby seemingly rendering shared somatic experiences insignificant (Licoppe 2004, 139). Nevertheless, virtual social relationships can never be completely uncoupled from material social life. Gilgiti women approximate behaviour suitable for female–male exchanges on mobile phones on the basis of their embodied sense of modesty. For example, they do not answer calls from unknown numbers, just

Figure 8.3 Still from a film depicting a wedding ritual in Gilgit, northern Pakistan. Installation by Anna-Maria Walter, Symposium Connecting Materialities/Material Connectivities, Munich 2017, LMU Center for Advanced Studies. Photo by the author.

Figure 8.4 Chat in SMS messages by young married couple (like all quotes in this contribution, collected and translated from Urdu and Shina by Anna-Maria Walter).

as they would not engage in small talk with a stranger in public. Invisible connections thus mostly align themselves with already existing paths and are less mobile than their potential implies.[3] What *is* mobile, however, is the way experiences made in the ambiguous virtual space feed back into users' daily lives. Social relationships become modified between phone users; they tease out new practices, embody them and reinterpret cultural concepts. While staying in the socially acceptable framework of (future) conjugal relationships, young couples establish intimacy and feel love for each other. While this process takes place in mobile space, it has consequences for the gender and power dynamics that are in place and influences concrete practices, such as newly-weds' interactions with in-laws and their sexual lives.

Relationships made in virtual space can be as 'real' as on-site experiences. Virtual links thus challenge common perceptions of social life as direct encounter and, at the same time, revolutionise our understanding of the material. The physical and the virtual are intrinsically entangled. Just as an enclosed room affects people's perception of it in – or outside of – its walls, the SMS chat between lovers takes on tangible form for them. Since young people in the Gilgit area primarily exchange messages on their mobile phones, they must develop creative ways to bridge the discrepancy between virtual and material presence. Through the thumb, they transfer emotions and stimulate the other's feelings. Longing for each other and experiencing sexual desire, as in the above SMS chat, are certainly somatic aspects of an intimacy that was, to a large extent, manifested through conversations in mobile space. As an integral part of love relationships in the Gilgit area, although mostly virtual, mobile phone connections leave material traces and feed back into life beyond mobile telephony. And, conversely, mobile space is appropriated on the basis of established norms and values. Intimate phone connections serve as prime examples of *thing~ties*: both spheres manifest and evolve through the other, thus dissolving the prevailing dichotomy of virtual and material worlds.

Manoeuvring within the safe social space of an acknowledged relationship, Gilgiti girls (re)negotiate ideas of romantic love and erotic intimacy, aligning them with existing gender norms and their own sentiments of modesty. While the intervention described here enacts gender segregation through curtains, *parda* may shield women from the gaze of strangers. But veils and curtains are not impenetrable: their diaphanous and mobile character allows a glimpse of life behind them and asks to be permeated. Mobile phones connect these private places and offer a virtual platform on which to interact. What is not possible for young couples in on-site meetings is experienced, felt and embodied in mobile space. They develop

emotional ties, affirm and reinforce loving bonds through SMS chats and phone calls, and effortlessly interlace the virtual and material worlds.

Notes

1. I identify emotions as motivational forces for people's actions; they reflect our innermost feelings as well as serving as transmitters of interaction between people and their environments (cf. Ahmed 2014). Current debates in the social sciences strive to circumvent analytically affects, emotions or feelings, and even sentiments. Affects are generally depicted as preconscious bodily sensations of unqualified intensity, whereas emotions involve a cognitive process of recognition and assessment of feelings, which themselves connote physiological and psychological conditions that result from a certain stimulus (Abu-Lughod 1986, 34; Barrett 2005, 263; Seigworth and Gregg 2010, 1; Massumi 2002, 27–9; Terada 2001, 4). Understanding embodiment as self-enforcing, sensory incorporation as well as enactment and renegotiation of norms and values, I do not support clear-cut distinctions between concepts of emotion: their boundaries are fluid; they conflate and co-construct each other; and they are all shaped by cultural models of interpretation and expression (Beatty 2014, 550; Röttger-Rössler and Stodulka 2014, 20).
2. While the actual practice of mobile phone use in daily life might seem to offer interesting insights, this focus on the handsets' material qualities is not supported by my fieldwork findings from Gilgit. Mobile phones are mostly experienced through the diffuse, abstract space they provide, rather than through paying attention to, for example, interruptions of conversations by vibrating phones.
3. Although mobile phone networks are often celebrated for uncoupling interpersonal communication from physical movement and facilitating new connections (Horst and Miller 2006; Pertierra 2005), most actual links between young couples in the Gilgit area follow previously established communication lines. Drawing on their earlier on-site experiences, users move along established pathways when negotiating their way within the new mobile infrastructures; thus phone connections mirror already existing knots (Ingold 2009, 32–4) which interweave people whose acquaintance is socially acceptable, in this example young couples whose (future) marital relationship has already been arranged and endorsed by their families.

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Part III
Dissolution and Traces

9

Smoky relations: beyond dichotomies of substance on the Tibetan Plateau

Gillian G. Tan

Introduction

For many societies, smoke expresses meaning in different ways and on multiple levels. In the past, the Cree of North America regarded agreements between two persons to be upheld in a binding way when they smoked the same pipe of tobacco (Venne 1997). 'Smoking the pipe' was used to bind treaty negotiations with the British in a way that was more meaningful to the Cree than the mark of ink on paper. Along with others, this example indicates the broader significance of smoke among Indigenous North Americans such as the Lakota with regard to pipe ceremonies and ritual identification (Csordas 2007; Kaiser 1984). Among Indigenous Australians,[1] the smoking of shrubs and grasses is associated with the 'Welcome to Country' ceremony and, in this instance, smoke is thought to be cleansing and renewing to both land and people (Merlan 2014, 297, 300). Other circumstances in which smoke is used in Indigenous Australian communities include traditional health practices, in which babies are passed over smoke that is used to fortify them against sickness and mothers are smoked post partum for restorative health benefits (Carter, Hussen, Abbott et al. 1987; Musharbash 2018). Moreover, smoke and its associated fire have been used to signal communication across a distance for coordinating hunting procedures, disseminating location and announcing confirmation of prearranged activities (Gould 1971, 20–1; Kimber 1983, 41). Among Tibetan nomadic pastoralists, smoke-purification rituals are performed for multiple reasons, including to please territorial deities and to purify them from the pollution of anthropogenic activities (Bellezza 2011; Fitzherbert 2014; Karmay 1998;

Tan 2016; Tan 2018a). While practices of smoke differ significantly in both the substance that produces smoke and specific cosmological framing, they nonetheless point to smoke's transformative effects: why does (some) smoke transform places,[2] persons and relationships?

In part, an answer lies in smoke's liminal existence in the betwixt and between. Produced by combustion of materials, smoke requires substance to come into existence, yet once it is produced its ephemeral qualities interrupt narratives based on the boundedness and fixity of substance. From its creation to its eventual dissipation, smoke is simultaneously material and non-material and, in its liminality, able to penetrate substance and the senses with transformative effects. For example, smoke's potent olfactory quality has accompanied the signal of category-change in different rites of passage, especially the signal of a transition from one classification of existence to another (Howes 1987). Moreover, the quality of smoke allows a unity of all previous classifications, so that the transformation is at the level of awareness itself (Howes 1987; Parkin 2007).

Building on these insights into smoke's liminal existence, this chapter suggests that smoke also offers a productive way to think through the concepts of 'materiality' and 'connectivity', taken here as one expression of the classic debate in anthropology between 'materialism' and 'mentalism'.[3] The predication of materiality on substance and its boundedness in form have been assumed as the *a priori* basis for connection, first posited as self-same substance and form, then connected with other substances and forms. This proposition takes its logical lineage from a Cartesian perspective on 'brute' matter; substances are self-composed before being connected to other substances. Yet, recent literature has challenged this perspective through arguments on new materialism (Barad 2007; Bennett 2010; Braidotti 2000; Dolphijn and van der Tuin 2012) and relational ontologies (Bird-David 1999; Descola 2005, 2013, 2016; Hallowell 1981; Strathern 1988, 2014; Wagner 1975, 1991). While these writings may be traced along several cleavages, most notably as an interdisciplinary strand (new materialism) inspired by the works of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, and an anthropological strand (relational ontologies) grounded in kinship and human–non-human relations, one aspect that they share is a critical response to the mind–body dichotomy of Cartesian dualism, a critical response that prioritises the unity of mind and body and relations among entities. Here, relations are posited neither as *a priori* nor as *a posteriori* but *along with* material forms. In this way, both relations and materials are the *thing~ties* suggested in the introduction to this volume. Concepts and practices of 'materiality' and 'connectivity'

are therefore not to be understood as operating in distinct and independent ways, but rather as simultaneously occurring and mutually enforcing.

Smoke as liminal and ephemeral underscores this clearly. Tibetans burn juniper to create fragrant smoke; the dissolution of juniper into fragrant smoke is the dissolution of 'materiality' into 'relationality'. Yet this fragrant smoke is itself the connection by which worldly deities come into being, and is itself dissolved soon after it is created. Using the example of a smoke-purification ritual known as *sang* (T. *bsang*),[4] this chapter understands the *sang* ritual complex as vital to maintaining and re-creating relationships among ritual practitioners, Tibetan pastoralists, worldly deities, and the environment in eastern Tibet (Kham). In particular, one manifestation of *sang* enacts relationships that bring entities such as worldly deities into being. What this means is that entities are not only fortified or augmented by the smoky relations of *sang* but also dependent on them for continued existence. Because smoky relations are an ongoing practice, and influence both human practitioners and worldly deities, the relationship may be more specifically articulated as a mutuality of becoming and un-becoming. Focusing on relationships agrees with the various writings on relational ontologies that have proliferated in anthropology following the earlier work of Marilyn Strathern (1988) and Roy Wagner (1975, 1991). More recently, Philippe Descola posited this question:

> How to recompose nature and society, humans and non-humans, individuals and collectives, in a new assemblage in which they would no longer present themselves as distributed between substances, processes, and representations, but as the instituted expression of relationships between multiple entities whose ontological status and capacity for action vary according to the positions they occupy in relation to one another?
>
> (Descola 2013, 5)

The task, then, is not to renew the primacy of material boundedness by *re*distributing substantive properties, processes and representations across already known and formed categories, but instead to recompose the apparently bounded terms of nature and society, humans and non-humans, through an emphasis on the manifest and instituted expressions of relationships in a given context. Using fragrant smoke in its ritual form as a heuristic device, this chapter demonstrates how relationships – maintained and re-created partly through smoke – are of primary importance for understanding *thing~ties* among Tibetan pastoralists, worldly deities, and the environments (variously material, social and political) of which they are part.

Smoky relations

The Tibetan pastoralists in question live in the south-eastern part of the Tibetan plateau, in an area traditionally known as Kham (T. *khams*), also called Chuzhi Gangdrug (T. *chu bzhi sgang drug*) for the four rivers and six ranges that topographically characterise the region. After the Chinese takeover of the Tibetan plateau in 1950, different traditional regions were placed into various Chinese administrative divisions and Kham was subsequently divided into Chamdo Prefecture of the Tibet Autonomous Region, Yushu Prefecture in Qinghai Province, Ganzi Prefecture in Sichuan Province and Dechen Prefecture of Yunnan Province. The pastoralist community of my field research is located in Ganzi Prefecture, Sichuan Province, which, in sixty years of Chinese rule, has experienced a succession of Chinese government policies targeted at altering pastoral modes of existence, reorganising methods of production, enclosing pastures and animals, and encouraging capitalist development.[5] In the past, the community itself was subject to the collectivisation and subsequent famine caused by the Great Leap Forward (1957 to 1962) and the cooperatism of the Cultural Revolution (1966 to 1976), which moved previously distinct households of nomadic pastoralists into cooperative buildings where they lived and worked according to a points system. Pastoralists received rations of food and other necessities based on the points gathered from their labour (Tan 2018b). Through the 1980s and 1990s, policies of the Household Responsibility System and 'four that form a set' (Chinese *sipeitao jianshe*) initiated the construction of winter houses, fences for pastures, allocations of land for annual fodder and barns for animals, thereby adding to the material foundations of pastoralism. Finally, in the 2000s and up to the present, government policies have moved towards the rhetoric of environmental protection, expressed through policies such as 'restoring pastures, converting grasslands' (Ch. *tuimu huancao*) and ecological resettlement (Ch. *shengtai yimin*). In the present period, the context of pastoral existence in China is framed by the Nomad Settlement policy (Ch. *you mumin dingju*) and its focus on intensifying the production base of pastoralists to align with market demands (Tan 2018b).

As a result of these various policies and their implementation, the majority of pastoralists of my fieldwork community in Ganzi Prefecture presently live in stone houses – built in the 1990s – in the winter and spring months, and move with their animals to different pastures in the summer and autumn months. In the summer and autumn pastures, they put up and take down their black yak-hair tents as they move from pasture

Figure 9.1 Map of Ganzi Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Province, China, 2006. Cartography by Chandra Jayasuriya.

to fresh pasture. The remaining pastoralists in the community live in concrete, government-subsidised houses located in an area of grasslands that is also the site of other developments, namely an asphalted double-lane road, a complex of buildings associated with a local incarnate lama (see Tan 2016), and an airport about 26 kilometres away. Pastoralists of the same community currently live in different types of houses in different parts of the grassland and depend on several sources of livelihood. This is the outcome not of a single factor but of a complex of reasons, including kinship networks, household demographics and income from the caterpillar fungus trade. 'Materiality' and 'connectivity' coalesce in multiple ways and instantiations; notwithstanding, it has been argued that communities of nomadic pastoralists in eastern Tibet are now internally stratified in ways that are more distinct than in the past (Levine 2015).

Despite alterations in the material conditions of life that outwardly differentiate the house and herd of one kin member from the house and

herd of another, the pastoralists of this community continue to orient themselves towards the symbolic and practical actions that bind them as a group. They are part of the same monastery of the Nyingma sect of Tibetan Buddhism, they share oral histories of their movement to these pastures from another region of eastern Tibet, and they perform collective and singular rituals to a common pantheon of worldly deities. On the Tibetan plateau, deities are more than the transcendental pantheon of Buddhist gods manifest as Guru Padmasambhava and the deities, for instance of compassion known as Chenrezig (T. *spyan ras gzigs*) and of wisdom known as Jambayang (T. *'jam dpal dbyangs*). Also included are worldly deities called *jig ten pa'i lha* (T. *'jig rten pa'i lha*), usually a range of territorial masters (T. *gzhi bdag*), homeland deities (T. *yul lha*), water spirits (T. *klu*), and the eight classes of gods and demons[6] (T. *lha 'dre sde brgyad*) that have been 'tamed' (T. *'dul ba*) by Tibetan Buddhism. Crucially, and unlike the transcendental beings, the worldly deities are part of the environment, namely mountains, hills and lakes, and are integrally connected to these places by imbuing them with special power and fortune. For instance, the material entity and topological mountain referred to as Zhara is also Zhara deity, and the plants, rocks and soil on the mountain are thought to be the deity's possessions (T. *lha phyug*) and imbued with his fortune. Moreover, worldly deities such as territorial masters (T. *gzhi bdag*) usually inhabit high places. They favour mountains and hills, with a correlation that the higher and more striking the mountain, the more powerful the territorial master. Importantly, worldly deities are distinct from transcendental ones because they are themselves thought to be of limpid composition (T. *gtsang rigs*), which makes them susceptible to anthropogenic activity. Burning (non-fragrant materials) and digging earth are just a few of the many acts that cast a pollution or shadow on the worldly deities, who are negatively affected or contaminated by this pollution. In retribution for this pollution, worldly deities enact deeds with negative repercussions that may cause ill-health and misfortune to the community. Correspondingly, worldly deities feel the range of emotions from anger and jealousy to friendship and approval. When the worldly deities are pleased and well disposed, they confer good fortune and power to the single or collective beneficiary. Worldly deities and humans are integral to the well-being of each other, and this well-being is enabled through practices of fragrant smoke. One instantiation of a smoke-purification ritual, or *sang*, to a worldly deity in this community sheds light on this chapter's focus on materiality, connectivity, and the mutuality of becoming/un-becoming expressed through human–non-human relationships.

The *sang* ritual occurred on a late winter's day five years ago, amidst a flurry of construction in the community: the two-lane road that passed the village had been completed, new houses were being built as a result of the Nomad Settlement project, and the incarnate lama had overseen the completion of a five-storey primary-level boarding school for pastoralist children of the area. The lama's complex of buildings had been constructed in an area of pasture called Taraka (T. *rta ra ka*), and the pastoralists who had formerly lived there in stone winter houses and grazed their animals on its pastures had moved either to other parts of the community's pastures or to the new concrete houses from the Nomad Settlement project. Because the incarnate lama was concerned about the fortune of this place, which included the sustained quality of water that flowed from the snow-capped mountains behind the place, he wanted to endow Taraka with the power of a worldly deity that would protect the well-being of the land and its inhabitants. However, he faced a problem. Taraka used to have a worldly deity that resided there however, pastoralists said that it had fled around sixty years ago, which corresponded with the 1950s and the time the People's Liberation Army (PLA) of the Chinese state camped there for a while. During that time, soldiers destroyed local chortens (stupas), cut down forests, and killed wildlife. They also took away a number of people associated with religion, including the ritual practitioner connected with the deity. In the light of this series of polluting acts, Taraka deity left the place[7] and, importantly, could not be called back since its ritual practitioner had died and the transmission was lost. Therefore, in order to confer the power and fortune of a worldly deity on Taraka, the local incarnate lama manoeuvred to call in a worldly deity from another place. This more powerful deity normally resides in, and is integrally associated with, the high snow-capped mountain called Zhara.

On that day, the ritual practitioner for Zhara deity was invited to conduct the smoke-purification ritual and chant the specific smoke-purification ritual text (T. *bsang yig*) for Zhara. It was a community event and pastoralists dressed in fine robes. The air was already thick with fragrant smoke from dried juniper branches taken specially from the hill of another nearby worldly deity. Plants and shrubs from this particular hill were thought to be endowed with particular potency. Within the framework of Tibetan Buddhism, incense is burned to please the gods. The subsequent fragrant smoke is thought to 'please the five senses' (T. *'dod yon lnga*) of the Buddha as well as other deities that have been incorporated into the Buddhist pantheon. Fragrant smoke rises to the sky, thereby creating a pathway or channel to the Buddhas in their Purelands (Fitzherbert 2016, 1). But within the specific context of worldly deities,

fragrant smoke does more than please the gods; it purifies the deities themselves, securing not only their goodwill and fortune but also their continued presence in a particular place.

The ritual practitioner for Zhara deity was accompanied by a small retinue of monks associated with the local incarnate lama, as well as the lama himself. They, however, did not chant the ritual text, which was chanted by the ritual practitioner:

> Homage to the master Guru Padma Sambhava (T. *na mo gu ru padma thod phreng rtsal*),
>
> King Padma's most revered host/collection (T. *pad ma rgyal po'i tshogs la gus pas 'dud*).
>
> Having nobly tamed the Snowy Land of Tibet (T. *gangs can bod yul 'phags pa'i gdul bya ste*),
>
> Particularly Guru Padma himself (T. *khyad par gu ru pad ma ka ra nyid*),
>
> …
>
> Protector of the sutra and mantra illuminating the world (T. *'dzam gling mdo sngags sgron me gsal ba'i mgon*),
>
> Protector of thunder illuminating Tibet, in particular (T. *sgos su bod yul num pa gsal ba'i mgon*):
>
> …
>
> At that time the one master Padma (T. *de dus rje gcig pad ma ka ra' yis*)
>
> Saw Tibet's poisonous demons (T. *bod kyi lha srin gdug pa can gzigs pa*),
>
> Subdued and conquered them by magic (T. *mthu dang stobs kyis btul zhing dbang du bsdus*).
>
> They completely listened to the requests of his servants (T. *kun kyung bka' nyan gsung sdod bran du bkod*)
>
> And promised to deliver the treasure of the protector/guardian (T. *dam tshig gtad cing gter gyi srung ma la*).
>
> …
>
> The many master protectors of the region (T. *gnas bdag du ma chos kyi srung ma la*)
>
> Order and entrust each with his teachings (T. *bka' bsgo mdzad cing rang rang las gnyer gtad*),

Particularly in the borders of China and Tibet (T. *khyad par rgya nag yul dang bod kyi mtshams*),

To teach and protect the boundaries at the time of adversity (T. *bstan pa srung zhing mu stegs kha gnon la*),

To establish the 38 masters of the region (T. *gnas bdag dregs pa sum cu tsa brgyad bzhag*)

In the lining of Zhara Lhatse himself (T. *de'i nang shar gyi bzhag bra lha rtse nyid*).

…

Be calm with this smoke-offering (T. *zhi ba bsang gi mchod pa 'di 'bul bas*).

As the chant progressed, monks assembled the stone foundation for a cairn (T. *la rdzas*), with poles of prayer flags in the middle. Beside the cairn, a one-metre-high pile of dried juniper branches smouldered, releasing thick plumes of fragrant smoke both to the sky and to the immediate area. Everyone could feel the smoke penetrating their nostrils, eyes, skin and throats; it engulfed the area and blurred clear distinctions among participants and between the senses. Pastoralists who were at a distance from the cairn and the ritual practitioner might not have distinctly heard his chants, but they felt the smoky effects of the ritual. After an hour of chanting, smoking and observing, the ritual concluded and its participants dispersed. Notably, the ritual practitioner did not return to his abode a little more than ten kilometres away. Instead, he moved into a newly constructed, simple stone house not far from the stone cairn and, to this day, performs the rituals required to please and purify Zhara deity. The cairn itself was reconstructed more elaborately after the ritual and is now regarded as another presence for Zhara deity, so that any ritual action performed there is equivalent to actions performed at the snow-capped mountain itself. The ritual action elicits a relational response: Zhara deity confers his power and fortune on the place of Taraka.

Let us now examine a few points related to this smoke-purification ritual. First, and related to the overall themes of 'materiality' and 'connectivity', is the creation of new avenues of ritual practice based on context and need.[8] The power and fortune of Zhara deity was not relocated to Taraka; that is, the deity was not transferred from one place to another but rather *extended*, in a way that conferred equivalent presence in both places, Zhara mountain and the cairn in Taraka. Elaborating on the extension, the cairn was also Zhara. It was incorrect therefore to think of the cairn as another representation of the deity; the material

form of the cairn connects with Zhara mountain as an extension of the latter, rather than as its representation. Here, to recall Descola (2013), is an example not of a *re*distribution of substantive properties, processes and representations, but of recomposing 'materiality' and 'connectivity': Zhara deity and the cairn at Taraka were recomposed as one through the smoke-purification ritual performed by the ritual practitioner. Importantly, physical and topographic manifestations, such as land and mountains and water, are not always or only understood through their material aspects, but also – and for Tibetans *primarily* – through the power and fortune that imbues certain portions of land or specific mountains or bodies of water. Recomposing materiality and connectivity, therefore, is not a universal and one-off act, but a constantly engaged practice (in this case, through smoky relations) of becoming and un-becoming.

I note un-becoming because of the second related point from the brief ethnography above: the original Taraka deity is now lost to the community and the place. This loss resulted partly from the polluting activities of PLA soldiers, which not only displeased the deity but also affected him directly and negatively. Even though these polluting acts could have been counteracted by fragrant smoke – that is, through smoky relations with his ritual practitioner – the person who could have performed the ritual was no longer alive. Taraka deity's well-being and continued presence in Taraka depended on smoky relations with his ritual practitioner. This historical situation illustrates how the worldly deity and the ritual practitioner are not in existence before their relationship. Rather, they existed in mutual dependence and the loss of one signalled the un-becoming of the other. In this regard, Taraka deity and his ritual practitioner highlight not a substantialist ontology of being posited on a duality of mind and matter, but rather a mutually constituting ontology of becoming and un-becoming, perceived and expressed through smoky relations.

