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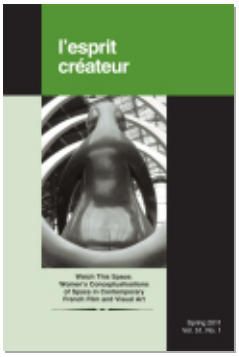

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"Cette poétique du politique": Political and Representational Ecologies in the Work of Yto Barrada

Amanda Crawley Jackson

A GRADUATE OF HISTORY and political science, the Franco-Moroccan artist Yto Barrada was born in Paris in 1971 and studied in Tangier, Paris, and New York. Her work has been widely exhibited, for example in Paris (*Elles*, Centre Pompidou, 2009), New York (*Tarjama/Translation*, Queens Museum of Art, 2009), Madrid (*Casa Arabe—Arab Cosmovisions*, Photo España, 2009), Amsterdam (*Snap Judgements: New Positions in Contemporary African Photography*, Stedelijk Museum, 2008), and Oxford (*Transmission Interrupted*, Modern Art Oxford, 2009). In 2006 she was awarded the Ellen Auerbach Award by the Akademie der Künste in Berlin and was also shortlisted for the Deutsche Börse Photography Prize. She is a founder and director of the Cinémathèque de Tanger. Her practice, which encompasses video, photography, and sculptural installation, takes as its starting point her own dual nationality and the possibility this affords of traveling freely between Morocco and France, while the mobility of her Moroccan peers is increasingly constricted by strict visa and border controls. She writes, "I think I was a privileged child. I crossed borders without really thinking about it. My parents are Moroccan, but I was born in France. So I'm interested because I could have had the same destiny too—to dream of Europe and never see it come true."[1]

In this article, I will explore how Barrada engages with the unevenness of mobility and the "asymmetries of boundaries"[2] between Europe and Morocco, the global North and South. I will show how, in her work on the Strait of Gibraltar, she discloses the border not as a line, but as a shifting zone of political, economic, and cultural negotiation. In so doing, she draws our attention to the complex *ecology* of globalization, calling for an ethics of relation and representation that challenges both the disconnectedness described by the prevailing geopolitical imaginary and the politics of fear in which it is constituted and sustained.[3] In her own practice, I will suggest, Barrada reflects critically on the politics of representation and exhibition, seeking to negotiate a conceptual path between poetics and politics in order to describe the iniquity of prevailing global structures and the chronic socio-political configurations they produce, but also to create an openness that allows for creative interpre-

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tive work and the imagining of other possibilities and (political) narratives. In other words, within the "système fantasmatique clos," she reveals the latent and subversive potential of "la possibilité du hasard."[4]

The Strait of Gibraltar, like the border between the USA and Mexico, is the site of an anxiogenic proximity between the global North and South. The EU sees Morocco as a highly problematic conduit for clandestine African (trans)migration to Europe, a worrying portal from a global South whose migrants promise to bring with them waves of terrorism, religious fundamentalism, trafficking in people and drugs, and transnational crime. For this reason, the boundary between the countries is aggressively defended. In fact, as the OECD[5] and scholars such as Hein de Haas[6] and Ali Bensaâd[7] have argued, the number of African migrants coming to Europe is relatively small in terms of global migratory trends. However, the "paranoid Eurocentric vision" of migration[8] has led the EU to transform relations radically in the Mediterranean basin, limiting inward migration and investing substantial human, financial, and technological resources in the policing of its external boundaries. A raft of EU policy measures, such as the introduction of new visa requirements for non-European nationals, the development and deployment of hi-tech security systems (such as Spain's *systema integrado de vigiliancia exterior*) and the creation of a cross-border EU database, containing fingerprint and DNA data, as well as driving licence and vehicle registration details, have all contributed to what has been commonly described as the fortification of Europe.[9] These measures have had a particular impact on relations between southern European and North African states. France had already introduced visa restrictions for Algerian nationals in 1986, with Italy and Spain introducing visas for Moroccan nationals in 1990 and 1991 respectively.[10] Maxence Rifflet observes that the first Moroccan to die while attempting to cross the Strait of Gibraltar and enter Europe illegally began his journey just two days after the signing of the Schengen Convention.[11]

Étienne Balibar has described the African-European border as "a normalized state of exception," in which "the violent police operations continuously performed by some European states (with the help of neighboring non-European subject states, such as Libya or Morocco) on behalf of the whole [European] community, including the establishment of camps, amount to a kind of *permanent border war against migrants*."[12] Furthermore, as Bensaâd explains, Europe has increasingly sought to "deport" migration management, "mustering the Maghreb countries into the role of a sub-contractor for repression delocalized far from European borders."[13] Morocco in particular has been co-opted as a site of filtration, coerced by means of incentivizing asso-

ciation agreements and much needed financial aid into acting as the "gendarme of Europe."[14] For example, the towns of Ceuta and Melilla, Spanish enclaves in Morocco since the fifteenth century and Europe's only land border with Africa, have been transformed into aggressively defended fortress cities, enclosed by security fences that are patrolled by the Moroccan army and Spain's Guardia Civil and reinforced with "infrared cameras […] as well as tear gas canisters, noise and movement sensors and control towers."[15]

