

Permeable territories

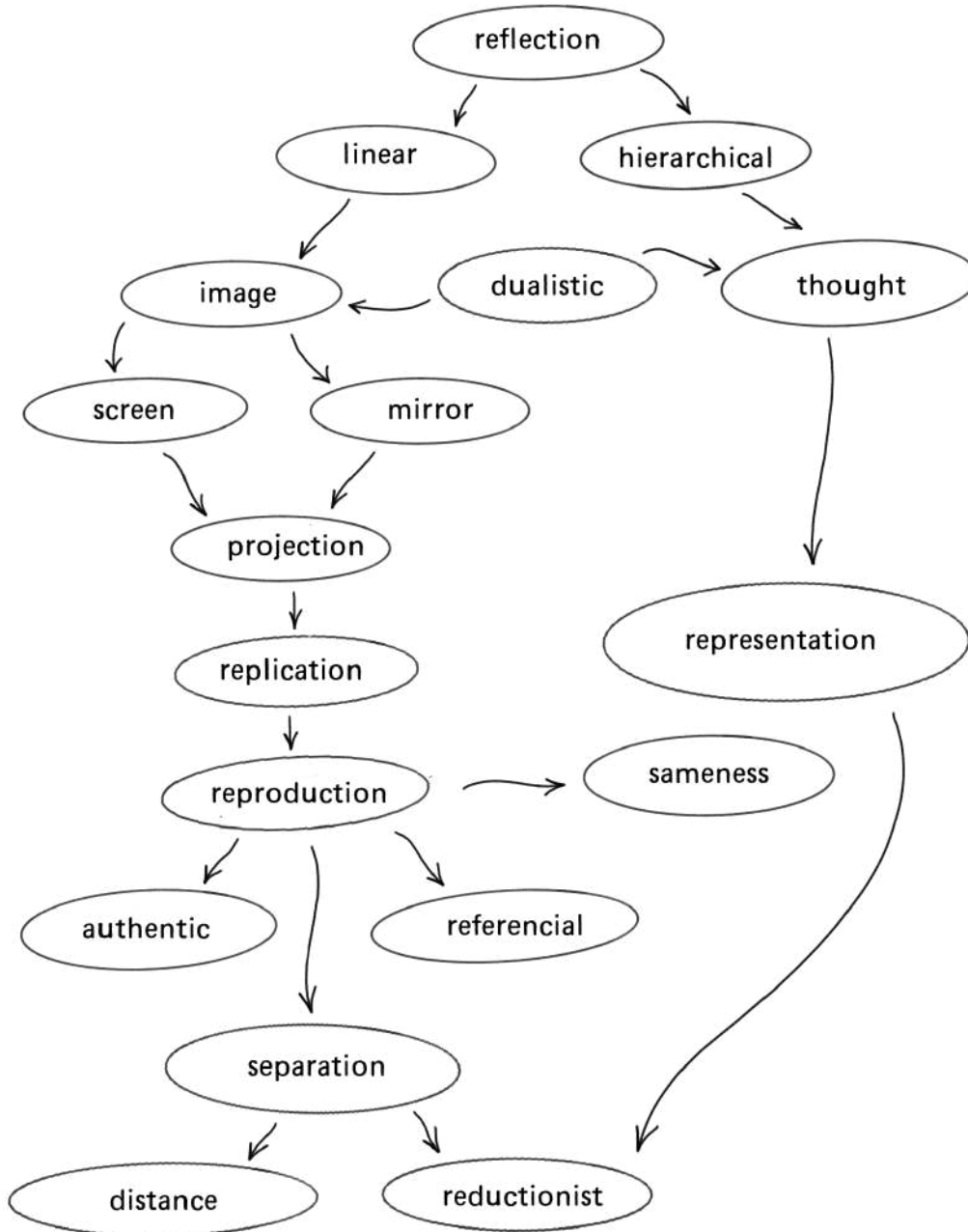
Between reflection and diffraction
weaving a living publishing practice

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REFLECTIVE



THOUGHT

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Introduction

"Publishing is political. Publishing can compel, persuade, inform, attract, confuse, script, or manipulate. Urgent acts of "making public" can mobilize communities and inspire change. In crisis, we see independent artists, community organizers, scholars, and activists collectively engaging with sophisticated modes of publishing to record and communicate in real time, while those in traditional positions of power use those same tools to engineer and control our defining narratives. It's here that we can locate the enormous paradox of contemporary publishing: its potential to oppress as well as to empower." (Solellis P., 2021)



Cats being instructed in the art of mouse-catching (or music) by an Owl, ca. 1700, Unidentified artist of the Lombard School.

Coming from a background in visual arts and printed matter, my first approach to a publishing practice was the idea of the book. Since I was a child, the book has been the magic carrier where things come to life. I've always enjoyed its materiality and its ability to unveil thoughts and digest emotions from page to page. However, I comprehended by experience that publishing goes beyond this object and there is a vast world of formats, materials, tools and processes besides the codex. Publishing practices today sit in a post-digital era where malleability and complexity constantly expand and contract in new shapes and forms. From paper to screen, from t-shirts to radio, in essence, every publication becomes from the mere act of making public.

The purpose of this thesis is to sketch and explore the foundations of my project "Glossary for a diffractive publishing practice" --work in title. This project is part of attempt, a collaborative practice of small-publishing with my friend Maria Paris. Together, in collaboration with different artists we have released three publications. One photo-book, one trio of queer speculative fiction tales, and a collection of poems and essays that reflects on translation, silence and distance.

Written in English and Spanish, our glossary project is an ongoing and ever-transforming experiment that introduces a diffractive methodology inside the publishing practice. Because the glossary is seen as mutable, the current state is result of collective workshops where participants are invited to think and converse around its words and annotations. During the workshop, diffraction performs a conscious interconnection of practices beyond reflection. As a glossary, it aims to gather different annotations on each word instead of a closed definition for each one.

Concretly, the glossary publication uses questions as triggers and it aims to weave as a conversation the multiple reasons, visions, intentions, actions, formats, shapes and forms of the current practice, with other vocabularies that come from critical theory, new materialism and others. The final intention is not just to envision our future as publishers but to initiate conversations with others that nourish the practice at large.

How can our publishing practice engage critically with our current realities? How can our publications be explored beyond commodity, innovation and replication of formulas? How do our editorial decisions draw the borders of a publishing imaginary? How do we dissolve those borders and expand relationships between matters both inside and outside the practice? How can our practice as publishers engage with the difference? How can it be a fluid and ever-transforming one? How can it resist classification and buzz words tagging?

This thesis is divided in four chapters that suggest seeing our glossary project as the diffractive foundation for a living publishing practice. First, it gives context to the publishing realm by explaining how my own experience has brought the necessity to question publishing discourses. Second, it introduces how the form of the manifesto has been a tool for reflection on publishing practices and it presents how a diffractive methodology could approach publishing thought differently. It exposes how the combination of both thinking methodologies, reflection and diffraction, opens up a paradoxical space where both could co-live. Third, the thesis presents the glossary project as the foundation of this paradoxical space on which the publishing practice can sit. It proposes to engage critically with the glossary structure and to experiment with it from an etymology and translinguistic perspective. Finally, It concludes by giving examples of publications that in the form of a glossary are expanding the traditional use, and sketching what would be the form of the project and therefore a living publishing practice.

1. Publishing Context

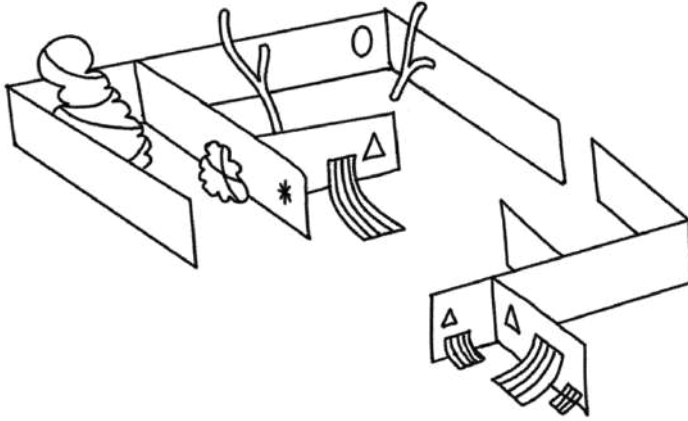
Questioning territories

During the period I was studying for the Visual Artist Bachelor in Bogotá, publishing practices were always divided into fine arts and graphic design. Multiple courses somehow touch the practice from different perspectives. Binding, Letterpress, Layout, Silent Books, Editorial design, Book design, Comic book, Artist's Book, Art Book, Poster Making, were some examples. Although some courses were aware of a more expanded practice based on experimentation, the majority took a strict and hieratic position over the curriculum. The editorial design course, for example, was based fundamentally on communication and readability. Even though the latest generations of teachers tried to expand their action borders, the results were essentially legible books. The codex format was the excellent object that communicates accurately to the audience. I am not suggesting this is wrong or not. I agree with Alessandro Ludovico when arguing that the book it's perhaps the best interface invented so far (Ludovico, 2012. p.7). The problem for me lies in the hidden categorization act behind these practices. In that class, when some students showed projects that were experimenting with other types of editorial decisions or formats, they were immediately categorized as "weird" and usually "derided" as art. Something similar happened in the artist book course where the teacher gave their own measurements based on other rulers. The results of such an evaluation weren't more interesting or diverse escenarios, the results were students losing grades and not finding themselves comfortable with publishing in any format at all.

