

A Publication
of the 2023
Inward Outward
Symposium

Witness



road

Witnessing / Care
& the Archive

ABOUT THIS PUBLICATION

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

6 Introduction

Alana Osbourne, Carine Zaayman and the Inward Outward Team

10 Curating Other-Archives: Witnessing, Care, and Image Afterlives

Daniela Agostinho (Aarhus University)

16 Ukugcina amagama: Keeping Names

Athambile Masola (Poet, Writer, Researcher and Lecturer, University of Cape Town)

22 On Spectrality as a Method of Care

Evelyn Wan (Utrecht University)

26 Living Archives: The Challenge of Capturing Memory in a Photographic Project

Edine Célestin (Kolektif 2 Dimansyon)

32 Moving Image Restitution in Australia: Towards an Indigenous Critique

Nikolaus Perneczky (Queen Mary University of London)

38 Strengthening Community-Based Human Rights Video Witnessing

Yvonne Ng (WITNESS)

44 [Deep Breath] Witnessing beyond Discourse in Colonial Sound Archives

Luc Marraffa (ASCA, University of Amsterdam)

48 Dreaming in Public

Aylin Kuryel (University of Amsterdam)

REFLECTING ON WITNESSING/CARE & THE ARCHIVE

Inward Outward engages critically with the complex interrelations of archives, coloniality, sound and moving images. For the third iteration of our symposium (on March 16 and 17, 2023) we convened conversations on *witnessing*, *care* and *repair* in the archive. We sought to mobilise Witnessing/Care together, as complementary practices, calling to each other as tools to move through the archive, but that may also be wielded in tension. We also deployed these words as verbs to highlight a form of implication, a refusal to conceive of archival work as a passive performance.

The terms *witnessing* and *care* have gained a fair amount of currency in recent times, as public institutions scramble to deal—or give the appearance that they are dealing—with calls to “decolonize” archives, to “redistribute” looted memories, to “redress” irreparable wrongs. As a consequence, while there have been some significant propositions to grapple with these words, there has also been much hollow noise.

So what could one more of these conversations really do?

Rather than adding to the din, and resisting trends that propose “best practices” or formulaic solutions to complex issues, the presentations at Inward Outward stressed the persistence of difficulty. Our conversations offered no suggestions that a panacea might be found, no indication of a new pro-forma method for finding novel ways, yet again, to make visible what so many in Europe do not wish to see. Rather, we interrogated what was—and continues to be—related to the protracted period of modernity; this post-enlightenment moment in which extractivism and the “thingification” of peoples, animals, plants and vital elements is the norm.

During the sessions, the contributors positioned the stakes of what it means to “witness”, what it means to “care”, deliberately and precisely in relation to the specificity of the locatedness and the intentions of their work. Together, we asked ourselves how to witness and care for the living in these violent times, how to turn to those who have lived before, and what to record for those to come. Across the presentations, we heard how “truth”, “fact”, the very so-called archival and documentary staples, keep shifting under our feet. So, we must start moving, perhaps even dancing.

What matters then, is not determining what happened, but asking who is able to draw on archival evidence in order to be able to speak, to be heard, and indeed to live. And with the word “speaking”, we mean all forms of embodied articulation that gain valency from both notes and silences, from singularity but also repetition, from openness as well as opacity.

While we began the symposium by focusing on witnessing and care, we slowly moved towards “repair”, another favoured word in these times. But we did not focus on repair in itself. Rather, as we thought for a while about the title for this session of the symposium, we decided on “*beyond* repair”. We thought this phrase to hold a beautiful idea because

it suggests two associative directions: to be beyond repair means the state of an object or situation is such that it cannot be repaired, it lies over the borders of the land of the repairable. “Beyond repair” also invites us to think beyond the seduction of repair as an ideal, as the aim of our work. It is enticing to believe that if only we could repair the broken object, it would all be over, our work would be done. The object would then cease to be of interest to us, no longer deserving of our labour. But in such a scenario, what happens to the most broken things, those things that are perhaps most in need of tending?