Beyond dichotomies of substance and worldviews

How do the ethnography and analysis presented here contribute to certain debates within anthropology on issues of non-dualism and relationality (Venkatesan, Candea, Jensen et al. 2012; Venkatesan, Martin, Scott et al. 2013)? At stake in these debates is a clear response to, and critique of, the understanding of realities according to dualism, and more specifically the substance dualism of René Descartes and its assumed

incommensurability between body and mind.[9] The substance dualism of Descartes proposes that the thinking, *cogito*, or consciousness/mind, is something radically different from body or substance. Substance dualism is therefore contrary to both the perspective of materialists, which states that physical substance is the only knowable truth, and the perspective of idealists, which posits that physical states are only mental ones. Rather, the assertion of Cartesian dualism is that both mind and body are real but cannot be assimilated into each other. This incommensurability draws a dichotomy between mind (also mental, immaterial) and body (also materiality, substance) and has the effect of an almost unquestioned assumption, namely that substances – as inert, brute matter – are already composed (or thought to be), and it is minds that connect them together and interact with them.[10]

One strand of the critique of substance dualism has emphasised the person-as-individual and called for alternative articulations based on a kinship- and exchange-dependent 'dividual' (Strathern 1988) and on the 'fractal person' (Wagner 1991). Another, taken up mainly by Bruno Latour and the actor-network theory, has focused on the dualism between mind and matter specifically through 'human action and material causality – in a hierarchical and axial manner' (Ssorin-Chaikov 2013: 315). Yet another strand of critique understands the dualism in terms of a Nature/Culture dichotomy and is exemplified notably in works by Descola (1994, 2005), Tim Ingold (1992) and Eduardo Viveiros de Castro (1998, 2004). All identify the problem of separating an inert Nature 'out there' on the one hand and an active Culture 'in here' on the other, particularly as a universal dichotomy, even while they have different perspectives on how humans relate with non-humans. In particular, Descola has argued for multiple ontologies of identification and relation (2005) and Viveiros de Castro for perspectivism (1998), and both have been pivotal to the literature on 'the ontological turn' (Alberti, Fowles, Holbraad et al. 2011; Henare, Holbraad and Wastell 2007; Holbraad and Pedersen 2014; Pedersen 2001; Willerslev 2007). Yet one key point related to this literature, as well as associated arguments for relational ontologies and subsequent critiques,[11] bears on this chapter. For if, indeed, the argument based on the ontological turn and associated relational ontologies is necessarily wedded to a basic theoretical ground, then, as Morten Pedersen (2012) suggests, the theoretical ground should preferably be the ground of our field of study rather than that of Descartes and substance dualism.

Taking seriously this proposition with regard to Tibetan smoky relations, the theoretical ground of Tibetan philosophy sees a dualistic view as

> the ignorant view characteristic of the unenlightened mind in which all things are falsely conceived to have *concrete self-existence* [emphasis added]. To such a view, the appearance of an object is mixed with the false image of its being independent or self-existent, thereby leading to further dualistic views concerning subject and object, self and other, this and that and so forth.
>
> (Yeshe 2001, 80)

In Tibetan philosophy, therefore, dualism is characteristic of the unenlightened mind, and the effort towards enlightenment is the ability to transcend dualism through non-dualism. Importantly, non-dualism is *not* the lack of recognition that categories and oppositions exist but rather a methodological approach that allows the thinker-practitioner to remain within the paradox of existing-within-dualisms yet *not only* existing-within-dualisms. In other words, it is the paradox of existing in a world of either/or while maintaining the methodological approach of both/and, which necessarily includes the either/or.[12] A Tibetan example that expands on the category of smoke illustrates this point.

A classical and basic definition of smoke (T. *du ba*) from Tibetan philosophy comes from the *Collected Topics* textbooks (T. *bsdus grwa'*)[13] and states that smoke – called *duwa* in the vernacular of eastern Tibetan pastoralists – is a secondary colour, which is also referred to as 'shades', of which there are eight kinds.[14] Tracing the genealogy of this classification, smoke as *duwa* is a kind of colour pertaining to vision form sources (T. *gzugs*), which are part of external form/matter.[15] Notably, external/form matter is an object of the senses rather than existence predicated on substance/matter (T. *dngos po*). This classification of smoke, like any kind of classification, is a process of ordering and exclusion: categorising what something is simultaneously comments on what something is not (within the system of classification). It operates within the categorising principle of either/or. Yet the Tibetan classification of smoke as colour exists generally as a phenomenon in the realm of conventional nature, which is marked by dualisms and the unenlightened mind. The aim of Tibetan philosophy is to transcend the dualisms presented by phenomena in conventional nature. To achieve this, though, the thinker-practitioner simultaneously holds on to dualisms in order to argue beyond them. As mentioned above, thinking with and through the classification of smoke in Tibetan philosophy and according to its method of argumentation and debate requires the paradox of existing-within-dualisms yet *not only* existing-within-dualisms if one is to transcend them. Guided by the framework of Tibetan philosophy, therefore, the aim of this chapter is

not to reconcile the dualism by rejecting it, but to recompose such terms as 'nature' and 'society', 'materiality' and 'connectivity' according to a method of both/and.

In practice, smoke-purification rituals comprise two different categories of *sang*, namely *sang chod* (T. *bsang mchod*) or fragrant smoke as offering, and *nol sang* (T. *mnol bsang*) or fragrant smoke as treating various spiritual, social and/or physical contaminations. These different categories can, in part, be explained by the fact that Tibetan Buddhism comprises what Samuel (1993) has described as two distinct components: 'clerical', prescriptive aspects and 'shamanic', dynamic approaches (Samuel 1993: 568–73). The latter is often traced to folk religious practices that share aspects of animism, as defined by Descola (2009). In Tibetan ritual practices, also, the combination of these aspects at times results in a conflation of components, particularly when shamanic approaches are made to fit into clerical contexts. Therefore, in terms of *sang* rituals, it is not technically or theologically possible to fumigate or have any impact on the Buddha and other-worldly Buddhist protectors (T. *'jig-rten las 'das- pa'i srung-ma*). In theological contexts of Tibetan Buddhism, the aspect of *sang* as offering (T. *bsang mchod*) is combined with, and often overrides, the aspect of *sang* as cleansing or fumigating (T. *mnol bsang*) (Bellezza 2011; Tan 2018a). In this way, ritual smoke can be seen to go beyond the dichotomy of either/or – either clerical or shamanic – to express the method of both/and. Smoke, worldly deities, ritual practitioners and nomadic pastoralists therefore should not be viewed as having concrete self-existence independently of the relationships that implicate them in a mutuality of becoming and un-becoming. To state this, however, is crucially to acknowledge and clarify that it is specifically through smoke from *sang* (T. *bsang*) that Taraka and Zhara deities, Taraka and Zhara ritual practitioners and the nomadic pastoralists of my fieldwork community are in a mutuality of becoming and un-becoming. Categories of language and thought cannot be completely 'captured' in the recomposing; rather, particular instantiations are implicated.

Therefore, it is important to acknowledge how different kinds of smoke in Tibet (Tan 2018a) and different worldly deities and communities of nomadic pastoralists recompose into smoky relations of different degrees and configurations. We can now fully appreciate that, for Tibetan pastoralists, only some smoke, namely, smoke from *sang*, transforms persons and environments. Smoke as *duwa*, on the other hand, sets up a category of phenomenal existence that heuristically allows a Tibetan thinker-practitioner to transcend dualisms and independent material existence.

Anthropological literature in its various ways has sought to go beyond dichotomies of substance and worldviews, culminating in multiple approaches that seek to activate the theoretical ground appropriate to an ethnographer's field of study. Staying with this proposition, the chapter has concluded with the theoretical ground of Tibetan philosophy and its focus on non-dualism to highlight the methodological ability to remain both/and within the paradox of dualism, either/or. Recomposing smoke neither as just substance, just colour or just fragrant smoke (*sang*) allows us to appreciate the different and specific cadences of smoke and the effects it engenders. Smoky relations therefore index shifting and blurred categories – shifting because what is foregrounded, either categories or relations, changes depending on specific ethnographic contexts, and blurred because the liminal existence of smoke itself obfuscates clear delineations between categories and unifies mind and perception through its potent sensory qualities. 'Materiality' and 'connectivity' are reconfigured to exist not as independent terms but through a mutual constitution that, even though conceptually distinct, is nevertheless practically simultaneous.

Notes

1. For a useful review of practices of smoke in indigenous Australia, see Musharbash (2018).
2. I use 'place' in the ways signalled by contributions in Feld and Basso's (1996) *Senses of Place*, namely as already marked by interactions – rather than existing conceptually in the abstract – as glossed by 'space'.
3. For an in-depth discussion, see Descola 2013.
4. Tibetan words are shown in transcribed form, followed in brackets by transliterations that follow a modified Wylie system.
5. For an overview of these policies, see Bauer and Nyima 2011; Gaerrang 2015; Tan 2018b; Yeh and Gaerrang 2011.
6. Where the worldly deities have not been tamed by Buddhism, they are referred to as demons (T. *'dre*).
7. The Tibetan word used was the vernacular '*shi song*', which glosses as 'lost, left, died'.
8. Charlene Makley (2013) has written of a similar creative reinvention of a ritual event, the lurol festival, in the north-eastern Tibetan region of Amdo.
9. It is important to note that conceptual dualism invokes a necessary incommensurability between two terms and, in this way, differs from binary oppositions that may be regarded as two qualities of a single term, for example, hot/cold as qualities of temperature (which is itself a relative measure). In this latter regard, binary oppositions might also express monism, which is the conceptual opposite of dualism. The incommensurability of terms in dualism is of a more basic order.
10. Insights on dualism presented here have been informed by Robinson (2017).
11. For critiques and responses to them, see Course 2010; Heywood 2012; Ingold 2016; Laidlaw 2012; Descola 2016; Holbraad and Pedersen 201; Pedersen 2012.
12. For an interesting and relevant discussion of both/and, see Lambek (2015).
13. Here I would like to thank Ruth Gamble for her guidance through the basic tenets of Tibetan philosophy.

14. The eight kinds of shades (T. *kha dog gi yin lag brgyad*) are (1) cloud (T. *sbrin pa*), (2) smoke (T. *du ba*), (3) dust (T. *rdul*), (4) fog or mist (T. *khug sna*), (5) sun (T. *nyi ma*), (6) shadow (T. *grib pa*), (7) lustre (T. *snang ba*) and (8) darkness (T. *mun pa*).
15. It is important to note the different categorical references to gzugs. Matter – manifest as materials, things, objects, substance – and its synonym form (T. *gzugs*) are that which can be experienced through the senses. Matter is again divided into (1) external and (2) internal matter. The externals are the six sense-object spheres that are the things one can see, hear, taste, smell, touch and think. The internals are the senses themselves. Significantly in Tibetan philosophy, there is a delineation between that which 'exists' and is predicated on matter/substance (T. *dngos po*) and that which is an object of the senses, namely external forms/matter (T. *gzugs*). External form/matter is divided again among the various senses, and it is the vision 'form sources' that pertain directly to smoke.

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The water in this humidifier was collected from a puddle formed in King Street after heavy rain, following an unusually long dry spell for an Aberdeen winter.


Grampian

10 Intervention

What remains: the things that fall to the side of everyday life

Marc Higgin

Water collected from a puddle on King Street, one of the major roads running through Aberdeen, Scotland, connecting the fishing ports and oil refineries to the north with the harbour and cities to the south. Water carried halfway across Europe to another city, decanted into a humidifier and placed in the corner of the break-out room of a symposium convened around the theme of materiality and connectivity in anthropological research. Next to the humidifier is a label identifying the source to those curious enough to wander over.

Aberdeen. Day and night, lorries, buses and cars pass, containers ferrying their payloads of people, equipment, goods, food, animals to slaughter, fish to market, waste to treatment and landfill. King Street's smooth, surfaced ground is a vital part of the circulatory system through which the economy of north-east Scotland has grown. However, the focus here is not on the infrastructure of the road itself. Nor is it on the modes of materiality and connectivity of the things travelling along it, things accounted for and given value through exchange, the 'goods' that fill everyday life. Instead, my interest is with the externalities, with the things that fall to the side and make up the atmosphere of King Street as a particular place: the noise of the traffic, the air laden with smells, soot and dust, the play of shadows

Figure 10.1 Close-up of humidifier stocked with water collected from a puddle on King Street, Aberdeen, in late January 2017. Installation by Marc Higgin, Symposium Connecting Materialities/Material Connectivities, Munich 2017, LMU Center for Advanced Studies. Photo by Vivien Ahrens.

Figure 10.2 King Street, at night after the rush hour. Photo by the author.

from passing headlights, the brightly lit faces staring out from buses, the flotsam and jetsam that accumulate in its gutters and drains.

Munich. Turned to vapour, the water fills the room while people eat and speak. Nearly invisible, this intervention is less representation than re-presentation of the street on which I have lived with my family for the last two years. Its aim was not to paint a picture of King Street in the realist tradition, nor to illustrate a 'study *of*' lives lived along its length (Ingold 2008, 82).[1] Instead – in the experimental spirit of juxtaposing things, stories and ideas developed over the course of the mat~con workshops – the remains of one place directly intervene, interpose themselves, in another. Though scarcely noticed, the vapour is nevertheless breathed in by all those in the room, with its cargo of particles gleaned from car tyres and engine exhausts, with its teeming microbial life fed by dropped cigarette butts and seagull shit, all absorbed and metabolised alongside the food and conversation. This intervention *does* something and, as I will elaborate, it is exactly the inconspicuousness of this doing that makes it interesting to this collection's attention to materiality and connectivity within anthropological research.

The work is a homage to the artist Teresa Margolles, in particular her work 'Air/Aire', an installation into which I inadvertently stumbled on a visit, in 2008, to the 'Emotional Systems' exhibition at the Palazzo Strozzina in Florence, Italy. I pushed through a set of those heavy plastic curtains more at home in a butcher's shop or slaughterhouse to find myself alone in a bare, white room. There was a slight and somewhat earthy quality to the air but nothing out of place in a basement not far from the river. Lacking any other place to land, my attention was drawn to a nondescript machine in the far corner. Wandering over, I read the small label that told me that the water in this humidifier had been used to wash the corpses of murder victims at the municipal morgue in Mexico City. My sense of the room flipped on its head, a visceral shock had me disgusted, disbelieving, unwilling to breathe, laughing, fascinated and deeply saddened, all in quick succession.

The involuntary intimacy of the piece broke all the conventions of representational art, with its still lifes, nudes and landscapes that keep the world at a polite distance. But it also unsettled the detached distance of the pathologist,[2] examining the bodies laid out on the slab along with the numbing litany of the news that has given up counting the victims of a war that has been going on for years. Absent of any hyperbole, the work quietly (re)presents death, murder, a war whose reasons spread far beyond Mexico, implicating us all. Avoiding the figurative, Margolles's installation works through what François Lyotard (2011) called the 'figural', a disruptive force that works to interrupt established habits and structures in the realms

of both discourse and sense, forcing their transformation. The installation interposed itself between sensuous experience and thought, undermining the sure footing of both. It was this technology of re-presentation I wanted to borrow – both the involuntary intimacy it forced upon its 'viewer' and its means of making this intimacy evident – in order to leverage its visceral power to unsettle anthropological theorising around materiality and connectivity. Playing at the border between art and anthropology (Schneider and Wright 2010, 1–22), the intervention follows in the footsteps of Alfred Gell and his anthropological (re)definition of art as technology of entrapment (Gell 1996). At stake here is less a reading of the 'complex intentionalities' that Gell saw at work in the work of art than the dispositive that Gell appropriates from the Western art world, the 'white cube' framing the encounter with an artwork (see Higgin 2017). The intervention is a proposition in the shape of a puzzle, awaiting a viewer to make sense of it, 'a trap or a snare that impedes passage' (Gell 1996, 37), slowing down habitual ways of perceiving, feeling and thinking in order to open possibilities for doing these otherwise.

From objects to atmospheres

For Tim Ingold, the civil engineering that characterises the road system in the UK (and in much of the world) aims to

> convert the ground into the kind of surface that theorists of modernity always thought it was – level, homogeneous, pre-existent and inert. It is to make the earth into a stage, platform, floor or baseboard, or, in a word, into an *infrastructure*, upon which the superstructure of the city can be erected.
>
> (Ingold 2015, 45)

Modernity has its dream of frictionless matter and instant connectivity but, as Ingold goes on to argue, this hard-surfaced world still partakes in the weather, in the flux of beings, materials and forces from which every particular place is continually being made and remade. The puddle from which I filled a plastic bottle was not, in this sense, a discrete thing but a *thinging*, a kind of gathering (Ingold 2010, 5; see also Heidegger 1971, 164–72) carried by the rain blowing in from the North Sea, carrying together the heavy hydrocarbons of asphalt, the synthetic rubber, steel, waxes, oils, pigments and silicas of the tyres passing over its surface, the salt that the council liberally spreads during the winter months, the fallout from the

exhausts of countless combustion engines with its sulphur dioxide, carbon monoxide and dioxide, nitrogen oxide, ozone, chlorofluorocarbons, petrol, benzene, particulates, heavy metals, the remains of last year's leaves, spit, the crumbs from a thrown-away crisp packet – a litany that only scratches the surface.

Spreading out to envelop the lunchtime chatter of a symposium, the intervention gestures towards a different mode of materiality and connectivity from those of the '"middle-sized dry goods" which are supposed to populate the world of "common sense"' (Latour 2012, 163): that familiar world of stable objects and artefacts that populate economic theories and accounts of the social. Since the inception of anthropology as a discipline, accounts from beyond the familiar horizons of Western material cultures have troubled the apparent ease with which people and things can be distanced one from the other. The recent, and much-needed, turn to 'materiality', to the innumerable things that surround us and through which we live our social lives – the houses we live in, the clothes we wear, the pictures we hang on our walls, the weapons we kill with, the cars we drive – has been driven by a recognition that the very physicality of bodies and stuff, so obviously important in everyday life, had been left behind as anthropologists read through them to their social function and cultural meaning.

It is this approach to materiality – as an attention to the sensible qualities of things and how these have been co-opted into human worlds – that I want to unsettle here. While this attention has, undoubtedly, allowed for a richer, more nuanced, unfolding of the mutually constitutive relationship between people and the material world within social scientific accounts (for example Miller 2008), my intervention in the 'surrounding vital quality' of place – what anthropologists have begun to take seriously as 'atmosphere' (see Schroer and Schmitt 2018) – aims to bring to momentary attention another, inadvertent and unaccounted, mode of 'materiality' and 'connectivity' that goes beyond the habitual mode of 'object-thinking' (Ingold, Chapter 1 in this volume; see also Higgin 2016).

Mind the gap

In Chapter 9 of this volume, Gillian Tan gives an account of how smoke is used within the Tibetan *bsang* ritual that tries to find a way out of the

Figure 10.3 What remains: view of installation. Installation by Marc Higgin, Symposium Connecting Materialities/Material Connectivities, Munich 2017, LMU Center for Advanced Studies. Photo by Vivien Ahrens.

Figure 10.4 Portrait of my son with line of toy cars, taken from King Street. Photo by the author.

conceptual framework, endemic to Western ways of thinking, that would define what smoke *is* – as a particular kind of a substance – in order to understand smoke as co-constituent of a ritual that establishes and maintains vital relationships between people, landscape and deities. Likewise, my intervention gestures beyond a framing of this puddle water-turned-surrounding vapour as substance, or collection of substances, towards what its multiplicity *can do*: what are their underlying forces and potentialities as material entities? What relationships is it busy establishing with the beings breathing it in?

In tentative analogy with the *bsang* ritual that Tan articulates, the intention was not to represent the tangible materiality and connectivity of already thrown things and relations but to make tangible this 'infra'-materiality and -connectivity of our mostly overlooked immersion in a medium, in its weather. The act of reading the label calls attention to our breathing, suddenly unsure of itself, suspiciously sniffing a world beyond familiar grasp. Its aim is to provoke an awareness, however temporary and amorphous, of the involuntary, constitutive relationship with a (latent) commons of which our living, breathing bodies necessarily partake (Tsing 2015). Without the small label framing it as an intervention, the humidifier and vapour would have remained in the background, unnoticed. It is this lack of presence that interests me here. Negligible, neglected, this is materiality and connectivity – as the sensible world we pay attention to, care for and give value to – exhausted.

As a coming-together of substances that have fallen out of the familiar world of tarmac and tyres, pavements and pedestrians, this puddle water is fascinating and unsettling precisely because it lays bare the inherent movement and transformation of the world of which every object is but a passing realisation. What relations can these substances enter into? What chemical romances are they disposed to? These questions remain open in part because so little is known about the metabolic afterlife of the particulates of iron or zinc oxide released by the engines following each other on King Street, or any of the multitude of other compounds used in the making of all that is transported along its length that will eventually fall out of familiar form. Reciting a barely adequate litany of substances does little to mask the realisation that we have next to no sense, next to no idea, of what we are already undergoing in promiscuous relation with them.

While the turn to materiality in anthropology has gone beyond representation to take seriously the serially overlooked in Western academia – senses, emotions, bodies, practice – this much more generous approach to understanding human relations (with human and non-human beings,

with deities, with weather, with ...) does not exhaust people's involvement with the world into which we have all been thrown, a world not wholly of anyone's making and with which we relate in a multiplicity of ways, most of which escape us. This is not to invoke the well-rehearsed Enlightenment distinction between primary and secondary qualities of the world; the first refers to measurable properties of objects that are independent of any observer, the second to the appearance of objects as they appear to an observer. This dichotomy resurfaces in a concept of materiality characterised above; to quote from the archaeologist Chris Tilley,

> there is on the one hand a processual world of stones which takes place oblivious to the actions, thoughts and social and political relations of humans. Here we are dealing with 'brute' materials and their properties. On the other hand there is the processual significance stones have in relation to persons and sociopolitical relations.
>
> (Tilley 2007, 17)

The concept of materiality is complicit in a worldview that separates out a human social sphere – its *anthropo*logy – divorced from the world within which it grows and takes shape, and into which it ultimately falls back. What this dichotomy between subjective appearance and objective reality misses is the centrality of practice to all knowledge-traditions: the *making sensible* of the world through the practical curiosity of people, following an 'instinctive faith' that there is more to nature than first meets the eye (Stengers 2011, 105). As Bruno Latour argues, the sciences are defined by their tradition of experimentation, understood as the work of a body 'learning to be affected by hitherto unregistrable differences through the mediation of an artificially created set-up' (Latour 2004, 209). Rather than adjudicate between Nature, as the *really real*, and Culture, as the *apparently real*, these empirical sciences serve to multiply the number of things abroad in the world.

My point is that our collective attention has been elsewhere. We know so little about the substances brought together in this puddle water, so little about their metabolic lives as they are breathed in by the participants in the symposium because they have not been made to matter. They are an externality to how we collectively organise, care for and give value to our shared socio-material environments. The vast majority of research and development is so focused on organising the world and making it available for our use (this is Heidegger's definition of technology in his essay 'The question concerning technology' (1977)) that we, collectively, pay next to no attention to what happens when

these useful things fall out of use. The tragedy of the *synthetic* material culture that Europe, in the main, has been responsible for exporting to the rest to the world is that, like a plastic bottle bobbing in the ocean, most of its 'social' life (after its 'consumption') plays out of sight, out of mind. The 'unknown unknowns' (to use Donald Rumsfeld's inimitable terminology) of the metabolic life of materials remain simply unimportant to the 'projects' by which we come to know, and refashion, the material world in our own idealised image. The mode of materiality and connectivity gestured to in this intervention is a proposition that remains an open question, requiring ongoing attention and care, integral to what the editors understand by *curation* of socio-material environments. In its small way, this intervention joins in with Anna Tsing's plea for a resurgence in the 'arts of noticing' (2015) that might render visible the 'latent commons' in which we are entangled, for good or for ill, with the world in all the plurality of its becoming, and activate them as sites of common interest.

Notes

1. While referring specifically to Ingold's distinction between ethnography and anthropology, I am drawing on the much wider critical reflection within the discipline that undermines any claim to represent the lives of others in a straightforward, realist sense.
2. Margolles trained as a forensic pathologist and used to work for SEMEFO, the Mexican Coroner's Office.

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11

Apocalyptic sublimes and the recalibration of distance: doing art-anthropology in post-disaster Japan

Jennifer Clarke

Introduction

> *Matter and meaning are not separate elements. They are inextricably fused together, and no event, no matter how energetic, can tear them asunder.*
>
> (Barad 2007, 3)

On 11 March 2011, a 'triple disaster' (an earthquake – the strongest since records began – a subsequent tsunami, and a nuclear accident at the Fukushima Daiichi plant) devastated the Tohoku region of north-east Japan. This singular yet predictable event has come to be called '3.11', echoing the traumatic event of '9.11' (Iwata-Weickgenannt and Geilhorn 2017). The disaster was predictable insofar as Japan, situated within the 'ring of fire' – an area approximately 40,000 km long in the basin of the Pacific Ocean, associated with frequent earthquakes and volcanic eruptions – has long experienced ecological hazards. This earthquake and tsunami left 18,000 people dead and thousands more injured. Over 340,000 people were displaced from their homes, as hundreds of thousands of buildings were destroyed. As this is a coastal and rural region, many livelihoods connected to fishing and agricultural production were obliterated overnight. A hundred and ten thousand residents in communities in and around the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant were officially evacuated immediately, and many more 'voluntarily' evacuated (without support from the government) because of concerns about the dangerous

levels of radiation – a result of a nuclear 'meltdown' and subsequent explosions at Fukushima. To this day, only about half of the evacuees have returned home, a problem for the government since plans for recovery are based on people returning to their towns (Figueroa 2013; Slater, Morioka and Danzuka 2014). By March 2018, the national government had ended financial support for the majority of nuclear evacuees. While decontamination projects actively removed tons of topsoil and debris, cycles of rain and wind continue to carry radiation across the region and, with it, uncertainty.