Of course, this fact pushes the publishing practice into a marginalization one that can be common in the academy. Especially in the one I studied, it was clear that some teachers see practices as football teams you need to root for and therefore compete. Territories you are asked to defend from invaders. It's true that in the end, as a student at any school, you are supposed to follow standards and formats in order to graduate and get a diploma. You decided to play that game anyway. And, even though there are some academies that flex their guidelines, there is still a curriculum list that you need to attach to in order "to achieve" a specific list of skills. In my experience, it was easy to come across a teacher saying, "we cannot graduate people who think this is editorial design".

I am not arguing that there is something fundamentally wrong with the act of categorization. It may be useful to understand and I will expand on it in the following chapters, but to be fanatically attached to it just reinforces borders as frontiers. In fact, the project presented for those students in the Editorial design class might be closer to an artwork. But, what is beyond the act of being categorized by one thing or another? I believe this binary approach to difference just perpetuates borderline thinking where the focus is on labeling and tagging. Eventually, such a scenario leads drawn borders to become walls. It seems to me that if categorization is the end and maximum goal of understanding publishing, then the pedagogy act ends up being how to define and defend those territories. An act that is terrible in its reminder of colonialism, taking into count that the book was the favorite tool for the colonizers of the 15th century. It is well-known the image of the missionary in the America's showing the Christianity word to the indigenous people.

I have had similar experiences in art book fairs, comic festivals, design book markets, etc. I've gotten the opportunity to participate in some in Colombia, the United States and Europe. And, to my point of view, in these spaces it is common the tension between practices and labels. The mere fact of applying makes you doubt if your work will fit. Am I going to fit their guidelines? Is it too designed? or, is it too experimental? For these fairs sometimes It's not about having a "good" professional or unprofessional portfolio that showcases your works. It varies, but usually, It's about meeting the criteria of their market or niche. In these spaces I constantly doubt about the idea of audience. Someone could say: "easy, you wouldn't showcase biology books at an architecture book fair" or "we are here to meet people we relate with". Yes, I understand there are diverse interest and therefore audiences, but I believe in this case is different. In the context of self-publishing events, my intuition is that the necessity, the urgency of organizers doesn't come for the sake of knowledge, academia, market or audience in itself. Most of the time it comes from intimate intentions of sharing, showcasing, circulating and mostly building communities.



Therefore, what type of communities are we going to build? are they going to be ones full of photocopies as echo chambers of similar entities? are they going to be ones full of walls as delimited territories between practices? I am aware of having an audience, my point is that I believe these common spaces of sharing and social interaction might embody something beyond those limited borders and propagation of the same. From my perspective, we have already enough of that on social media platforms such as Instagram and so on.

Even the experimental approach to publishing could fall into the territorialism trap. Because, who is truly experimenting in publishing and who has the label of it? The ones that come from media art? the ones that imply a vernacular language? The ones that claim for open access material into the academia? The ones that go against design? The ones that embrace the post-digital era? It is common as well to step with purists propagating the proper way to experiment with publishing.

I think it makes no sense to continue with this discourse that only perpetuates competition and property. Today's neoliberal society leads all intentions to an illusion of individual success. For me, to fall into a race to claim awards, value and recognition is to replicate the idea of conquering and expanding territory to accumulate land and power over others. It reflects an attitude that puts growth in the center to propagates marginalised mind structures, segregation, separation, and exclusion.

Measuring the act of publishing

Yo: "Me gustó mucho tu fanzine"
Otro expositor: "Libro, si no te importa"

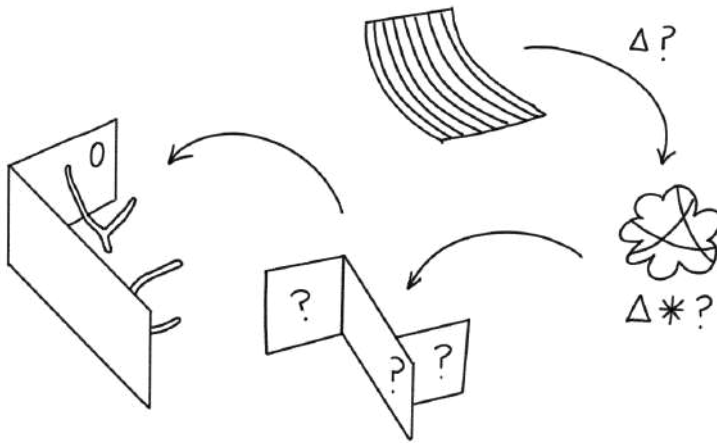
Me: "I liked a lot your "fanzine"
Fellow Exhibitor: "Book, if you don't mind"

(Barcelona, Comic book festival "GRAF", 2022)

Being part of a society of segregation where family, race, gender, class, nationality, and languages are separate and classified entities, drives you to perceive the world the same. For me, there is a close relation in behavior between spheres of action. By doing so, I was also trained by this society to distinguish what is a book, an artist's book, a fanzine, or a magazine. Of course, keeping in

mind the proportions of what this could mean in terms of violence and consequences. It's not the same to judge a book than a person based on categories. My point is about logics and, therefore, actions. Because propagating this in publishing just reduces the practice to a variety of products, denying the different processes. I believe it is important to find a balance between what brings us together and what differentiates us inside the publishing practice.

But who is even giving those rulers to measure and categorised? Historians of the book or art historians? Is it the institutions they belong to? Neither of them? Is the art market? The design market? The audience? Where are all these measurements to draw borders coming from?



In the text *Soap*(2020), the Brazilian writer Fabio Morais argues that these are for sure nor personal nor experience-based. According to him, they are strictly other photocopies of a foreign reality. These measurements are usually based on global north practices, guided by a history that is disconnected from their contexts. He exemplifies how in the context of arts --and here categorisation is useful to understanding, the history of Artist Book is usually using as a reference the work of The American artist Ed. Rucha. The artworks and intentions that follow his intentions are part of the Art Book history of Brazil and thus categorised as such. And on the contrary, the rest of the intentions would have less art value. But not just because they will go out of the market, it's because they are simply segregated as minor or less quality according to North high-level standards. Morais approach suggests that, beyond falling into the trap of categorisation, it is necessary to go towards critical practices that use specifics rules to measure specifics forms.

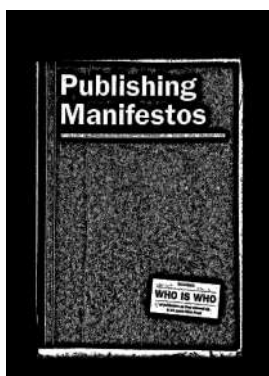
That's why I believe in Paul Soullelis's intention when it comes to imagining possible transformations of the society with publishing: "A new language is necessary"(Soullelis, 2021). New languages that build up the rulers to measure our own necessities. And it is necessary because the current one does not consciously engage with realities. How is this language? It's difficult to know, but I feel that the urgency to find something, is more important than the act of accomplishment. Because for some reason, the mere act of being uncomfortable, moves the body. Being aware of the current problems is not enough but sure essential. Soullelis(2021) suggests in publishing practices to stay messy and illegible. I believe this is also part of the process of finding a new language. The mere act of imagining how could it be activates the curiosity but not necessarily trying to solve or give an order. More towards questioning, How to imagine it? How to explore a publishing practice differently? And how to reflect on this in a way that is not setting new definitions and new boundaries?

2. Thought Spaces

The manifesto: a space for reflection

Manifestos have played a role in reflection on the publishing practices. Manifestos like *the new art of making books* by Ulises Carrion, *Why publish noise?* by Miekal And or *Book to the future* by Hybrid Publishing Consortium express a reflective scenario for publishing practices by questioning current methods and proposing clear actions. In the best scenario, manifestos commonly reflect and state how practitioners envision the present and future of the practice by positioning critically.

The book *Publishing manifestos*(2018) is an example of how reflective texts are part of the publishing practice. Published as a beta version and then officially launch in 2020, this publication compiles texts from the last century that manifest reflection from different perspectives. According to Michalis Pichler, one of the co-editors and founder of Miss Read art-book fair, some of the texts published in the book are not manifestos in a strict sense although "Some are proclamatory, some are playful, and some just push the borders" (Pichler, 2018, p.8).