While, for reasons I shall discuss presently, Barrada does not photograph Morocco's detention camps, the barbed wire and floodlights that surround Ceuta and Melilla or the technological apparatus of surveillance deployed in Morocco's port cities, she conveys in her work something of the generalized border condition that prevails in cities such as Tangier. Her photographs reveal a shifting space of desire and flow: lorries, coaches, and ferries continually come and go; products such as contraband cigarettes and clothes are traded and exchanged (see *Bornes* [2006] and *La Contrebandière* [2006][16]); those waiting to migrate spend their long days walking the streets or sleeping in the city parks (*Jardin Public—Dormeurs* [2006]). In an interview with Charlotte Collins, Barrada described the atmosphere she wanted to convey in her work:

> There's this obsession to get to the other side where the grass is greener that animates the streets of Tangier, that governs everything you do from morning to night. People are standing there thinking all day how they're going to make enough money to pay their passage through. You just walk in the street and you see people waiting, walking, as if they're going nowhere.[17]

Her best known work, *Le Détroit, ou une vie pleine de trous* (1998-2004), a series of large, square format colour photographs taken for the most part in Tangier, explored this condition, describing the effect of the Strait of Gibraltar and the wider geo-political fissure it represents on life in contemporary Morocco. Barrada explains that she was particularly interested in the asymmetries of the neo-colonial relations constituted by the EU in the era of globalization, and the frustration born of the rigorously maintained political and symbolic divide between two geographically proximal countries with very different levels of economic prosperity:

> En arabe, tout comme en français et en anglais, *détroit* conjugue étroitesse et détresse. L'entreprise coloniale a laissé un héritage complexe qui a façonné en profondeur le bassin méditerranéen et remodelé l'image et l'usage du Détroit de Gibraltar. Avant 1991, les Marocains munis d'un passeport avaient toute latitude de voyager en Europe. Mais depuis les Accords de Schengen, le droit de visite, désormais unilatéral, ne s'exerce qu'au bénéfice des seuls Européens. Toute une génération de Marocains a donc grandi les yeux rivés sur le Détroit, cet espace singulier et troublant, un lieu où se recoupent les dimensions physique, symbolique, historique et intime.

De Tanger, par temps clair, l'horizon des côtes marocaines est proprement espagnol. Le Détroit—devenu depuis deux décennies la porte d'entrée principale de l'émigration clandestine vers l'Europe—est aujourd'hui un vaste cimetière marocain. (*A Life Full of Holes* 61)

If, since Schengen, Moroccans have been largely unable to travel to the West, the West continues to flow into Morocco, bringing with it images and narratives of wealth and opportunity that will always remain beyond the border, frustratingly close but always out of reach. For example, the satellite dishes and information technologies (which, ironically, emerged around the same time that Europe closed its external borders) have enabled an unprecedented circulation of images, information, and dialogue across national boundaries, streaming the West more than ever before into the homes of Moroccan nationals. Second, the volume of international trade passing through Morocco's factories and ports and the numbers of Western businesses locating to Morocco have grown substantially. Today, Morocco promotes itself as an attractive hub and host for international manufacture, trade, and investment. The 1995 Investment Charter Law's creation of Free Trade Zones (FTZs) is just one of the incentivizing measures designed to increase the flow of international business into Morocco, offering foreign investors exemption from duties, taxes, corporate tax, and VAT.[18] Furthermore, while it is highly unlikely that Morocco will be admitted to the EU (it applied unsuccessfully for membership of the European Community in 1987), the signing of the EU-Morocco Association Agreement (1996) and the partnership agreed under the terms of the European Neighbourhood Policy (2005) suggest that the EU considers a strong relationship with Morocco crucial in terms of its own security and economic well-being.

Third, and perhaps most visibly, the numbers of Western tourists visiting Morocco or buying second homes there continue to expand. International tourism, aggressively promoted by the Moroccan state as a key driver of economic growth, brings in millions of foreign tourists (many of them from Europe) every year. The French *Association des Tour-Opérateurs* reports that Morocco is now the most popular international holiday destination for French tourists,[19] with 1.6 million visiting the country in 2007.[20] Between 2005-2009, the annual number of Spanish tourists visiting Morocco increased almost threefold, rising from 220,000 to more than 650,000.[21] The government's highly mediatised *Vision 2010*, announced by the Moroccan Ministry of Tourism in 2001, aims to increase the number of international visitors to Morocco to over 10 million visitors by the year 2010 and generate 20% of the country's GDP through tourist revenue.[22] Key implementation measures have

included visa waivers for tourists from Britain and other EU states, Canada, the USA, Australia, and Japan, the development of coastal resorts, and a focus on improving the tourist infrastructure. In 2005, Morocco signed an open skies agreement with the European Union (the first of its kind between a non-European country and the EU), which lifted previous restrictions and allowed low-cost airlines such as RyanAir and Easy Jet to fly into its airports.[23]