Japan relies on nuclear energy, despite being the only country that has experienced the atomic bomb and nuclear 'accidents'.[1] This is Japan's fourth nuclear incident,[2] and repercussions continue. It is impossible to foresee all the implications of this disaster, or to grasp the geological temporalities, of hundreds of thousands of years, implied by nuclear radiation. The anti-nuclear activist Mari Matsumoto has remarked that the 3.11 disaster has fundamentally produced a 'recalibration of distance', something that one 'can't see … you can't reduce it to something economic or physical, but this breakdown of relationality is, to some degree, another injury caused by the nuclear accident, and is part of the current situation' (2017). Understanding something of how this recalibration of distance operates and how I have approached it through making 'art-anthropology' is key to my work. This chapter describes elements of the ongoing project I have undertaken as a response, generating anthropological knowledge through art, as a kind of thinking-by-doing, as the editors similarly set out in the introduction to this volume. I worked primarily in Tohoku (the region in the north-east affected by the disaster) as part of a European Research Council (ERC)-funded postdoctoral project, spending about ten months there in total, and also internationally, undertaking residencies, doing workshops and producing six independent but related art exhibitions under the umbrella title *Invisible Matters*. For a six-month period in 2015, I lived in Sendai, a large city with a population of over one million; just inland from the coast, largely protected from the impact of the tsunami, Sendai is about sixty miles (nearly 100 km) north of the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant.

I came to this project by invitation. The question of whether anyone who did not experience this disaster can make work about it is a fraught one; early on it was viewed as distasteful for *gaijin* (outsiders) to engage in research (Gill 2014). The Japanese artists' collective ChimPom has suggested (2015) that responses to Fukushima will come to be seen as defining for contemporary Japanese art; arguably it has marked an important shift towards socially engaged practice in the country. Keiko

Mukaide, a Japanese artist based in Scotland, approached me in 2011, knowing that I had lived and worked in Japan. A question she asked stuck with me: what does it means to be an artist after such a disaster? Keiko put me in touch with artists from Tohoku, and I was introduced to Yasuko Sugita, who runs the 'therapeutic' organisation 'Iwate Future Project', formed in response to the increasing number of suicides in Japan. It is one of more than 50,000 NPOs (non-profit organisations) registered with municipal governments, and I continue to work with them. In doing so, I have learned about the entangled relationships between local government bureaucracy, academia, art and NPOs, which have provoked questions about political apathy, and *jishuku* (self-censorship), which are arguably connected to the notion of *gaman suru,* a Japanese term usually translated as 'enduring suffering' (which is interesting given that NPOs are the organisations arguably driving the country's recovery). Keiko's question became, for me, about what my role might be as an anthropologist and artist in Tohoku and beyond, in the years that have followed. I continue to return to Tohoku, by invitation.

This chapter, based on my experience of visiting 'stricken' sites and making artworks and interventions from a feminist perspective regarding 'situated knowledge' (Haraway 1988) combines descriptions of specific works and discussions of key concepts that emerged and were enacted in practice (Mol 2002): the nature of apocalyptic sublimes, and the meaning of *gaman suru*. *Gaman suru* is a central feature of the recalibration of distance and my experience of the 'deferral of reality' in post-disaster Japan, as well as an opening towards the immanence of things, through making artworks. In the following section, I outline the basis of my approach and introduce the first of the exhibition series *Invisible Matters*, followed by a more detailed introduction to the key term *gaman suru*.

Art-anthropology, *Invisible Matters*, and *gaman suru*

There have been important philosophical and political efforts to rethink the breakdown of relationality and the 'mutant ecologies' (Masco 2004) that have produced this 'current situation', in which, as the epigraph articulates, 'matter and meaning are … inextricably fused together' in particular ways (Barad 2007, 3). There are also excellent works of ethnographic anthropology about the disaster and the subsequent recovery processes written by Japan-based anthropologists (Gill, Steger and Slater 2013; Gill 2014; Morioka 2013; Slater, Morioka and Danzuka 2014). However, my work tips towards what I call an anti-ethnographic

approach, further developing the idea that anthropology is not ethnography (Ingold 2008). It is anti-ethnographic in that it does not seek to create anthropological knowledge retrospectively through writing, but works as a form of 'research creation' (Manning 2016a), generating knowledge through practical engagement in creative work. The focus of the work of art, in this view, is not a finished object for a gallery, but an intervention in the situation, framed in terms of relational aesthetics – a set of practices that take the social context as their theoretical and practical point of departure (Bourriaud 1998). Crucially, it is interdisciplinary. There are many definitions of inter- and transdisciplinary research, integrating or exchanging knowledge across subject boundaries; my approach aims at a combination based on a deep understanding of these related but distinct disciplines, and includes recognising the limitations of both (cf. Toomey, Markusson, Adams and Brockett 2015).

In *Invisible Matters*, I produced site-specific installations through durational (two-week) open-to-the-public residencies, creating and holding open spaces for self-reflection and shared conversation. During the residencies, I metaphorically and literally raised issues, including the fraught matter of radiation exposure, in a number of ways. For example, a key component of *REC. 3.11*, the first *Invisible Matters* exhibition, was the making of a series of cyanotype prints exposed in natural light. I used Prussian blue (ferric ferrocyanide, a solution for cyanotypes made with ferric ammonium citrate and potassium ferricyanide) to make prints, after learning that this chemical compound was used in Britain after the Chernobyl disaster, when scientists were experimenting with ways to absorb radioactivity in the soil, by inhibiting the uptake of caesium-137 (see Figure 11.1).

Making work continuously in the gallery, creating performative, relational spaces, required my presence. By doing these things, I developed my approach to interdisciplinary research creation – generating forms of knowledge that are extra-linguistic (Manning 2016b). I do not see this work as ethnographic, partly because I do not claim to systematically *represent* a community or a group of individuals; the work is a personal response in a way that makes most sense to me within the discipline of art. Moreover, these works do not aim to 'capture' people's experiences as ethnographic data, a question some anthropologists later asked me. Nevertheless, elements such as the subsequent detailed discussion of *gaman suru* could be read as 'ethnographic theory' in the way that David Graeber suggests, as 'an attempt to grapple with the internal logic of an apparently alien concept or form of practice (bearing in mind here that concepts are always the other side of a form of practice)' (2015, 6).

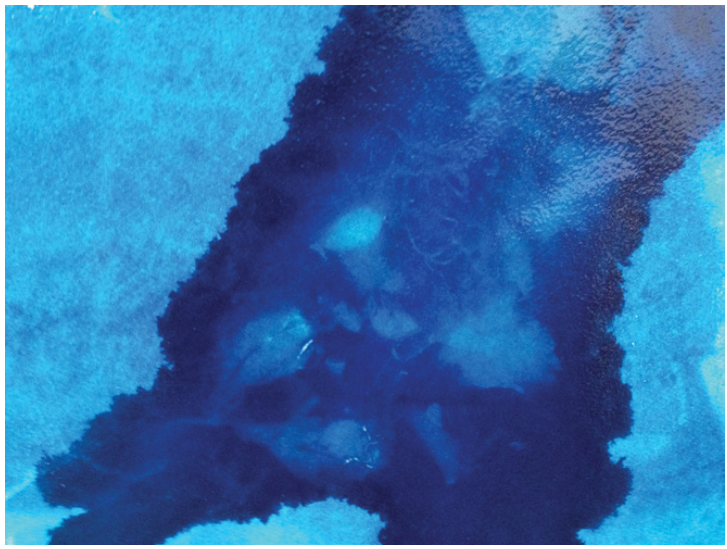

Figure 11.1 *Moly*, Jennifer Clarke, 2015. Cyanotype print using plant matter (galamanthus roots) on handmade paper, 60 cm x 60 cm. Photo by the author.

Gaman suru is central to my work, and, I suggest, to the 'recovery' phase in Japan, post disaster. A Japan-based academic called 'recovery' (*fukko*) 'one of the evil words of our day … because it excuses everything that is going on: the forced returns, the use of workers in very questionable circumstances and work environments, what is done to children' (quoted in McInerny 2016). *Fukko* employs the language of *gambare*, to 'fight on', a slogan that abounds in community as well as media and government materials: *Gambare Nippon!* Fight on, Japan! Some Japanese anthropologists have criticised the nationalist agenda implied, arguing that it drove a turn away from local communities (Okada 2012). *Gambare* is the imperative form of *gaman,* broadly interpreted as 'perseverance' or 'endurance'. In this form, it is meant to encourage cooperative activities, such as those led by the NPOs.

Gambare can be related to the notion of 'resilience' which is currently feted in environmental discourse, but also increasingly critiqued (it is used in Japanese too). While it is popularly understood positively, as a way of enduring, of surviving, Brad Evans and Julian Reid instead convincingly argue that resilience is *dis*empowering (2014); they argue that resilience is a 'neoliberal deceit' that reduces subjectivity to survivability in situations of ongoing catastrophe and crisis. Their argument

essentially is that resilience promotes adaptability, so that life may go on regardless of the situation. In this case, it can be seen as implying that one is expected to *adapt* to exposure to threats, such as radiation, which are fundamentally uncertain.

Like resilience, *gaman* has a complicated set of meanings that imply bearing or enduring suffering and adversity; with origins in Zen Buddhism, before 3.11 it was often attributed to Japanese prisoners of war. For me, it is felt in the phrase *shikataganai* (or more informally *sho-ga nai*, as I learned to say): 'there is nothing to be done' or 'it can't be helped', with the implication that one can only endure (Morioka 2013). *Gaman suru* is widely understood as a common, if not defining, national trait of Japan, and is certainly a local one in the north-east. I gained a strong sense of it during my previous years working in Japan, but especially during this project. While it originates in a negative Buddhist critique of self-attachment, related to the potential for arrogance noted above, *gaman suru* is now generally viewed positively:

> this term has deep Buddhist roots in that it is derived from the Sanskrit word *māna* (conceit). In its original Buddhist meaning this term had a clearly negative meaning in that it designated one of seven types of human conceit, that is, attachment to self (*ga*). Yet following the onset of the Edo period in 1600 the fact that 'self-attachment' was such an *enduring* human characteristic led to its negative Buddhist meaning being replaced with a positive meaning.
> (Victoria 2012, 6)

Nevertheless, Brian Victoria goes on to argue that *gaman* is intimately related to *ho-ben*, expedience or not telling the whole truth, and directly connects it to radiation: '*gaman* can and has been used to justify the endurance of *human-created* injustice, including exposure to nuclear radiation' (2012, 6; emphasis original) This points to the complexity of *gaman suru*, which I will further expand on below. The next section introduces the second concept, the apocalyptic sublime, to give further context for my approach.

Apocalyptic sublimes?

In the immediate aftermath of the disaster, as the country moved from a state of emergency to the processes of recovery mentioned above, I was struck by how distanced and distancing were the views from outside, or

more often above, a maelstrom of mediated images of disaster circulated on repeat: devastated coastlines, fire, spreading radiation levels. Kate, a Japan-based sculptor I collaborated with, described her experience of driving along the Iwate coast with a singular image: televisions strewn across the beach, for miles. It was 'sublime', she said, 'terribly beautiful'. At its root, the sublime refers to an experience in which words fail, when we find ourselves beyond the limits of reason. I also came to understand this in a singular moment. In 2014, I was driving south with Yasuko, a collaborator, from Sendai towards Yuriage, a coastal village thirty miles (48 km) north of the 'difficult to return zone' (the evacuated zone around the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant, and other off-limits areas into which radioactive materials had drifted). Crossing the bridge into the town, I took in my first sight of the destruction. The road bridge, cutting through the district, had acted as a barrier to the tsunami which rose 40 feet (12 m) high. Inland, the landscape of rice fields, dotted with houses under overhead electrical lines, was familiarly verdurous but on the coastal side there was quite suddenly a vast dark flatness, intermittently disrupted by remnants of structures, houses with no sides. We visited a primary school, Yuriage Shogakko; its clock had stopped at 3 p.m., the moment the rising water flooded the building.

I took many photographs of scenes like this one. While they might convey a sense of recovery as well as disaster (it was three years on), for me it evokes a form of the sublime: destruction, death and loss seeping in at the edges. There is a surreal silence to such images, a feeling of terrible beauty, at a remove. A muteness remains despite the noise; like earlier images of the event of disaster, even beautiful images of loss drive 'disaster tourism' (Shondell Miller 2008), or 'disaster porn' (Recuber 2013). Videos of the 2011 tsunami are usually wiped of sound: the cries for help, rarely heard, are so haunting and violent that I, and millions of others, cannot bear to hear them. Such apocalyptic images in news feeds feature the enormous cruise ship balanced precariously on the roof of a small building, fishing boats capsized in fields and lorries upturned under bridges, rows of pine trees suspended, surfing the wave of the tsunami. The problem is not that these images are not 'real' but that the reality they enfold is a vision of a moment of apocalypse, almost always seen from a distance, from above, from a position of safety: a sublime image. It is this distance that permits the potential of a sublime experience, the beauty in the terrible. These images usually focus on the event of disaster, as the well-worn phrase implies – the seconds before and the hours after the event, which these images hold in suspension, extending the time *ad infinitum*. Figure 11.2, which I made, is a snapshot, a moment; the force of the sense of loss

pushes at the limits of words. What do these images do, beyond invoking loss, generating pity? Does mine merely join the plethora of images presented and re-presented in international media and anti-nuclear art that are locked into a sense of the spectacular – cartoon mushroom clouds and ravaged earth, versions of the 'atomic sublime' (Carpenter 2016), which only serves to create distance? In my view, these do not reflect the real recalibrations of distance, the felt experience of a post-nuclear ecology, and the endurance of disaster; they are apocalyptic.

The root of 'apocalypse' is the Greek *apokalypsis*, which means an unveiling, or a revelation. The sublime has a similarly long history, though there are two dominant theories, from Edmund Burke ([1757] 1990) and Immanuel Kant ([1790] 2007). Dating back to the eighteenth century, these have shaped understandings of the sublime as primarily an aesthetic experience that may be transcended. By the time Burke published his treatise on the sublime and the beautiful in 1757, the term 'sublime' was already in common use. His thesis is pertinent because it relocates the sublime in the body, as a feeling, yet it also offers a clear dualism, opposing the sublime to the beautiful, which allows it to take on more fearful connotations. For Burke, 'whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror, is a source of the *sublime*' (1990, 36). Though terrifying, this sublime carries

Figure 11.2 *Yuriage Shogakko* (Yuriage Primary School), Jennifer Clarke, 2014. Photo printed on card, 15 cm x 10 cm.

a sense of wonder and awe, through an experience of speechlessness in the face of the 'terrible beauty' of some indescribable event.

Immanuel Kant provides another enduring exposition of the sublime, in his treatment of aesthetics and taste in relation to the limits and conditions of knowledge, the *Critique of Judgement*, first published in 1790. Kant offers a more complex consideration of the sublime, conceiving of it as strangely seductive experience, a feeling of being in confrontation with the infinite. Kant's intricate analysis introduces two further aspects: the destabilisation of the subject, and the role of pleasure, specifically what he calls a 'negative pleasure' or 'respect'. This negativity is necessary, since his version of the sublime carries with it the sense of a failed *telos*. In sum, the Kantian Romantic sublime describes an awe-inspiring, even violent experience of *aesthetic (dis)pleasure*. It is this idea of the sublime that came to be exemplified by earthquakes and volcanic eruptions, metaphorically marking the beginning of Enlightenment (Samuels 2013).

Some suggest that violent images allow new audiences to engage with the event and with political issues (Ritchin 2014). However, I follow Walter Benjamin, who wrote that the real work of photography is in the captioning ([1934] 1970). Susan Sontag makes a similar argument in her important text, her last publication before she died, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (2003). In it she argues for the value of painful images, but concludes that they require narrative to confer meaning. While, for Sontag, ultimately those who have not lived through these events 'can't understand, can't imagine' the experiences such images represent (2003, 126), this does not mean that no response is possible. With narrative, including interpretation material, which is central to the art-anthropological work that I do, visual work that is properly framed can provide a 'script for social responses', which in turn have *material* effects (Holm 2012). My argument and my art-anthropological work constitute a response to the above criticism that images of disaster are distancing, that they do not *do* anything beyond shock. In part, we need context to frame the encounter. Moreover, Japan is a particular case: we require an understanding of the recalibrations of distance that *nuclearity* insists on.

The journalist Debitou Arudou, a naturalised Japanese journalist for the *Japan Times*, characterised responses to the disaster as a deferral of the recognition of reality; this was also my own striking experience, buttressed by the responses of the government, slowed by the 'myth of safety' (*anzen shinwa*) regarding nuclear energy. Most people had no prior understanding of the risks, and had enthusiastically supported nuclear expansion. High-profile figures evoked a different sense of denial: the Governor of Tokyo, Shintaro Ishihara, was forced to apologise after suggesting that the

3.11 disaster was 'divine punishment' for the 'egoism' of Japanese people (McCurry 2011). What was shared was a sense of uncertainty. Immediately, a range of experts (scientists, activists and NGOs) began producing and reviewing data sets of radiation: where, when and how much; but still

> daily life continues, lived by rote amidst accumulating data that must be measured but whose significance is both deferred and opaque, at best. … *In the end, the sublime escapes us*, leaving us … years later with an ongoing disaster and a swirling affective environment of stupefaction, confusion, and impotence …, unable to grasp what it really means.
>
> (Knighton 2014, 8; emphasis added)

Uncertainty evokes another sublime but enduring moment: the inability to grasp the meaning of the impact of the nuclear accident, in the short or the long term. The notion of the sublime is clearly slippery; in contemporary usage it is so prevalent and contested that it is 'in danger of losing any coherent meaning' (Bell 2013, n.p.). It is important to be specific. I borrow the term *apocalyptic sublime* from Joshua Gunn and David Beard (2000), who draw on Burkean and Kantian notions of the sublime, as outlined above. Their essay identifies two key features of an *immanent* apocalyptic sublime, described as a postmodern alternative to traditional apocalyptic rhetoric rooted in a non-linear temporality and destabilised subjectivities. Their argument follows Frank Kermode's *The Sense of an Ending* (1977), which suggests that apocalyptic views of crisis are contemporary ways of making sense of the world. I follow this attention to 'immanence' in my work, which is related to my experience of living and working in Japan, and to the notion of *gaman suru* introduced above. It is not that these concepts shaped my art-anthropological work in a linear direction; making art informed my thinking and my experiences, and informed the work, iteratively and even itinerantly, in a Deleuzian sense. The series of exhibitions entitled *Invisible Matters* are thus not ethnographic, but experimental 'art-anthropology', the compound term I use to describe my interdisciplinary approach as outlined above. The following section will describe elements of this practice in more detail.

Invisible Matters: REC. 3.11

REC. 3.11, in March 2015, was the first in the series *Invisible Matters*. It was a collaborative exhibition with Japan-based sculptors Katagiri

Hironori and Kate Thomson, designed as a commemorative event to mark the fourth anniversary of the disaster. After a year of planning, I spent a month in Morioka, north of Sendai, under a foot of snow. I created an exhibition through an open-to-the-public residency across two rooms of a large commercial gallery, *Kenreitei,* curated by the painter Sachiko Hayasaka. Our exhibition aimed to provide alternative stories, countering mainstream narratives about the disaster, exploring the role of art and artists (Clarke, Katagiri and Thomson 2015). In one room was the work *Moly*. While the gallery usually hosts commercial exhibitions, I began with no work displayed; every day for two weeks I made and displayed two new prints – cyanotype exposures, in natural light – using the decaying roots, stems and flowers of snowdrops, which I had brought from Scotland, and the Prussian blue compound solution described above.

Snowdrops carry symbolisms of hope and forgetfulness in Europe and Japan. According to myth, a single snowdrop blooming in the garden warns of impending disaster (Hessayon 2011). I produced a series of interpretative texts, in English, and, with Michiko Takahashi, in Japanese, which told stories of memory, hope and consolation, of the coming of spring, as well as of death, beginning with a Christian legend: when Adam and Eve were driven out of the Garden of Eden, they arrived in a cold, barren land. An angel promised spring would arrive and blew on snowflakes, which were transformed into snowdrops when they hit the ground (Hessayon 2011). I drew on Homer's epic poem *Odyssey* to give the work its title: the god Mercury gave Ulysses a herb called moly, made from snowdrops. Moly made Ulysses immune to the forgetfulness and amnesia that a witch had inflicted on his crew. Today, scientists use an extract from *galanthus* (snowdrop), *galantamine*, in medicine for Alzheimer's disease. The complex of memory, hope and forgetting between the narratives and the prints provoked a number of conversations about the disaster, in a metaphorical manner. In other text exhibited alongside the prints, I explained my use of cyanotypes, made from Prussian blue. These texts were the starting point for a series of conversations, often about the colour blue and its significances in Japanese cultural history (Clarke 2017b), as well as conversations about loss, memory and hope. In these ways I aimed to reflect a sense of enduring through loss, through uncertainty, which is embodied in *gaman suru*. This was reflected in the way I produced and presented the cyanotype prints, and most importantly perhaps by working with decaying plant materials, and by allowing the exhibition to accrete over time. But I also wanted to make space for the self-reflection that is somehow suppressed or latent in

gaman suru, by means of a part of my *REC. 3.11.* exhibition that I called *The Generation of Personal Intimacy.*

The generation of personal intimacy

Despite the information 'tsunami' (Matsumoto in Matsudaira 2017) that followed the initial withholding of information by the Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO) and the government, new legislation in 2013 had made information concerning the nuclear plants classified (Gill 2014). In this moment of relative taciturnity, not least on the subject of the impacts of nuclear radiation and its ontological nature (what it *is* and how it is measured), but also the secretive politics and the silencing of people who raised questions by pathologising their attitude (Slater and Danzuka 2015), I felt it would be meaningful to create a space for private individual reflection, to make space for other stories. *The Generation of Personal Intimacy* was an installation for *REC. 3.11*, in what is known as the 'safe room', a small room with wooden floors and a wide circular hole in the corner of a wall, designed for the disposal of documents in the event of a raid on the house. Originally built in the eighteenth century for the Prefectural Governor, the building is Western in style, the oldest brick-built house in Morioka. My installation rule was that only one visitor at a time was allowed into the room, to reflect on a set of questions about life, family and memory.

The questions were adapted from a famous study led by the US psychologist Arthur Aron, who runs the Interpersonal Relationships Lab in New York (Aron 2019). Dr Aron's research focuses on creating interpersonal closeness, investigating the ways we incorporate others into our sense of self. His study created laboratory conditions for strangers to form close relationships quickly. I wanted to transform this into a moment for people to *self*-reflect. There were 36 questions in total, in three sets. Every day, over twelve days, three new questions were displayed. There was, therefore, a double translation at work: from an exercise about interpersonal relations to one about self-reflection, and from English to Japanese, working with an unusual grammar. How to have a conversation with yourself? How to generate intimacy and knowledge through speaking to yourself, and through the practice of listening, in a dialogic process? The instructions were to read and respond to the questions. There was a mirror in the room, and I asked that before they leave, they sit in front of it for four minutes, holding their gaze, then write their responses and leave them in a box.

I personally responded every day, in writing and drawing, which I later displayed. It was profoundly interesting to do it myself and then return to making prints and conversation with visitors who then wanted to talk to me about their lives. It was surprisingly engaging for people, a way to explore how we understand our relations with ourselves and incorporate our relations with others into our sense of selves. Having now produced this installation in different sorts of spaces, I find that it has generated interesting comments and feedback and facilitated unexpected conversations. A response from one anthropologist was that it was fascinating, that it transgressed their borders. Hearing about it, one artist thought it was intrusive, asking what would have happened if I had followed Marina Abramovich, and put myself in their gaze instead of a mirror? Another felt it 'got at who we really are and who we represent ourselves to be'. This work was important to me in somehow opening up in a context in which to endure, to *gaman*, is mostly a silent process of self-censorship and the suppression of personal feelings.

I came to understand this better through conversations about my work, especially *The Generation of Personal Intimacy*. My translator and Sendai o-kasan (mother) Michiko discussed the meaning of *gaman suru* with me while we were working together on this project. She told me that she found it difficult, since Japanese people use the word so often without paying any attention to what it really means. *Gaman* consists of two Chinese characters, *ga* (我) and *man* (慢); *ga* means self/I, and *man* is used to form other combinations of Chinese characters, such as *goman* (傲慢) (arrogance or contemptuousness). *Gaman suru* is *gaman* (noun) and *suru* (verb), but people often use the noun as a verb: *gaman gaman*. When the word is used as *gaman suru*, it is directed at the self (when used to other people it is *gaman shinasai*: 'please, bear it') to warn, caution or admonish oneself, to prohibit oneself from doing something or being arrogant – anything which would make it difficult to create good relationships, and thus, Michiko explained, 'to achieve anything':

> Of course, there is no rule but exception … but basically, Japanese are good at disciplining themselves. When [the] huge tsunami hit the coastal area in the Pacific Ocean Side of Tohoku region, evacuated people made a line to get a small meal without any fuss, and people throughout the world were surprised to see the video footage. *Gaman suru* includes that kind of sense. … You said in the previous mail that the word is not all about bad or sad thing. I cannot agree more.

