



#FassonStRedGoldBrickLane; Graffiti Ethno-map of Fashion Street's Colonial History

Abstract: This comment piece reassembles a colonial history of Fashion Street London, through the refracted prisms of a graffiti ethno-map and social media hashtag.

Author: Dr. Pamela Odih BSoc.Sc, PhD

So I leave it for four months and then I repaint. So essentially it's like a gallery, if you come here; if you make visits to London, if you wanna come down to Shoreditch you are going to see different paintings of mine; every time you come. That's kind of my thing. I use social media in a way; I use Instagram in the way you would use a gallery. So I have my photographs, I have the person next to the painting and then I have the back story, so you can read the back story. (Extract: Unstructured, Qualitative Interview; Video Transcription: Proximity of Brick Lane, London, May 2017)

The social media hashtags, #FassonStRedGold and #FassonStRedGoldBrickLane were launched in September 2019 succeeding the publication of my books entitled *Adsensory Urban Ecology* (Vol. 1 and Vol. 2). Dedicated to the application of postcolonial critical theory to the analysis of a form of gentrification in which the body is integral as subject and object, my books feature a case study of Brick Lane street artists. Emerging from the aftermath of this empirical research, the social media hashtag #FassonStRedGoldBrickLane has crystallised further a central premise of the books, i.e. that social media has become integral to an online/offline continuity in adsensory gentrification in which, the body is both subject and object. Axiomatic to the books' case study of street art and Brick Lane is evident a phenomenon I define as graffiti ethno-maps, in which race and ethnicity elide with the street artist's proximal positioning in space so as to disrupt the perspectivism of rational linear teleology. Indeed, the street artist's device of proximal positioning at the intersections of deeply racialized urban ecological historical trajectories is revelatory in its resistance to adsensory forms of gentrification. Graffiti ethno-maps, retrace the intersections of race, ethnicity and gender that direct the topography of urban streets and do so in conjunction with a cognizance of the esoteric truths of online mythology as part of their curation of virtual galleries for their street art. Indeed, the extract of my interview with a street artist in May 2017, is incisive as an exemplar of graffiti ethno-maps in process. For, Brick Lane and Fashion Street provide for impressive canvases upon which autobiographical portraits of women of colour have been inscribed; but while a familiar visual theme unites the Brick Lane portraits, the Fashion Street display diverges deliberately in its inference of an intervention and disruption in the linear Eurocentric narrative of African colonial history. An issue that was recently eluded to in the Twitter *talk* that annotates the exchange featured in figure 1., whereby @jamessummer2 (dataset name¹) responds to my Tweet with the statement: "Not your comment but Brick Lane was pretty awful to visit ??".

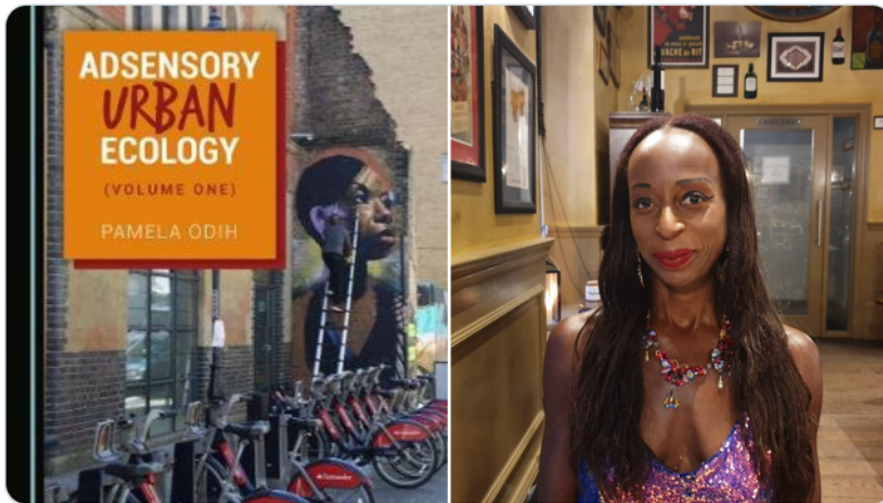
¹ "dataset name" Vs "variable name" - the latter is an indicator of value and the former is just symbolic. Thus .if N=0 then "1" unique posting is significant.