Publishing Manifestos (2018)
soft cover
edition

To Michalis, this collection of texts is an important attempt to understand the current practice. He argues that by publishing them, it is possible to envision concrete attempts on past and new motivations for publishing. In fact, by quoting Fabian Scheidler he expresses the necessity of bringing up a question that calls for topics rather than u-topies: "We need a pool of ideas, concrete attempts and experiences. A new system cannot be designed at the green table" (Pichler, 2018, p.9). It is clear how for him, the idea of a manifesto can lead to a reflective practice on current processes.

I think that while the manifesto as a form is laying the foundations of thought for a different publishing practice, is closing off its own proposals as a definitive space in itself. Although this does not happen in the book of manifestos, because he is suggesting multiple reading paths. In essence, each of these texts that are specifically manifestos delineates boundaries. It represents the answers to the questions every practitioner is interested in changing, transforming, discussing, or improving. An individual and personal picture of their own motivations are presented as solutions. The concept of reflection in these cases is constitutive of the concept of the reflection in the mirror which I will introduce in the next chapter. That is why, beyond reflecting, I am interested in and intrigued by diffracting. Diffractive methodologies imply imagining something beyond those borders of concrete solutions in my field of vision. They enhance imagination on and off a personal scope.

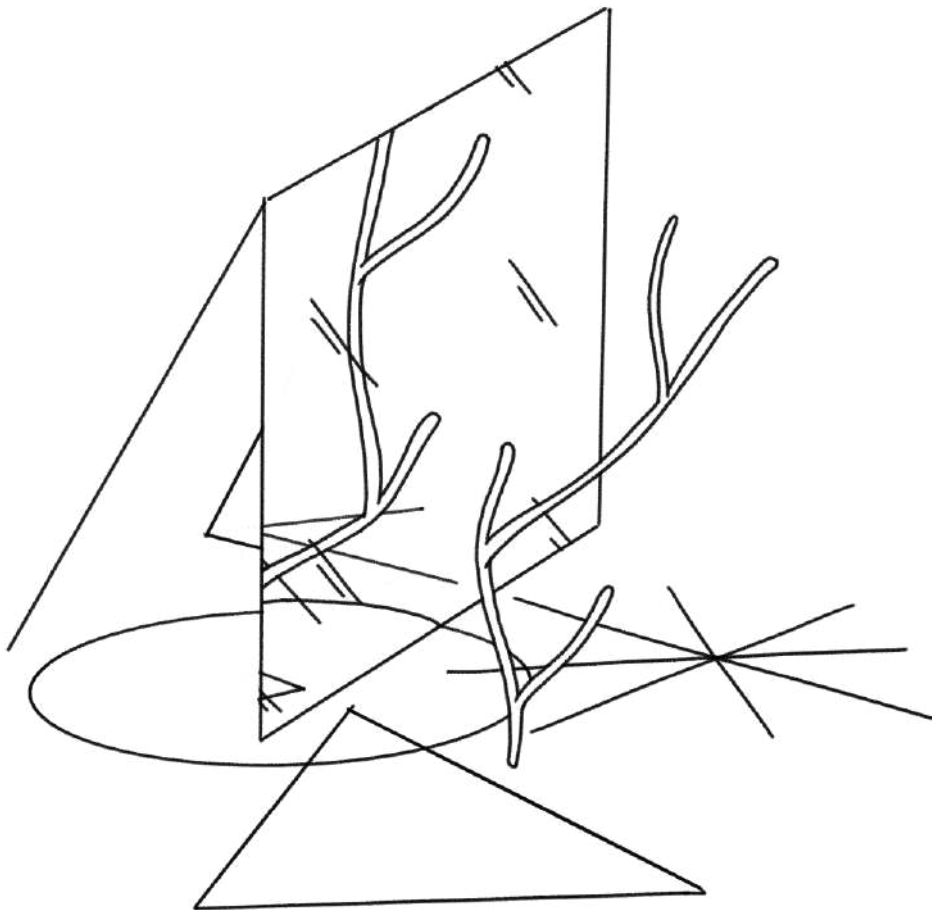
Diffractive methodology

Reflection for me has been a tool for thinking. Intuitively, I find reflexivity the way to ask myself questions critically. To dig into thoughts and develop a conversation with the reality that surrounds me, by asking questions about it, I see myself engaging with what I think is a conscious thought process.

Diffractive methodology on the other hand is a critical approach to theory and knowledge construction that seeks to open up the binary approach of reflective thinking. Donna Haraway and Karen Barad elaborated this critical thought as part of their contributions to feminist theory and new materialisms. They propose to look the diffractive physics phenomena of waves to engage critically with reality.

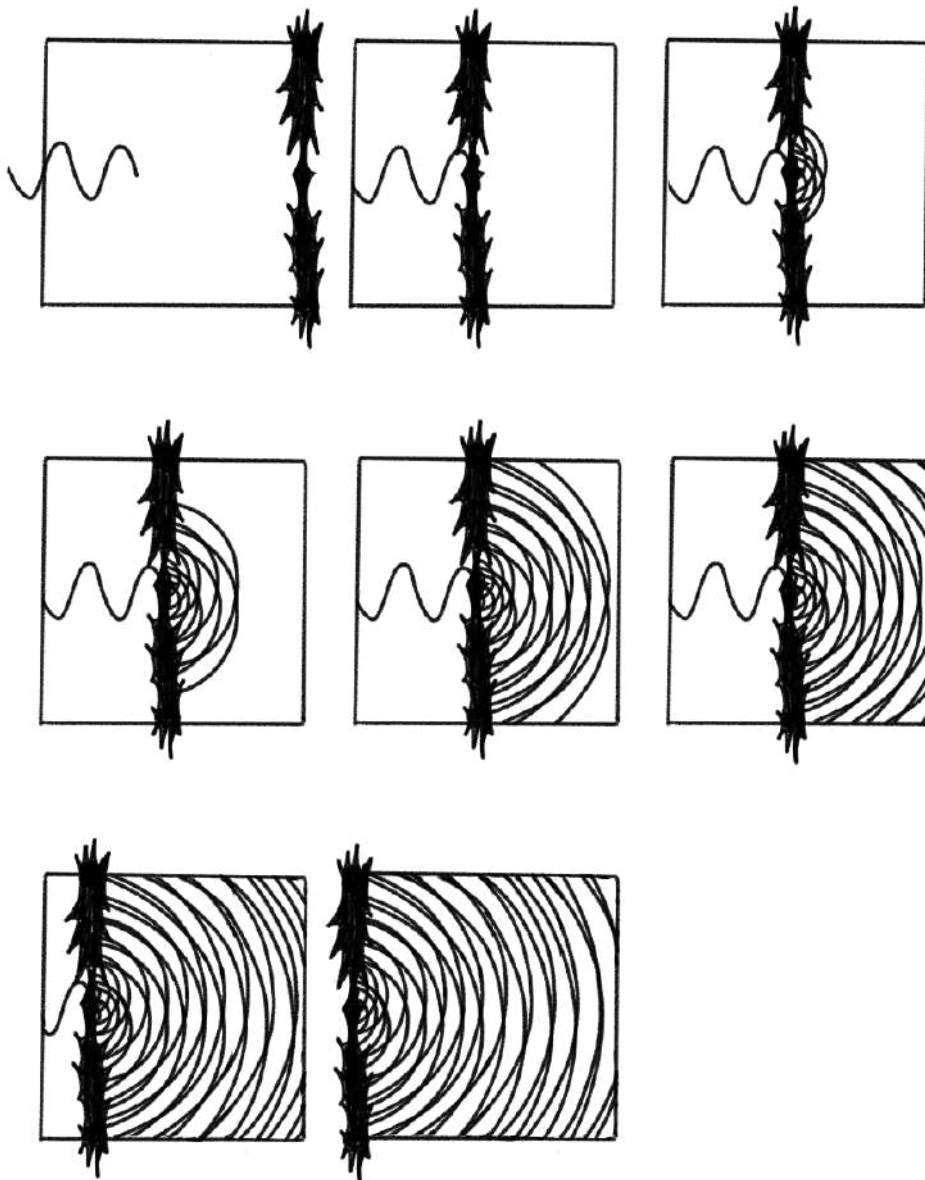
When reading Haraway and Barad's theory of diffraction, I understood that, without being aware of it, when reflecting on the world I am approaching it from a distance. Reflection let us see the world from the distance. Haraway argues that reflexivity is founded in representationalism, which is embedded in a scientific knowledge: "a scientific realist believes that scientific knowledge accurately reflects physical reality, whereas a strong social constructivist would argue that knowledge is more accurately understood as a reflection of culture, rather than nature"(Barad, 2007, p.86). One is projected into the other, like imprinted stamps on a surface.

Therefore, reflection acts from the idea of a mirror, which in fact is a reflective object. By providing an accurate image or representation of the object mirrored, the reflection is exposed to be known, described, thought, identified, etc. There is never an act of relation between the observer and the reflected more than proximity and identification of similarities. In fact, according to Haraway a mirror just displaces the same elsewhere, setting up additionally worries about copy and original and the search for the authentic and really real (Barad, 2007, p.86). The already known reductionist approach of science.