A Japanese friend, Yuko, who had studied abroad in North America told me via social media that she had had to relearn *gaman suru* after coming back to Japan. We talked about the corollary expression, *shikataganai* ('there is nothing to be done'), which I understand as a feeling of inner collapse in the face of a situation once cannot change. She told me:

> Shikataganai has both positive and negative energy. When things go wrong or the way I don't want it, I often think 'shikataganai' … things are already decided and I can't really change it. Sometimes I can try to change it but I don't want to make efforts or don't really see better results coming along. I think you are thinking of the word 'shikataganai' with 'gaman suru' because Japanese people often think 'shikataganai', 'cause we don't want to bother anyone or make bad impressions by doing it. And that is true. I think we often don't speak up and think 'shikataganai' even though we don't always agree with others, but I think we are so used to it … just natural things we do in our daily life, and we often don't think it is negative but maybe positive cuz we don't need to disturb others' feelings and thoughts, and making peaceful conversations, discussions, environments, etc. Maybe we think we can create *wa* (和) [harmony] and *heiwa* (平和) [peace] by doing 'gamansuru' and thinking 'shikataganai'. I don't think it is always positive and healthy to do that, but I guess those words explain well about Japanese culture and people.

I came to these conversations and to a complex understanding of the recalibrations of distance that were – are – continuously in operation, through relation work such as the *Generation of Intimacy* and conversations and experiences with friends and translators while I was living in Tohoku. I have also tried to translate this understanding and these experiences into a different approach to making visual work.

Urato is part of a series of six prints, averaging 180 cm by 80 cm, made through a combination of analogue and digital print making, including *moku hanga* Japanese woodcut printing, drawing and photography, printed on *washi*, handmade Japanese paper. When I look at this image, I remember standing *between* the space where a house used to be and the shore of the small island Urato, part of the infamous Matsushima islands off the coast of Tohoku. Behind me the forest and the weeds are growing up, taller than people, in the absence of the house destroyed by the tsunami; in front the land at the edge of the sea, littered with sandbags, construction machines, and the beginnings of a new poured-concrete sea wall, a site in recovery. Here the sense of disaster is

Figure 11.3 *Urato,* Jennifer Clarke, 2017. Digital print of mixed media image, printed on washi, handmade Japanese mulberry paper, 91 cm x 185 cm.

Figure 11.4 *Ikebana portraits*, Jennifer Clarke, 2017. Photo of ikebana (Japanese flower arranging) installation, by the author. Installation view of 'Palimpsests and Remnants', an exhibition by Jennifer Clarke, curated by Alana Jelinek, Anatomy Rooms, Aberdeen, May 2017.

muffled; there is no sublime distance here, for me, but an intimacy with echoes of the relations and the responsibilities bestowed by experience.

This image was part of a series I included in my final exhibition for *Invisible Matters* entitled *Palimpsests & Remnants,* which took place in Aberdeen, Scotland, in May 2017, curated by the artist Alana Jelinek (Jelinek 2017) and which was accompanied by an 'artist book' (Clarke 2017a). *Remnants* presented selected 'remains' of collected materials from my archives: the vestiges of previous creative workshops alongside recent, collaboratively produced Japanese calligraphy, made by the calligrapher Ruriko Hanahusa with several of my Japanese collaborators. *Palimpsests* was made up of experimental print and photography on handmade paper and other materials (copper, wood), such as *Urato*, with associated *ikebana* – the Japanese art of flower arrangement, or the art of 'living flowers' which I studied with the contemporary *hana* (flower) artist Kazuo Konno in Sendai.

In learning the basic elements of *ikebana*, the art of 'living flowers', I embodied the recalibration of distance that I witnessed and experienced in post-disaster Japan. At first, I was responding to the scenes of remembrance at the 'stricken sites', where I witnessed memorials that included flower arrangements. One root of the art of *ikebana* is as a Buddhist 'act of consolation', both as a practice and in how it is experienced by others, in its final form. I was drawn to it after my visit to Yuriage primary school, where I saw long freshly made lines of marigolds, wreaths draped across the shrines barring entry to the building. There are over fifty schools of *ikebana*, which share seven key principles: silence, minimalism, shape and line, form (which is found, not planned), humanity (a reflection of the makers' feelings), Japanese aesthetics, and a constant relational structure, three constant points that represent heaven, earth and the body. I was taught to approach *ikebana* as a response to people and place, to express the meaning, and my feeling, through the relationships between materials, space and time. In making an arrangement, it is important to emphasise the hybrid and unstable nature of *ikebana* as an object: it is not merely a decorative object but a set of relations, which are expressed in the symbolism, shape and form of the materials chosen, whether fruit, flowers or non-natural materials, and in the relationships of lines in space.

For this exhibition, I made *ikebana* 'portraits' of four important women whom I have mentioned here: Michiko, my translator, Yasuko from the NPO, Sachiko, the curator, and my friend Yuko (see Figure 11.4). This work, in a different way, aimed to question, even challenge, the silent endurance of *gaman suru*, the learned but unconscious imposition of self-discipline, in a manner related to the critique of resilience

outlined above. Yet the immanent nature of *gaman suru* also works to hold open the moment of instability; for me, the work of *ikebana* also holds this sense of instability. In such acts of consolation, of remembrance or of tribute, as my arrangements were, there are glimpses of the recalibration of distance; this is inherent in the silent feeling-making that is *ikebana* practice (like other of my art-anthropology efforts where 'matter and meaning are … inextricably fused together').

Such acts of art-anthropology, or, more broadly, of research creation, thinking-by-doing, have been a means both to better understand extra-linguistic ways of being, and to attempt to convey these in creative work that does not contribute to the sublime and distancing images of 'disaster tourism', but rather confronts, feels through, and aims to open up a situated space to reconsider and attend to, the recalibrations of distance at work, and the immanent nature of things. The neurologist and Buddhist James Austin (2009) uses the word 'immanence' to describe the 'deep realisation' of 見性, *kensho*, the Zen term for a moment of enlightenment. Immanence is derived from the Latin *immanere*, to remain in; the Japanese equivalent is 内在 *naizai*, the state of being within. *Naizai* implies that meaning exists continually within us, around us. Thus, there is no salvation but only the ongoingness of the situation, which must be endured – *gaman shitei.* This kind of immanence, though complex to set out in language alone, is comparable to the Deleuzian sense (2001), and is key to my understanding of this situation in Japan. For Gilles Deleuze, the plane of immanence includes life and death; it is an unqualified immersion that denies transcendence. Without form, subject or structure, this plane of immanence is about the collapsing of all distinctions (mind or soul and body, interior and exterior), accepting, or enduring, the moment of *shitakataganai* (there is nothing to be done), a moment of collapse, and realisation. It is this moment that, for me, defines the recalibration of distance in the post-disaster, now nuclear, ecology of Tohoku, within which matter and meaning are inextricably linked.

Notes

1. An 'incident' is at level 2 of the International Nuclear and Radiological Event Scale (INES), as determined by the International Atomic Energy Agency, from 0 to 7. An 'accident' is level 4 or 5, depending on the wider consequences. Fukushima was a 5. The atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were 7; nuclear bombs hit Hiroshima on 6 August 1945, then Nagasaki, days later on 9 August, during the final stages of World War II. More than 129,000 fatalities were estimated, mostly civilians.
2. This was the fourth event that had casualties. Following Hiroshima and Nagasaki, in 1981 workers were overexposed to radiation during repairs to a nuclear power plant in Tsuruga City, and in 1999, in two separate 'incidents' at nuclear plants, overexposure led to worker fatalities (see note 1 for definitions).

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12

Towards a fragmented ethnography? Walking along debris in Armero, Colombia

Lorenzo Granada

Ask me where have I been
And I'll tell you: 'Things keep on happening.'

Pablo Neruda (1974)

Introduction

On 13 November 1985 at 10 p.m., the Arenas crater of the Ruiz volcano in the centre of Colombia erupted. The outburst led to a thaw and mud avalanche that made its way along the beds of the Gualí, Azufrado and Lagunilla rivers, travelling east and ending up in the largest river of Colombia, the Magdalena. In the darkness of the night, the massive slide of sludge razed the village of Armero along the way and scattered entire houses, cars and bodies through the Magdalena valley. The avalanche killed more than 25,000 people; the magnitude of the devastation was unprecedented (Zeiderman 2012). The hot mud that broke through the *cordillera* ('mountain range') carried away the villagers, stripped them of their clothes, and dispelled them along the avalanche's path. The *enlodados*[1] were nowhere to be found, and in the following days they appeared startlingly, hanging on to treetops, holding on to construction scraps, or half-buried under the mud. After the avalanche, when all that was left of Armero was 'a pile of corpses and wounded survivors', a military mayor, Rafael Ruiz Navarro, was appointed by the Colombian president, Belisario Betancur, to manage the disaster and collaborate with several

international rescue teams (cited in Suárez Guava 2009, 375; translation mine). Ruiz promised he would build a 'new Brasilia' on top of the debris of Armero as the realisation of a new beginning, a new 'modern' city that could only come into being through the devastation and destruction of the avalanche (Unas in Suárez Guava 2009, 375). And yet the appointed mayor would barely be able to assist the recovery of those who survived the following days of the avalanche and repel what he termed 'the avalanche of Colombians' from across the country who had come to dive into the sludge in search of 'buried riches' (Suárez Guava 2009, 375). The vault of the Bank of Colombia was looted and found empty a few weeks after the avalanche, while rings, chains and jewellery were frantically dug out of the mud. As people were still being rescued, the remains of the city buried in the mud had attracted hordes of looters in search of valuable remains.

Thirty years after the avalanche, the Colombian heritage industry, fuelled by a law that declared the 'ruins of the disappeared city of Armero' a site of heritage that had to be 'preserved' and 'protected', began the creation of what would be called the Parque Nacional Temático Jardín de la Vida ('Garden of Life National Theme Park') (Bill no. 1632, 2013, translation mine). Among the aims of this law was the possibility of recovering residues from the city and displaying them in a park that would attract tourism and create a form of economic income for the Tolima region. As some materials, such as the remains of houses, typing machines and old photographs, were recovered and put in the custody of a new museum within the park, other remains seemed to escape the settings of the museum, either because they were discarded as worthless scraps, or because they were 'stolen' by 'looters', *valancheros*, who constantly undermined the heritage industry's efforts to control the fate of certain, particularly valuable, remnants. It is within this tension that I set out to work along Gastón Gordillo's conceptual and ethnographic distinction between rubble and ruins; while ruins appear as 'orderly, positive' objects, rubble emerges as 'disjointed, fragmented' materiality (Gordillo 2014, 9). In this sense, I am led to think of ruins not as monuments, but rather as what Ann Laura Stoler has thought of as 'ecologies of remains' (Stoler 2016, 367). Between 2015 and 2016, I travelled along the Magdalena valley following the path of the avalanche, the murky layer of mud that remained 30 years after the disaster, looking for the ways in which these remains appeared and disappeared from within the mud. I stumbled my way into hidden vaults, scraps of train rails, broken machinery from the cotton-producing industry, remains of coffee threshers, a skull with golden teeth and a trunk full of rotting

clothes. These things – I would find – are not bound to a linear progress of decay. Rather, the pathways of decomposition and the *longue durée* of residues are marked by different processes that rearrange materials as they accumulate, move and persist in the landscape. How are they reconstituted? How do they shift? What connections might they hold together, as some remains seem to endure in changing landscapes? In this chapter, I turn towards the particular mobilities of rubble through the valley of the Magdalena, and the ways in which they get entangled with human bodies, exerting pressures and mobilising affects.

In a poem entitled *There's No Forgetting: Sonata*, the Chilean poet Pablo Neruda articulates a sense of place tied to the destruction and erosion of things as much as to their recurring presence in a landscape. To wonder about a place, in the poet's words, is to *talk with* 'things falling away', with their duration in their own destruction. In this chapter, I set out to follow things 'falling away', as they fade, become unrecognisable, and yet persist, endure and return in destroyed landscapes. Along these movements and mutations, I draw on what Keith Basso has called a *sensing of place*, a 'kind of imaginative experience, a species of involvement with the natural and social environment, a way of *appropriating* portions of the earth' (1996, 143). As Basso argues, the crucial question within any sensing of place resides not in asking 'where it comes from, or even how it gets formed, but what, so to speak, *it is made with*. Like a good pot of stew or a complex musical chord,' Basso writes, 'the character of the thing emerges from the qualities of its ingredients' (1996, 145; emphasis added). But, just like any good pot of stew, it is precisely in the stirring, infused with movement and instability, that the ingredients are caught *in the making*. On the basis of this grounded understanding of rubble as unstable materials that move and mutate, overflowing in connections with their surroundings, I trace their mobilities and mutations, as much as their duration and persistence.

The sludge

I begin this section with a cartographic image that I found as I was looking for maps of Armero in 2015. This map, obtained from the archives of the Colombian Institute of Cartography, captures the particular tensions that constitute Armero as a place where the anxieties of erasure and illegibility coalesce long after the avalanche had made its way. Indeed, 30 years after the avalanche, the space where the city of Armero once stood is represented as a blank area on the map, an empty space. But, as I will

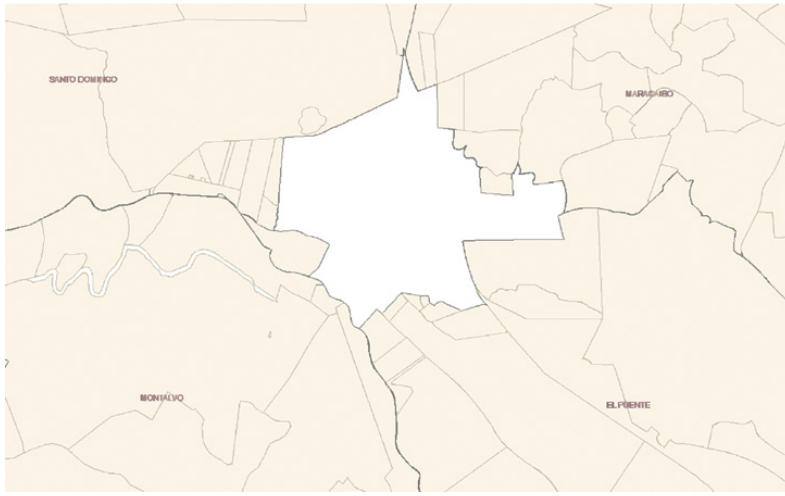

Figure 12.1 Map of the city of Armero, displayed at the Colombian Institute of Cartography. Image retrieved from Instituto Geografico Agustin Codazzi. 2015.

show, it is within this apparently empty space that the materialities of the sludge and the residues are reordered and reconstituted, allowing a different relation to the remains of destroyed places.

At the break of dawn on 14 November 1985, the single engine of a small fumigation plane buzzed through the skies of Armero, carrying two pilots who scrutinised the disaster of the avalanche from above. The night before, Leopoldo Guevara and Fernando Rivera were driving to Armero from Mariquita, a town 15 minutes north when the mass of hot mud crossing the road impeded their way and forced them to turn back. The two pilots decided to fly over Armero at sunrise to try and figure out what had happened. As they were flying, they stuck their heads against the small cabin and saw the horrific trail of mud that had carried away people, cars and houses. In an interview published on a national newscast 30 years after the avalanche, Leopoldo remembers that, when he first glanced towards the ground, he felt 'that first feeling of *instability* … We had to elevate the plane and recover ourselves, we had to look at what we were seeing from 60 to 100 metres above the ground from a higher altitude, just to keep ourselves together' (Caracol Radio 2015; translation mine, emphasis added). As they went up, they plunged their eyes towards the ground again, this time to discover the violence of the sludge, a grey stain that had erased the city they used to fly over when they fumigated the fields of cotton and rice. 'Armero quedó *borrado del*

mapa' ('Armero has been *erased off the map*') were the words uttered over the static of the radio to report the extent of the damage (Caracol Radio 2015; emphasis added). 'The mud *erased* the houses, *erased* everything, everything, everything …', reported Guevara's shaky voice on the radio of the plane as he tried to explain the magnitude of the devastation to a perplexed reporter (November 1985; translation mine, emphasis added). The sludge levelled the ground and 'left nothing' – only a *playón de lodo* ('beach of mud'), Guevara said. This image was, in Guevara's words, 'unmentionable, terrifying' (Guevara 2010; translation by the author). It was an image of anxiety and loss, pointing towards what Thomas W. Laqueur would call 'a powerful anxiety of erasure, a distinctly modern sensibility of the absolute pastness of the past, of its inexorable loss' (Laqueur 1996, 132).

However, this erasure from the map also pointed towards a sense of intractability lodged within the materiality of the sludge and its underlying forces, which rendered this place opaque to the techniques of cartography. Such an anxiety grew more and more acute as the distinctions between the living and the dead, the houses and the debris, collapsed into each other through the viscous texture of the mud, 'a mulch of matter which profanes the order of things and their separate individuality, or their membership of a category of objects', as Tim Edensor would say (Edensor 2005, 319). Not only had the topography of the land become unrecognisable as hills and trees were displaced, but it was the very constitution of the living and the dead, of subjects and objects, wealth and destruction, that became blurred beneath the layers of mud, their boundaries suspended and transgressed, suddenly rendering a place impossible to represent, impossible to mention. 'So too language will start to creep and crawl', writes Michael Taussig, speaking of Georges Bataille's 'shipwreck in the nauseous' along the Pacific coast of Colombia, in a landscape of mangroves and swamps 'where death and life sustain one another *in extremis*, and matter – formless matter – spreads its silver trail in the moonlight' (Bataille 1991 in Taussig 2003, 10; Taussig 2003, 9). In the morass of wreckage and mud, of living and dead, survivors, who were at the brink of death and tried to escape the mud, and looters, who came from elsewhere to plunge into the mud in search of buried wealth, were both confounded as *valancheros* ('people of the avalanche'), becoming indistinguishable from the viscous substance. Attraction and repulsion are confounded in the stench of the mud, life and death are held in suspension.

The car shook and trembled over the gravel. We stopped. The dust animated by the car's movement ran over the windscreen and hovered along, dissipating a few metres further on. Yolima twisted the key and

turned the engine off. We opened the doors and started walking off the road and into the 'old Armero', where the earth had been violently elevated, covered in a dense layer of mud that had suddenly made its way here 30 years ago. By the time we were walking over it, all of the sludge that was once viscous and hot, that had swallowed the inhabitants of Armero and violently covered the city, seemed to have settled. Big *ceibas* and rubber trees had grown over the town's remains. The air felt thick and humid on my skin. Although uneven, the ground felt firm under our feet. As we walked further, sometimes tripping over the remains of walls, our eyes moving along the ground, we improvised our way through the remains. At one point, when we had crossed most of the houses that were still standing, Yolima asked, probably expecting no answer at all, 'Who knows *what it is* we're stepping on?' I certainly did not, and only answered with a shy 'Hmmm', and nodded, as the question followed our footsteps. There was the mud, there were the pieces of concrete, bits of walls that you could see emerging from the surface, there were massive boulders that had been violently dragged from the mountains and into the valley. There were also pebbles and stones that people knew had come from the rivers, because they were smooth and rounded by the water's erosion, *piedras de río*, river-stones, with their sluggish, geological pace, suddenly displaced from the rivers and thrown into the world of disaster and catastrophe (one of them now rests over the crushed remains of the old police station). There were also the dead. Oddly enough, the only place in the city of Armero that remained completely untouched by the mud avalanche of 1985 was the cemetery. There, the dead had remained where they were once buried, under their respective tombstones, safe from the ravages of the sludge. Outside of the cemetery, my steps alternated in uncertainty, imagining what might lie beneath the ground. 'You know, they say that this is one of the most fertile lands in Colombia, that in the months after the avalanche the crops of rice grew on their own, over Armero,' said Yolima. It was not hard to believe, as, among the irregular forms of rubble, the empty houses engulfed by the earth, other forms of life seemed to be thriving. Rubber trees embraced the debris, leaning over pieces of walls and houses, spider webs abounded around the corner of walls, and one would easily trip over large ants' nests that led to underground tunnels, indications of a life lived beneath the surface. 'It was one of the most bountiful crops ever,' Yolima said as we walked into a small clearing that allowed us to see the valley all the way down to the River Magdalena. If you stand at certain points, and look the right way – Yolima showed me – 'you can *see* the avalanche'. She held me by my arms, twisting my body into the right position. Then, pointing towards

the valley, she traced with her hand the path of the avalanche from the River Magdalena, where it all ended, some 20 kilometres away, as far as the ground beneath our feet. The hand's movement was met by a rumbling sound coming from her mouth: '*Vvvvrrrrroooommm*.' I could not see it, at least, not in the green forest of crops and fields that extended into the valley. But I saw it in her hand, coming back and forth from her chest as her fingers clenched onto the air. '*Vvvvrrrrooooooomm*. *What is it we're stepping on?*' Who knows …?

Rubble, things and vainas

'Look at that under your feet! Just behind you! Can't you see it?', shouted Freddy, the director of the Red Cross of Armero, as he pointed his finger towards my feet. 'It is so hard to find one of these! We must take it *antes que desaparezca* ['before it disappears']!', he said. When I finally understood what he was talking about, I saw an empty bottle of pop under my feet. It read, *La Bogotana*. Freddy came up to me and picked it up, putting it in the pocket of his sweaty trousers. We were walking slowly, stumbling with our heads low, looking for enormous snail shells that had 'invaded' Armero after the avalanche. They were scattered around the remains of the city and were said to bring good fortune to those who found them. After we had walked for half an hour, still unable to find any shells, Freddy asked me if I wanted to visit his old house. I nodded and followed him. We walked for a while towards the mountains and stopped at a big house that was, just like the others, half-buried beneath the surface. The mud, covered with leaves that cracked under our feet as we walked in, had devoured the house up to half its height. I followed Freddy through the frames of old doors that still divided, though precariously, the inside and outside of the house. Freddy stood inside and explained through gestures where the living room used to be, the kitchen, and, finally, his own room. 'This was where I used to sleep,' he said, pointing towards a small space still enclosed by concrete. Among dry leaves and dirt, in the middle of his room, a rubber tree stood tall, climbing through an absent roof and reaching what I guess must have been at least five metres high. 'What happened to the roofs?', I asked. 'Those were taken by vandals, scrap dealers who have no respect, *valancheros*', he answered. The void left by the absence of some fragments still resonated through these material presences and showed how complex and incomplete the process of regrouping and conserving these ruins was. In spite of the will to restrain and keep the fragments of old houses and ruins together, the

great mobility of some particular fragments – which travelled not only in the hands of *valancheros* but also through the layers of mud, moving erratically through the landscape – constantly broke the unity of the ruin as heritage. These remains, scattered through the fields, escaped the heritage industry and did not operate as ruins that call for contemplation, materials held away from our touch, far from the ground, cut off from their entanglements in order to be crystallised and preserved; their vitality lay rather in their capacity to move and grow close to human bodies. These residues inhabit the liminal space between objects and things, or, as Freddy would have put it, exist as *vainas*, disintegrated residues that have no unity, no name, that are hard to grasp. Thinking about 'empire and objecthood', W. J. T Mitchell argues for a dialectical tension 'between the *object* and the *thing*', in the sense that objects appear 'with a name, an identity, a gestalt or stereotypical template, a description, a use or function, a history, a science', whereas things 'are simultaneously nebulous and obdurate, sensuously concrete and vague' (2005, 156). In this sense, *thingness* and *objecthood* are seen as two distinct possibilities for materials. And yet, in Bill Brown's terms, the border between objects and things is never clear, or rather there is an 'all at once-ness', a 'simultaneity' that *objecthood* and *thingness* share within materials (Brown 2001, 5, quoted in Mitchell 2005).

In the Real Academia Española (RAE) dictionary, *vaina*, from the Latin root *vagīna*, is defined as a 'sheath or a holster for weapons or sharp instruments'. However, the tenth definition in the dictionary offers a use that gets closer to the kind of relation between certain material remains and people who come to be in touch with them: '10. Thing not well known or remembered' (RAE). In this sense, *vainas* embody this tension as obdurate remains, fragments that dwell within the depths of the mud and appear as materials that are hard to put into words, a 'thing not well known'. As they surge into the depths of the subsoil, they might lose their definitions and their boundaries, become remade as things that endure and yet change, their connections and points of contact made anew. Their identities become hard to define, as the materials shift and mutate through time. And yet *vainas* also imply some form of return, a thing that is 'not well remembered' but that cannot be dismissed.

In the first lines of the poem quoted at the beginning of this chapter, Neruda, prompted by the question of where he has been, begins his response with the sentence '*Things keep on happening*'. In these first two lines, I identify two movements that help me work through things. On the one hand, Neruda seems to play with the ambiguity of the word 'thing', as both material form and event, as something that *happens*. *Vainas* carry

the same ambiguity, in which a *vaina* is both, a kind of material and something that might happen. This brings me closer to the tension between the thing as materiality and the thing as force and event, in which materials might intersect and grow close to people.

In a second move, the question of the past, of where Neruda has been, is seen as something that is still happening, in the sense that the past remains within the present:

> *Ask me where have I been*
> *and I'll tell you: 'Things keep on happening.'*

It is this particular simultaneity of the past and the present that I work through in the following section as a possibility. Tim Ingold traces the origin of the word 'thing' to a 'gathering of people, and a place where they could meet to resolve their affairs' (Ingold 2007, 5). Although I began my reflection on the connections between rubble, things and *vainas* through fragmentation and dislocation, I argue that it is precisely within this fragmentation that the possibility of the thing as a site of gathering appears as an event, as, to go back to Neruda, things that *keep on happening*.