In her practice and in interview, Barrada has strongly criticised the violent asymmetry between the containment of Moroccans and the privileged, insouciant mobility of Western tourists:

> That space [the Strait of Gibraltar] is a border, it's a closed border; the announced goal for Morocco for 2010 is to have ten million tourists come to the country—that's a one-way street! Everyone's coming over—guess what? We can't move! Legally, nobody can get out of the country—'nobody' meaning a big, big majority.[24]

It is precisely the aggravated desire to leave and to make one's life in the Western society that is continually and visually present, literally and virtually proximal, but which remains in practice frustratingly out of reach, that Barrada represents in her work. In this sense, the Strait of Gibraltar is a neuralgic and deeply ambivalent metaphor for both the *possibility and impossibility* of departure and migration. In an interview with Barrada, the philosopher Nadia Tazi described how

> Le Détroit est dans la tête, dans toutes les têtes, et il produit une division malheureuse, une *schizé*… Du fait d'une paupérisation aggravée, le Détroit est comme le mur de Berlin avant la chute. Il y a l'appel de la liberté, du possible, des lumières de la ville, le désir de fuir l'ennui, la grande fatigue de l'Islam, et la faillite historique. […] Non seulement le pays s'enfonce, mais une part de soi est déjà ailleurs, de l'autre côté du Détroit. Et cette part de soi est d'autant plus douloureuse qu'elle est à la fois creuse, boursouflée par les images de la télévision et interdite. Le Détroit, c'est la concomitance de l'aliénation, de la frustration, et dans le même souffle, de discours identitaires enflammés. (*A Life Full of Holes* 62)

Barrada's *Le Détroit, ou une vie pleine de trous* describes this sense among Moroccans and other peoples from the global South that *life is elsewhere*, somewhere behind the aggressively defended borders, around and across which tantalizing images and narratives nevertheless continue to flow. Her photographs attest to the processes of enclosure and exclusion that characterize the globalized world, depicting landscapes divided and dominated by fences, ditches, walls, and embankments. For example, *Landslip (Cromlegh de Mzora)* (2001) is a large-format photograph of a wide, muddy crevasse that vertically bisects the verdant landscape, before curling around horizontally to

the left and separating the upper and lower parts of the image. The cromlech mentioned in the title of the photograph, the largest in North Africa, is visually absent, made irrelevant in an image dominated by the void of the crevasse. A similarly divided landscape is found in *Le Détroit (Avenue d'Espagne, Tangier)* (2000), an aerial photograph of a wide road which, as the title suggests, is visually and functionally reminiscent of the Strait. A narrow strip of pavement runs along the top of the image, its edges clearly marked with red and white curbstones, marking the boundary between pedestrian space and the empty, blue-grey expanse of the tarmac. A small group of figures wait nervously for an opportune moment to cross. In the lower right-hand corner, separated from the pedestrians by the seemingly impassible tract of tarmac and walking in the opposite direction, a young man carries a model ship, his face hidden behind it. As T. J. Demos observes, the way the road dominates the picture plane and the angle at which the image is taken have the effect of transforming "the street's horizontal expanse […] into a vertical wall that bars visual passage, as if to block escape."[25] In both *Le Détroit* and *Landslip*, a physical void consumes the physical and affective landscape, restructuring sociality and expelling humanity to its margins.

With the exception of one photograph, *Ceuta Border—Illegally Crossing the Border into the Spanish Enclave of Ceuta* (1999), which shows, as its title suggests, a group of young men attempting to make the illicit crossing into European territory, Barrada's images distance themselves from the spectacle of migration that is the politically and commercially lucrative fodder of the Western media, focusing instead on the moments of stillness, reverie, and boredom that characterize the lives of those who dream of a life elsewhere. There is no evidence in her work of barbed wire fences, surveillance cameras, and security patrols. What she describes instead is "le suspens au croisement du même et de l'autre: du physique et du symbolique, de l'histoire et de la géographie, du désir et de l'interdit, de la vie promise et de l'exil" (*A Life Full of Holes* 63). *Hole in the Fence (Tangier)* (2003) is a poignant allegory of exclusion. Two boys watch a football match from behind a fence that prevents them from participating in the game. One of them wears the same branded sportswear as those who are playing, but despite this, he remains excluded from their coterie and can only observe from the sidelines. The second boy lifts the wire fence and attempts to pass underneath, but his shirt and jeans will certainly mark him out as not being one of the team, even if he succeeds in crossing to the other side.