This thought drives me to question how actually such an embedded idea implies a certain attitude to the world. I recognize in reflection the capability to find common ground. By looking for the same elsewhere there is an activity that connects conceptually the reality. Reflections as the process of finding intersections between the thing that I already know within the present reality. It is a thinking process that elaborates and digests critically, but it is, in fact, linear and binary. Again, like the image in the mirror.

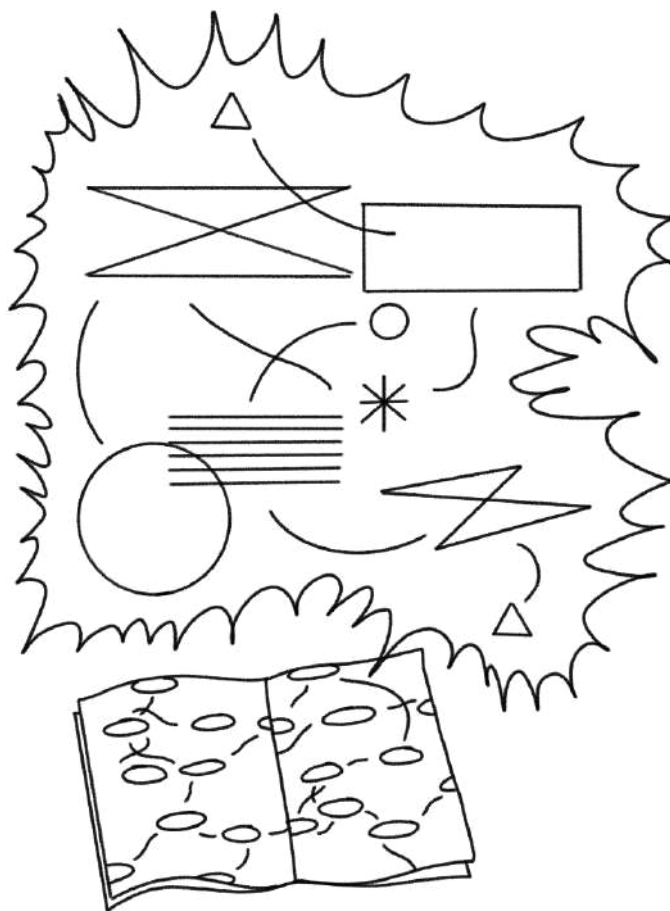
Diffraction makes emphasis not on the intersections between things but on their relationships. It happens when waves -light, water, sound- encounter an obstacle and form a multitude of patterns as they pass through. This image of interferences among waves is what Donna Haraway and Karen Barad want to draw attention to. Haraway(2007) sees diffraction as an optical metaphor for the effort to make a difference in the world. To her, diffraction patterns record the history of interaction, interference, reinforcement, difference. In contraposition to reflection, it is about heterogeneous history, not about originals nor uniformity. Unlike reflection, diffraction doesn't displace the same elsewhere in more or less distorted form. Diffraction can be a metaphor for another kind of critical consciousness. "It gives us the opportunity to become more attuned to how differences are being created in the world, and what particular effects they have on subjects and their bodies" (Barad, 2007, p.273). Seeing and thinking diffractively, therefore, implies a self-accountable, critical and responsible engagement with the world. But what does that mean in practice? How can it be a concrete methodology? And how can I relate it to the publishing practices?



From reflection to diffraction: Paradoxical spaces

Barad describes how diffraction can be used as a reading methodology. If reflection approaches a text in a hierarchical methodology that contrasts different texts *from one to another* a diffractive methodology would dialogically read *through one another* to engender creative, and unexpected outcomes (Barad, 2007, p.30). For Barad and Haraway, a diffraction reading embodies an attitude of respectful engagement with different texts from different disciplinary practices. Instead of bringing all the texts together as a collection or a pile of arguments, a diffractive methodology creates multiple quilts or inter-weavings within them.

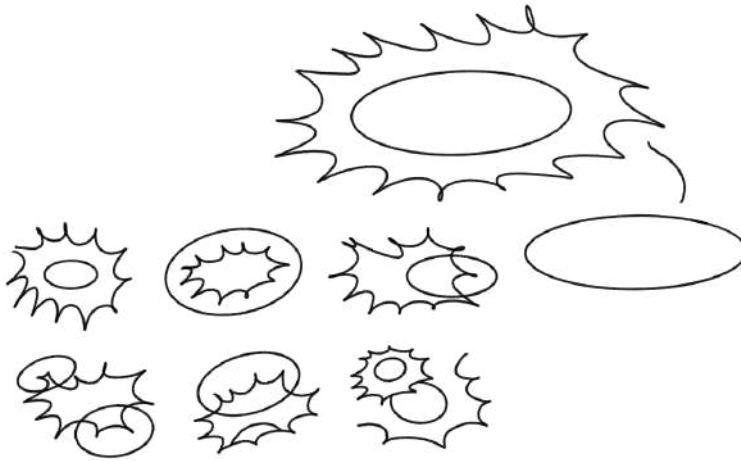
In the text "More-than-reflective practice: Becoming a diffractive practitioner" Cher M. Hill, a teacher and researcher, explores how diffraction could take place for pedagogy practitioners. For her, a reflective approach is never antagonistic to a diffractive one, but instead it exists in addition to it. She suggests that a diffractive approach for example would mean to accompany a reflective question with multiple others that make emphasis on their relations within the context and its productions. Thus highlighting the intra-actions that come within the encounter between parts.



Is interesting to me how both methodologies, the reflective and the diffractive, uses questions as prompting devices. Even though the idea of questioning has always been related to reflection, diffraction suggests to formulate questions as well. To me, questions embody fundamentally a curiosity that aims to unveil the world in a reflective way. Even basic questions such as, how old are you? or how are you? are interested to know a description or representation of something, which is a reflective process: there is a question that acts as a mirror of the reality in front.

Nevertheless, how can questions do differently? The diffractive methodology I propose steps into a paradoxical space in which questions demonstrate both approaches at the same time: reflective and diffractive. In psychics terms, this research is asking how can a question be both at once a mirror, causing reflection, and an obstacle engendering diffraction.

In thinking about the diffractive patterns that Donna Haraway and Karen Barad describe when "engaging the differences that matter", Gillian Rose's concept of paradoxical spaces is key. Gillian Rose, a feminist geographer, describes paradoxical spaces as "places that allow the existence on both sides of a limit simultaneously and alternately" (Olson, 1998, p.242). She exemplifies this by explaining the public sphere and private sphere paradox within a marginalised context. According to her this apparent division between spheres in the society is not clear, besides, both spheres co-live and mix to make society what it is. Similarly, when questioning myself about diffraction and how could it be practiced in publishing, I found myself in this paradoxical space of being reflective about diffraction but not being able to understand how to untangle those abstractions that come to mind. How to solve a *pattern or differences* without reflection? Without asking my self questions about the mess I am seeing? I think this tension that emerges from the paradox is the potential fuel for imagination and creativity the mere diffractive concept is aiming for.



In the end, just by keeping questioning when being reflective, diffraction in practice will entangle and paradoxically untangle reflection links, knots and eventually meshes. Maybe not to find any solution or strict answer but to stay active while being messy and blurry like previous thoughts about new possible languages in publishing. But, what constitutes this paradoxical thinking? What are the links that structured the knots? what is the matter to entangle with a publishing practice? What are its foundations?

3. The Glossary as Foundation

Challenging the structure

I see in glossaries a key idea to understand the foundation of the paradoxical spaces I'm stepping on. Glossaries are common elements inside books. Typically made as a list of terms and descriptions, they usually exist inside non-fiction and fiction books to clarify terminology, explain words or give context to the text. But, most of all they create meaning at the very base of a book. By explaining specific words within their context, each description makes part of the book's foundation. Fundamentally, glossaries don't guide the reader, they accompany the reader; building up the soil to step on, without being the path to walk through.

In the context of literary theory, a book's glossary is what Gerard Genette(1997) describes as a paratext. Investigating how texts operate with each other, he highlights how every text is presented inside a book using elements that are not part of the text itself. According to him, titles, subtitles, index, dedications, epigraphs, etc. are thresholds to the text. Elements that mark a start to the text without being a boundary or a sealed-border (Gerard Genette, 1997, p. 1). In those words, glossaries can be seen as the permeable space inside a book that gives context to the reader. According to Allison Fagan, researcher on bilingual glossaries in latinx literature, "The glossary is a way to create context, for those readers who wanted it, without interrupting the flow of the story" (Allison Fagan, 2016, p.61).