Scrap

> I wonder why bones last so long … Why does it take so long for bones to disappear? If everything is destroyed, ten, twenty years after … Everything is destroyed, finished, rotten … and still bones do not rot. That's what puzzles me. I have asked people, 'Why do bones last so long? I've been told that it is because bones are stout and hefty, because of all the vitamins inside them. But I don't believe that. If you bury a chunk of iron, you'll see that a year later it will be corroded and fragile. Why is it that bones last so long?
>
> (Scrap dealer 2016)[2]

As I walked through the town of Guayabal, a small city a few miles north of the ruins of Armero to which some of the survivors of the avalanche had been relocated thirty years earlier, I stumbled upon a particular house that attracted my attention. Similarly to the other houses in the small town, it had big doors and windows that allowed me to peek into the residence, but unlike the others this particular one was surrounded by mounds of metal junk and scrap that spilled into the streets. Fragments of tractors and washing machines, and unrecognisable chunks of

Figure 12.2 Heaps of scrap in Armero. Photo taken by the author in 2015.

rust and metal, emerged from the front door. I walked up to the front of the house, greeted by these small hills of metal, and saw a group of men sitting in plastic chairs, listening to the radio out of a couple of speakers. As I approached, an old man with an improvised cane slowly stood up from his chair and limped towards me. He introduced himself as 'the scrap dealer of Armero', and asked what I was looking for. As I told him that I was interested in finding residues of Armero, he said that he made his living out of gathering things that came out of the soil and selling them to tourists or people who had 'nostalgia for these *vainas*'. As we talked about the things he had found, he guided me through the heaps of metal into the house. A chaos of scrap metal greeted me. The kitchen, where the scrap dealer's wife was cooking, was barely recognisable among the piles of bicycle parts, broken radios and rusty bolts. Piled things seemed to accumulate almost by themselves, growing bigger and bigger as we walked deeper into the house. I could not stop thinking of Jane Bennett's work on hoarders and the way in which the heaps of accumulated things revealed the powerful agency of things (2013). These mounds of scrap exemplified what she called the 'thing-power', a particular moment in which *objects* appear as *things*, and 'manifest traces of independence or aliveness, constituting the outside of our own experience' (Bennett, 2010, xvi). Indeed, among the piles of unrecognisable things, of scraps of metal that had already rebelled against the names they were once given, I witnessed the 'liveliness intrinsic to the

materiality of the thing formerly known as an object' (Bennett 2010, xvi). I wandered around the scrap dealer's house, enchanted by the presence of *vibrant* metals. I found myself immersed in a place governed by heaps of things, a place we walked through only as some kind of temporal intruders. 'I don't know why', he said, looking up at the mounds of metal, his eyes absorbed by the rust and sharp edges that surfaced from the mounds of metal, 'they simply fascinate me.' 'I found many things of that time, of the time of Armero', the scrap dealer began. 'Three years ago, I was walking around and found a denture, with three teeth of gold. It was *bien jalado*, ['well made'], a pretty good job', he said. Little could I imagine the remains he was going to talk about, little did I know of the relations between bone and gold.

Figure 12.3 Inside the scrap dealer's house. Photo taken by the author in 2015.

Just as, in these days, the metal spilled out of the scrap dealer's house, in 1757, two and a half centuries earlier, gold washed up out of the riverbed of the Coello river, some miles south of the town of Guayabal. Fray Juan de Santa Gertrudis, a Spanish friar, walked through the valley of the River Magdalena towards the southern end of what is now the Putumayo Department of Colombia. Writing about his travels along the Magdalena valley, he remembers the presence of this shiny material as pieces and bits of gold washed up on the banks of the river, *peps* of gold that could only attest to the presence of 'wild *indios*' in the mountains that had yet to be conquered because the terrain was too hard to access (Santa Gertrudis 1994, 464).

The scrap dealer had not only found many things in Armero, he had also lost much during the night of 13 November 1985, the night of the avalanche. He had found the tooth-piece in the sludge of the avalanche, but the sludge had also taken his house and belongings away from him. 'It was terrible,' he said, referring to the night of the tragedy. The sludge had snatched a small girl from his arms, a girl he never saw again. And yet the scrap dealer had returned to Armero as soon as he could after the disaster. Four months after the avalanche, having recovered from his wounds, he returned to Armero in search of buried remains, anything he could gather and sell. However, the sludge had stirred the land to the extent that it had not only covered and displaced the belongings of the people of Armero, but also displaced remains of colonial structures and vestiges of ancient times. As the scrap dealer told me later, these residues were not only capable of hiding in the mud and appearing only to those worthy of good fortune, they could also enchant and bewitch people who wandered in search of these living remains. After showing me the golden tooth-piece, the scrap dealer told me about a time he had ventured into Armero with a friend, looking for scraps or anything that would be of some worth, and found an *envuelto*, something buried beneath the ground.[3] 'A skull surfaced out of the mud', he said. It was one of the skulls that had been disturbed by the avalanche high up in the mountains and ended up in Armero. He told me that the skull had a piece of gold carved into the nose: 'The gold was roughly encrusted into the bone. It wasn't smooth, I could tell it was handmade so it had to be the skull of an *indio*', he said. 'The gold was rough like my skin, so it had to come from *el monte*, the mountains', he continued, as his hands pointed towards the wrinkles in his arm. The gold, he told me, was inserted into thick bone, not into cartilage; 'It was very big, very elegant.'

'Doña Gregoria … told me she had found at the margins of the Coello river a golden nose piece that weighed three ounces', writes Fray Juan (Santa Gertrudis 1994, 466). As the few remaining natives were pushed back to the high mountains, it was already well known to the Spaniards and the colonial administration that those mountains were filled with gold. The material was not only present within the mountains beside the rivers and the openings in the ground, it was also to be found in the bodies of those who dwelled among the mountains. 'I was then told that these wild *indios* are known to wear golden nose pieces as badges, and that they drill them into their noses. The half-circles are completely round and end in sharp fangs like the moon. I hear they are made of very shiny, thick gold' (Santa Gertrudis 1994, 466).

'A gentleman, a German gentleman offered me a good deal of money for that skull', continued the scrap dealer. 'He wanted to offer it to his daughter. They had come to Armero in search of treasures, just like you', he told me, pointing his finger towards me. 'Those Germans offered me five hundred thousand pesos for the skull. But that skull had been …'. 'Been what?' I asked. 'A few weeks after setting a price for the skull,' he went on, 'I turned to a small field I have near Armero. I went there during the night because I thought it would rain in the morning and I wanted to plant the fields. I'll tell you what happened! Around eleven o'clock, *nos asustaron* [they frightened us] … A strong sulphur scent invaded the air … It was sickening.'

It was not the first time that I heard of places that *asustan* (Gordillo 2014), that scare people as they pass by, of those *diablos*, devils that lurk among the rubble of destroyed places and, as the scrap dealer said, 'uncovered the earth'. 'How do you mean, a sulphur scent?', I asked him. 'I was terrified, I fled the fields and thought, this is the devil! Who knows what devil?' As he got home, the scrap dealer picked up the skull and left in the direction of the fields of Armero. He buried the skull, for it 'didn't want to be sold, we couldn't do business with it, *it needed* to return to the mud' (emphasis added). Indeed, the skull had 'awoken the *diablos* and cracked the earth open'.

Things keep on happening …

Why is it, then, that *bones last so long*? What is it about some *things* that still linger, as the scrap dealer said, after everything is destroyed, after everything is rotten? When do *duress* and *duration* meet, as some residues refuse to disappear and make their way through the sludge into

the lives and practices of those who dwell on the surface (Stoler 2016)? These residues can no longer be understood as inert traces of a distant past that are recovered from the mud, but rather as powerful materials that disturb affects and shake the very ground we stand on. Things, as I read Neruda's poem, might be not only material presences, but forces and events, *things that happen*. They can appear from within their material instability, as a force that shakes the ground and cracks the soil. And in that sense, the question of duress, in Ann Stoler's terms, of the forces and pressures exerted by things that linger, echoes Neruda's powerful sentence: *things keep on happening*. Remains, in their changing and mutable forms, emerging and diving back into the soil, appear as materials that, as Walter Moser has said, are 'at once permanent and unstable, unavoidable and evanescent' (Moser 2002, 102). Here, residues disrupt sequential temporalities, by persisting in duress and appearing in the mud, 'a pressure exerted' (Stoler 2016, 7) that opens the past as an ongoing force that exists in the present, up on the surface. They point us towards the wreckages of history that return, within muddy textures, in compost-like substances, to crack the earth open and make the air stink.

Notes

1. In Armero, people refer to those who survived the avalanche as '*enlodados*', the people of the mud. They are also called '*valancheros*', the people of the avalanche, but this term surprisingly also refers to the people who, soon after the avalanche, dug into the mud in search of lost riches and buried belongings (Suárez Guava 2009).
2. All quotations from conversations with the scrap dealer are translated by the author.
3. *Guacas* and *envueltos* are buried remains that have the ability to bewitch, enrich or condemn people that stumble upon them. They appear as shiny materials like gold and might lead to wealth but they also carry the curse of contaminated wealth, a wealth that will curse the one who finds it. These things are normally associated with colonial or pre-Columbian burials. As Luis Alberto Suárez Guava has put it, 'experiences with guacas present a bizarre space-time logic. The depth of history condenses into the appearance of buried riches. Stories in which a very old, past event becomes present in the form of buried enchantments and curses are common in the Tolima region of Colombia' (2013, 19; translation by the author).

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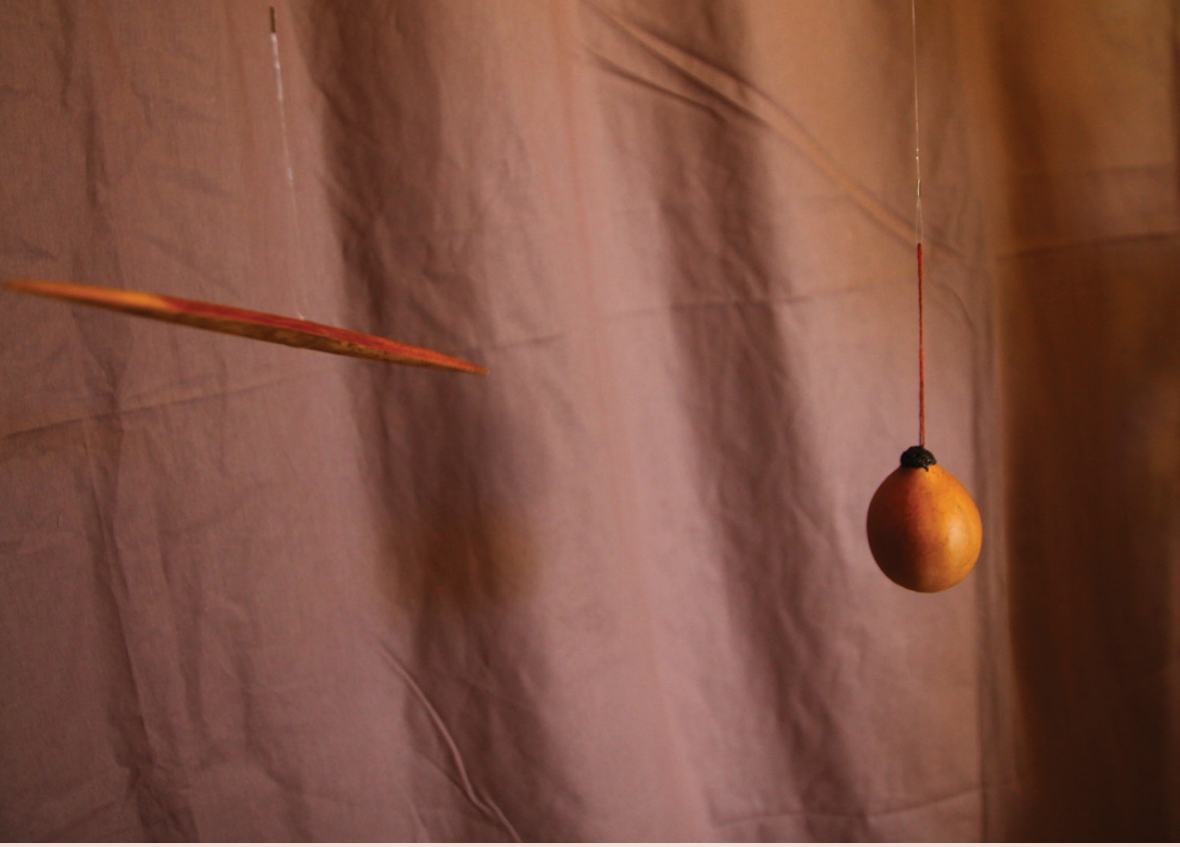


13 Intervention

Remembering and non-remembering among the Yanomami

Gabriele Herzog-Schröder

A bamboo splinter and a small calabash gourd dangling loosely from above; the lance-shaped splinter points to the bottle gourd in a somewhat aggressive way and then turns away from it, while the gourd remains rather stoic, gently dangling up and down, and rotating around its own axis. It is the movement that links and unlinks the two items. These two elements are suspended on nylon strings which are fastened to a metal skewer. The skewer itself also sways from the ceiling on a thin nylon cord, so that the whole construction swings loosely. Flimsy and fragile, it responds to the slightest breeze. It points to the specific notion of the connecting power of materiality which – in Amazonia – is ambivalent and ephemeral by nature.

The lanceolate splinter originally functioned as an arrow tip. This kind of arrow tip, called *rahaka*, would be taken out of the quiver and inserted into the front of an arrow shaft before use. The small bottle gourd has the silhouette of a drop. Its orifice is sealed with black resin mixed with beeswax. It serves as a container for powder and is used in the funeral context. The dangling arrangement is supplemented by a pixelated black-and-white photograph located in the lower part of the arrangement. It shows the bent backs and heads of grievers squatting on the floor during a mourning

Figure 13.1 Mobile of dangling Yanomami items, central to the funeral feast called *reahu*. Installation by Gabriele Herzog-Schröder, Symposium Connecting Materialities/ Material Connectivities, Munich 2017, LMU Center for Advanced Studies. Photo by Natalie Göltenboth.

Figure 13.2 On the occasion of a festive celebration, the *reahu*, the bones of the dead are pulverised by grinding them in a mortar. Photo taken by the author in the 1990s.

ceremony in an indigenous community in northern Amazonia where people are gathered at a ritual site in the communal house. In the centre of this image a metal pot can be detected, into which a substance is poured from a small vessel – a gourd, just like the one dangling from above in the installation.

The items acting in this arrangement originate from the society of the Yanomami who populate the tropical rainforest in the drainage basin of the Upper Orinoco river in southern Venezuela. They subsist mainly by hunting and gathering, supplemented by the yields of their large gardens. With an overall population of roughly 45,000 in southern Venezuela and neighbouring Brazil, the Yanomami managed to keep away from intensive contact with the non-indigenous world until relatively recently. Although in extreme peril in some areas, where quite a number of Yanomami communities have to face the effects of road construction and the invasion of miners, in remote zones the majority by and large maintain the life of a tropical forest society. Hunters make frequent use of bows, which are equipped with tips like the *rahaka* presented in the installation. Women gather small animals like frogs and crabs as well as nuts, mushrooms and fruits on their tours along the nearby creeks and both genders care for the family gardens. In the interfluvial zone of the Upper Orinoco, the settlements consist of about 40–150 individuals, and the communities are grouped into three to eight extended families. These are bound to each other by marital relationships, and the family groups practise various forms of informal and ritual exchange within their villages, and even more so with local groups of the wider area on the occasion of festive gatherings.

An important part of these large celebratory get-togethers is called *reahu* – the commemoration of a recent death and an event in the final sequence of the complex process of treating the body of a deceased person. Shortly after the occurrence of death, the body is cremated on a pyre. As soon as the embers have cooled, the bones and the skull are taken out of the cinders and kept hidden in a basket until, some weeks later, they are ground in a canoe-like mortar in the course of a public festivity. The grinding yields a powder that the Yanomami call *yupu*, which means ashes. These ashes are funnelled into small gourds, and the substance is – on occasions of further *reahu* – ritually poured into a banana sauce and consumed by close relatives and loyal allies. The pixelated photograph in the installation documents this moment in a *reahu*-event in the 1990s. It depicts the very instant when the ashes are discharged into the banana sauce (Herzog-Schröder 2003; 2006; 2013).

It takes several *reahu* to completely consume the powder stemming from an adult. There must not remain any relics of the person that could

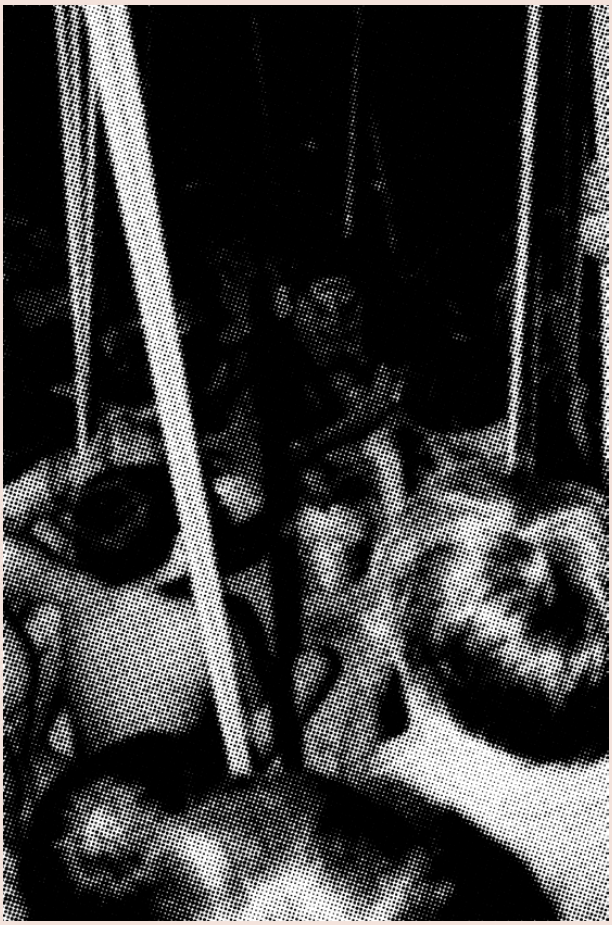
serve as reminders. The name of the deceased is never mentioned again, and no trace remains that could bring back memories of the beloved person who has passed away. The communal bereavement and the consumption of the last share of ashes mark the onset of prescribed obliteration.

As Paul Connerton (1989; 2008) has pointed out, the management of 'remembering' is in many societies linked to material matter as a way of encoding memory. 'Souvenirs', for example, are meant to remind us of earlier times and other places or specific people. Monuments are set up to create a memorial to a certain idea or person, and might be torn down when the idea or the specific ideological concept linked to a person has become obsolete. In many societies it is considered virtuous to remember and a failure to forget. For Yanomami, however, forgetting the dead is mandatory and remembering is avoided in a prescriptive sense. This explains the scrupulous effort to destroy all possible remains and belongings of a deceased person. The obliteration of memory is no easy task, however, and although they are warded off, memories do come back.

The dangling play of Yanomami items in the intervention points to this strong potential of the reminding and thus connecting power of everyday items, and to the ambivalent interplay between *re*-membering and *de*-membering. It relates to the abovementioned convention of the Yanomami: the taboo against publicly naming the departed and the attempt to comply with the imperative to forget the deceased loved ones. The two-pointed arrow tip, the *rahaka*, is used by the Yanomami to hunt larger animals like peccary, deer and tapir, but it is also a weapon in confrontational situations in conflicts which may arise among Yanomami communities. Thus, the *rahaka* is endowed with the meaning of war and killing. However, as arrow tips are regularly interchanged among males as tokens of alliance and friendship, they are also imbued with notions of peace and diplomacy. In the context of this book, they can be approached through their 'itinerancy' (Stockhammer, Chapter 2 in this volume): by being swapped between members of distinct local groups, these arrow tips create a web of *thing~ties* (Saxer and Schorch, Introduction to this volume) that operates on a political level; in a paradoxical way, these weapons – given to an ally who is also a potential enemy – pledge to keep the peace.

Figure 13.3 Scene from a mourning ceremony in the course of a *reahu* ceremony. A woman lifts the calabash containing the pulverised bones, which are called 'ashes'. Photo taken by the author in the 1990s.

Figure 13.4 This deliberately pixelated image of a *reahu* ceremony points to the imperative to forget. Photo taken by the author in the 1990s.



There is yet another aspect which underlines the multiple implications of the *rahaka*: hunters or warriors avoid using arrow tips they have carved themselves. Hitting a target with an arrow tip one has made oneself is assumed to be impossible. Accordingly, *rahaka* are considered the good of exchange par excellence, and on the occasion of a festive gathering many of them are exchanged between the male hosts and their guests. Indeed, in the course of festive gatherings, people from a number of local groups come together to exchange information, songs, and goods like *rahaka*. A *reahu* combines communal lamentations and the burning of the remaining possessions of a deceased person, and it culminates in the consumption of the remnants of the dead body after the cremation. *Rahaka* arrow tips that were received in exchange from allied Yanomami during such a ceremony are later returned to the donor's family when the giver has passed away. They, together with the other possessions, have to be eliminated in the course of the *reahu* ritual. Only those which were given to foreigners, including the anthropologist authoring this text, do not need to be returned, as they are out of the possible range of vision and thus cannot trigger sorrow and memories among the dead person's family.

The intervention points to the difficult connection between the material substance of the body and the dead person's belongings on the one hand, and emotional bonds to the deceased on the other. The elimination of any matter is a way of evading remembrance, and it is impressive to observe how rigorously the congregation of mourners destroy all items through which they might be reminded of the lost companion or relative. It is not only presents and bartering goods which were once received from the person in question that are returned in order to be annihilated. Trees in the forest to which the deceased had tied his or her hammock are cut down, with considerable effort; rubbish dumps are searched to sort out things thrown away by the person in order to cremate them; and sometimes parts of communal dwellings are burned down. Even entire settlements are dislocated at times in the aftermath of deaths. Much energy is spent in order to wipe out any material trace. Memories do come back, however. Just as the bamboo splinter and the corresponding calabash gourd in motion turn towards one another and connect, then disconnect while turning away from each other, the dead are remembered and forgotten or, better, dis-membered. The calabash gourd containing the cinders of a deceased person epitomises the menace of social disintegration through the death of a group member.

Comparable management of material matter and memory under the circumstances of death can be observed more widely in Amazonian societies. To a certain extent, the fear that remembering provokes is related to a belief

in a kind of ghost, *pore*, that comes into existence in the very moment of passing and which haunts the surviving and lures them to accompany it into its ambiguous state. *Pore*, the death ghosts which the Yanomami dread, are not to be confused with powerful forefathers and foremothers; they are not honourable ancestors who demand to be worshipped. Here, the dead are of an uncertain status – neither human nor non-human. By their nature, *pore* are awkward, undefined, without intention, and in this sense they are not equipped with power and influence. They are, however, dangerous in their loneliness. Craving life, they entice the living to follow them. This is why the dead need to be excluded from the collective existence of the living (Descola 2004, 251–2; also Descola 1993); and this explains why memory is such a threat. Memory turns into fear of the dead or – more precisely – of the ghostly spirit of the dead, and thus raises feelings of awe. The undesired connection, which is provoked by remembrance, needs to be expelled, and all material links – body and possessions, but also the name and manifold memories – need to be erased. There is a notorious difficulty in following the generalised command to forget on an individual level. Nostalgia arises again and again, a dilemma which Anne Christine Taylor (1993) explains as the order to keep on 'remembering to forget'. With regard to the specific context of traumatic events during the time of the rubber boom, Juan Álvaro Echeverri (2010) points to the vexing dichotomy of 'to heal or to remember'.

For the Yanomami, personal memory is supposed to fade away when lamenting in a ritualised form is combined with a specific rhetoric. Acts of mourning are called *puhi ohotamou*, which translates literally as 'to work off the memories and sentiments' (Mattéi and Serowë 2007, 253). In that sense, lamenting does not serve the purpose of remembering but of forgetting.

In the installation, the Yanomami directive to forget, and the taboo against mentioning the names of a deceased person, or, in a general sense, the taboo against remembering, are portrayed through the deliberately pixelated photograph of the funeral scene in which a man is pouring the cremation powder into the vessel containing banana sauce. It shows the very moment when the materiality of the body's remnants is bound to be consumed and thus the person is to be annihilated. The mobility of the two dangling Yanomami items in their correspondence point to the ambivalent predicament of remembering and non-remembering, which is ultimately unresolvable and conflicting, just as death poses a general dilemma in human existence. Here, in the text, the forceful intention to forget, in order to eradicate the impulses of remembrance, finds its resonance in the image fading out of sight, and memory … .