We chose “moving beyond repair” to indicate that we are trying to shift our collective gaze to what lies beyond the paradigm of repair and what is excluded from it. Hereby we signal our intention to imagine the aims of our work not as something to be done with, something with an end, but as an expanding repertoire of situated, individuated and co-determined responses to the variety of ways in which the brokenness of the past presses into the present—and the present as a horizon that moves with us.

In highlighting issues of care, witnessing and repair the presentations wove together many threads, but below we offer three thematic patterns that cut across the two-day symposium, and that we want to hold on to:

- There were presentations that highlighted the **temporal collapses** that working with care in archives creates—here we can think of artist Lavaugh Belle writing to ancestors who are children in Daniela Agostinho’s presentation; the chronicity of colonial and migratory flows Amade Aouatef M’charek’s traces through the movements of bodies, sponges and phosphorus in Tunisia; the empty museums of Palestine that simultaneously call to pasts and futures in Noor Abuarafeh’s work; and Athambile Masola’s practice of naming, invoking, conjuring those who have passed so that they might, as Edine Célestin said, “live forever”. These archival engagements demonstrate that while we are in the long wake of colonialism, we also live with multiple temporalities that evade linearity, that loop, swirl and fold. These temporal patterns attest to the “living-on” of life.

- Many presentations emphasized that caring, witnessing and moving beyond repair are **embodied practices**. Citing the work of Isabelle Stengers, Amade Aouatef M’charek described this corporeal disposition as an *art of paying attention*, a way of following the minute, the traces and the residues.

Similarly, Bonaventure Soh Bejeng Ndikung invited the audience to listen—really listen—to what transpires through sounds, in the interstices of linguistic folds and breaths. These practices found resonance in performances by Sites of Memory, and the *flesh witnessing* of Yvonne Ng's talk, but also in a widening of what the embodied is via Aylin Kuryel's *dreams* and Nikolaus Pernecky's films as *bodies of inscription*.

● In rethinking the body of the archive in these ways, questions of **agency** emerged. Our agency, as subjectivities working and dancing in/with/through the archive, but also, as Edine Célestin reminded us—the agency of archives themselves as animated, alive, full bodied. This led us to consider how the archive might not want to be remembered, and that some memories cannot afford to be kept. At times, the archive must remain hidden to persist, as Noor Abuarafeh's buried objects attest, or they convey impossibility as valuable knowledge to be transmitted. The archive (as ghost, human, animate matter or object) might refuse to be held and remembered; thereby re-fusing, re-making, our patterns of knowing and shifting relations of care, of witnessing, and of repair. In these cases, an archival ethics of care entails an implicated witnessing of this agency, an attention to the constellations of re-made and re-fused connections. At times, it means stepping-back, following or letting-go.

Of course, such careful engagements require intensive labour, as the working session beautifully led by Stevie Nolten and Carine Zaayman clearly revealed. It is also a process for which we are not always ready (we are thinking here of the last line of Makho-sazana Xaba's poem, which is shared in full in Athambile Masola's intervention in this collection).

What follows is an assemblage of articulations, rearticulations, thoughts and reflections drawn from the collective work that took place at Inward Outward's third edition "Witnessing/Care & the Archive". The works included in this collection were brought together through an invitation to all presenters of Inward Outward to contribute. In some cases, presenters have agreed to share abridged transcripts of their talks, in others, they share reflections or further thoughts inspired by their experiences at the symposium itself. The contributions thus offer a mix of different writing approaches and styles, including essays, reflections, conversations and more visual pieces.

Daniela Agostinho opens the publication, as she did the 2023 symposium, with her presentation "Curating Other-Archives: Witnessing, Care, and Image Afterlives", reflecting on what it means to care for the people whose spirits manifest in exhibitions which rely on colonial archives and their memories of violence.

Athambile Masola describes the responsibilities we owe as storytellers to the people whose stories we conjure, and how part of that responsibility can be fulfilled by taking our work out of university settings in "Ukugcina amagama: Keeping Names", based on her experiences creating a series of children's books on the lives of South African women.