Barrada makes the point that "When you spend your time on the edge, on the jumping-off place of Africa, trying to get on the other side, you're turning

your back on whatever's happening where you are. So you're not invested in what you're doing for your own country."[26] This process of absenting oneself from one's reality can be seen in *Advertisement Lightbox—Ferry Port in Transit Area (Tangier)* (2003), in which two girls, as they reach out longingly towards a backlit advertisement showing a ferry leaving for Europe, are reduced to nothing more than black silhouettes. The ferry is both tantalizingly close and impossibly distant; the pull it exerts on the young girls has the effect of (literally) removing them from their own space-time. In *Man Sitting (Boulevard Mohamed V, Casablanca)* (2001), another of these "personnages en état d'absence" (*A Life Full of Holes* 63), a solitary young man sits on the steps of an unidentified building, his eyes fixed beyond the picture plane towards an invisible horizon. He is wearing earphones, suggesting a disconnection or removal from his immediate environment and those around him. The square format of the image and the dominant vertical lines of the composition evoke a sense of melancholic containment. The doors and windows of the building are covered with metal security grilles, and there are two shallow safety cages attached to either side of the door. Behind the man, we see the buildings on the other side of the road reflected in the doors and windows. These reflections have the effect of folding the space upon itself, adding to the sense of inescapability. They also collapse the distinctions between past and future, here and there, producing an endlessly self-reflecting present, a no-man's land stripped of sensation, community, and engagement. This affective absence from one's local environment speaks to what Barrada describes as "cette façon de partir tout en restant sur place [qui] crée un climat particulier, une tension nouvelle et lourde de conséquences" (A *Life Full of Holes* 63). It evokes also what Zygmunt Bauman has described as "the burden of abundant, redundant and useless time [which people of the immobilized global South] have nothing to fill with." It is a time in which "nothing ever happens," what I would describe as *timeless time,* or *the time of the void*, "heavy, resilient, untouchable." [27]

The empty expansiveness and monotony of time are taken up again in two photographs made by Barrada in 1998 of a Dutch-owned prawn factory in the Tangier FTZ. The prawn factory—one of the city's biggest employers—receives, via Holland, daily consignments of prawns from Thailand. The low-paid workers depicted in Barrada's photographs shell the prawns, which are then transported to Portugal to be tinned before being distributed for sale across Europe. *Factory 1—Prawn Processing Plant in the Free Trade Zone (Tangier)* (1998) starkly juxtaposes the flow of the prawns, back and forth across international borders, with the rootedness and stasis of the workers, arranged as objects or machines in geometric rows on the factory floor. Bar-

rada emphasizes their immobility again by using a square format and by visually underscoring the repeating pattern of horizontal and vertical lines produced by the anonymous and identically dressed women, all performing the same, monotonous task. *Factory 2—Canteen (Tangier)* (1998) shows the austere staff canteen, in which two workers sit at a table, at some distance from one another, one with her back turned to the camera and facing the wall, the other hiding her face behind a brightly coloured plastic bag. The carrier bag is a symbol of the global consumer society, whose cosmopolitan tastes increasingly demand goods from around the world, necessitating the outsourcing of production, labour, and services in order to ensure affordability while protecting profit margins. In these images, the emphasis is perhaps less on the dreams of the elsewhere which absent people from their immediate community, than on the effect on local populations of the globalized labour practices. The cosmopolitan tastes of Western consumers demand products from all over the world, necessitating a cheap global workforce that can satisfy their needs. As the products and consumers themselves circulate across the globe, local communities, particularly those in the global South, provide a static and stable source of labour. As Kevin Hamilton has observed in his essay on the uneven mobilities that structure the *déroulement* of international art practice and the global art market, "Mobility […] never originates from within the self, but is granted from outside, exchanged, gifted, or stolen. Mobilities depend on other 'moorings' or even immobilities."[28]

As Barrada shows in this and other work, contrary to the idea of an all-inclusive market serving to secure and enhance equally the economic and social well-being of all global communities, globalization is grounded in and sustained by the politics of exclusion. The Western world's freedom (to consume, to travel) is structurally predicated on the (economic and political) *unfreedom* of the countries of the global South. The philosopher Peter Sloterdijk has used the architectural metaphor of the crystal palace, resonant with all its colonial history, to describe the spaces constructed by self-enclosing, privileged minority communities in order to defend the wealth and well-being afforded to them by late capitalism. Shopping malls, gated communities, and holiday resorts are all good examples, designed to exteriorize and exclude all that threatens the comfort and insouciance of those who dwell inside their walls, by means of increasingly sophisticated technologies of defence and surveillance. Sloterdijk writes:

Quand on prononce le mot de globalisation, on parle donc d'un continent artificiel, dynamisé et animé par le confort sur l'océan de la pauvreté, même si la rhétorique affirmative dominante

donne facilement l'impression que par son essence, le système mondial inclut toute chose. C'est le contraire qui est vrai, pour des raisons impératives relevant de l'écologie et de la systématique. L'exclusivité est inhérente au projet palais de cristal en tant que tel. Toute endosphère "autogâtante," construite sur le luxe stabilisé et la surabondance chronique, est une structure artificielle qui défie les lois de la probabilité. Son existence suppose un extérieur sur lequel on puisse faire peser la charge et que l'on puisse, provisoirement, ignorer plus ou moins […]. Il est sûr cependant que la réaction des dimensions externalisées ne peut être qu'ajournée, mais pas durablement éliminée.[29]