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14

The matter of erasure: making room for utopia at Nonoalco-Tlatelolco, Mexico City

Adam Kaasa

Erasure's agency

I set out to consider the modernist ideological position that to build in a city one must first demolish what exists: one must make room for utopia.[1] Urban erasure is ideological, and that ideology is material. Processes of urban erasure, of urban demolition, of slum clearance and of land terraforming require structures of legitimacy to be enacted, and those structures of legitimacy are produced through materials. Materials that produce the legitimacy for urban erasure in the following case of a site in Mexico City in the 1960s, materials like paper, ink, graphite, typewriters, bound journals and texts, printing presses and newspapers – the materials of the public and professional sphere of discourse – operate in connection with the material produced by urban erasure. In turn, the materials produced by an enacted erasure, materials like rubble, debris, ruin, refuse and dust, perform the formal, functional and aesthetic failure required of that material to legitimise demolition. Finally, the materials that replace what once was on a site, a new building for example, become the argument for a past demolition. Building on the work of Gastón R. Gordillo (2014, 25) that 'seek[s] to show that the pure multiplicity of rubble is the void that haunts modernity', this chapter explores the matter of that multiplicity, by extending it from the rubble of destruction to a consideration of the material documents that legitimise demolition and rebuild: architectural journals, presentation and pitch boards, and statistical visualisations. The materiality of urban erasure, of dissolution,

is a co-constitution of the materials of planning ideology, their material effect, and the connections between them.

Tim Ingold (2007) argues for a return to the matter of materials, rather than the concept of materiality. Deploying James Gibson's division of materials into medium (like air), substance (like rock or mud) and surface (the interface between medium and substance), Ingold makes the case that matter matters (Ingold 2007, 4–5). Taking Ingold's return to the material as a starting point, this chapter investigates the complex connections between the multiple materials involved in producing urban erasure (Ingold 2010). Taking the matter of urban erasure seriously suggests the need to consider the medium, the substance and the surface of erasure.

The matter of erasure is a potential that rests in the very matter of the urban. Every urban form holds in it the possibility or potential of erasure, of demolition, of destruction. However, equally, this potentiality is not a property of the material's 'substance', to use Gibson's term, but rather of its co-constitution with social and political processes. As Ingold (2007, 1) notes, materials are active not because they have agency, but because the properties of materials themselves are processual and relational. That is, for Ingold the duality implicit in the distinction that arises between subject and object when objects are imbued with agency is one that reduces agency to an individuating capacity, rather than a relational one. It is impossible to think the agency of urban erasure without considering the entanglements of property law, building standards and conservation heritage, to name just a few of the most common legal intermediaries. However, we need to add to this the capacity of aesthetics themselves to be agents of legitimacy in relation to demolition. Asher Ghertner's (2015) work on slum clearance and demolition in Delhi forms an important argument about taking image, text, aesthetic symbols and their relationships to aspiration, desire and the political as fundamental components of the capacity for material erasure. In other words, it is not solely the property of the material that lends itself to destruction: wood, stone, concrete, steel and glass – all can be demolished if a legitimate cause is produced. The materiality of erasure is more than the possibility of matter to be erased.

This chapter argues that erasure as part of urban planning or architectural production is a political choice produced as a technical necessity (Kaasa 2018). In line with Walter Benjamin's assertion that 'what is crucial in the observation of architecture is not seeing but rather the coming through of traces and structures' (quoted in Frisby 2001, 7), the chapter works to identify the architectural and urban planning

ideologies that led to the possibility of arguing for and delivering a massive urban project of erasure followed by a project of rebuilding in Mexico City. Specifically, I turn to Jane Rendell's (2007) work at the intersection of critical theory and architectural practice. Methodologically, Rendell suggests the need to explore 'modes of critical practice that operate in architecture through buildings, drawings, texts and actions' (2007, 6). Following from the work of other architectural scholars who argue for the primacy of the textual in architectural production (Colomina 1994; Kleinman 2001), Rendell's intervention allows us to hold on to the materials of built form, while allowing the location of architectural materiality to include other visual and textual artefacts.

Architectural design deploys what Gillian Rose and Divya Praful Tolia-Kelly (2012) describe as co-constitution in as much as the process of design itself moves between image and haptic, material, textual and narrative processes. The movement between the image/text and the material in architecture is a semantic argument, one that desires to prove its own legitimacy. Architecture compels multiple forces of political jurisdiction, of land ownership, of structural engineering, and of finance, to agree with its argument. Insofar as this is true, it contains within it the possibility of producing what Ghertner calls 'rule by aesthetics' (2015). If this is the case, then the matter of erasure is not only the rubble of demolition, but also the matter of documents, bodies, photographs and architectural journals that legitimate demolition. These are, after all, materials of circulation and connectivity. The architectural journal as a 'thing', to use Ingold's distinction from an 'object', entangles the flow of ideas that creates the legitimacy for erasure as an urban process (Ingold 2010, 3–7). That is, there is not only matter in the act of erasure, or demolition, nor only matter in the act of building after erasure. Matter exists in the idea, in the very argument of erasure. Part of the materiality of urban erasure lies in the traces of documents that define and defend it as a necessary. It is this matter of erasure, then, that this chapter explores.

I work through a case study of the origins of the argument for urban erasure central to the Nonoalco-Tlatelolco modernist housing project. Nonoalco-Tlatelolco is located to the north of the *zócalo* in Mexico City, and the project was developed and built between 1949 and 1964 by the architect and urban planner Mario Pani (1911–93). However, the site of this chapter lies in the materials that connect built form to ideology: the architectural journals, and architectural drawings and visualisations. First, I trace the relationship between the *tabula rasa*-dependent urbanism of Le Corbusier and demonstrate its influence on Mario Pani. This idea becomes legitimate in Mexico City through its circulation in the

material 'thing' of *Arquitectura/México*, the leading architectural journal in Mexico at the time, co-founded by Mario Pani. Secondly, I turn to a set of architectural drawings, maps and visual diagrams produced by the Taller de Urbanismo (Urban Studio) run by Pani between 1945 and 1964, to show this idea in architectural practice. What is uncovered through the analysis is a recurring normative argument about the dynamics of slum regeneration in Mexico City.

The *Charter of Athens* and Mexico

Of all the urban projects Mario Pani completed in his life, one of the largest exercises that combined the restructuring of urban spaces, transport infrastructure, housing and services was Nonoalco-Tlatelolco. Internationally renowned in architecture and urban planning discourse at the time, the modernist master plan of 102 buildings for some 100,000 people featured in a comparative article in a 1962 edition of the French architectural journal *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* alongside the new master plans of Brasilia, Brazil, by Lucio Costa, and Chandigarh, India, by Jane Drew and Le Corbusier, a founding member of the influential modernist group the Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne (CIAM) (Jácome Moreno 2012, 94). In fact, when Pani originally sent the architectural photographs of the completed project, the editors of *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* misread them as photography of architectural models, and rejected them. So close was the functionalist material reality in Mexico City to the unbuilt modernist fantasies of post-war Europe that it was interpreted as false. It was a pure *tabula rasa* urbanism erasing the vast majority of the site, and inserting a modernist rupture to the city around it.

At its opening on 20 November 1964,[2] Nonoalco-Tlatelolco was the future-made-present, a gleaming testament to rational order and architectural functionalism. Now, many mark it a modernist horror – a particular trope in the development of a homogeneous set of prescriptive urban design and social engineering principles built on the most inhuman of scales (Gallo 2010; McGuirk 2015). Its architect Mario Pani, however, remained optimistic. Years after the 1968 Olympic massacre and the devastating destruction of the 1985 earthquakes that left some thirteen buildings in the modernist complex demolished and several hundred dead, in an oral history interview with the architectural historian Graciela De Garay in 1991 Pani said:

> We wanted to continue with more projects, to expel all those who were living in poor neighbourhoods, we wanted to build more and more housing complexes. I was planning on building five or six Tlatelolcos, with an extension of over 3 million square metres, two million square metres of gardens, and a capacity for 66,000 families.
>
> (quoted in Gallo 2010, 57)

Though it was planned, Pani was never able to complete the subsequent phases of his urban erasure and regeneration in what was commonly referred to as the *zona de tugurios* (or 'slum area'), a region identified as being to the north and east of the historic centre in Mexico City.[3]

It was in part through *Arquitectura/México*, the architectural journal that Mario Pani co-founded in 1938 and of which he remained editor until its folding in 1978, that the migration and flow of ideas from architects around the world were positioned as legitimate in Mexico, including the ideas about slum clearance and regeneration central to projects like Nonoalco-Tlatelolco. The first issues of *Arquitectura/México* focused on the internationalisation of architecture, and engaged in comparisons of similitude rather than difference. These early issues included the work and writing of CIAM protagonists working towards a globalised approach to urban planning and architecture at the time. Founded in Switzerland in 1928 by 28 European architects at a meeting organised by Le Corbusier, CIAM hosted a series of eleven conferences until its dissolution by an offshoot of younger dissenters, Team 10, in 1959. Among the most widely cited publications was the *Charter of Athens*, an edited volume compiled by Le Corbusier of the discussions about the functional city originating during CIAM IV in 1933, but not published till 1943. Through its exposure in architectural journals and discourse, CIAM had influence in Mexican architecture and urban planning. Hannes Meyer, a Swiss architect who would emigrate to Mexico and figure in its urban planning, was present at the inaugural 1928 CIAM meeting, and a co-drafter of the Declaration of La Sarraz (Mumford 2000, 24–7).[4] Meyer also authored the first article on urbanism and Mexico City to appear in the journal *Arquitectura/México*, in 1943. Later, a full reprint of a text by another CIAM protagonist, Sigfried Giedion, the introduction to his tome *Space, Time and Architecture*, appeared as an edited translation by Alonso Mariscal in issue 20 (Mariscal 1946).

In the *Charter of Athens*, Le Corbusier relates a new urban vision of dense collective housing in vertical towers surrounded by gardens created through the erasure of slum-like conditions, most famously visualised in his Plan Voisin for Le Marais in Paris (Mumford 2000, 89). As a version

of the principles laid out in the *Charter of Athens*, Pani's first large-scale housing project, the Centro Urbano Presidente Alemán (CUPA; 1947–9), was at the forefront of experiments in modern housing in Mexico, and in Latin America – an early example of urban restructuring whose argument would lead to the Nonoalco-Tlatelolco project some 15 years later. The CUPA is routinely referenced in relation to Le Corbusier's *Ville Radieuse*, an unrealised urban master plan presented in 1924 and published in 1931, extolling a city-scale plan of intense zoning, the separation of cars from pedestrians, and the proposal of tower-block residential patterns throughout a garden landscape, with communal services (Le Corbusier 1987). As William Curtis (1982, 208) put it, 'the "Charter of Athens" was really a restatement of the Ville Radieuse philosophy but without the poetry.'

The idea of the building

Enrique X. De Anda Alanís (2008b, 159) traces 'the image of Western modern architecture in Mexico', centring on the early presence of Le Corbusier in professional journals *Cemento* and *Tolteca* between 1924 and 1931 (De Anda Alanís 2008b, 168–76).[5] De Anda Alanís (2008b, 170) includes what he claims is the earliest record of a publication on Le Corbusier present in Mexico, an article from the daily newspaper *Excélsior* on 15 July 1926. Titled 'Un tipo de casa ultraísta', it was authored by Le Corbusier's cousin and business partner Pierre Jeanneret some two years after Le Corbusier's *Vers une architecture* (published in France in 1923) arrived in Mexico. The Mexican art historian Ida Rodríguez Prampolini (1982, 20) suggests that 'while we cannot credit Le Corbusier with the architectural theories of functionalism, the repercussions of his book *Vers une Architecture* contributed in large part to the development and consolidation of this new style of architecture.' In terms of Pani's urban planning studio, Manuel Larrosa (1985, 99–100) argues that it adhered to the considerations concerning transport and zones for work, recreation and housing stipulated in the influential *Charter of Athens*. De Anda Alanís (2008b, 125) equally reflects on the urban planning and 'slum' regeneration programmes of Pani, rhapsodising that 'the work that was implemented was on the same messianic scale as that of the architects of European modernity. … "architecture or revolution" was the threat made by Le Corbusier in 1923.'

In his own words, Mario Pani would reference the influence of Le Corbusier on his work throughout his career. For example, when discussing his collective housing projects in an interview conducted by Louise

Noelle (2000, 25), Pani stated that '[t]he origin of the matter is the theory of Le Corbusier on the Radiant City, that is, tall buildings that allowed green spaces to be freed up, with all the necessary services on the ground floor'. In an interview as part of an oral history project in 1990, Pani mentions that, in proposing the dramatic shift for the CUPA site from 200 houses to over 1000 apartments, 'clearly, I was thinking about the radial city, the *Ville Radieuse*, that was then being proposed and evangelised by Le Corbusier' (De Garay 1990, 2). Later, in reference to Le Corbusier, while discussing Pani's own participation on the jury for the 1952 São Paulo Biennale,[6] Pani says, 'I was also in favour of what Le Corbusier was doing. I based the multi-family Alemán on his theories' (De Garay 1990, 2). He continued, recollecting that he 'believed the city should be made like the *Ville Radieuse* of Le Corbusier, and [he] tried to accomplish this through the *multifamiliares*, particularly in the Miguel Alemán' (De Garay 1990, 2). Pani also paid extensive homage to Le Corbusier in *Arquitectura/México*.[7] The inaugural issue showcased an interview with Le Corbusier, and also of importance were an essay in issue 82 in June 1963 by Raul Henríquez, titled 'Arquitectura moderna en México', demonstrating the influence of Le Corbusier on architecture in Mexico, and a special issue (no. 92, December 1965) dedicated to Le Corbusier following the architect's death in that year.

Demolition as regeneration

The normative argument framing much of Mario Pani's focus on housing involved creating a better standard of life for the urban poor through slum clearance and the construction of a housing ladder – and this was certainly present in the development of Nonoalco-Tlatelolco. As demonstrated above, this argument finds material legitimacy through the connecting materiality of the architectural journal *Arquitectura/México*. This argument also remained consistent, from early work on his first multi-family housing unit, the Centro Urbano Presidente Alemán (1947–9), to the inauguration of the Nonoalco-Tlaltelolco project in 1964, to an oral history interview just three years before his death (De Gary 1990).[8]

In preparation for the VII Panamerican Congress of Architects in Havana, 10–16 April 1950, Pani's Taller de Urbanismo focused on developing an aesthetic language that could translate Le Corbusier's argument into planning doctrine, and therefore be used to justify the urban erasure required to build Nonoalco-Tlatelolco.[9] The argument presented in Havana was as follows: as people move into new modernist housing

units, they vacate their older homes, which are then occupied by people from even lower classes, who vacate their homes. This housing ladder continues until the lowest-quality housing (informal settlements) is vacated, allowing 'the authorities to freely dispose of these slums, once emptied, transforming them, for example, into magnificent sports fields' (Cuevas 1950, 21).

The presentation boards for the Congress in Havana open with a four-part montage representing this housing ladder. The first three pages are dedicated to maps that show the sites of change. The final page of this four-part opening montage is not a map of the city, but rather a mapping of the process of regeneration, a key diagram that visually asserts the argument about demolition. This page is split into two parts. The bottom third is a statistical visualisation of data from the 1940 census for Mexico City, comparing family sizes with the frequency of apartments of different sizes in the city.[10] Whereas just under a third of the population live in families of one or two people, just under half of the dwellings are one-room studios. More clearly, 78% of families are made up of three or more people, but 73% of dwellings have one bedroom or less. The census data signals a housing crisis of overcrowding in Mexico City. This presentation of a situation of overcrowding in the city uses the visualisation of demographic statistics to justify the proposition of decanting populations from areas considered to be overcrowded 'slums' to new, planned, modernist neighbourhood units in the as yet non-urbanised parts of the city.

The top two-thirds of the page are left to typography and graphics. One of the visual motifs of relationship and cause at use here is the arrow. On the left are three words: 'Dynamic', 'Tenants', 'Upward'. Each word is placed slightly above and to the right of the preceding one, and the end of each word is linked to the beginning of the next with a dynamic, curved white arrow, as if each leads to the other. Underneath we read 'For the regeneration of the slums'. To the right, a series of images are set up as a literal ladder. At the bottom of this ladder is a representation suggestive of a crowded slum. Above and to the right from here is a series of four boxes, unlabelled, with an arrow leading to each one, up and up and up, until the last graphic: a single-family modernist home. Along the side of the ladder-like set of images, the image of a moving van intersects a diagonal arrow as it climbs up from the slum to the single-family home. At the bottom of the image, the original 'slum' is crossed out, and in its place there is a graphical image of trees. This graphic presents a visual representation of the normative project of urban erasure behind modernist urban regeneration. Coming full circle from studio to congress, the visual

diagram was printed in *Arquitectura/México* in May 1950, a month after being presented in Havana (Cuevas 1950, 22).

This four-part opening montage acts as a visual argument for moving populations from one part of the city to another. The typography of '*tugurios*' or 'slum' figures prominently, and the repetitive form of the arrow enables leaps of causal logic necessary for the argument to succeed. The only element the argument required was the first step – a site big enough, and 'empty' enough, to build a large neighbourhood unit to begin the chain reaction of urban regeneration. A decade later, it arrived in what would be Nonoalco-Tlatelolco. In 1963, with the Nonoalco-Tlatelolco just a year away from its inauguration, Pani worked on the *Programa del C. Presidente Lic. Adolfo Lopez Mateos, de regeneración urbana y vivienda para trabajadores en la Ciudad de México* (Programme of President Adolfo López Mateos for urban regeneration and workers' housing in Mexico City). The proposal is the story of what can happen next now that a population can move out of their homes and into Nonoalco-Tlatelolco. The plan adopts not only the terminology and narrative logic of Pani's early solution to the 'urban problem' of Mexico, but also the visual logic. One map visualises the decantation of central Mexico City to newly built housing projects in the south of the city. A plan for the 'central hovel area' of Mexico City, a horseshoe shape surrounding the *zócalo* to the north is shown later in the proposal. Nonoalco-Tlatelolco is visible in the plan as just one small part, located above 'Guerrero', a colonia north-west of the historic centre of Mexico City. Its scale within the overall plan provides a visual cue for the ambition of the full urban regeneration project. Finally, on a page titled 'Dynamics of regeneration', we have a carbon copy from the Urban Studio project – large arrows flowing from Guerrero into the newly built housing units of Nonoalco-Tlatelolco, visualising the flow of people 'decanting' from their homes, leaving a vacated space for the pattern of erasure and rebuilding to begin again.

The repetitive form of the arrow acts as a visual component legitimising and naturalising the normative claims about urban erasure and regeneration in Mexico City. As Perkins and Dodge (2012, 269) argue, 'visual illustrations communicate specific information about the vision, but at the same time these images reinforce and reify the policy detail that will bring about the transformation'. The form of the arrow works to link the narrative thrust of the argument through these scales, creating a flattened causality. Both enable the delivery of an argument for decanting several areas termed 'slums' in urban research publications spanning thirteen years between 1950 and 1963, an argument that was central to the justification for Nonoalco-Tlatelolco (Pani 1966, 106).

Ideas matter

The matter of erasure I have examined in this chapter is very different from the matter that others might turn to, matter like rubble, dust or ruin, the effects of natural disaster or of war. Where others look to the material aftereffects of demolition, I look to the materials that produce demolition and erasure as a legitimate urban planning argument: the material of the architectural journal, and architectural presentation boards. Specifically, I have traced the matter of an argument from Le Corbusier to the Taller de Urbanismo, to one moment at a Congress in Havana in 1950, a moment of material circulation, and later to publications in *Arquitectura/México*. The argument that any one moment caused the urban erasure of Nonoalco-Tlatelolco is not one I make here. Urban erasure is not an object. Rather, it's a 'thing' in Ingold's (2010) sense, a relational thing that we need to understand as part of a life-world that connects materialities across space and time. As such, urban erasure does not happen at some point in time, but is a processual 'thing~tie' (see Saxer and Schorch, Introduction to this volume) happening all the time. The process of urban demolition and the production of newness through new build is not simply a natural function of material properties, but an entanglement of matters. The matter of erasure is a series of intra-actions, to borrow Karen Barad's term (2007), between the matter of buildings, the matter of rubble, and, fundamentally, the matter of ideas.

I began this chapter with a discussion of Ingold's (2007) return to material and asked, What might be the medium, the substance and the surface of urban erasure? I answer this question through a diversion to reconsider the insights that James C. Scott (1998), who relies heavily on Jane Jacobs ([1961] 1992), offers when writing about the hubris and failure of modernist planning. In *Seeing Like a State*, Scott offers a critique of high-modernist urban planning, arguing that '[t]heir most fundamental error was their entirely aesthetic view of order' (1998, 133). By this Scott means the reduction of the pluriverse of the city to a set of simplified relationships guided primarily by a visual order. This simplification, argues Scott, is a recurring trope in scientific and modernist governance, and, in terms of high-modernist urban planning, leads to failure through its incapacity to confront complexity: 'As an aesthetic matter, it led to the visual regularity – even regimentation – that a sculptural view of the ensemble required. As a scientific matter it reduced the number of unknowns for which the planner had to find a solution' (Scott 1999, p. 140). As a historical argument, Scott's analysis falls short of contemporary readings of modernist cities like Brasilia. If, for Scott, the success of a planned city

is that it achieves its original goals, then it follows that there cannot be such a thing as a successful urban plan: the social always overwhelms the intentions of the planner. I raise Scott, and his debt to Jacobs, not to argue for or against high-modernist planning, but precisely because at its core, at the core of a project of simplification – the central argument for Scott –, is the necessary precondition of a possibility of erasure: the possibility of a choice of with whom or with what one cohabits the world. Erasure here is a metonym for choice and power to simplify (into racial or class segregation, monocultures, terraforming, or zoning). Simplification, I argue, is a process of erasure: It is not just that high modernism fails to achieve that which it claims is possible to achieve, but that the underlying ethic is one of *tabula rasa* urbanism. By way of an Ingoldian focus on the matter of erasure, however, it becomes clear how ideas connect through substances like graphite and ink, media like the architectural journal or the congress, and surfaces like the architect Mario Pani, who operates between the two.

Coda: erasure remains

> In time Santiago de Tlatelolco lost more and more of its importance until it became a dirty and unattractive suburb, the seat of army barracks, prisons, warehouses and factories. Today, like the old gods, technicians are going to create a new Cosmogonic Sun with the buried remains of the past and the blood of the new nation.
>
> (González Rul 1960, 228)

In 1960, writing in the pages of *Arquitectura/México*, the leading architectural journal in Mexico at the time, Francisco González Rul narrated the story of modern-day Tlatelolco. González Rul presented a narrative of urban decline, describing the site as having 'lost more and more of its importance', as 'dirty and unattractive', and filled with things unbefitting its central location in the geography of the city and the history of the country. Instead, deploying the twentieth-century Mexican nationalist return to Mesoamerican tropes (Bonfil Batalla, 1996), González Rul references the 'old gods' of the Aztec empire and 'the buried remains of the past' – here meaning the literally buried archaeological remains of historic Tlatelolco. From here, González Rul ascribes god-like qualities to the 'technicians' (the architects and planners) who will construct the new creation myth of a modern Mexico – the modernist housing utopia from the architect and urban planner Mario Pani. And yet, to make room for this utopia, erasure is required.

Ending with a beginning, the beginning of 'a new Cosmogonic Sun' suggests that even urban erasure is not something from nothing. In spite of the legitimacy produced in the matter of architectural journals and presentation boards, erasure undoes itself. As the historian Stefka Hristova argues (2016, 6), '[r]ubble speaks of remains, and the act of remaining'. Erasure erases one thing, but produces another – and through it, remains remain. Whether the buried remains of the past, demolition dust, or the hubristic urban planning documents of architects and planners, the matter of erasure remains.