Evelyn Wan continues a conversation she began as moderator of the 2023 panel on Witnessing, meditating on the power of hauntings and conjurings. In "On Spectrality as a Method of Care", she challenges us all to become haunted scientists as we deliberate whether and how to let archival ghosts speak or rest in peace.

Edine Célestin's contribution, "Living Archives: The Challenge of Capturing Memory in a Photographic Project", blends images created by her photography collective K2D with lessons learned while creating those images.

Nikolaus Pernecky's contribution pivots from the challenges of making visual archives to those of maintaining and sharing them, and shares lessons European archivists might learn from in "Moving Image Restitution in Australia: Towards an Indigenous Critique".

Yvonne Ng takes us further into the idea of witnessing as action, sharing her experiences of working for WITNESS, an organization that supports activists who use video and other recording technology to advocate for human rights around the world in "Strengthening Community-Based Human Rights Video Witnessing".

Luc Marraffa, a participant in the 2023 Inward Outward working session, brings their insight on working with sound archives and how to find meaning between the words in "[Deep Breath] Witnessing Beyond Discourse in Colonial Sound Archives".

Aylin Kuryel closes the publication by taking us out of the conscious world and into that of dreams, where reality, memory and activism blend and are remade in "Dreaming in Public".

Looking back at these contributions and the conversations of March 2023, we are saddened to observe that the world has become even less liveable for so many. In the current moment of conflict and loss, the forces of oppression are exerting power also through controlling what can be publicly attested to, which witnesses are afforded a space to speak and whose testimonies are taken seriously. We are thus faced even more intensely with the difficulty, and at times seemingly impossible work of care and repair. And yet, we are compelled to keep dancing on the shifting

sands, to connect to and bring into view, as we hope to do in this publication, those temporalities in which other frameworks for relating might emerge.

If you have any thoughts or reflections on reading this publication, we invite you to get in touch with us at inwardoutward@beeldengeluid.nl.⁷

— *Inward Outward 2023 Editorial Team*
Rachel Somers Miles, Alana Osbourne, Alison Fischer, Carine Zaayman, Eleni Tzialli, Isabel Beirigo, Wayne Modest

I think about why we write letters—as an antidote to distance, as a cure for miles and the spaces that stretch between us. I think about the distance that is between us which is only the distance of life and death which isn't so great a distance as I once imagined.

— (Miller)

DANIELA AGOSTINHO
(Aarhus University)

Curating Other- Archives: Witnessing, Care, and Image Afterlives

How do we witness the violence of coloniality with care for archives and the voices, bodies, and spirits they house? Which forms of witnessing are possible when witnessing has become so tethered to sight, a mode of perception so inextricable from colonial histories of visibility and its economies of the display of subjugated peoples? How do we work through the visual economy of colonial archives to arrive at a different kind of account?

These questions emerged in the process of curating *For Alberta and Victor: A Collection of Conjurings and Opacities*¹, a solo exhibition by visual artist La Vaughn Belle which I guest curated in Copenhagen in 2021. A site-specific intervention, the exhibition originated from an invitation by ARIEL—Feminisms in the Aesthetics, an independent curatorial project housed at the Women's Building. Located in the center of Copenhagen, the building is layered with unremembered histories, in particular the 1905 Colonial Exhibition at Tivoli Gardens, an amusement park that hosted a series of colonial exhibitions of human subjects in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Belle's exhibition at the Women's Building engaged with the residue of this history, with particular attention to the afterlife of Danish colonial presence in the former Danish West Indies and the representational qualms of working with the visual archives that document colonial encounters.

The Women's Building was co-founded in 1937 by Emma Gad, an author, exhibition-maker, and etiquette specialist, who started the building to support women's activities and associations. Gad was also the head of the Exhibition Committee of the 1905 Colonial Exhibition, which undertook many efforts to put people from the various Danish colonies in Greenland, Iceland, and Faroe Islands on display. After several failed attempts to bring two adults from the Danish West Indies, the committee forcefully displaced to Copenhagen two children from St. Croix, the seven-year-old Victor Waldemar Cornelins and the four-year-old Alberta Roberts. They arrived together in Denmark in the summer of 1905 and became one of the exhibition's main attractions. Newspaper articles of the time report that every day, thousands

of visitors came to visit the exhibition and look at the children.