What I find most interesting about Sloterdijk's geopolitical imaginary is that it speaks to three important ideas in Barrada's work. First, it emphasises that the interior of the crystal palace is visible yet unattainable, producing both desire and frustration in those who live outside its walls. Second, it underscores the interdependency between the global North and South, underlining that the latter bears the cost and burden of the former's privileged lifestyle. Third, in its description of the unsustainability of the contemporary global hierarchy, in terms of both the increasing attacks on the iniquities it sustains and the negative impact it has on the global ecology, Sloterdijk's analysis accounts for the globalized world's contemporary politics of fear, born of a profound sense of vulnerability to the structural effects of violent incursions by the excluded other. Far from being counter-intuitive to the processes and dynamics of globalization, the prevailing "logic of walls"[30] (or "aesthetics of security"[31]) with which privileged communities assuage their fears is both a product and a guarantor of its unevenly distributed effects.

The political and economic ecology described by Sloterdijk and Barrada, this global plexus of *co-fragilities*,[32] both disrupts and also goes some way towards explaining the rationale of prevailing geopolitical imaginaries, which are grounded in the constitution and defence of autonomous territories and cultures. For example, in his influential 2004 book, *The Pentagon's New Map: War and Peace in the Twenty-First Century*, Thomas Barnett describes a political geography of two disconnected spheres: the "Functioning Core" of the globalized world and the dissenting or marginalized countries that together constitute what he calls the "Non-Integrating Gap."[33] Samuel Huntington's theory of a clash of civilizations, developed in his best-selling 2002 book, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Making of the World Order*, sketched a similar political and ideological cartography. To remain disconnected in a deeply (if unevenly) connected world, to extract oneself from relations or any form of contact with nations or communities who do not share the same beliefs and values, to draw lines that might replace those which have collapsed or are in danger of collapsing, threatening therefore the very integrity, autonomy, and

sovereignty of both the nation and national identity, to be able to ignore one's responsibility in a world where the actions of one group impact inevitably on the quality of life and habitat of others—such are the desires, the very impossibility of which gives rise to the fears that are at the heart of this "logic of walls." Zygmunt Bauman makes an important contribution to this discussion when he argues that African migrants "epitomize the unfathomable 'space of flows' where the roots of the present-day precariousness of the human condition are sunk. Seeking other, more adequate outlets in vain, fears and anxieties slide off targets close to hand and re-emerge as popular resentment and fear of the 'aliens nearby.'"[34] His comments serve to reiterate the point that in such a manner, the West is able to occlude its own responsibility for—and participation in—the very structures that produce in the global South the poverty, political disenfranchisement and sense of injustice or exclusion that give rise, in fact, to the much feared will to migrate.

I mentioned earlier that Barrada deliberately chooses not to represent the detention camps, barbed wire fences, overcrowded *pateras*, and washed-up migrant bodies that, for the media at least, constitute the atmosphere of the Moroccan border zone. I understand this choice in fact as a form of resistance to the visual discourse employed by the Western media in its accounts of migration. These accounts tend to prioritise the borderline, its defence and transgression, both visually and discursively, thereby shoring up dominant geopolitical imaginaries. According to this logic, migrant identity is reduced to the event of crossing, thereby enabling the media (and the popular political imaginary) to sidestep or elide the conditions in which migration is produced and in which migrants live. Teddy Cruz writes, "Les images dramatiques qui proviennent de cet équateur politique convergent et elles sont intensifiées par la politique de la peur qui a cours actuellement."[35] It is in this context, I think, that we must interpret the stillness, tone, and content of Barrada's practice. They speak of the artist's awareness that the border is a zone produced, as Eyal Weizman has explained, by multiple forces and agencies, using devices that are legal, material, and *representational*,[36] and attest to the acknowledgement of her own responsibility as a producer of images within that ecology. They suggest also that the real issue is not the evental act of crossing, which haunts the Western imagination, but the *everyday border condition* inhabited and experienced by the people of the global South.

This point about the role of the image in the construction of spatial reality is made very clearly in *Fais un fils et jette-le à la mer* (2001-2004), an exhibition and book that emerged from a two-year community project with *h're-gas* (clandestine migrants)[37] in Marseille and street children in Tangier,

directed by Barrada in collaboration with Anaïs Masson. The young migrants in Marseille were given cameras and asked to photograph their environment. For one of them, Othman B,

> certaines choses méritaient d'être photographiées, d'autres non. Pas de saleté, pas de gens indésirables. Peu de sol et jamais d'à-côté. Seulement des choses clinquantes, brillantes, verticales, érigées, centrées. Il aimait la nature, les monuments en pierre, les vêtements et les pays enneigés. Au terme du premier atelier, Othman a mis en scène une image horizontale: sur un lit, des vêtements de marque sont assemblés en forme de bonhomme—casquette, blouson, pantalon et chaussures. L'espace laissé au sol, sous le lit, fait flotter la sorte de pantin. Le corps est absent. Reste la peau, le déguisement, la carapace. (*Fais un fils* 17)