Notes

1. Intentional urban demolition is, however, not necessarily the only act of erasure that is political in nature. Anthropologist and human geographer Austin Zeiderman makes the compelling case that natural disasters, such as landslides and mudslides, become political tools for reorganising state–citizen relations in Bogotá, Colombia. See Zeiderman, 2016.
2. The 20 November in Mexico is *el día de la revolución* (the day of the revolution), commemorating 20 November 1910, regarded as the start of the Mexican Revolution.
3. The reason for this lay not necessarily in the perceived failure of the buildings, nor in the idea of housing densification around modernist ideals, but rather in a falling-out with the ruling party. In an oral history a few years before his death, Pani narrates how he fell out with President Gustavo Díaz Ordaz (1964–70) and says that this is what halted his broader ambitions to extend the logic of the Nonoalco-Tlatelolco development: 'Acabo de tener acuerdo con el presidente Díaz Ordaz, y me dijo: "¿Cómo es posible que a Pani le den tanto trabajo? No quiero que se le dé ni una sola obra más." … Con eso terminamos ése capítulo' (Pani, quoted in De Garay 1990, 12).
4. The Declaration of La Sarraz was the founding document of CIAM.
5. *Cemento* and *Tolteca* were journals connected to the cement industry, and used to promote the use of the material in contemporary buildings. See the chapter 'Cement' in Gallo 2005, 169–200. De Anda Alanís also lists articles appearing in these two journals and in the Mexican daily newspapers *El Universal* and *Excélsior* that show modern architecture mostly from Europe divided into countries. Countries represented at the time were Germany, Austria, Spain, the United States of America, France, the Netherlands, Sweden, Italy, Hungary and Belgium. He also mentions two references to modern buildings in Latin America, one from Uruguay and the other from Cuba. See full list in De Anda Alanís 2008a, 160–1.
6. The two other jury members were Sigfried Giedion, business partner, friend and promoter of Le Corbusier, and Junzo Sakakura, a disciple of Le Corbusier.
7. His theories and built work featured prominently in issues 1 (December 1938), 2 (April 1939), 21 (November 1946), 32 (October 1950), 37 (March 1952), 45 (March 1954), 56 (December 1956), 74 (June 1961), 76 (December 1961), 78 (June 1962), 79 (September 1962), 82 (June 1963), 90 (June 1965), 91 (September 1965) and 92 (December 1965).
8. The visual materials discussed here originate in the presentation at the VII Panamerican Congress of Architects in Havana, as published in *Arquitectura/México*, original presentation boards based on the study for the Congress from the Archivo Pani in the Faculty of Architecture at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM), materials on Nonoalco-Tlaltelolco published in *Arquitectura/México*, and archival materials on *Programa del C. Presidente Lic. Adolfo López Mateos, de regeneración urbana y vivienda para trabajadores en la Ciudad de México* (1963), a research document also from the Archivo Pani. The study from the archives is authored by the architects Mario Pani, José Luis Cuevas, Dominguez García Ramos and H. Martinez de Hoyos, and the engineer Victor Vila; the publication is twenty-seven pages long and primarily visual. Some of the images were subsequently published in *Arquitectura/México*. See, for example, the following, published in *Arquitectura/México*: Mayorga 1949; Cuevas 1950; García Ramos 1959.

9. The title of their presentation in Havana provides a good description of its intentions: *Experimentos concretos de dispersión organizada y de concentración vertical para el mejoramiento de la habitación de la clase trabajadora en la capital de la República Mexicana* ('Concrete experiments of organised dispersion and vertical concentration for the improvement of the housing of the working class in the capital of the Mexican Republic').
10. The family sizes of Mexico City in 1940 as depicted in the presentation board for the Congress in Havana were: 32% of one to two people, 30% of three to four people, 29% of five to seven people, 9% of eight or more. The types of dwellings in the Mexico City were cited as 46% studio, 27% one-bedroom, 21% two-bedroom, 6% three-bedroom.

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15

Refugee life jackets thrown off but not away: connecting materialities in upcycling initiatives

Elia Petridou

Introduction

The political developments in Syria and the civil war that started in 2011 have generated a migratory flow that has been strongly felt on the Greek islands of Lesvos (Lesbos), Chios, Samos and Kos in the eastern Aegean Sea. Although those islands – Lesvos in particular – have served as a main entry gate to Greece and Europe for most of the twentieth century, in 2015 an unprecedented wave of arrivals, mainly from Syria, took place.[1] Lesvos, an island with a population of 85,000, received just short of half a million refugees in five months.[2] After the EU–Turkey deal of March 2016,[3] these numbers dropped considerably but sea arrivals did not entirely cease.[4] Refugees and migrants continued to enter despite a regime of official prohibition, closed borders and barriers.

Such a great number of arrivals became manifest through the vast quantity of life jackets discarded on the shores. Through both their abundance and their bright, fluorescent colours (mostly orange), they attracted attention and inspired various initiatives that prolonged their envisioned social lives. Through art installations, photographs and upcycling[5] projects, discarded life jackets did not end up in landfill but were reintegrated into the spheres of social life, creating new social connections.

Purchased in Turkey, sometimes at a very high price, life jackets are vital equipment for refugees and migrants preparing to take the risky trip across the Aegean Sea to enter Europe. There are hundreds of depictions

Figure 15.1 Photographs of refugees in sinking, overloaded boats have prevailed in representations of the refugee crisis in the media, creating a sense of a state of emergency. Photo taken in 2015 off Skala Sykaminias, in the north of Lesvos, by Alison Terry-Evans.

of them in orange life jackets, cluttered in overcrowded flimsy boats or being pulled out of the water (see Figure 15.1). Life jackets have become the symbol par excellence of the refugee crisis. Experiencing moments of agony, refugees and migrants bestow on them their hopes of survival before they throw them off in relief. Thus, a thing of great value to those crossing the sea becomes trash only a few moments later. Once discarded, life jackets acquire new value, either through artists who use them to comment on European migration policies, or through upcyclers who transform them into new things, such as bags, and use them to foster networks of support for the refugees.

In his seminal work, *Social Life of Things* (1986), Arjun Appadurai highlights the fact that things have social lives in the sense that their meaning changes as they circulate in and out of different 'regimes of value'. His approach is essential to the present study, as it lays the ground for understanding how refugee life jackets acquire and lose value during their lives. However, Appadurai's approach ignores the social and material connections (and disconnections) that emerge in the process. There is no consideration of the possibility that the thing's biography may itself

contribute to its value (Graeber 2001, 33), an aspect which Igor Kopytoff (1986) seeks to develop through his biographical approach to things. As will become evident in the social life of life jackets, the fact that they once belonged to refugees adds to their value as upcycled items, as does the human labour that is incorporated in them through upcycling. This point is well illustrated in David Graeber's (2001) anthropological theory of value, according to which a thing's value does not rely primarily on the thing itself but on its history (and its capacity to retain history), and the human labour it contains.[6]

In the present research, refugee life jackets acquire value as upcycled items because of previous actions and the human labour inscribed in them during the course of their lives. The history of life jackets is thus retained and incorporated into the value of new things. In upcycling, as opposed to recycling, the retention of history becomes possible because of the nature of the material transformation (improving instead of dissolving). Upcycling is about 'revitaliz[ing] old material by placing it into new constellations and by suggesting new ways of using it, while at the same time, keeping its essence intact as a main value-adding feature' (McDonough and Braungart 2002, cited in Wegener and Aakjær 2016, 2). So, in recycling the old dissolves to produce the new, while in upcycling the socio-material essence of the old continues to exist.

Studying the upcycling of refugee life jackets makes it evident how material and social processes co-exist and should not be studied separately. This point will become even more prominent as we move on to examine upcycling as a process of reintegration of waste into social life. It will be argued that upcycling is about reintegration not only of wasted things but also of people who have become 'superfluous'.

Refugee waste on the island of Lesvos

At the peak of the migratory flow in the late summer of 2015, life jackets discarded by refugees landing on the shores of Lesvos rendered the coastline orange and fluorescent (see Figure 15.2); together with the mounds they formed when collected, they became easily the most visible sign of the arrival of refugees. Life jackets are designed to retain their colour and stay bright; this characteristic, however, ceases to be an advantage when they become rubbish.

Life jackets and boat debris (inflatable, wooden, metallic or polyester), left behind by each refugee landing, became the island's greatest waste problem (Skanavis and Kounani 2016). For the local authorities,

Figure 15.2 A northern coast of Lesvos covered with discarded life jackets in the village of Sykaminia, a common destination for refugees crossing the border. Photo taken in 2016 by the Municipality of Lesvos.

discarded life jackets emerged as a prime environmental problem, with no resources available to provide a solution. They are classified as superfluous, a burden and a source of pollution. Until the end of 2017, the municipality of Lesvos, relying exclusively on its own human and financial resources, collected over 20,000 cubic metres of wrecked boats and life jackets, often from inaccessible shores, and placed them into two dumps waiting for the Greek state to provide a solution for their ultimate disposal.[7]

The environmental impact of refugee arrivals does not end there, however; it also includes tons of clothes, blankets, sleeping bags, mattresses and tents, which are thrown away at the camps. These often become the cause of criticism from the local authorities directed towards NGOs and other organisations, such as the UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees), arguing that they abundantly provide new aid materials but are not concerned with their disposal after use.[8]

Waste has been discussed in the anthropological literature as something redundant or, alternatively, as 'matter out of place'. This approach stems from Mary Douglas's classic work (1966), in which she relates the notions of pollution and cleanliness to social organisation, thus paving the way for the study of social inclusion and exclusion. Following in her

footsteps, Thomas Hylland Eriksen and Elisabeth Schober (2017) link symbolic processes of exclusion with the crises of neoliberal globalisation. They argue that waste, as something rendered superfluous, not only is an integral part of the functioning of global capitalism, but also contains a powerful symbolism which applies both literally and metaphorically to social communities cast out of the capitalist system, such as refugees. In Eriksen's words,

> There is a logic of exclusion and expulsion to the way we handle waste, which is paralleled in the way people are being treated: redundant humans, sometimes spoken of as 'human waste', people who were not meant to be, who are 'warehoused' in refugee camps, slums or prisons, who are superfluous, poor consumers, and inefficient producers.
>
> (Khazaleh 2015, quoting Eriksen)

Those insights indicate that notions regarding waste may inseparably refer to social and material processes alike. They allow an understanding of upcycling not only as a process of material transformation of waste but also as a social transformation of people who have become redundant. In many cases of upcycling, material waste is just the starting point for a process that is mainly driven by the desire to 'upgrade' underprivileged social groups who are primarily categorised by deficiency (prisoners, refugees, elderly people, and so on) – a process Charlotte Wegener and Marie Aakjær (2016) call 'social upcycling'. Social upcycling, they contend, is related to political recognition and empowerment. It is no coincidence that most social upcycling projects contain a narrative about 'turning around life stories of suffering into positive catalysts of social change' (p. 7).

In this sense, waste may be regarded not solely as a material but also as a social disconnection. Throwing away indicates the end of a relationship. As Jonathan Chapman rightly observes, the presence of material waste creates an affective experience of abandonment, lack of care and disinvestment, and becomes 'a symptom of a failed relationship' (quoted in Martínez 2017, 347). By reintegrating waste and infusing it with new life, upcycling creates ways of restoring social connections lost in the process of a traumatic experience of displacement. It entails forms of social reconnecting, such as empowerment, rehabilitation and a restoration of dignity, which, as my own research[9] on the provision of clothing to refugees indicated, were prominent in discussions and practices of aid provision on Lesvos. For example, with the intention of empowering refugees and providing them with choice, certain NGOs adopted, when possible,

a clothing delivery model that resembled that of a shop. These initiatives work against the image of refugees as victims in a state of extreme need and vulnerability,[10] an image prominently promoted by the media which puts them in an unequal relationship subject to biopolitical power.

Depictions of refugees and migrants in life jackets struggling for their survival instantiate what Giorgio Agamben (1998) names 'bare life', that is, a limited version of what it means to be human, which recognises their basic biological needs and excludes their political and social existence. As will be discussed in the next section, this image has acquired visibility through the work of journalists, photographers and artists who have extensively used life jackets with the aim of commenting, creating emotional impact and sensitising public opinion with regard to the refugee crisis.

The social life of refugee life jackets in artwork and the media

The social life of refugee life jackets does not always end in the dump; incorporated in photographs, art installations or upcycling projects, life jackets continue their material and social lives. The refugee crisis brought to the islands of the eastern Aegean Sea an unprecedented number of photographers, journalists and artists who use life jackets to document the passage of refugees from the Turkish coasts to Greece. Aiming to create strong emotional impact, photographers focus on depictions of pain and suffering (Giannakopoulos 2016) by taking pictures of refugees in orange life jackets in sinking, overcrowded boats. Such is the proliferation of those images that, in the minds of many people, the refugee crisis is all about rescuing people from the sea.[11]

Life jackets have also repeatedly featured in the numerous appeals by artists and actors for humanitarian aid. At the end of 2015, when the refugee flow peaked, various non-governmental organisations operating in Lesvos formed a gigantic symbol of peace on a hillside using about 3,000 discarded life jackets, with the intention of sending a Christmas message.[12] Engaging in a similar act on a coast near Mytilini, the capital of Lesvos, rescuers and aid workers used life jackets to construct a Christmas tree in order to send a message of hope (Chrysopoulos 2015). In September 2016, London's Parliament Square was covered for one day with 2,500 life jackets. The installation, resembling a graveyard, coincided with the beginning of the migration summit of the United Nations in New York (Pasha-Robinson 2016).

Life jackets have also systematically appeared in art projects by the Chinese artist Ai Weiwei. The artist has produced a series of public installations using life jackets and sea-related symbols, such as boats, with the aim of highlighting the consequences of European policies for the refugee crisis. To coincide with the opening of the Berlin International Film Festival in February 2016, Ai Weiwei wrapped the columns of the Berlin Konzerthaus in 14,000 fluorescent orange jackets from Lesvos. The installation was reported to be a tribute to the refugees who have drowned while trying to reach Europe.[13] After Berlin, a series of installations followed in other European cities: a colourful assemblage assemblage of rings of lotus flowers made of life jackets floated in the pond of the Belvedere museum in Vienna (Gibson 2016); twenty-two rubber boats hanging on the façade of Palazzo Strozzi in Florence drew attention to the fragile vessels in which refugees are forced to travel;[14] a gigantic 70-metre-long inflatable boat with 258 cramped life-sized dark figures at the National Gallery in Prague served as a reminder of the inhumane conditions of refugee journeys across the sea (Grenier 2017); 3,500 life jackets barricading the windows of Kunsthal Charlottenborg in Copenhagen formed a critical comment on the overcrowded conditions in rubber dinghies.[15]

Ai Weiwei uses life jackets with the intention of enhancing the visibility of the refugee situation and provoking a reaction to the ways in which the EU and other political actors have been handling the issue, though there is concern that the continuous reference to symbols of drowning may blunt public opinion instead of sensitising it (Yalouri, 2019). Life jackets thus become an active force, an agent, according to Alfred Gell (1998), carrying the artist's intention of bringing about certain results. In Gell's theory of art, 'artefacts' are indexes of their makers and have the capacity to manifest their intention. In this sense, life jackets as part of artwork become social agents; through their circulation, they create social connections of intention and action.[16]

Following the same line of thought, upcycled products may be regarded as 'artefacts' carrying the intention of their makers, which is to invite people around the world to engage in action and support for refugees. As will be shown in the next section, this approach is supported by the way upcyclers themselves talk about their work.

Upcycling refugee life jackets and blankets

In autumn 2017, when I started to look for upcycling projects on the island of Lesvos, three initiatives were still operating: two were based in

Lesvos and the third, situated at a site near Athens, used discarded refugee life jackets and blankets from the island. In all cases, the collection of data was based on interviews with the people who set up the initiatives, on-site visits, and an internet search on their websites. Other upcycling projects, some of which have definitely ceased to operate and others of which may no longer be active, are presented according to information found on the internet.

Safe Passage

Safe Passage is the name of an upcycling enterprise that started at the end of 2015 as part of the local organisation Lesvos Solidarity,[17] which, as its name suggests, was set up to foster solidarity with refugees.[18] Operating today as an NGO, Lesvos Solidarity runs an open refugee camp outside of Mytilini, providing humanitarian support to the most vulnerable refugees as well as integration and educational activities at the support centre Mosaik.[19]

Safe Passage is based on the ideas and designs of a local dressmaker, Tina Kontoleontos, who transforms life jackets into pencil cases, small wallets and bags. In its initial stages, the project relied on the contributions of local volunteers, who were gradually replaced by refugees from Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iran, all of whom were men claiming to have knowledge of sewing.

The production process starts with carefully cutting the fabric of the life jacket along the seams, emptying out its foam content and cutting off the straps. Fabric and straps are then separately washed. The fabric is cut according to the patterns of each design; next, the pieces are aesthetically matched, assembled, sewn together and equipped with straps and buckles retrieved from the life jackets. At the end, the upcycled items are stamped with the Safe Passage logo.

It should be noted that the future of an upcycling project based on raw materials sourced from continuous landings is uncertain. All upcycling initiatives were set up on the assumption that life jackets would continue to be abundant. However, the gradual reduction of refugee landings created scarcity[20] and the need for alternative solutions. Safe Passage, for example, are partially replacing the fabric of life jackets with pieces of other clothing materials, making sure that some 'authentic' pieces are incorporated into every bag.

Safe Passage promotes the idea that each item is not simply made from upcycled material; rather, each one is unique, as is every refugee that crosses the sea. As Tina mentioned during our conversation, her previous experience in tailored couture helped her deal with the individuality

of each client, including the particularity of used fabric as opposed to a standardised roll. In her narrative, upcycling is more closely related to craft than to mass production, and she was critical of any attempt to standardise the upcycling process.

The main idea, however, upon which the promotion of the upcycled bags is based is that each bag contains not only the life jacket fabric but the experience of refugees, the hardships of their journey, and the collaboration and solidarity of many people from many countries involved in upcycling. All these are contained in each upcycled item, as a small leaflet put inside the bag reminds us:

> Dear friends, this SAFE PASSAGE bag was made from:
> – people from all over the world,
> – all kinds of sentiments,
> – us 'all together',
> – hardship and alleviation,
> – a life jacket in the Aegean sea.
> so ENJOY IT, it was made in Lesvos!
> Thank you for supporting the Safe Passage workshop.
> Best,
> Suheib, Sophia, Soultan, OmarAli, Lena, Sultan, Manaja, Matina, Serfaraz, Efi, Yusuf, Omar … and many more :)
> Lesvos 2016

As this note reveals, the history of life jackets and the human actions related to their previous existence (that is, the fact that they were worn by refugees crossing borders, thrown off on shore, collected, and transformed through upcycling initiatives in which refugees and international volunteers work together) are incorporated in the value of each upcycled bag. It is not coincidental that all the pieces of life jackets reminiscent of their former lives are intentionally incorporated in the bags, for example the Yamaha logo, the instructions for use printed on the lining of life jackets, or an unevenly faded fabric alluding to the harsh weather conditions during the crossing (see Figure 15.3).

In January 2018, nine refugees and migrants were employed at Safe Passage, and the output ranged from 350 to 500 pieces per month (Tina's estimate). The selling prices of the upcycled items were between eight euros for small wallets and 35 euros for large bags. Orders were placed mainly through personal networks as well as online. The income from the selling of the upcycled items went to Lesvos Solidarity, who used it for salaries and for services offered to refugees. When Tina decided to proceed with upcycling, she confessed that the idea of working with a fabric

Figure 15.3 Bags made from upcycled life jackets by Dirty Girls and Safe Passage. Photo taken by the author.

carrying so much pain initially shocked her. The thought that upcycling activities offered refugees and migrants jobs and dignity became a strong motive for her, as did the creation of an extensive network of relations across national borders based on the idea 'Support us to support them'.

Dirty Girls of Lesvos Island

In October 2015, witnessing good-quality clothing forming mountains of garbage rather than being saved and reused, Australian photographer Alison Terry-Evans initiated an organisation called Dirty Girls of Lesvos Island that mainly operates with the involvement of international volunteers and sponsors. From its inception until the closing of the borders in spring 2016, Dirty Girls provided the framework for collecting, washing and redistributing clothes mainly collected along the shorelines. When refugee landings began to decline, their activity was mostly focused on washing blankets and sleeping bags thrown away at the refugee camps. To those activities was eventually added an upcycling initiative based on discarded life jackets.

As was initially stated on the Dirty Girls Facebook page, the washing of dirty clothes 'is all about respect: respect for the people who

leave, respect for those who come, respect for the local people and the environment'.[21] Through being washed and redistributed, discarded clothes and blankets acquire a new life and are, in a sense, rehabilitated, as they can be used by newly arrived refugees, who thereby have their own kind of clothing available to them, in terms of both modesty levels (the extent to which clothing is required to cover the body) and sizes. Respect, here, applies simultaneously to clothes and people; it follows that showing care for the former restores the dignity of the latter. As is explicitly stated online, 'what message does it give a person to take their blanket after use and trash it?'[22] A simultaneous reference to people and things appears constantly in this narrative. As Alison personally told me, she considered it important to eradicate refugee waste, as it extends from the material to the people themselves, allowing feelings of racism to grow.

In environmental terms, more than 400 tons of material have been saved from becoming refuse and causing vast environmental pollution, both at the coasts and inland, where refuse is provisionally stored. Alison's biggest complaint is that after all the work she has put in to increase awareness about the environment, NGOs, international humanitarian agencies and local authorities still do not support the washing of dirty blankets. Instead, they throw them away, so that Dirty Girls need to take them out of waste bins before they get dumped or burned.[23]

In 2016, alongside washing, Dirty Girls initiated the upcycling of life jackets into a single type of bag, a colourful 'messenger bag'. Alison decides on the combination of colours for each bag, while a local seamstress takes up sewing the pieces together. Each bag has a unique combination of pieces, representing the fact that 'each refugee is a person with an individual life story'.[24] In Alison's narrative, individuality is a prevailing notion: the idea that each refugee should be treated as unique, despite their massive numbers, should be reflected in the way their life jackets are individually handled, while emphasis is placed on the craftsmanship and uniqueness of each bag.

The messenger bag is designed to send a message to people in other parts of the world, inviting them to support refugees: 'Carrying your bag will demonstrate and open conversations about your support for people who have become refugees. Carry a bag with a message.'[25] Through a clever marketing technique and her connections in the US, Alison has managed to attract international visibility and the attention of the media, such as CNN, while internationally known celebrities visiting Lesvos have occasionally supported Dirty Girls.[26]

Dirty Girls do not sell the bags directly but, rather, they offer them as a gift for every 100 euros donated to the organisation. Donations are collected through the website of a US-based charity.[27]

The Welcome (Mats) project

At the Ritsona refugee camp, which is situated 80 km north-east of Athens, an upcycling initiative was set up in 2017 producing mats woven from discarded life jackets and UNHCR blankets. The enterprise was the product of a collaboration between Thistle Farms, a Nashville-based enterprise that set out to 'heal, empower and employ'[28] women in need, and I AM YOU, a humanitarian aid organisation which provides long-term relief to refugee camps in Greece. The so-called Welcome Project is one of Thistle Farms Global's social enterprises, which provides the framework for the production of crafts sold online on the Thistle Farms website. The aim is to empower women, by providing them not solely with a job but with a field of activity that makes them feel useful and creative, a job that allows them to take decisions for themselves and regain control of their lives, rather than being treated as people with no options and in need of care and control. The idea of empowering is related to the basic concept *love heals*, which permeates all the initiatives of Thistle Farms and the philosophy of its founder, Becca Stevens, an author, speaker, priest and social entrepreneur.[29]

In April 2017, three traditional looms were installed so that refugee women could find employment weaving upcycled mats.[30] The fabric of life jackets and UNHCR blankets was cut into strips, then inserted into the looms to produce mats in two sizes. In March 2018, with discarded life jackets becoming scarcer, the production of mats[31] relied mainly on grey, old and unusable blankets, with only a few colourful strips of life jacket fabric sparsely woven into them. Each mat featured a unique combination of colours.[32]

The emphasis on the uniqueness of each upcycled item deserves further attention as it emerges in all three upcycling initiatives and may be seen as part of a critique of an economic and political system that creates 'waste'. According to a Thistle Farms representative, the notion of craft and the idea of a social enterprise go together and are an integral part of the Thistle Farms philosophy.[33] Expressions such as 'One mat at a time' (Thistle Farms) or 'Each bag has a different, one off design; representing the fact that each refugee is a person with an individual life story' (Dirty Girls), or even Tina's critique of upcycling on a more massive scale (Safe Passage),[34] are all indicative of this stance.

The name Welcome Project expresses the idea that mats laid at the doorsteps of American homes convey acceptance of and solidarity with refugees. The *welcome* mats are intended to work as a public statement that refugees are welcome, at a time when political restrictions have been imposed on their ability to settle in the US. Thus, Thistle Farms wish to provide Americans with the opportunity of personal engagement with the refugee crisis, doing something to help apart from just offering money.[35] Mats become a form of political resistance as they carry an intention to change; as stated on the Thistle Farms website, 'Thank you for joining us in the belief that love is the most powerful force for change in the world'.[36] The Welcome Project serves the *love heals* concept also by reversing the negative symbolism of the life jackets, transforming them from reminders of a traumatic past, tragedy and loss into symbols of hope and prosperity.[37] When they reach their destination, the mats are appropriated in a variety of ways: besides their use as floor mats, they are put on the dining table as a centrepiece or hung on the wall as a piece of art. They have also been shown in art galleries and acquired wide visibility through media such as CNN, *People* magazine and a TV show.[38]

Other upcycling initiatives

The three enterprises presented above do not exhaust the upcycling projects in the refugee context of Greece. Lighthouse Relief, an NGO that provides immediate humanitarian relief to landed refugees on the northern coasts of Lesvos Island, combined clean-up operations with creative upcycling projects under its ECO Relief & Upcycling project. A foreign volunteer at this NGO presents an online video on how to make upcycled handmade bags from the material of discarded rubber dinghies and life jackets.[39] The idea pervading his narrative is that such initiatives are not confined to Lesvos but extend backwards to all the countries refugees come from. As he phrases it in the video, 'It doesn't begin here. It begins in Syria, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, all these countries with all these refugees coming everyday risking their lives, trying to find new opportunities.' This point made by the volunteer reveals a way of experiencing life jackets as a uniting thread that connects people beyond the geographical and temporal framework of Lesvos Island.