When the Colonial Exhibition ended, the Exhibition Committee did not return the children to their families on St. Croix. Instead, they were placed in an orphanage in the center of Copenhagen. The newspapers of the time conveyed the colonial rationale for this decision: "It is in all cases the best solution; at home, no one either misses them if they stay here, or takes care of them when they return" (Politiken). Alberta died prematurely at the age of 16, reportedly due to tuberculosis but most likely of neglect, while Victor lived out the rest of his life as a teacher in Denmark, where he passed away in 1985.²

There are no visible traces of this history in the Women's Building, which is located a mere 15-minute walk from Tivoli Gardens. ARIEL's exhibition space in the Women's Building is on the ground floor, in what used to be a kiosk that opened up to the street. Working with this space raised a series of dilemmas: How to approach an exhibition in a space so burdened by colonial histories of display and racialization, literally a window display? How to enter the delicate story of Alberta and Victor, and how to negotiate (and respect) the limits of what is known and cannot be known about their lives? Which traces adequately evoke and honor their memory, given the risks of reinscribing past injuries?

Due to how Alberta and Victor were cruelly overexposed during their lives, Belle knew early on that she did not want to use any images of the children that could be found in the repositories of Danish cultural institutions online. Working with visual artifacts that played a defining role in reproducing racial stereotypes raises the dilemmas and contingencies of care. To look at the visual remains of slavery and colonialism necessarily implicates viewers in the same violence that originated such images. As art historian Temi Odumosu writes in "What Is in Our Gaze?":

We reproduce typologies, and the bodies of unnamed people, over and over again, online and in public space. And we do all this without permission from the original subjects. Still, we continuously conjure ghosts, and then try our best to appease the dead, to give them a more honourable place—perhaps in a book or an exhibition—a "hospitable memory," in which to finally rest.

1

See: <https://arielfeminisms.dk/ariel/program/upcomming-for-alberta-and-victor-a-collection-of-conjurings-and-opacities>.

2

See both Elg and Hunter on Victor Waldemar Cornelins' life in Denmark.

Creative and interpretive efforts at shifting the original terms of address of an image are always, to some extent, precarious. As Saidiya Hartman notes in “Venus in Two Acts”, such redressive gestures do not take place outside the visual economy of the colonial archive but through it, negotiating its constitutive limits (13). Writing about Emmett Till’s open casket, Jared Sexton observes: “There is, after all, no such thing as unalloyed looking or an image innocent of the violence it addresses” (71).³

Based in St. Croix, Belle has long engaged with the visual and material remnants of Danish colonial history through her practice. In our initial conversations, she and I wrestled with the conspicuous exhibition space and wondered how to interrupt the display logic of the window. When considering the modestly sized space of the exhibition, we wondered whether it would lend itself to a sensorial shift, a more intimate engagement with the story of the two children, beyond the ocular and towards a broader “ensemble of seeing, feeling, being affected, contacted, and moved beyond the distance of sight and observer” (Campt, *Listening* 42). We tried to offer such a sensorial shift in the exhibition space. Belle wondered how little the children must have remembered from their childhood on St. Croix, as they had been taken to Denmark so young and before they had the chance to make their own memories. She thus wanted to create a space of care for the memories of their lives in the Danish West Indies, a different kind of archive that could generate and offer an alternative account.



Exterior view of exhibition, *For Alberta and Victor: A Collection of Conjurations and Opacities*, ARIEL – Feminisms in the Aesthetics, Copenhagen, 2021–2022, photo: Malle Madsen.

3

Sexton invokes the term “unalloyed looking” used by Fred Moten (200) to discuss the same photograph.

The exhibition featured a seven-minute video work entitled *In the Place of Shadows* and a large-scale collage entitled *Storm—How to Imagine Tropicalia as Monumental*. In the following pages, I pay closer attention to the video work to unfold some of the questions that bind witnessing, care, and archives.