According to the narratives described in the book, it is precisely this kind of idealized image that the *h'regas* send back home to their family and friends, in order to reassure them that their lives have significantly improved since they migrated and that they are now enjoying the kind of Western lifestyle that is seen in glossy magazine images and on the television. The manipulated and constructed photographs that circulate between Europe and Morocco produce an image of the West that only serves to acuminate the desire to migrate:

> [Saïd C] raconte son parcours depuis le jour où il est parti de Casablanca. Il parle du mensonge: celui de sa tante qui lui avait promis de l'accueillir, celui des images qu'elle lui avait envoyées au Maroc, et celui qui se cache dans ses propres "ça va" quand il téléphone à ses proches. Il parle de l'impasse dans laquelle il se trouve et des projets auxquels il peine à s'accrocher. (*Fais un fils* 73)

These images are similar in function and content to the posters and wallpapers depicting snowy, Alpine landscapes that decorate Moroccan homes. *Wallpaper (Tangier)* (2001) is a photograph of one such poster, showing a glassy, frozen lake surrounded by pine trees and snow-capped mountains. The edges of the poster are curling and torn, making us aware that this is an image of an image. Barrada thereby disrupts photography's historically privileged relationship to the referent, suggesting that instead of recording reality, the photograph is instrumental in its construction.

Barrada's 2002 photograph, *Hoarding—Advertising for a Tourist Development (Briech)*, is a photograph of a tourism poster advertising a leisure resort in the Moroccan town of Briech, approximately 30 kilometers from Tangier. The photograph (which, when viewed alongside *Wallpaper*, illustrates that the desire for mobility is the same on both sides of the global divide, although encoded and valued differently) shows a swimming pool, ringed with deckchairs, sun loungers, and covered outdoor bars, and a block of tourist apartments, of the kind that can be seen in resorts across the world. The poster,

like the one depicted in *Wallpaper*, is peeling, however, and its joins are clearly visible, which again draws our attention to the *constructedness* of the image (of Morocco as tourist destination) and also to its abyssal reproduction. Moreover, the generic architecture and landscaping of the tourist resort speak not only of the growing importance of the tourism industry in Morocco, but equally of the ways in which the Moroccan landscape is being increasingly shaped to accommodate the needs and desires of the Western tourists, the revenue from whom is crucial to the domestic economy. For Steve Garlick, this accommodation is a recurring phenomenon in the countries of the global South, which "come to see their own cultures as resources to be reshaped and repackaged to suit tourist expectations, and in the increasing standardization of touristic experiences in terms of food, accommodation and other services."[38]

The impact of globalization on the Moroccan ecology is one of Barrada's key concerns. In her 2007 *Iris Tingitana* series, which takes its name from a rapidly disappearing species of indigenous flower, Barrada contrasts photographs of the purple irises and yellow *oxalis* that grow in vacant lots, fields, and forests with images of the non-indigenous red and pink geraniums that increasingly dominate planned, public space and the generic palm trees that are a staple of hotel complexes and leisure resorts. In a 2007 work, *The Botanist*, Barrada filmed an amateur botanist, M. Pasti, whose garden "is home to hundreds of varieties of plants native to Morocco, including many rare and endangered species."[39] This garden, like the indigenous flowers that continue to grow, stubbornly, in the interstices of planned and regulated space, represents a small act of resistance to the spatial, cultural, and botanical homogenization of Morocco, which increases in intensity and pace as the country endeavors to produce itself—because of the economic exigency that is both a legacy of Empire and a consequence of the unevenly distributed global, neoliberal market economy—as an international tourist destination.

One of the most striking features of the photographs in the *Détroit* series is the way the majority of the people photographed by Barrada turn their backs towards the camera, resisting the Western tourist gaze that comes to consume them as folkloric spectacle. For example, *Girl in Red—Playing Jacks* (Tangier 1999) shows a girl in a red dress facing a wall of *zellij*, the traditional geometric mosaics made of striking blue tiles. The girl is wearing a brightly coloured, patterned dress, which—to Western eyes—appears rather old-fashioned, belonging perhaps to another generation or age. The combination of colours and patterns plays on the tropes of folkloric exoticism, connoting the temporal and spatial otherness of both the girl and the location. The square format of the photograph and its symmetrical composition suggest

stasis and immobility, alluding perhaps to what is imagined as the eternal and unchanging essence of Morocco. The hidden movement of the girl's hands as she plays jacks barely disrupts the stillness of our contemplation. However, by choosing to face the wall, the girl in fact refuses to surrender herself to Western, tourist eyes, and her plastic, branded flip-flops disrupt the apparently timeless, folkloric scene that the (neo-)colonial tourist gaze has typically sought to capture, record, and fix through the camera's lens. A similar resistance to prevailing (visual) discourse can be seen in *Ceuta Border* (1999), the only photograph in Barrada's series to depict *h'regas* attempting to cross into Europe. A teenage boy in the bottom left-hand corner of the image takes the time to finish his cigarette, before joining the others as they rush over the hill to the border. Both his actions and facial expression suggest he is in control of his own decisions and destiny. As Barrada observes, "Vouloir s'en aller, c'est aussi une forme de révolte. Dans le passage à l'acte, dans l'exil, il y a une reprise en main de son destin" (*A Life Full of Holes* 63).