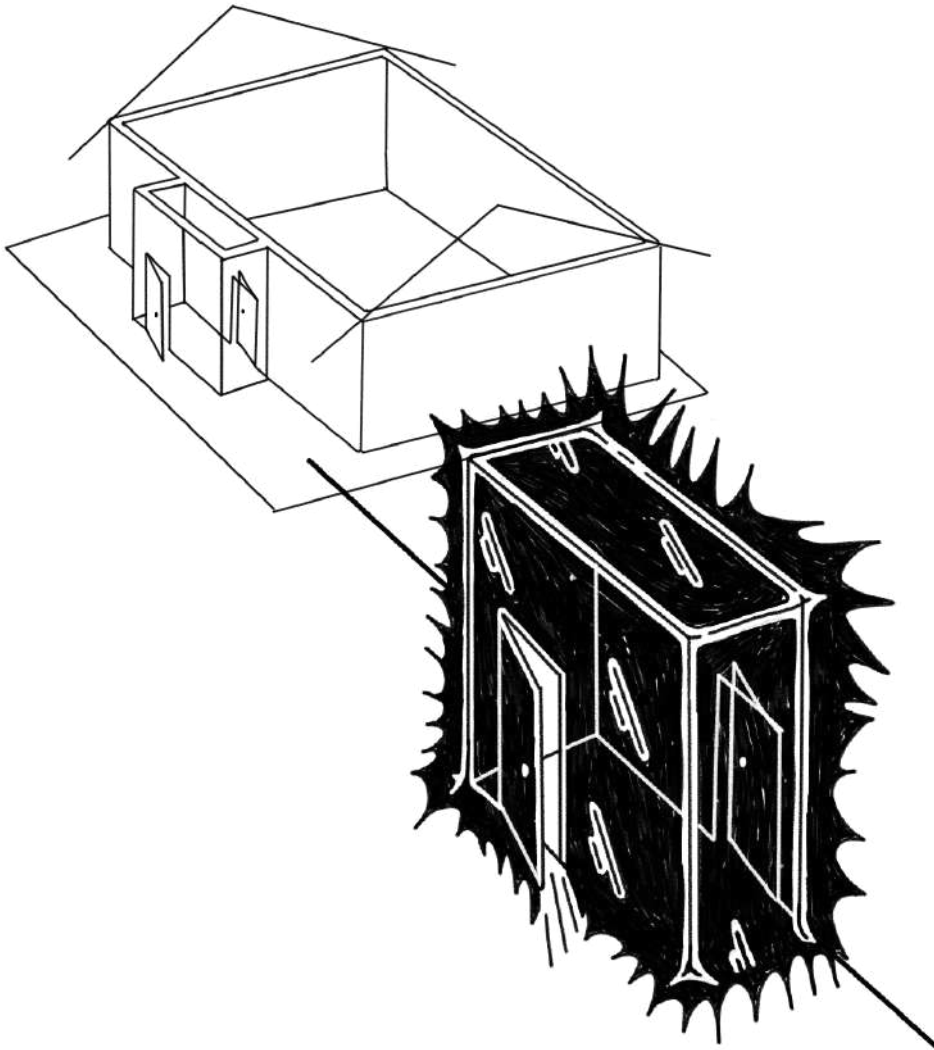
The structure of the glossary is usually a list in alphabetical order placed at the beginning or end of a book. It follows a concrete order because it aims to communicate accurately. Going letter by letter and describing word by word, every glossary is always accessible. In fact, It seems to decrypt the texts' foundations by classifying its key entities into a clear, direct and ease-to-use rule book for the reader.

18 Either made by the editor or the author themselves, every glossary is essentially the result of gathering, describing and classifying specific words and technical terms used by the author. Analyzing this process and its structure, brings up some problems. To me, setting limits through tight definitions, one after the other, turns the glossary-making process into an exercise of drawing sharp borders surrounding definitions. An act of making strict containers and putting "non-living" entities inside. Like territories defined on a map. A practice that would sector the glossary as a space. In fact, if this space is the foundation of the book, it is one marked by strong borders and delimited areas using lines between concepts and meanings. It would be naive to deny that this can be useful, but it's important to highlight that by recognizing the existence of the limit, an attitude of power is revealed. The reasons to choose terms and descriptions may be questioned.

For Hope A. Olson "classifications are closed systems [...] they represent some concepts and not others". She argues that, "no classification will ever be inclusive" (Olson, 1998, p.235). Therefore, the clarity of such a structure inside the glossaries implies the constrain of the threshold, and its apparent impossibility of being open and fluid. Furthermore, generally the description gathered inside each entry of a glossary follows what Olson describes as a "mainstream act of classification" which means it usually follows "structures developed by the most powerful discourses in a society". By tracing limits between words and descriptions, there is a "marginalisation of concepts outside the mainstream". Everything beyond those descriptions and explanations becomes irrelevant or assumed to be known. In glossaries is easy to fall into marginalisation and closed pictures of the world. They seem to be the gatekeeper of book knowledge as unidirectional puzzle solvers or the key to understanding. Rather than a threshold, usually they become a wall. A surface to post a rulebook for comprehension.

Nevertheless, I believe glossaries may be explored as the open space the image of a threshold suggests. When describing a *paratext* Genette(1998) uses as an example Borges' description of a preface. He describes it as a *vestibule*: the space inside a house "that offers the world at large the possibility of either stepping inside or turning back". Such a space is one space in itself, but it, as a threshold, suggests movement. Its passageway characteristics draw intimate connectivity from the house to the street. After opening the door to a book, the reader has a space to move, interact, continue or step back. a *paratext* inhabits these moments for the reader. They are elements and entities themselves that simultaneously facilitate movement from, and to the text in a double-way

direction. As the same as the vestibule of Borges, I believe glossaries can be seen as a space for freedom and fluidity where relation-ability and critical thought can *emerge*: elements inside books that facilitate interactions between the inside and the outside of a book. Letting readers ask questions about the construction of knowledge they are reading. Why have these words been defined in this way? Who chose them and who defined them? Or what are the intentions of classifying them as they are classified?



In contraposition to such a constrained structure that draws limits by classifying, and instead acknowledging a diffractive methodology. I want to experiment with shapeshifting in glossaries. In the following sections, I am going to introduce two possible attempts to re-think and diffract the glossary. First, I'll explore the etymology of "glossary" to find radical approaches to its form. The glossary will transform into a "layering of annotations" where footnotes are annotations that enrich the text's meaning. And second, I'll visit Allison Fagan's article *Translating in the Margins: attending to Glossaries in Latina/o Literature* (2016) to exemplify how the glossary project we are making for publishing can subvert the dominant and oppressive culture of knowledge by criss-crossing between languages.

Radical Glossary: a layering of annotations

"Las etimologías nos acercan a lo que fuimos, lo que nos dijimos cuando las cosas eran de otra manera"^{1 2} (Obligado, 2021)

The etymology³ of the word glossary comes from the Latin term 'gloss' which means 'annotation', and also 'layer' in English.

Therefore, radically –from the root^{4 5}–, a glossary can also be seen as the layer of the book that accompanies the reader^{6 7 8} through annotations. The glossary as a 'layering of annotations'⁹.

I understand annotations as small gestures from the reader to a text. In the form of notes or short explanations, it is an act that makes a strong connection between them both.¹⁰ I think that, by annotating, the reader is giving back something to the text. The notes on the margins of a book expand the text by introducing new information that didn't exist before, but furthermore, give new thought to it.

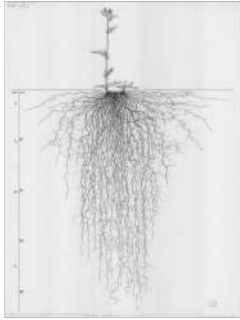
To me, the annotated thought inside the margins of the book becomes a conversation between the reader and the text.¹¹ A conversation I like to think happens as an intimate act of reciprocity. Intimate because it appears from a close encounter, and reciprocal because both are giving from themselves to each other.¹²

1. Y eran de otra manera porque las cosas cambian, se transforman, se moldean y tornan de forma. Toman un sentido distinto, se vuelven diferentes. Continúan siendo desde la diferencia. No por adición ni sustracción. Difracción. ↩

2. *Etymologies bring us closer to what we were, what we said to ourselves when things were different. | And they were different because things change, they transform, they mold and change shape. They take on a different meaning, they become different. They continue to be from the difference. Not by addition or subtraction. Diffraction. ↩*

3. Clara Obligado, the writer from the quote, gave me a nice insight regarding etymologies. They are secret stories. Hidden moments of words that are also ours. Etymology for me it's driven by that notion, it's not about the proper use of language neither addressing the truth. It's about tracing the human consensus through languages. Ones that are secret and malleable. Permeable. ↩

4. Roots can be long, short, slippery, strong, sticky, pale, scrawny, robust. Sometimes towards stability and other towards nourishment, they all tend to the profound. There: where life makes them possible. ↩



This drawing shows the roots of a plant; All those things that make life possible but you don't see often. It is a botanical illustration made by Lichtenegger, E. in 1992 part of this root system drawings collection: <https://images.wur.nl/digital/collection/coll13/>.

5.