← Tweet



#FassonStRedGold: "Fashion Street ... originally Fasson Street, but it was known as Fashion Street as early as 1708" (Wheatley & Cunningham 1891). Graffiti ethno-maps, Fashion Street's urban topography; Fassons as prospectors of London's Brick Lane & Africa's colonial gold coast.



7:09 AM · Sep 18, 2019 · Twitter Web App

||| View Tweet activity

3 Retweets 28 Likes



Replying to @geraldi23591291 and @guardian

Aker @AndrewB45017541 - Sep 20th 2019

Reply Message: "Very interesting thanks for tweeting"

James @jamesummer2 - Sep 22nd 2019

Reply Message: "Not your comment but Brick Lane was pretty awful to visit ??"

Figure 1. **#FassonStRedGold**: "Fashion Street ... originally Fasson Street, but it was known as Fashion Street as early as 1708" (Wheatley & Cunningham 1891). Graffiti ethno-maps, Fashion Street's urban topography; Fassons as prospectors of London's Brick Lane & Africa's colonial gold coast.

Available at: <https://twitter.com/geraldi23591291/status/1174203713478639616?s=19>



← Tweet



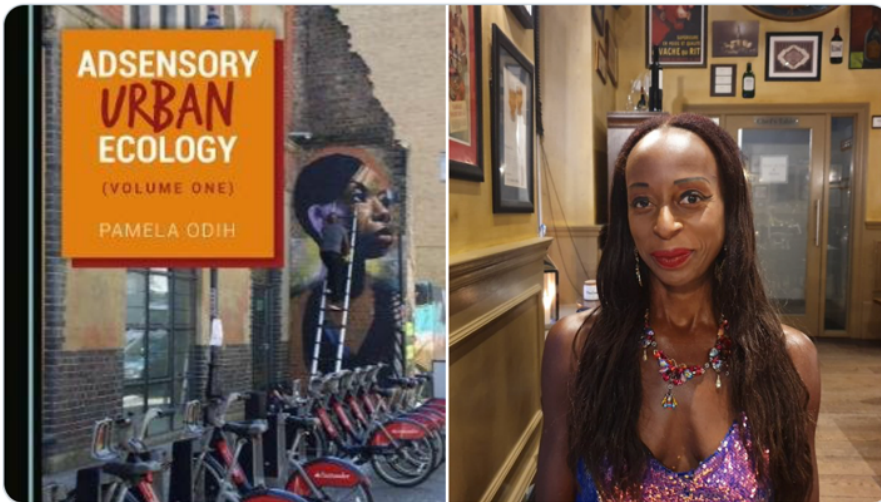
Pam xXx
@geraldi23591291



Replying to @jamesummer2 and @guardian



Sign: #FassonStRedGoldBrickLane Neglected colonial history: "Fashion Street, originally Fasson St, but it was known as Fashion Street as early as 1708" (Wheatley & Cunningham 1891). Graffiti ethno-maps, Fassons as prospectors of London's Brick Lane & Africa's colonial gold coast.



10:36 AM · Sep 22, 2019 · Twitter Web App

||| View Tweet activity

3 Retweets 8 Likes



Figure 2., Sign: #FassonStRedGoldBrickLane Neglected colonial history: "Fashion Street, originally Fasson St, but it was known as Fashion Street as early as 1708" (Wheatley & Cunningham 1891). Graffiti ethno-maps, Fassons as prospectors of London's Brick Lane & Africa's colonial gold coast.

Available at: <https://twitter.com/geraldi23591291/status/1175705430238142465?s=19>