Barrada thus emphasizes both the insufficiencies and responsibilities of photography, its role in the construction of dominant spatio-visual ideologies, and also its subversive capacity to imagine other ways of seeing. She writes:

> On trouve des motifs récurrents dans mes photographies, platitude des tons, perte de l'épaisseur des choses (volumes écrasés, murs omniprésents…), mais mon travail s'est construit comme une juxtaposition d'images différentes. Je ne cherche pas une unité organique comme pour un photomontage ou un reportage, c'est plutôt une forme en soi qui se situe entre les deux. La juxtaposition n'est pas narrative, ce qui autorise à la fois une certaine précision et la possibilité du hasard. Puisque le canevas reste précis, les nouvelles images peuvent s'y insérer facilement. (*A Life Full of Holes* 64)

Rejecting the linearity of narrative in favour of discontiguity and provisionality, she opens up the series and the exhibition space as dialogical sites of exchange, where new meanings and interpretations might be developed. The shifting juxtaposition of images creates non-linear linkages that induce multiple, agonistic, and self-reflexive readings, producing connections that work against the teleological and naturalising grain of dominant narratives of migration. Furthermore, occupying the space "between poetry and politics,"[40] Barrada practices what the artist Ursula Biemann has described as "sustainable representation," telling

> the story of how everything we do around the world is interconnected here and now, i.e. how the Western lifestyle, known to have an effect on climate change, also has an impact on herdsmen in the Sahel. […] Images are not excluded from this process. As social relations, representations that constitute meaning in one place are locked into the signification of another.[41]

I have shown in this article that Barrada's photographs invoke a complex relational interdependency, an *ecology* of unevenly negotiated relations, which disrupts the inside/outside binary of contemporary Western geopolitical imaginaries. Visual representation plays an important role in this ecology, both producing and unfixing the dominant narratives and structures of globalization. Her work challenges the naturalness and inevitability of the "système fantasmatique clos" that is globalisation, unstitching the hermeneutic and epistemological sutures which, for the time being, hold the kinetic and economic hierarchy in place.

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Notes

1. "Yto Barrada discusses her love of photographing international borders," *Magharebia* (8 November 2006), www.magharebia.com/cocoon/awi/xhtml1/xhtml1arear/features/awi/features/2006/08/11/feature-02 (accessed 12 December 2009).
2. Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Times: Living in an Age of Uncertainty* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), 32.
3. For a useful discussion of this point, see Teddy Cruz, "De la frontière globale au quartier de frontière: pratiques d'empiètement," *Multitudes*, 31:1 (Winter 2007):70; http://multitudes.samizdat.net/Multitudes-31-Winter-2007 (accessed 15 June 2010).
4. Yto Barrada, *A Life Full of Holes: The Strait Project* (London: Autograph ABP, 2005), 62, 63, 64.
5. "Key Facts: Africa to Europe Migration," BBC News website (2 July 2007), http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/6228236.stm (accessed 1 August 2010).
6. Although the nature of clandestine migration—and indeed the politics of managing it—means that exact figures are hard to come by, de Haas, writing in 2008, notes that "Between 65 000 and 120 000 sub-Saharan Africans are estimated to enter the Maghreb yearly, of whom 70% to 80% are believed to migrate through Libya and 20% to 30% through Algeria and Morocco." See Hein de Haas, "The Myth of Invasion: The Inconvenient Realities of African Migration to Europe," *Third World Quarterly*, 29:7 (2008): 1308.
7. Ali Bensaâd, "The Militarization of Migration Frontiers in the Mediterranean," in *The Maghreb Connection: Movements of Life Across North Africa*, Ursula Biemann and Brian Holmes, eds. (Barcelona: Actar, 2006), 19.
8. Bensaâd (2006), 18.
9. "UK Police in EU Data Sharing Pact," *BBC News* (12 June 2007), http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/6746571.stm (accessed 1 July 2010).
10. Hein de Haas, "Morocco: From Emigration Country to Africa's Migration Passage to Europe," *Migration Information Source* (October 2005), http://www.migrationinformation.org/Profiles/display.cfm?ID=339 (accessed 27 June 2008).
11. Maxence Rifflet, "Europa, Europa!," in Yto Barrada, Anaïs Masson, and Maxence Rifflet, *Fais un fils et jette-le à la mer* (Paris: Éditions Sujet/Objet, 2003), 7.
12. Étienne Balibar, "At the Borders of Citizenship: A Democracy in Translation?," *European Journal of Social Theory*, 13:3 (August 2010): 319.
13. Bensaâd (2006), 18.
14. See Elie Goldschmitt, "Storming the Fences: Morocco and Europe's Anti-Migration Policy," *Middle East Report*, 239 (Summer 2006), http://www.merip.org/mer/mer239/goldschmidt.html (accessed 1 August 2010).
15. "World's Barriers: Ceuta and Melilla," BBC News (5 November 2009), http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/8342923.stm (accessed 1 August 2010).