6. The reader is according to the dictionary: "Noun: a person who reads". But also "someone who reads for pleasure, specially a person who reads a lot." I wonder why it has to have such a positivist meaning? Sometimes I hate reading, I hate what I read and I keep considering myself a reader. ↵

7. Reader in Spanish is "Lector". Its etymology comes from the word "leer" which is "to read" in English. Leer comes from *lectus* that means "escoger", to choose. How am I choosing when reading? And how is this related to the my pleasure? ↵

8. Matthew Stadler thinks that as readers, we are public and being public we make sense of the mere act of publishing. From the pleasure of choosing, he suggests that we can shape an economy. Nevertheless, according to him, readers are struggling shoppers. He claims that the reader naturally quiet the noise of shopping. "The clerk asks us what we'd like to buy, and we look up, half-focused in the space of reading, and we answer with a question." (Mathew Stadler, 2011). ↵

9. Sheila de Bretteville, in 1992 as part of the Dirty Design and Fuzzy Theory, brought up the idea of "strudeling" as a metaphor for a multi-layered field of work, "in which spheres of professional and private life are constantly mixing. In dynamic contact with other people, boundaries blur and competences are combined and shared" (Severin GeiBler et al., p.88). Such a pastry draws an imaginary of complexity. Sweet baked pieces of interwoven annotations. ↵

10. As a liminal space. Matthew Stadler describes the reading process as the dissolution of the self by mixing with others. The multiple voices. The author, and the countless others readers, real and imagined. (Mathew Stadler, 2011) ↵

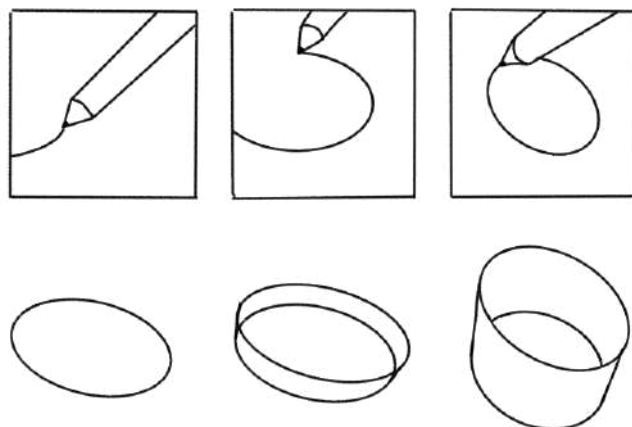
11. Footnotes as a weaving process. How can entanglements be shaped on the practice of communicating? How to map and overlap thoughts while doing transversal reading of texts? Reading diffractively also shapes the way writing takes form. A further exploration of diffraction will come in the next Chapter. ↵

12. *atata* is the composition of two ideogram in Mhuysqa, an indigenous people language from Colombia. It means: "I give myself to you", "you give yourself to me". It is reciprocity awareness, the relationship between living nature: plants, territory, animals and culture. Words, sentences, paragraphs, meanings, descriptions, footnotes, notes, pictures, languages. It comes from the deep understanding of the profound connection between things. The ones that touch the ground where differences morph and transform the matter. ↵

The Bilingual Glossary

"descubrir a los otros, otra realidad, otros objetos, otros gestos, otras manos, otros cuerpos" (Antonio Faundez, p.50)

Living abroad, becoming a foreigner and experiencing separation from my roots, makes me reflect on the distance between others. As it happens when describing different territories in publishing, the act of crossing borders with all the bureaucracy and notorious restriction of freedom, marks fundamentally the distance between bodies and therefore languages. The imaginary, the world that words bring to life, it's challenged when the encounter with the different takes place. Beyond communication the otherness amplifies the abyss between the own and the foreign.

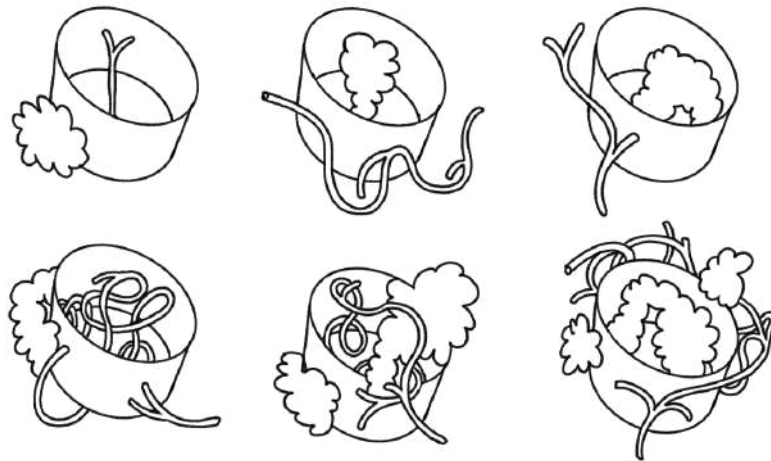


When performing diffraction, understanding the concept of the difference is key. Paul Freire and Antonio Faundez(2013) conversing about pedagogy from the exile, being both expelled from their countries –Brazil and Chile– due to political violence in 80's, express how by encountering the otherness, the concept of difference takes on a profound meaning. They point out that the strangeness and discomfort produced by the approach of differences unveil their own reality. Abroad, the understanding of daily life is revealed in differences, and to be able to negotiate with those differences and enter into a critical and intimate dialogue with them is key to inhabiting the own present. The manner in which this separation is confronted; modifies the way each-self express. Paradoxically, by being intimately related to the different oneself emerges.

Allison Fagan's article *Translating in the Margins: attending to Glossaries in Latina/o Literature*(2016) resonates with me those reflections about separation, languages and therefore differences. In her article, she exposes how some paratextual glossaries inside the Latina/o literature can exist beyond the accommodation to monolingualism. In fact, translating vocabulary from one language to another just for the sake of language homogenisation would enforce the separation between differences expressed by Freire and Faundez.

As a case of study, she introduces the glossary of the text *Barrio Boy*(1971) by Ernesto Garlaza. According to Fagan(2016), this glossary is not just an explanatory document to the reader, but also a space for the process of transculturation. In it, there is an encounter between different cultural entities form North America and Mexico, more specifically the *Chicanos* and the *Gringos*. In this case, Garlaza uses humor in the glossary in order to guide the reader to not just the understanding of the word, but to trigger new connections between the narrative and the cultures. For example: "*palacio de gobierno*: the state capitol, where the important autoridades spent most of their time; *palacio municipal*: city hall, where the not-so-important autoridades did likewise(306)"(Fagan, 2016, p.67) The definition of each word suggest more than the plain understanding of it with direct translation.

When readers are in close encounter with the text and its corresponding glossary they have the capability to build their own connections between words and meanings because it is a personal moment (Fagan, 2016, p.60-61). Understanding why the definition of "palacio municipal" is a joke, depends on the reading process. In fact, she argues that, in bilingual glossaries the opposition of languages even opens up the possibility to drive the reader to ambiguity. Sometimes the reader approaches codes that are sometimes antagonistic; readers are driven to different conclusions about the relationship between languages, but other times these relationships work in concert to produce a coherent picture (Fagan, 2016, p.59). The actual interpretation of the codes given by the glossary is ultimately done by the freedom of encountering the difference in intimacy. Maybe as an annotation or as a layering of multiple like suggested in the last section.



Translation for Fagan evokes a crossing of borders that goes beyond the limits. Pulling and pushing back and forth from language to language, bilingual glossaries create spaces where the differences are under tension but they are acknowledged. When translating, meanings are permeable and malleable territories.

"Whether subtle or more forthright, Latina/o writers by calling attention to the shaping forces of the border elements of the material text, glossaries can challenge readers to reflect on Latina/o linguistic identity itself, or the places where competing ideologies, identities, and languages come into contact with one another" (Fagan, 2016, p.72)

Glossaries that embrace different languages enhance the potential foundation for a re-territorialization of forms of power. Living in a society where the hegemony of English monolingualism and the idea of the glossary as a gatekeeper are the constant, bilingual glossaries spaces act as a subversive resistance (Fagan, 2016, p.59). I believe this resistance sees its potential inside publishing practices in the capability to re-territorialize the meanings of publishing. Not any more as closed territories measured by categorization.

However, how are this meanings the foundation of new forms of reflection? What type of entries and how are they co-living between each other? The last intention of the "glossary for a diffractive publishing practice" would be to become not an artefact of the dominant culture and oppressive knowledge, but a threshold of one's reality that constantly meditate the distant encounter with difference; different practitioners, different tools, different resources, different entities.

4. Performing Diffraction

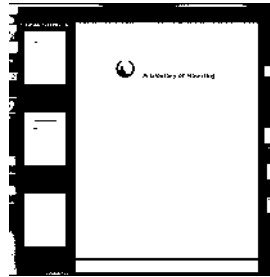
From paratext to text: glossary as a form

Either made as a layering of annotations or using different languages I have introduced so far the glossary as a paratextual element. Taking in count its potentialities through a diffracting methodology, I would like to introduce it as a form in itself using examples of projects that have done so. This to give a contextualisation on the current practices, and to explain how our glossary project with Maria takes form.