In The Place of Shadows meanders through invisible traces of Alberta and Victor on the landscape of St. Croix and in the artist’s own body and memory. Belle wanders through various sites in St. Croix, conjuring presence through her own body, becoming the medium that connects the memory of the landscape with the memories of the two children. The video takes the form of a letter addressed to Alberta and Victor, with Belle speaking to the children in voice-over, interweaving their story with her own memories of migrating from St. Croix to the United States mainland. In weaving her letter with her embodied sensing of the land, Belle invokes and discards archival sources to conjure a more tender connection from the distortions in the historical material.

I want to tell you a story. There was a little girl who traveled to the place called the United States of America. In a way she was already there. It’s still St. Croix, but it was no longer Danish in 1980. By then it was owned by the United States, so perhaps now you understand what I mean. When you leave a colony to go to the mainland, you basically migrate into the same country. You did that too in a way, leaving the Danish West Indies to go to Denmark. But a place inside a place doesn’t mean it’s the same thing. Different rules. Different gaze. I know you know what I mean.⁴

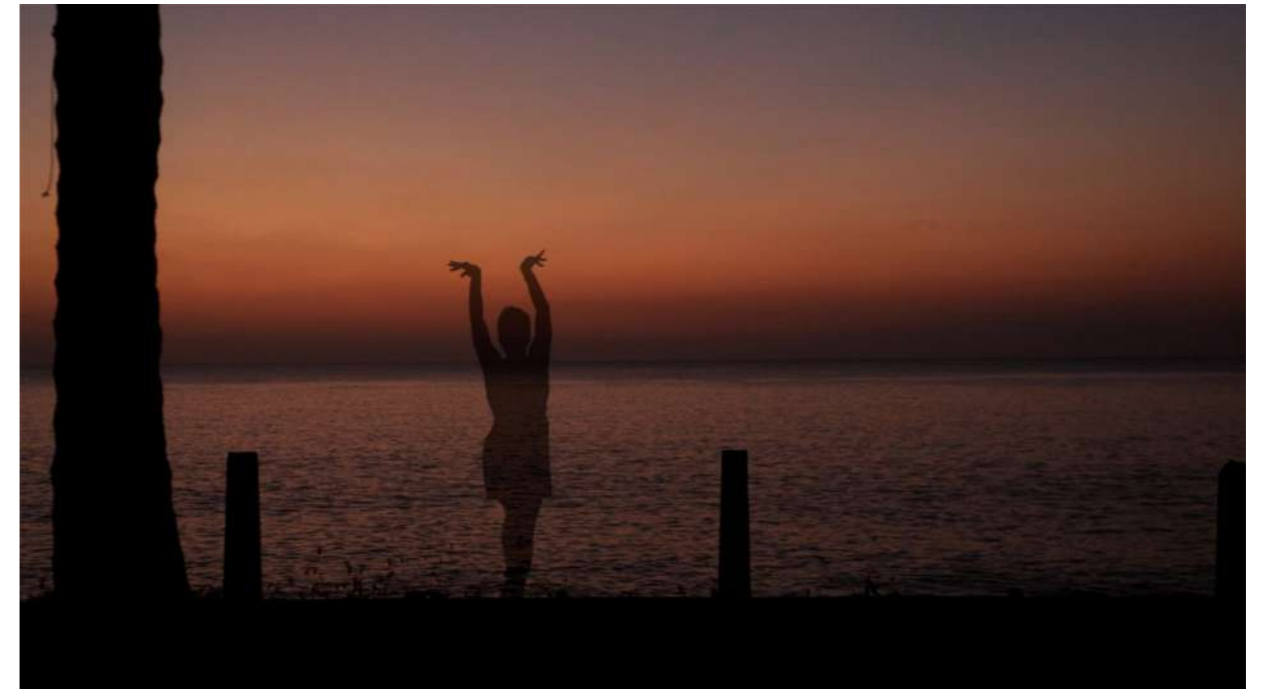
Reaching out to the children, reconnecting incommensurate histories across time and space, Belle openly grapples with the lingering effects of the colonial gaze. Evoking—but not directly reproducing—a series of images from the colonial exhibition through description, the video wrestles with but also destabilizes the colonial gaze through what Tina Campt has termed “correspondence”: a practice of connecting different time-spaces, when images are reactivated to reimagine Black life, spaces, and bodies in ways that straddle the present and past (“The Afterlives of Images”). In addressing Alberta and Victor, Belle extends a series of gestures to the past, to hold the children in an impossible transtemporal embrace, and to signal a recognition of the comfort and kinship they were owed. Belle’s video letter becomes a conjuring device, a means to open a new line of communication, a portal to reach out with an impossible antidote to separation.