16. These images and all others referred to in this article can be found on the artist's website (www.ytobarrada.com).
17. Yto Barrada, interviewed by Charlotte Collins in "The Photography of Yto Barrada: A Pervasive Sense of a People in Limbo" (undated), www.qantara.de/webcom/show_article.php/_c-310/_nr-291/_p-1/i.html?PHPSESSID= (accessed 14 July 2008).
18. "Doing Business in Morocco," website of the Moroccan-American Trade and Investment Council, http://www.moroccanamericantrade.com/business.cfm (accessed 1 July 2010).
19. "Travel and Tourism in Morocco," *Euromonitor International* (July 2010), http://www.euromonitor.com/Travel_and_Tourism_in_Morocco (accessed 10 August 2010).
20. Website of the Moroccan Ministry of Tourism, http://www.tourisme.gov.ma/francais/2-Vision2010-Avenir/1-en-bref/enbref.htm (accessed 21 July 2008).
21. "Over 650k Spanish tourists visited Morocco in 2009," *Morocco News and Press Reviews* (25/2/2010), http://news.marweb.com/morocco/economics/home-over-650k-spanish-tourists-visited-morocco-in-2009.html (accessed 1 July 2010).
22. http://www.tourisme.gov.ma/francais/2-Vision2010-Avenir/1-en-bref/enbref.htm (accessed 21 July 2008).
23. "Morocco's open skies agreement ushers in low-cost European flights," http://www.essentialmorocco.com/morocco-s-open-skies-agreement-ushers-in-low-cost-european-flights.asp (accessed 21 July 2008).
24. Yto Barrada, in Charlotte Collins, "Morocco Unbound: An Interview with Yto Barrada," *OpenDemocracy.net* (17/6/2006), http://www.opendemocracy.net/arts-photography/barrada_3551.jsp (accessed 22 July 2008).
25. T. J. Demos, "Life Full of Holes," *Grey Room*, 24 (Summer 2006): 73.
26. Barrada, cited in Collins (undated).
27. Zygmunt Bauman, *Globalization: The Human Consequences* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1998), 88.
28. Kevin Hamilton, "Mobility as Freedom in Critical Art" (2006), http://www.kevinhamilton.org/project.php?id=122 (accessed 21 July 2008).
29. Peter Sloterdijk, *Le Palais de cristal: à l'intérieur du capitalisme planétaire*, Olivier Mannoni, trans. (Paris: Hachette, 2008), 280.
30. Bensaâd (2006), 19.
31. Teresa Caldeira, cited in Zygmunt Bauman, "City of Fear, City of Hopes" (2003), 28, http://www.gold.ac.uk/media/city.pdf (accessed 1 July 2010).
32. I borrow this term from another of Sloterdijk's works. See *Écumes: sphérologie plurielle*, translated from German by Olivier Mannoni (Paris: Hachette, 2005).
33. Thomas Barnett, *The Pentagon's New Map: War and Peace in the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Berkley Publishing Group, 2004). Cruz (2007) uses Barnett's text as a rich starting point for his discussion of the visual representation of globalization.
34. Bauman (2007), 49.
35. Cruz (2007).
36. Weizman made these observations in a recorded response to Francis Alÿs' 2004 work, *The Green Line*, in the context of an exhibition in Leeds at the Henry Moore Institute in 2008, entitled *The Object Quality of the Problem: Palestine/Israel* (curated by Penelope Curtis).
37. "Burner" or "burnt" (from the Arabic *h'reg*, "to burn"). *H'rega* is used to describe the clandestine migrants who make the perilous journey across the Mediterranean towards Europe, burning their identity papers (required by European authorities in order to determine nationality and enforce deportation) *en route*.
38. Steve Garlick, "Revealing the Unseen: Tourism, Art and Photography," *Cultural Studies*, 16:2 (March 2002): 293.
39. http://www.ytobarrada.com/video/botanist/text.html (accessed 10 December 2009).
40. Yto Barrada, in interview with Abdellah Karroum, 22 August 2009, http://universes-in-universe.org/eng/nafas/articles/2010/yto_barrada (accessed 31 July 2010).
41. Ursula Biemann, "Dispersing the Viewpoint: Sahara Chronicle," in *Mission Reports: Artistic Practice in the Field. Video Works 1998-2008*, Ursula Biemann and Jan-Erik Lundström, eds. (Umeå and Bristol: Bildmuseet and Umeå U P, in collaboration with Arnolfini, 2008), 91.