The text *A Glossary of Haunting*(2013) by Eve Tuck and C. Ree. part of the Handbook of Auto-ethnography is a first example. It is an experimental essay written in the form of a glossary that aims to explore the authors thinking on haunting. Coming from the theory and arts the authors of this text are two women who write in singular person and describe this glossary as:

"a fractal that includes the particular and the general, violating the terms of settler-colonial knowledge which require the separation of the particular from the general [...] This glossary is a story, not an exhaustive encyclopedia (which is itself a container), and this story includes my own works of theory and art as well notations on film and fiction".

This text takes the shape of a glossary to address a broader understanding on haunting, but also it does so by being conscious of its own constitution. For example, in alphabetical order, first entries of the glossary uses the letter A to start introducing the essay: "Alphabet of terms", "Am I telling a story?" are contextualizing the essay. Through the lenses of diffraction, this glossary is a text itself that embodies the idea of notations and the necessity of dissolving borders when describing words and knowledge.



Haunting
Glossary (2013)
Pdf Screenshot

The book *A Glossary of undisciplined Design*(2020) is another example of glossaries as text. In the format of a printed book, this publication is a collection of 53 glossary entries made by different authors that aims to offer additional definitions and concepts for the field of graphic design and its current state (Spector Books, 2021). The book explores the idea of the glossary by using each entry as a different reflection about the graphic design practice. The index is organised in alphabetical order but the book is not ordered alphabetically. It has "A" entries in the page 200 and "B" entries in the page 10. In a hierarchy level, the book invites the reader to jump between pages, suggesting connections between them all differently. When thinking about diffractive methodologies, I believe this example of glossary as a form embodies a very diffracted approach to publishing. It conceptually makes emphasis on creating an interwoven state of the graphic design practice by going "through one another" reflection.



A Glossary of
undisciplined
Design (2020)
Soft Cover
edition

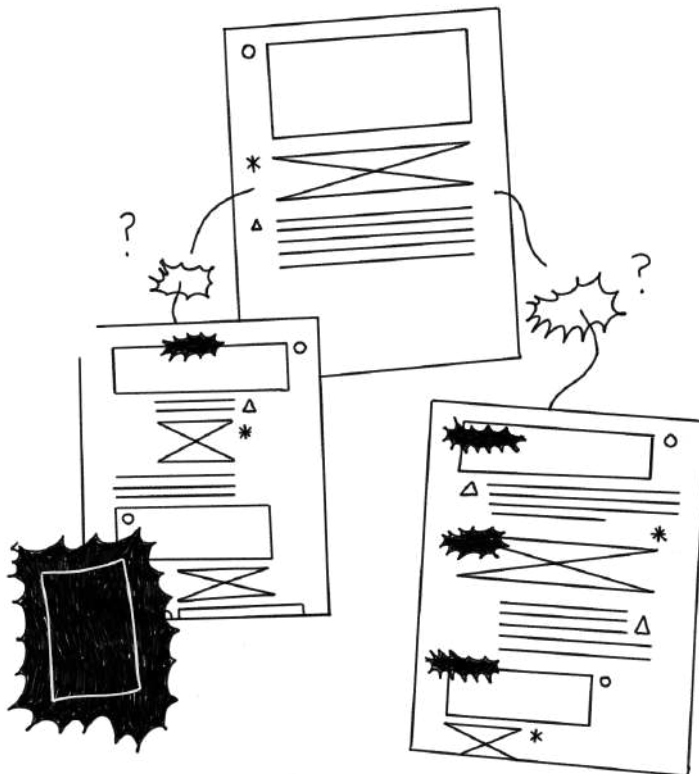
In the introduction of this thesis I explain briefly how this glossary project is mutable and create itself by collective work sessions. The way in which this project transform from a paratext into a text is by doing those workshops called "Rumination Sessions"-- working title. The purpose of this sessions is to ask participants to reflect but also diffract on publishing practices. It aims to digest and feed collectively the current state of the "glossary for a diffractive publishing practice". The idea is to see it as a shared tool to collectively gather and critically comment on publishing thought. It's not as a space to unveil the key of knowledge and categorize things, it is a space to ruminate, share and converse.

Questions as diffractive apparatus

*"¿Si la naturaleza era la respuesta, cuál fue la pregunta?"
(Jorge Wagensverg, 2002)*

As previous stated, diffraction happens when waves encounter a slit in an obstacle where they bend and overlap making patterns. A question in the other hand is an interrogative sentence or clause which, to me, triggers the basic and curious principle before every definition. Before defining what is nature, someone ask themselves a question. There, in the mere act of questioning, nature becomes. Questions have the power to invoke meanings without defining. But they do so in a moment of pause; there is a stop embodied by the question.

Both, the slit and the question are connected by temporality. They both provoke a momentum of possibility. An impulse for contemplation and therefore close encounter with the things. Nevertheless, same does the mirror, it stands in front of the wave and reflects it. There is a momentum of reflection, but to me there is a predictable resolution. The light wave as it is.



I am interested in imagining with the glossary and its construction how questions as obstacles can provoke diffraction instead of reflection. Stand in a paradoxical space between reflection and diffraction, my idea is to experiment if close contemplation and observation of the world don't lead necessarily to reflection and therefore closed definitions. Words in glossaries are definitions, and therefore enact these ideas of classification and exclusion. Questions enhance the generative potential of diffraction that subvert glossaries as such. What if questions themselves act as the

diffractive apparatus proposed in the diffractive methodology? What type of questions would they be?

My proposed "glossary for a diffractive publishing practice" with Maria would become a "layer of annotated" questions based on keywords, rather than a list of annotated keywords. The reading of the glossary would be patterns of thought that are not concrete or straightforward answers or solutions, but an interweaving of annotations made of the keywords related to that question. A puzzle or tongue twist that embrace one of the multiple interwoven messiness.



Living publishing practice

"situarnos ya no frente al mundo sino entre las ideas, las cosas, y las personas, siendo parte del mundo." (Arcina, A. and Daviña, L., 2020, p.13)

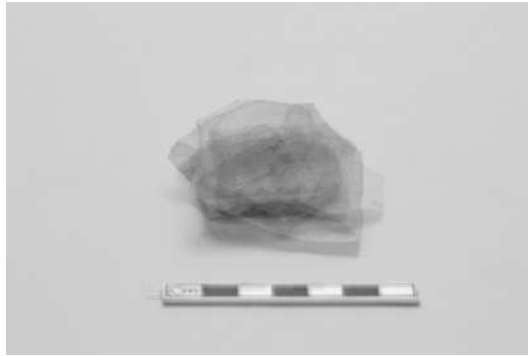
Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, like in many other practices, multiple publisher practitioners have started reflecting on the future of their practices. Multiple encounter scenarios such as fairs were not possible and the practice itself as it used to circulate needed to stop. Asking ourselves why, when and how to publish, some of us decided to translate these encounters into the digital world. Trying to gather and emulate same experiences, fairs such as Printed Matters went digital where besides selling their publications, practitioners were invited to reflect on new possibilities on the practice. I believe this last wave of reflection shook the way people engaged with thought.

During my thesis research, I found some projects of these scenarios as key attitudes to *diffract* and not just *reflect* on the practice. Ones that precisely emerge as multiple interwoven of purposes, methods, tools, urgencies. Projects such as "*la forma de una idea*", "*Selepputu*", "*Urgentcraft*", "*leitura e traducao*" among others appear as spaces and attempts to think processes different.

I would like to Highlight the project "*La forma de una idea*". It was a program for Latin American publishers with the objective of reflecting on independent publishing practices. It consisted of 6 meetings designed as a journey through the publishing process, from the origin of the idea to its circulation. Fifty publishers and artists, grouped in pairs and trios, participated in a two-week dialogue among themselves and then presented their reflections in public meetings at the end. All the event happened digitally and, as a result, they published the sessions on youtube.

After watching all these efforts to understand and re-think the practices, I am convinced that the more I try to find how a diffractive publishing practice looks like, the more away I am from it. I am happy to say that this publishing practice has no methodology but struggles. Struggles that can be infinite strudels. Layers and layers. Confusing layers of unsolved questions. More than diffractive,

they become alive. They live, they survive, they struggle and move; they remain blurry. Like the photo "soft body(fragments)" by Stephanie Syjuco composed by overlapping pictures of different pottery shards found in the Philippines. She describes the picture with a poetical indeterminacy: "the resulting form appears to gently shift and move as if reconstituting itself or dreaming of becoming whole".



"soft
body(fragments)"
(2021) by
Stephanie Syjuco

In the end, the dream of becoming a whole is what fuels to me all publishing processes into a living practice. Without understanding what exactly is going to form, it is a practice that shakes, stop, weaves and makes something public. Always remaining permeable, fluid and pours in between things. A practice that is aware of its blind spots and trains its peripheral vision to engage with the difference. A practice that calls attempts, what history would call a failure. Not based on its relevance, but in its ambivalence and ability to learn and transform.

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Colophon

This work has been produced in the context of the graduation research of Camilo Andres Garcia Aycardi from the Experimental Publishing (XPUB) Master course at the Piet Zwart Institute, Willem de Kooning Academy, Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences.