4

This passage is a transcription of Belle’s voice-over for *In the Place of Shadows*.

In her book *Visitation*, Jennifer DeClue suggests that the erasures and distortions in colonial archives often lead to an estrangement between communities and their ancestors. Through correspondence, *In the Place of Shadows* also attempts to counter that forced estrangement, “mobilizing a love that travels back in time” (DeClue 3).

While the video-letter stages an archival encounter that becomes a source for communion between Belle and her ancestors, the letter indirectly addresses viewers in the form of an invitation to bear witness to this encounter. It is a mode of bearing witness that is not tethered to seeing evidence of the past but as a sensibility to presence,



La Vaughn Belle, *In the Place of Shadows*, 2021, single-channel video, 7:20 min, film still, courtesy of the artist.



La Vaughn Belle, *In the Place of Shadows*, 2021, single-channel video, 7:20 min, film still, courtesy of the artist.

which includes forms of intimacy with the past that are sensorial, embodied, spiritual, fleeting, and anti-monumental.

As Avery Gordon et al. remind us, the present is not just haunted by the ghosts of unresolved histories; the ghosts themselves are haunted too, by the irreparable violence inflicted on them and left unacknowledged. Belle offers a necessarily incomplete gesture of retrospective caretaking through *In the Place of Shadows*, a gesture that does not undo the harm or provide an impossible closure but instead offers a sign of redress so that the ghosts might also receive care in the present, “where there has historically been none” (Odumosu, “The Crying Child” 297).

With this “collection of conjurings and opacities” gathered by Belle, I came to think that the exhibition offered an open-ended archive-memorial that puts the archival form to the test. Belle crafted her own archival form, an “other-archive”⁵ that disturbs the account in the Danish colonial records and expands what an archive can do: a space to invite viewers into co-presence across time and space, to bear witness and remember what has been left unacknowledged. At the charged space of the Women’s Building, this archive-memorial enacted its own kind of haunting of the space and its surroundings, making an absented story more felt. More than a counter-archive, then,

Belle’s *poesis* creates a different form, a hybrid of archive and memorial, an “other-archive” that creates the conditions for witnessing and staying in touch across time and space, and for creating a different record not only of the past, but of our ongoing redressive gestures. In restoring a line of communication, Belle’s archive-memorial makes room to communicate to Alberta and Victor that they are loved and remembered, adding softer and gentler traces to an archive that harms. This is a prospective gesture, too, a gesture that aims to leave behind another archive of this story, one that destabilizes the extant one and allows for the story of Alberta and Victor to be accessed in a different register.

As performance scholar Rebecca Schneider reminds us, “attempting to account for atrocity can never be complete, but must be ongoing” (140). Curating other-archives is a reparative endeavor, assembling archival, performative, and ghostly matters into new forms with which to access, witness, and engage the past from the present. Such a collection of conjurings and opacities prompts us to recognize the value of open-ended inquiry, of gestures that do not offer closure but acknowledge enduring reverberation. They are reminders that our interpretive and creative interventions are aimed at different times simultaneously: that our interventions address the living, the dead, and the not-yet living.

5

Here I draw on El Guabli’s book *Moroccan Other-Archives. History and Citizenship after State Violence*.

