

WORKSHOP, MAY 3-4, 2018

FANTASIES, ANXIETY, DIFFERENCE
THE FIGURE OF THE OTHER IN THE AFTERMATHS OF A
VIOLENT POLITICAL TRANSFORMATION

*Library Hall, Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity
Organized by AbdouMalik Simone & Sabine Mohamed*

May 3, 2018, 4.15 – 6 pm

Keynote Lecture by ROSALIND C. MORRIS

(Professor of Anthropology, Columbia University)

**EYES OF THE STORM: REFLECTIONS ON
SACRIFICE, ALTERITY AND POLITICAL VIOLENCE
IN (DE-INDUSTRIALIZING) SOUTH AFRICA**

Industrial capitalism did not merely transform the nature of production, Walter Benjamin reminds us; it made waste a source of value. But if the slag-heaps and refuse dumps of industrial production have become the locus of new economic and social forms, they are often also zones of informality and exception, abandonment and precarity—from which the institutions of law and policing have been withdrawn. In South Africa, the violently enabled plurality of the spaces associated with natural resource extraction are now undergoing a second set of transformations, as mines close, de-industrialization commences, and scavenging for gold becomes a means of accessing money in the aftermath of wages. Here, a striated world of visibilities and invisibilities has emerged beyond the eye of the state. Here, a rhetoric of visual exposure, and a longing to be seen vie with each other as the idiom within which the contemporary world is grasped. Here, too the task of constituting something like a political order is undertaken in the mode of sacrificial violence. This paper, based in two decades of ethnographic research in the gold mining regions of South Africa, considers how the specter of radical alterity figures in this process, how 'justice' is constituted in the mode of mimetic, sacrificial violence, precisely in order to obviate the even more threatening prospect of fully politicized violence. At once an ethnography of the closure of the gold mines, and a theoretical exploration of violence's transformations, the paper asks what it means to 'look' at such questions from the point of view of an aesthetico-political analysis.



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