HYPNOPOMPIA

Living within the interstices
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PROJECT NOTES

> "I am neither I nor the other one. I am something in between"
> — Mário de Sá-Carneiro.

The term Hypnopompia is derived from hypnopompic, an adjective used to describe the state of semi-consciousness preceding wakefulness. In this project, I use it to refer to the blurred portions of one's socio-cultural identity. The project seeks to navigate a few accessible areas of the complexity of human individuality by highlighting myriad circumstances that have contributed to creating hyper-complex identities and ratifying that the concept of "a true ethnic identity" is fast becoming a mere illusion. In a sphere increasingly made up of interlaced genealogies and cultures, complexity in individuality is here to stay!

It has become increasingly complex to categorise an individual without having to encounter a web of intersections. Filling out forms, either for migration, medical or social purposes to responding to seemingly straight-forward questions such as, "where are you from?" have become more intricate. The logic of identity according to Stuart Hall is important in a whole range of political, theoretical and conceptual discourses. The term itself has become quite contentious in various disciplines. If "[t]he idea of identity is extremely important to our own self conceptions [and] contains the notion of the true self, some real self-inside there, hiding inside the husks of all the weird

selves we present" (Hall 42), then one might beg the question: Does a true self really exist? What does a "true" cultural, political or social identity constitute?

The suggestion that the space between two or more cultures can be a productive place of has been explored by scholars such Mary Louise Pratt. She developed the concept of Contact Zones and defines Contact Zones as "social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out in many parts of the world today" (Pratt 34). It is a space in which transculturation takes place. She understands that the intersectionality of a contact zone allows for people to interact between cultures and break cultural boundaries. Individuals within a Contact Zone are open to new perspectives as they interact with people of unfamiliar cultures. I would add that there is also an inevitable shedding and adoption of some of an individual`s preconceptions, beliefs and entire personhood.

Homi Bhabha, in "The Third Space", refers to the zone in-between two cultures as the Third Space and states that this zone "gives rise to something different, something new and unrecognisable, a new area of negotiation of meaning and representation" (Bhaba 211).The Third Space "though representable in itself...constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, re-historicized and read anew".[1] In the same way as the Contact Zone, these in-between spaces provide

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[1] cf., Homi K. Bhabha, The Location of Culture. (London: Routledge, 1994)1-2.

the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood, singular or communal, that initiate new signs of identity and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself.

Other scholars have developed various concepts to chart the space of intercultural exchange; with the aim to illuminate and construe the forces at work in these zones. Gloria Anzaldúa in *Borderlands La/Frontera* offers examples of theorizations of a self to show how disintegration can be a source of suffering and at the same time, of self-recreation, of new cultural meanings. The result however, is a continuous process of individuation.

Returning to the question, "who am I?" and by extension, how do the cultural, political and social selves amount to that which is being coagulated in a community? How –and on what grounds– can a new identity be forged that is neither retrospective nor a cross between that which the social constructions imposed and the remnants of the individual one? Or is such a meta-institutionalised mixture actually what should be achieved in order to avoid the mechanisms of exclusion that any assumption of identity/authenticity implies?

Consequently, the shifting nature of individuation, and by extension, socio-cultural identity, have produced complex crossroads where race, gender, nationality and ethnicity-among many factors-collide. Multidimensional perspectives emerge unceasingly on social and cultural issues with an overarching problem; the politics of representation. This begs yet another the question: How, and under what classifications can interstitial persons be fittingly represented?

In a more suitable argument to this project, Hall interprets identity as a ground of action, "a psychological discourse of the self which is similar; a notion of the continuous, self-sufficient, developmental, unfolding, inner dialectic of selfhood". He goes on to define identity as "…[A] point at which on the one hand, a whole set of new theoretical discourses intersect and where on the other, a whole new set of cultural practices emerge" (42). This project chooses to replace the term "identity" with "individuation". a process through which an individual becomes increasingly distinct.

On a practical level, Hypnopompia is an ongoing collaboration and collection of palimpsestuous individualities defined by subtle or blatant influences of various forms of commingling (biological and cultural) on the indeterminacy of personhood. An anticipated outcome of this project reveals newer concepts of socio-cultural identities and the cultivation of newer ways in which social spaces function, not as metonymic or "imagined societies"[2] but a reality of intermingling complexities. Since "modern societies are differentiated within themselves to such a degree that uniformity is no longer constitutive to, or achievable for them" (Welsch 195), this project goes further to focus on the individual through photographic portraits and temporal biographies. It underlines the possibilities of the emerging intersectional individuals recalibrating the foundations of already established perceptions.

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[2] The concept of "imagined communities" is used by Benedict Anderson, a political Scientist, to describe nationalism. Anderson describes a nation as a community made up of people who imagine themselves to be part of a group, rather than bound by physical boundaries. See, Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism.* (Verso, 2016)

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