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Ukugcina amagama: Keeping Names

ATHAMBILE MASOLA
(Poet, Writer, Researcher
and Lecturer, University of
Cape Town)

“Tongues of their Mothers”
By Makhosazana Xaba¹

17

*I wish to write an epic poem about Sarah Baartman,
one that will be silent on her capturers, torturers and demolishers.
It will say nothing of the experiments, the laboratories and the displays
or even the diplomatic dabbles that brought her remains home,
eventually.
This poem will sing of the Gamtoos Valley holding imprints of her
baby steps.
It will contain rhymes about the games she played as a child,
stanzas will have names of her friends, her family, her community.
It will borrow from every single poem ever written about her,
conjuring up her wholeness: her voice, dreams, emotions and thoughts.*

*I wish to write an epic poem about uMnkabayi kaJama Zulu,
one that will be silent on her nephew, Shaka, and her brother,
Senzangakhona.
It will not even mention Nandi. It will focus on her relationship
with her sisters Mawa and Mmama, her choice not to marry,
her preference not to have children and her power as a ruler.
It will speak of her assortment of battle strategies and her charisma as a
leader.
It will render a compilation of all the pieces of advice she gave to men
of abaQulusi who bowed to receive them, smiled to thank her,
but in public never acknowledged her, instead called her a mad witch.*

*I wish to write an epic poem about Daisy Makiwane,
one that will be silent on her father, the Reverend Elijah.
It will focus on her relationship with her sister Cecilia
and the conversations they had in the privacy of the night,
how they planned to make history and defy convention.
It will speak the language of algebra, geometry and trigonometry,
then switch to news, reports, reviews and editorials.
It will enmesh the logic of numbers with the passion that springs from
words,
capturing her unique brand of pioneer for whom the country was not
ready.*

*I wish to write an epic poem about Princess Magogo Constance Zulu,
one that will be silent on her son, Gatsha Mangosuthu Buthelezi.
It will focus on her music and the poetry in it,
the romance and the voice that carried it through to us.
It will describe the dexterity of her music-making fingers
and the rhythm of her body grounded on valleys,
mountains and musical rivers of the land of amaZulu.
I will find words to embrace the power of her love songs
that gave women dreams and fantasies to wake up and hold on to
and a language of love in the dialect of their own mothers.*

*I wish to write an epic poem about Victoria Mxenge,
one that will be silent on her husband Griffiths.
It will focus on her choice to flee from patients, bedpans and doctors.
This poem will flee from the pages and find a home in the sky. It will
float below the clouds, automatically changing fonts and sizes
and translating itself into languages that match each reader.
It is a poem that will remind people of Qonce
that her umbilical cord fertilized their soil.
It will remind people of uMlazi that her blood fertilized their soil.
It will remind her killers that we shall never, ever forget.*

*I wish to write an epic poem about Nomvula Glenrose Mbatha,
one that will be silent on my father, her husband Reuben Benjamin Xaba.*

*It will focus on her spirit, one that refused to fall to pieces,
rekindling the fire she made from ashes no one was prepared to gather.
This poem will raise the departed of Magogo, Nquthu,
Mgungundlovana,
iNanda, Healdtown, Utrecht, kwaMpande, Ndahleni and Ashdown,
so that they can sit around it as it glows and warm their hands
while they marvel at this fire she made from ashes no one was prepared
to gather.*

*These are just some of the epic poems I wish to write
about women of our world, in the tongues of their mothers.
I will present the women in forms that match their foundations
using metaphors of moments that defined their beings
and similes that flow through our seasons of eternity.
But I am not yet ready to write these poems.*

Makhosazana Xaba's poem "Tongues of their Mothers" is about the stories of women and the various lineages that lead us to their stories. It is an epic poem—a long narrative poem about prominent figures and their deeds—but an ironic one as indicated by the final line: "but I am not yet ready to write these poems." Xaba's epic is ironic, because hers is not an epic poem in the Greek tradition, but a collection of names and deeds of women whose narratives have been misunderstood or ignored. Xaba inadvertently writes an epic poem even while she is still imagining such a poem as she repeats "I wish to write an epic poem." An epic requires the writer to have as much information as possible about one particular figure, but Xaba has written about multiple figures using only fragmented information. Xaba has only enough information for a stanza and a wish to write lengthier poems for each woman. The poem embodies some of the challenges related to restorative work in feminist historiography, particularly in the context of precarity. By feminist historiography, I am referring here to a history that takes seriously the stories of women's lives, not as peripheral figures, but as central historical and agentic actors who have shaped history and therefore the present. A feminist historiography responds to the patriarchal historiography that has centralized the stories of white men, particularly from European and North American countries, as the makers of history and the present. By precarity, I am referring to the precarity of the archive and the precarity of time, where some stories disappear because the cultural moment does not make space for them.