XPUB is a two year Master of Arts in Fine Art and Design that focuses on the intents, means and consequences of making things public and creating publics in the age of post-digital networks.

This publication is based on the graduation thesis **Permeable territories: Between reflection and diffraction weaving a living publishing practice**, written under the supervision of Natasha Soobramanien.

This printed version was made using html, css and Paged.js. The typefaces used are PicNic, Social Condensed Edu, Garamont italic, Helveesti Edu, ABC Asphalt Edu and Fluxisch. The drawings and maps were made by him.

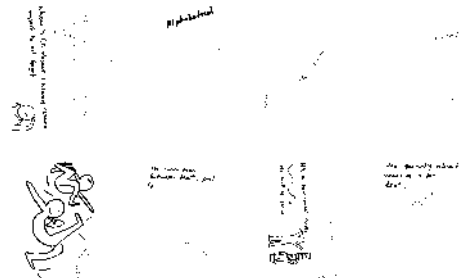
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<https://xpub.nl>

Appendix

A Brief Glossary of Glossaries

Sequence/Loop:



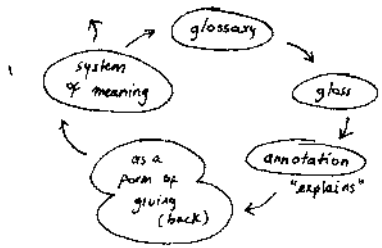
the lack of flow
X
this a horizontal ruler
HIERARCHY

Context:

Glossary of Glossaries Workshop website

However, seeing the glossary as a layer of annotations that come from an act of reciprocity and not just as a static list of terms, brings up ideas about its possibilities. Or at least questions about its traditional structure.

Diagram:



Alphabetical

Workshop:

On October of 2021, I proposed a quick collective workshop to create "a glossary of glossaries" to explore this different perspective of glossaries. This workshop took place at the library Leesaal in Rotterdam as part of an event called Aquarium 1.0.

You can check it out here:

https://hub.xpub.nl/sandbot/Camilo/a_brief_glossary/#2

Workshop:

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During the workshop, some of the questions proposed to reflect on brought to light different aspects of the traditional glossary structure, like: How a vertical and closed structure of terminology can be conceived as a horizontal and open one? What is the voice of these annotations on the words, who is speaking? What does it mean conceptually to write down a list of terms, words, and explanations? If an annotation is seen as an act of reciprocity what can it explicitly say or look like?

The workshop gave some options for the answer but also brought more questions that explore the idea of the language. When constructing knowledge, how to not prioritize written language? or Why when creating them there is a domination of monolingualism?

Overall, I understood that there is space in the glossary structure to experiment with from different approaches. For me, behind this common structure, there is most of all a lack of diversity. Conversations, thoughts, and notes are diverse. They can be slow and quiet but also loud and messy, and everything in between. I understand that being the reader companion, a glossary aims for clear communication, but I believe there are multiple types of company and therefore communication.

// #3

the apparently relevant words of a piece of text.
keywords

Glossary for a diffractive publishing practice

EN ESP

Why is this?

- Can questions be a reading medium? How can they trigger the understanding of a text? Can they activate a communication between the reader and the text? What if the text is a glossary? Why is the text a list? What comes when connecting? What is the relationship between connecting and connecting?

Where is this?

- Click on the icons to start formulating your question.
- When your question is ready click on the question mark.

Question maker: [] ?

Question Archive of previous reading: [What is wrong with humans?]

Logging of conversations

Interface Prototyping #1

Glossary for a diffractive publishing practice

EN ESP

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Question maker: [] ?

Question Archive of previous reading: [What is wrong with humans?]

Logging of conversations

32

08.12.2022

Future-trash

- Resisting burnout and future trash puts artist and their work in a good position to solve problems. By sustaining a publishing practice over time and creating objects that persist with meaning as their inherent value, artists/publishers can continue to create, contribute to, and maintain the radically open, imaginative, accessible and inclusive uncertainty that makes up artist publishing. (Alex Arz, p. 20, What Problems Can Artists/Publishers Solve?)

Non-teleological reading

- What if instead of reflecting about the why, we focus about the how? [<https://tdp.unimelb.edu.au/reading-machines/>]

In this prototype questions will be the reading medium for the glossary. As a reader you will formulate a question that then will make the glossary display in a certain following a conversation layout.

Glossary for a diffractive publishing practice

EN ESP

Question maker: [] ?

Question Archive of previous reading: [What is wrong with humans?]

Logging of conversations

08.12.2022

Future-trash

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Non-teleological reading

- What if instead of reflecting about the why, we focus about the how? [<https://tdp.unimelb.edu.au/reading-machines/>]

Fost growth

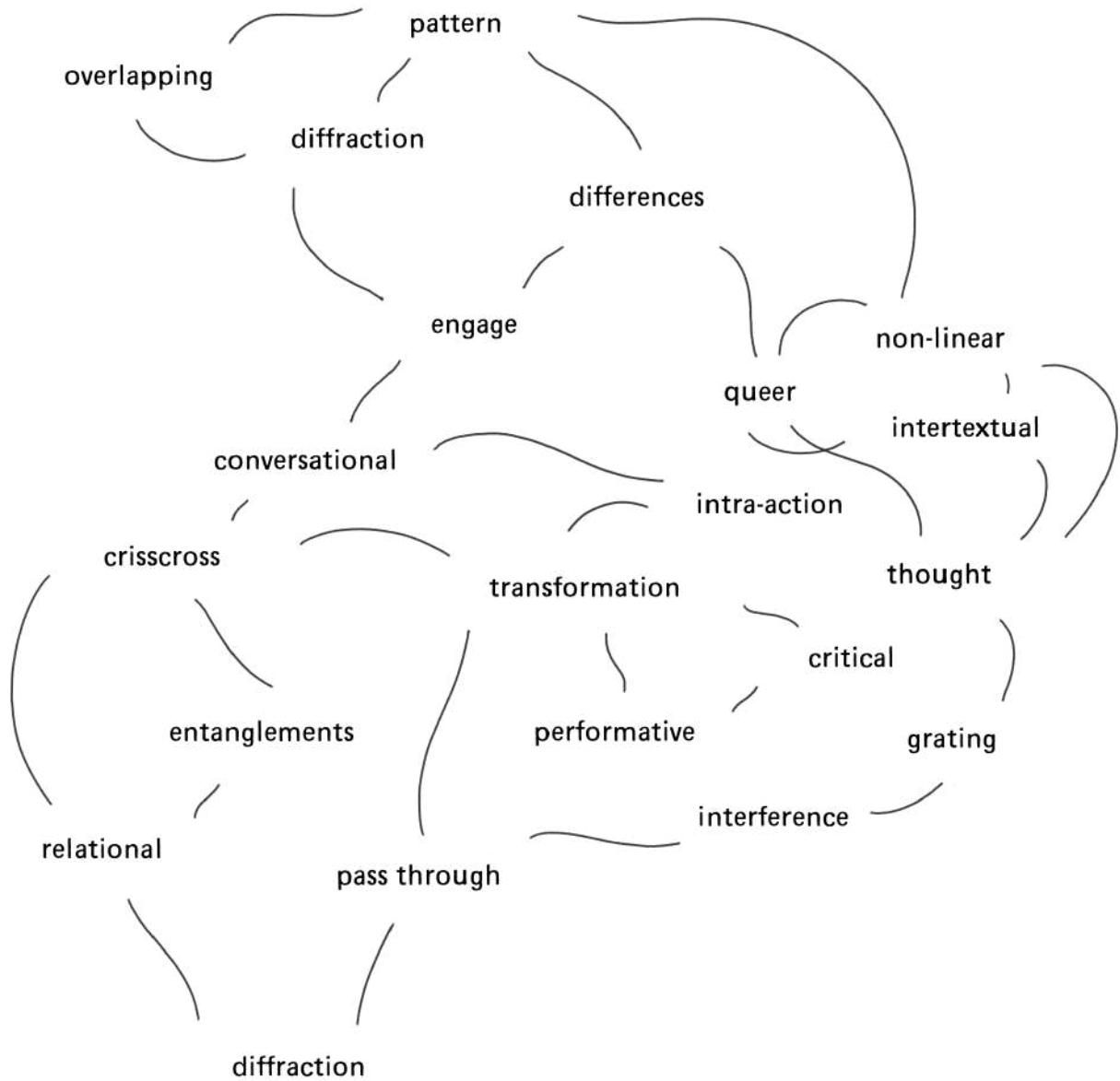
- to challenge the dominant narratives about growth and progress, and re-envision social metabolism through an understanding of the energy it requires reconnecting human survival with the living, material qualities of the biosphere, drawing on ecofeminism, indigenous knowledge, environmental accounting and historical materialism. [<http://postgrowth.art/>]

Afterlife

- How to make the content relevant again? Re-using it for different contexts.

Interface Prototyping: conversation between words. #3

Diffraction



Thought