When a volunteer from Denmark reused the foam inside the life jackets to create insulated emergency sleeping mattresses for refugees, it was reported in the news that refugees treated this solution with scepticism 'because the life jackets are a vivid reminder of their torturous

journey across the sea'.[40] Many upcycling projects contain a narrative about rehabilitation and change, aiming to turn negative life experiences into positive forces for change. One such initiative[41] took place at the Moria refugee camp in Lesvos: a female textiles student from Amsterdam demonstrated how to make a rucksack from one folded piece of rubber boat material clipped with buckles from life jackets. Her idea, presented on video,[42] was to show how the wasted material can be used to meet an urgent need for bags for the refugees. A reporter covering the initiative recorded a female Syrian refugee saying 'It's a good idea to make a bag from the boat. You kill the boat that tried to kill you.'

Conclusions

Following the life of refugee life jackets and other materials, such as blankets and pieces of rubber boats, into and out of the landfill, the chapter has focused on how the reintegration of waste into social life creates connections, thereby reversing the experience of 'a failed relationship' caused by a system that makes things and people redundant. Their reintegration through art projects and upcycling initiatives is not only materially realised but is taken to extend to refugees and migrants themselves. In the cases presented, the transformation is talked about as a reversal of suffering into hope, of turning a problem into an opportunity, of replacing the image of a victim with that of an empowered individual. Providing refugees with jobs or financing other services (for instance, cleaning blankets or providing a bus service) is considered an act of empowerment and rehabilitation, and a restoration of deprived dignity.

All the cases of upcycling described above share certain features as to the nature of the connections formed through the integration of life jackets back into social life. These include (1) the incorporation of the history of life jackets and the people related to it, (2) the sharing of the refugee 'drama' through the distribution of 'authentic' pieces of fabric, (3) the agency of the upcycled items aimed at establishing networks of refugee support, and (4) the structuring of social and material connections on ideas of internationalism and open borders.

Starting with the importance of the history of the fabric in creating connections, it should be noted that the value of an upcycled bag or mat does not rely so much on its use value – in the sense that there are easier and cheaper ways to obtain bags or mats – but on the history of the material and the human labour involved in previous phases of its social life.

Preceding human actions, such as the use of life jackets for a risky border crossing, their collection in the form of waste, their transformation into upcycled items with the purpose of supporting refugees, and the participation of refugees themselves in the upcycling – all these actions add to the value of the upcycled items, which now become the thread that brings together an extended network of social connections. The wording on the note inside Safe Passage bags is indicative of this understanding, as is the incorporation into the bags of pieces of life jackets that reveal their previous life.

Connections are also based on ideas of authenticity. In all three cases of upcycling, the shortage of discarded life jackets due to the temporary decrease in refugee landings required solutions that would guarantee the use of at least some of the 'authentic' fabric worn or used by refugees. Life jackets embody the moment when the refugee 'drama' escalates, that is, the moment of rescue (Papataxiarchis 2016).[43] When their fabric travels, incorporated into the upcycled items, recipients in other parts of the world are given the opportunity to partake in the 'drama'. Through the circulation of upcycled items, the 'drama' becomes 'distributed'.[44]

Another type of connection forged through life jackets concerns the networks of refugee support established through their circulation. In the case of artwork, life jackets carry the intention of the artist to increase the visibility of the refugee issue and exert a critique on EU policies. In the three cases of upcycling presented, life jackets carry the intention of upcyclers to invite people around the world to support their cause. Their intention is infused into the upcycled items, which become what Gell calls 'agents', acting on their behalf. Upcycled items function in a way similar to artwork, in that they invite recipients to engage in action.

My final point concerns a strong element of internationalism entailed in the social life of life jackets as they are infused with new life. Neither art nor the upcycling projects are confined within the geographical and temporal framework of Lesvos (or Greece, for that matter); instead they materialise the idea of open borders. Most of the initiatives are generated by people coming from other countries and are based on fabrics used by refugees coming from different parts of the world, while the upcycled items travel freely to European destinations and the US. While the life jackets are turned from a symbol of suffering into an active and transnational force drawing attention to the crises, the refugees themselves embark on more constrained and uncertain onward journeys.

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Notes

1. Indicatively, in the same year, sea arrivals from Turkey exceeded 856,000 people, of whom 700,000 arrived at the Aegean islands in the last five months of 2015. These numbers concern only registered arrivals. UNHCR, http://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean/location/5179 (accessed 18 February 2018).
2. UNHCR Lesvos Island snapshot (December 2015), https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Daily_Arrival_Greece_31122015.pdf (accessed 18 February 2018).
3. In March 2016, EU and Turkish leaders agreed that Turkey would take measures to prevent border crossing to the Greek islands for new irregular migrants. Additionally, all migrants arriving on the Greek islands would be returned to Turkey if their claim for asylum was rejected.
4. From April 2016 until the end of 2017, registered sea arrivals on the eastern Aegean islands amounted to approximately 50,000 refugees. Among those, in 2017 only 41.7% were from Syria. The rest originated from many Asian and African countries, Iraq and Afghanistan being at the top of the list. UNHCR, http://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean?id=83 (accessed 18 February 2018).
5. Upcycling is a term coined by the German engineer and upcycler Reiner Pilz (1994) for the practice of transforming old things into new ones of improved quality. Unlike recycling, in which things lose their value by being smashed and dissolved (which Pilz describes as down-cycling), upcycling is considered to add more value, not less.
6. Graeber draws, first, on Nancy Munn's notion of value in her study of exchange in Gawa (Papua New Guinea), in which she illustrates how food itself is not as important as its power to create social relations through its circulation and, second, on his own interpretation of Karl Marx's concept of human labour as entailing all the capacity, physical and mental, of a human being to transform the world.
7. Information based on an interview with the head of the Department for Cleaning and Recycling at the Municipality of Lesvos, Georgia Mpletsa, in January 2018.
8. According to the head of the Department for Cleaning and Recycling at the Municipality of Lesvos, it is disappointing that out of the 500 million euros received by NGOs for the management of the refugee crisis, none was channelled towards cleaning the island of the waste caused by the refugees. This has 'crucial repercussions for the display of tolerance on the part of the local population', the representative said, adding that at the peak of the migration flow, local people would call the municipality in tears, asking for help to clean their gardens from refugee waste, saying 'we are not racists, but the rubbish blocks entry to our homes'.
9. My research on the provision of both second-hand and new clothes to asylum seekers took place on the islands of Lesvos and Chios between August 2015 and April 2017.
10. In discussing what would count as 'authentic' in an exhibition about refugees, Anastasia Chourmouziadi (2016, 48–9) observes that material things such as mobile phones, which are extremely important to them, rarely feature in their representations, as they do not form part of the stereotyped image of their deprivation.
11. The public has systematically been exposed to thousands of such images shared and re-shared on the internet, which all create a visual information overload of refugees in orange life jackets. To the long list we could add the Oscar-nominated documentary *4.1 Miles* by Daphne Matziaraki (2016) featuring a coastguard captain in the north of Lesvos who is daily involved in rescuing refugees from drowning at sea.

12. ABC News. 'Aid groups create peace sign of life jackets on Greek island of Lesbos in tribute to asylum seekers.' http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016–01-03/aid-groups-create-huge-peace-sign-of-life jackets-on-lesbos/7064788 (accessed 12 February 2018).
13. ABC News. 'Ai Weiwei fixes 14,000 life jacks to Berlin building to highlight refugee plight.' 16 February 2016. http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-02-16/ai-weiwei-uses-14000-life jackets-to-highlight-refugee-plight/7171100 (accessed 14 September 2019).
14. *Designboom*. 'Ai Weiwei to wrap the façade of Florence's Palazzo Strozzi in rubber life boats.' https://www.designboom.com/art/ai-weiwei-florence-palazzo-strozzi-rubber-life-boats-libero-reframe-exhibition-09-14-2016/ (accessed 6 June 2018)
15. Kunsthal Charlottenborg. 'Ai Weiwei: soleil levant/.' https://kunsthalcharlottenborg.dk/en/exhibitions/ai-weiwei-soleil-levant/ (accessed 16 May 2018).
16. Upcycling here is a form of 'craftivism', that is, a combination of craft with activism, which involves the use of handmade art to bring about social and political change. Craftivism may incorporate elements of anti-capitalism, environmentalism and solidarity (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Craftivism). I would like to thank Anna Bonarou for bringing the term to my attention.
17. The organisation was initially formed by local volunteers in 2012 under the name 'The Village of Altogether', with the purpose of responding to the emerging needs of members of the local community caused by the economic crisis in Greece.
18. A dedicated section on the key concept of 'solidarity' in the context of the refugee crisis in Greece is included in the academic journal *Social Anthropology* (May 2016 24 (2), titled 'The other side of the crisis: solidarity networks in Greece').
19. Mosaik. https://lesvosmosaik.org (accessed 14 September 2019).
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28. Thistle Farms. https://thistlefarms.org/pages/our-mission (accessed 25 May 2018).
29. Thistle Farms. https://thistlefarms.org/pages/ (accessed 25 May 2018).
30. In December 2017, mat production financed the employment of 10 women working 5 hours a day, and of other people working at the camp, plus other services, such as a bus.
31. In December 2017, the production output was 50 mats a week, over 900 mats had already been sold and there were still pending orders.
32. Thistle Farms. https://thistlefarms.org/collections/welcome-project/products/welcome-mat (accessed 25 May 2018).
33. Skype interview with Thistle Farms representative, January 2018.
34. Despite the massive presence of life jackets as discarded material, their upcycling is here characterised by resistance to the possibility of mass production and commodification; Kopytoff (1986) names this process 'singularisation'.
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37. Information on a previous version of the Thistle Farms website accessed on 10 January 2018.
38. Skype interview with Thistle Farms representative (January 2018).

39. Lighthouse Relief volunteer Juan describes the ECO Relief & Upcycling project at https://vimeo.com/200963440 (accessed 15 March 2018).
40. Pappas 2016.
41. The initiative was part of Odyssea, a Greek non-profit social enterprise founded in February 2016 to create solutions that would empower people and help them 'realise their full potential'. Odyssea's upcycling project was called LOVEST and aimed at making bags and wallets out of discarded boats and jackets. http://www.odyssea.org.gr/ (accessed 14 March 2018).
42. Daniella Cheslow. 2016. 'On Lesbos, Dutch volunteers teach migrants to turn boats into backpacks', Radio Free Europe, 3 March https://www.rferl.org/a/lesbos-migrants-turning-boats-into-backpacks-dutch-volunteers/27587663.html (accessed 12 March 2019).
43. Papataxiarchis calls the act of rescuing the most significant act within the symbolic hierarchy of humanitarian aid. He contends that being part of the human encounter at the front line, that is, 'being there', is valued highly.
44. In Alfred Gell's theory, the notions of 'distributed person' and 'distributed object' are used to describe how artists act at the same time in different places and times through their distributed artefacts which carry their agency.

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16 Intervention

Tamga tash: a tale of stones, stories and travelling immobiles

Lisa Francesca Rail

Setting two scenes

The installation's centrepiece is a stone. It took three adults to carry it up the driveway and the flight of stairs that lead into the Center of Advanced Studies in Munich, in February 2017. A couple of sturdy ropes are strung around its bulky middle and connect it to a laptop showing travel blog entries, to a guidebook on Kyrgyzstan, and to several photographs. Some ropes' ends have pages of writing attached to them while others remain loose, leading nowhere. The widespread Buddhist mantra *om mani padme hum* is painted across the stone's flattened upper side in Tibetan writing. Or rather, this is what some people might be able to read, should they be familiar with the sketchily emulated letters. On the wall next to the stone, a signpost designates it as a remake, an evocation, of an inscribed, historical rock resting in the north of Kyrgyzstan, called *tamga tash*: letter stone.

From the village of Tamga – more than 6,000 kilometres to the east, one summer earlier – I walk south, away from Lake Issyk Kul, while facing the distant mountain peaks. I leave behind the wooden and concrete houses adorned by front gardens and let an uneven road lead me through apple orchards, fenced and unfenced, past fishing grounds along

Figure 16.1 Image of the *tamga tash* in Djeti Ögüz region, Kyrgyzstan, as presented in an online travel blog. Photograph by Michal Choura, 2015. https://www.choura.cz/kyrgyzstan-tamga/h69591115#h60660fa4 (accessed 11 June 2019).

Figure 16.2 Reproduction of the *tamga tash* at the Center for Advanced Studies. Installation by Lisa Rail, Symposium Connecting Materialities/Material Connectivities, Munich 2017, LMU Center for Advanced Studies. Photo by Marlen Elders.

the mountain stream, past the forester's house, and past tall-growing meadows. Today, I do not undertake the walk to help with working in the orchards or preparing hay. Today, I come to visit the ancient, inscribed rock among the winter pastures.

A rustling breeze briefly stirs up the frayed remains of some colourful prayer flags that adorn the cool contours of the big, immovable *tamga tash*. It rattles the dry branches surrounding the massive mountain boulder before it rushes on across the fragrant grassland and the foothills towering over the lake and the villages by its shore. The stone among the shrubs is approximately three metres wide and two metres high, has been scribbled on by lichens and is split lengthwise. Its flattened side faces downhill towards the distant water surface. This side is also the one inscribed with a line of letters. The writing is weathered, yet its meaning is still decipherable: *Om mani padme hum*. Archaeological knowledge about the stone and its inscription is scant. It can be inferred from the writing system and the historical literature on past extensions of the Tibetan empire, however, that the marks on this stone must stem from roughly the seventh or eighth century CE (Beckwith 1993; van Schaik 2011). That past imperial presence is a story not commonly told in and about today's Muslim Central Asia. Yet, stubbornly slow in its material erosion, the *tamga tash* keeps bearing witness and ties connections between widely separated times. It *is* the tie. The writing suffices to single out the rock to be named and recommended in travel guides or blogs, even though information about its formation more detailed than a vague century is not ready at hand. Tourists far away from the breezy foothills read about the *tamga tash*, then make their way up through pastures towards the stone with its engraved line of letters.

In Munich, the compilation of knotted-up things forms one of the artistic-academic interventions at the symposium 'Connecting Materialities/ Material Connectivities (mat~con)'. The assembled papers and installations share the purpose of tracing ways in which material things and connections – as *thing~ties* (Saxer and Schorch, Introduction to this volume) across space and time – bring forth one another. While many contributions are concerned with the joint proliferation of links and things through movement, my installation composed around the painted stone is based on an instance of material *im*mobility, that is, on the absence of the original and immobile *tamga tash*. Its variously mediated figurations, however – the replica, images and writing, printouts and digital information – allow the stone to be partially present – or re-presented – nonetheless. Simultaneously, it is words and photographs on travel websites and in travel guides that help entice people to venture towards the stationary rock.

Recounting the *tamga tash* and the forms of connection, transmission and movement that spring from this case of resistant and immobile matter, this chapter explores three conceptual aspects in particular: One is the stone's material property of endurance that enables connections through time. Another is that the same fixity may initiate movement of visitors, promoting additional connections across space. The third is that these connection-forging capacities cannot be ascribed to qualities inherent in lithic material alone but must be understood as the product of both the stubborn stone and its co-constitutive mediation processes. By the end of this tale, the *tamga tash* will have emerged as what I would like to call a *travelling and attracting immobile* – a figure of interest for the project of thinking through modes of entanglement of matter and connections.

Connecting immobility

Hauling the re-created letter stone through the hallway of the Center of Advanced Studies brought me and my fellow stone carriers to the limit of our influence over the stubbornly heavy rock. On the lookout for a suitable model, I had chosen the now painted stone from a street in Maxvorstadt, a neighbourhood in Munich. I picked it because of its flattened upper side and manageable size. It still took a car and six arms to bring it to the conference venue. Even my smaller remake of *tamga tash*, chosen to fit through the entrance door, made our muscles sore.

As mentioned above, other contributions to this volume are concerned with travelling things and connections emerging from the mobility of materials, from imperial horses, political gifts, Barbie dolls, migrants' pilgrimage souvenirs, and smartphones moving across the Pacific, to arrowheads and life jackets. Theirs are stories of circulation, of becoming and taking effect on the move. Diverging from this mode of material connectivity, the *tamga tash* is notably stationary and comparatively unchanging. From the positional perspective of human longevity, physical power and sensory perception, boulders like *tamga tash* are fairly reliable preservers of history and points of orientation; in the dimension of geological time, it should nonetheless be remembered, this affective material-historical stability dissolves. Weathering slowly, for humans, the lettered stone is a keeper of a past Tibetan political topography and of a writing system that can still be translated into spoken sound. Resistant to muscle power, it carries the potential to be a shared reference point in the mountainous grassland. Whoever wants to touch and see the conserved traces of time

and history will have to make their way towards Tamga and its *tamga tash*, as the stone itself will not be moved.

Similarly to the stories of the travelling souvenirs and smartphones, we may observe material things giving rise to, or rather becoming themselves, linkages. Yet in the case of the lettered stone, this takes place not despite its fixity, but, importantly, because of it. Its immobility makes people wander towards it. Its durability allows it to become a mark of the landscape, an anchor for movement and talk, or – using Tim Ingold's figure of thought – a discernible knot of past and ongoing lifelines (Ingold 2011: 148–9). Lifelines of herders, travel guide writers, villagers offering guestrooms, lichens, tourists, and a stonemason who has long passed away.

The capacity of material things to stay 'fixed' across diverse temporal and spatial scales is, among other aspects, what enables them to become connectors. As stones are particularly fixed and enduring media for traces like engraved letters, they may additionally become historic singularities calling for visitors. The stubborn lithic weight and the potential to preserve and attract others are inextricable. The painted stone among the ropes is more than a visual reproduction; its demanding setup gave a tangible glimpse of precisely the weight and immovability that characterise the *tamga tash* in its connection-weaving. In the end, because of its weight and bulk, the replica at the conference never made it back to Maxvorstadt.

Gravitation

On the village streets of Tamga, there are not many signs indicating the presence of the ancient stone nearby.

The right trail, up towards the mountain ridge's snowy peaks, is neither easy to find nor in good condition. The last part of the way no longer even follows a path, but cuts through a swampy, overgrown meadow sprinkled with fruit trees and hidden puddles. Not many tourists find their way to Tamga, but those who do have generally read about the village's eponymous rock on the Lonely Planet website or perhaps even in a copy of the guidebook that lies tangled up in the ropes in February 2017 (Scholl 2009). The local tourist infrastructure is sparse and guest rooms few. There

Figure 16.3 Image of Tamga's main street in Djeti Ögüz region, Kyrgyzstan. Photo taken by the author in 2015.

Figure 16.4 Remains of the reproduction of the *tamga tash* in Munich, one year after its presentation at the Symposium Connecting Materialities/Material Connectivities, Munich 2017, LMU Center for Advanced Studies. Photo taken by the author in 2018.

are no restaurants in the village's centre, neither is there any specialised tourist information. However, Tamga's residents are good at improvising, and at reading the habits and desires of the odd visitor. Accordingly, they know that most will probably ask for *tamga tash*.

Tamga tash literally translates to letter stone in Kyrgyz, a Turkic language. The chiselled writing gave the village Tamga its name. None of the village dwellers I know is able to read the Tibetan characters, and nor am I. But I heard rumours about scientists who once roamed the area on the quest for the stone's provenance. The scientists, it is said, found lettered rocks matching the one on Tamga's pasture, a handful of them close by, others in a faraway land, all of them ancient. At the same time, the stone, the *tash*, also features in a narration that is offered locally to explain the genesis of the landscape and its landmarks: the gaping crack running through the stone is said to have been caused by a stroke of the sword of Manas, the protagonist of the Kyrgyz epics, now the national mythic hero of the independent republic. Even though Tibet and the seventh and eighth centuries are generally not featured in accounts of the stone's origin in Tamga, the *tamga tash* definitely appears as a bearer of both history and stories.

During the summer months of 2016, an elderly woman sells honey and pickled wild mushrooms in front of her house on one of Tamga's two main streets. Aware of the stone's potential as an attracting sight, and to make up for the lack of official signposting, she sets up a colourful cardboard sign describing the lettered stone. The writing is in Russian and not well printed, but it is accompanied by more self-explanatory photographs, recognisable by readers of guidebooks and travelogues. Should an interested traveller pass by, she will be quick to summon some children in their summer school holidays who are eager to be her guide and earn some pocket money. The honey seller, the children and the guesthouse keepers align themselves with the dispersing, comparatively modest but locally very palpable fame of the *tamga tash*. They tap and partake in the rock's gravitational force, the potential of its immovable, enduring weight to draw and conserve narratives, and to pull in travellers. If a common language can be found between tourists and villagers, the stone's stories are likely to be exchanged and perhaps eventually circulated further via travel blogs.

Gradual detachability

So far, this essay has explicitly traced the workings of immobility. Yet this is only one half of the tale of travelling immobiles, because the rumours,

the book, the photographs, the webpages, the printouts, the ropes and I travel more easily. Tamga's *tamga tash* emerges in Munich despite the distance between the two places. In a sense, it had already emerged for the village's arriving tourists before they actually saw and touched its surface. Its story is not solely one of fixity, it is also one of multiplicity and the inseparability of representations and things.

Once mediation processes are not understood as separate copies of *an* original, 'representations' have effectively already become something else – actualisations, re-*present*ations, remakes, enactments, performances. The images, the blog posts, the talk I give in the course of the symposium, and this essay I write, would not exist without the stone's heavy material basis. But likewise, the *tamga tash* would not be the same – neither the same point of attraction nor the potential generator of additional income in Tamga – without these more volatile and partial reproductions. Non-representational aspects of relational materialist theory (e.g. Anderson and Harrison 2010; Bennett 2010; Dolphijn and van der Tuin 2012) and post-humanist rethinking of semiotics (e.g. Kohn 2013) are concerned with this inextricable mutuality. Signs, images and re-presentations do not form a separate mental realm vis-à-vis their material grounding. Rather, they inseparably emerge from, and consequently remain continuously entangled with, what we colloquially call the material world. This does not mean, however, that they can be reduced to it.

On the other hand, inseparability does not, and must not, mean that we stop distinguishing. While they certainly depend on their point of reference, narratives and images possess properties of their own, freed from constraints posed by *tamga tash*: spoken language travels differently from written lines. Words travel differently from images. Their difference is different according to whether their travel is digital, on paper or mediated through sound waves. All travel differently from actual rocks. The remake travels differently from its template. Nonetheless, the re-presentations stay conjunct with the letter stone in Kyrgyzstan. I would like to call this the gradual detachability of mediations, indispensable for immobiles to travel and sprawl. Mediations can be shared, multiplied, transported and communicated, each in distinct ways and within their own limitations. Along the way, they make the *tamga tash* arrive in Munich and become something slightly different with every single new enactment, including the conference installation and this very volume.

Radiation

Trying to grasp the *tamga tash*'s workings as a gravitational – stationary and moving – entity, I found an explanation in the interplay of singularising immobility and travel in the form of gradually independent reproductions. Accordingly, *tamga tash* can productively be understood as travelling immobile. Its anchoring fixity and the mobility of its mediations co-constitute each other; only together do they give rise to a stone that both stays put and connects, attracts and radiates.

The *tamga tash* has made it into the pages of this book. The book has become another node in the stone's rope-work that it describes, another radiating spore. Carried along on the lithic lettering, a piece of largely forgotten history of past Tibetan presence in Central Asia has entered this chapter, as have some more or less improvised fragments of Tamga's tourist infrastructure, as have some rumours, and some strained muscle fibres. One particular stone, immobile yet travelling, material and virtual, evoked an interplay of abstract lines of thought. The concepts that emerged from this engagement with a small empirical setting may move on and potentially help further as guiding tools for thinking through materiality and connectivity should they fall into a fertile substrate.

The lettered stone in the foothills of Tamga remains located among the grass and branches and keeps awaiting visitors. The lettered stone in Munich was first heaved out into the Center of Advanced Studies' garden after the end of the symposium, to be left there in the absence of a car and the motivation to transport it back to its place of recovery. One week later, however, it had to be moved to a nearby park, as the centre's staff found it a little too bulky and immutable either to be kept as a memento or to be ignored. It must still be sitting underneath a smallish tree with the stubbornness of its own weight. The watercolour writing, materially less resistant to rain, will, on the other hand, have disappeared, dissolved into particles, drained off into the ground and perhaps digested further by soil organisms.

That spore from Tamga, the remake's lettering, was drowned: the spore between these duplicated pages keeps awaiting readers, even travellers.

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Exploring Materiality and Connectivity in Anthropology and Beyond provides a new look at the old anthropological concern with materiality and connectivity. It understands materiality not as defined property of some-thing, nor does it take connectivity as merely a relation between discrete entities. It rather sees them as two interrelated modes in which an entity is becoming in the world. The question at stake is how these two modes of becoming relate and fold into each other.

The four-year research process that led to this book included workshops dedicated to practical, hands-on exercises in working with things. A series of installations emerged, which served as artistic-academic interventions during the final symposium and are featured alongside the other academic contributions to this volume.

As interrelated modes of becoming, materiality and connectivity make it necessary to coalesce things and ties into thing~ties – an insight toward which the chapters and interventions came from different sides. Throughout the pages of this volume, we invite the reader to travel beyond imaginaries of a universe of separate planets united by connections, and to venture instead into the thicket of thing~ties in which we live.

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