Axiomatic to graffiti ethno-maps is a non-linear genealogical street artistic technique designed to enable the viewer to experience and decipher simulacra, and their disconnects, signifying the time-shifting and space-shifting of adsensory gentrification. Indeed, consider the street scene imagery captured in the book jacket featured in figure 1., and figure 2. Situated in Fashion Street, London (proximity to Brick Lane) the photograph's inclusion of the Santander bicyclical rank (cycle lease) coupled with the subtle red and gold hue of the colourings is evocative of a legacy of finance capital, aesthetics and continental Europe. One's elementary French qualifies a tentative translation of Fashion Street into Fasson Street and this is confirmed as follows: "Fashion Street, Spitalfields, leads from Brick Lane to White's Row – a very unfashionable locality. The name was originally Fasson Street, but it was known as Fashion Street as early as 1708" (Wheatley and Cunningham 1891: 33). The "1708" date is epochal as it positions Fasson Street's development within the context of British and French colonisation of West Africa. Named after the dynasty of fine Fasson pewters (Markham 1909, Massé 1921) that are recorded as once resident in the now historically obsolescent Pewter Lane (Stow 1633, Wakefield 1794), Fasson Street was prospected from Brick Lane, some indication of this urban ecological visionary is evident in historical texts e.g., "Fashion-Street, Brick-Lane, Spitalfields ... it leads into White's Row ..." (Lockie 1810). Accepting this, I contend that the Fassons financialised the Fasson Street development from the prospecting of "red gold" (Herbert 1984) in French colonial West Africa. Accomplished in the production of elegant pewter objects the Fassons demonstrated dexterity in the application, to pewter of "de belle fasson" and "fasson d'argent" (Bell 1913:42). Given that the latter translates into "fashion of silver" and is associated with Côte d'argent itself defined as the "silver coast" (Baedekers 1981:105) one might question my association of the Fassons with the French colonial expropriation of "red gold" from Africa's gold coast. But while emulating "fasson d'argent" pewter is a copper infused metal alloy; and Red Gold (i.e. copper) during this colonial era was largely expropriated from British and French colonial West Africa (Davis 2003).

Returning to my case study of the Brick Lane graffiti street artists, it is my contention that graffiti ethno-maps exceed colonial binaries of truth versus mythology. For, the offline/online assemblages of graffiti ethno-maps precipitate *talk* i.e., critically engaged (re)connections that agitate creatively for visionary change as exemplified through the refracted prism of the Twitter social media hashtag: #FassonStRedGoldBrickLane.

References

Baedekers Autoführer-Verlag, (1981); *Baedeker's France*, London: Prentice-Hall.

Bell, Malcolm, (1913); *Old Pewter*, London: George Newnes Limited.

Davis, John, (2003); *Pewter at Colonial Williamsburg [1600 - 1775]*, United States: Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.

Herbert, Eugenia, (1984); *Red Gold of Africa Copper in Precolonial History and Culture*, London: The University of Wisconsin Press, Ltd.

Lockie, John, (1810); *Lockie's Topography of London: Giving a Concise Local Description of and Accurate Direction to Every Square, Street, Lane, Court, Dock, Wharf, Inn, Public-office, &c. in the Metropolis and Its Environs, Including the New Buildings to the Present Time*, London: Nicol, G., Nicol, W., Miller, W., Hatchard, J., White and Company, J., Mawman, J.

Markham, Christopher, (1909); *Pewter Marks And Old Pewter Ware, Domestic And Ecclesiastical: With About 100 Illustrations, 200 Facsimile Marks, And 1,000 Full Descriptions Of Touches From The Touch Plates At Pewterers' Hall, As Well As Other Marks Obtained From Various Sources. List Of Members Of The Pewterers' Company*, London: Reeves and Turner.

Massé, Henri, (1921); *The Pewter Collector: A Guide to English Pewter with Some Reference to Foreign Work*, London: H. Jenkins.

Odih, Pamela, (2019); *Adsensory Urban Ecology (Volume One)*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Odih, Pamela, (2019); *Adsensory Urban Ecology (Volume Two)*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Stow, John, (1633); *The Survey Of London: Contayning The Orignall, Increase, Moderne Estate, And Government Of That City, Methodically Set Downe*, London: Elizabeth Pvrslouv. Available at: <https://archive.org/details/b30331870/page/154>

Wakefield, Roger, (1794 circa); *Wakefield's Merchant and Tradesman's General Directory for London: Westminster, Borough of Southwark and Twenty-two Miles Circular from St. Paul's, for the Year, 1794. Containing an Accurate List of the Names and Places of Abode of the Merchants, Manufacturers, and Principal Tradesmen*, London: T. Davidson.

Wheatley, Henry Benjamin and Cunningham, Peter, (1891); *London, Past and Present; its History, Associations, and Traditions*, London: J., Murray; New York, Scriber and Welford. Available at: <https://archive.org/details/londonpastandproocunngoog/page/n44>

Author

Dr Pamela Odih is a Senior Lecturer in Sociology at Goldsmiths University of London. Her research interests include gender, work and global capitalism; time, social theory and the constitution of subjective identity; and environmental cultural politics, international communication media and poststructural semiotics. Her work also focuses on financialisation, neoliberalism, consumer citizenship and healthcare markets.

Author Email: p.odih@gold.ac.uk

Copyright: Pamela Odih ©

Publication: September 2019, Spitalfields Life: @thegentleauthor, London