As a response to this poem and to the gaps in historiography more broadly, I have been exploring the practice of *ukugcina amagama*, to be

the keeper of names, as an intellectual project as well as a feminist practice of care. *Ukugcina amagama* is from isiXhosa, the language I most often think and write in. In an Anglicized world, where English hegemony is so profound that at times it seems impossible to imagine knowledge in other languages, I have started using isiXhosa in my literary and historical work, as well as in my academic work, to puncture and disturb this reliance on English when we constitute knowledge. *Ukugcina amagama* means to keep names and to be the keeper of names, which effectively captures the work I do both in my teaching, and scholarship, and in my creative work. *Ukugcina amagama* is also a practice I grew up with. When I was younger, adults would meet me and instead of asking for my name they would ask for my family's name. I was asked to introduce myself by the phrase *ungumamni/ungumabani* (Who are your people?), I began to realize that I was being located in relation to the names I brought into a room. So if people asked me *ungubani/who are you*, I would respond with *ndingu MamGcina, uTyhopho, uXhamela* ... a mixture of the names of ancestors and their praises. This was my early practice of historical consciousness in a context where names were often shortened or changed at school to be more palatable and malleable for white English speakers.

As a practice, *ukugcina amagama* is about *ukuzilanda*, a consciousness about placing oneself in relation to a deep past in order to remember that not only am I never an individual—in the sense that I appear in relation to a lineage—but also that I am always responsible for keeping alive the names of others. I bring this consciousness of being a keeper of these names into the history

1

The poem "Tongues of their Mothers" is copied here in full with the permission of the author Makhosazana Xaba. It was initially published in Xaba's collection of poems titled *Tongues of their Mothers* (UKZN Press, 2008), the poem giving the book its name.

work that I do and into the academy, but also into the public sphere. In 2022, my colleague Xolisa Guzula and I published a set of three books for children under the title *Imbokodo*:² *Women Who Shape Us: 10 Extraordinary Leaders, Activists and Pioneers*; *10 Curious Inventors, Healers and Educators*; and *10 Inspiring Singers, Writers and Artists* (available in English and four African languages). When we conceptualized *Imbokodo*, we had stories in mind which we had to piece together through an archive which we had both collected over time. In choosing to render these women's stories in children's books, we also made the claim that children's books are intellectual work and knowledge production—that even the choices we made in the process of writing for children were reliant on broader questions about, agency, archive, care, and citation (for example, which women to include).

Gathering information was the first way in which we engaged with care. None of the women we wrote about have an institutional archive, so we had to construct the archive through our own research. I often hear people say "I'm going to the archives... I am going to this particular building... I am going to search for this particular box." Researching and writing *Imbokodo* gave us a sense of encountering a scattered archive and what it means to think about care and the work that we do in relation to that archive that can be recreated in a book through which people can engage and develop their own relationship with that archive. We had to rely at times on secondary material but at times also on our own primary material which consisted mainly of newspaper articles and photographs. We collected much of our information for the series while making mental bookmarks over many years, an archival practice of *ukugcina amagama*. It is about remembering names, retrieving information from footnotes and margins and recreating them in a book. This act of collection was the first layer of care.

The process of choosing the names and stories of the women was the second layer of care. Our choices were subjective, informed by the gaps we had identified in how the same names are often regurgitated. We were interested in women who had not necessarily had the opportunity to write themselves into the grand narrative of women's history in South Africa, which usually begins with the 1956 anti-pass march. We also had to balance visibility and invisibility, by placing in conversation with each other women who are

2

Imbokodo is a rock used to grind corn and other foods. It is used in the expression *Wathinta abafazi, wathinta imbokodo/You strike a woman, you strike a rock*, which was popularized by the women's movement during apartheid.

often known only individually or in relation to men. For example, Nomzamo Winifred Zanyiwe Madikizela Mandela is a hyper-visible name: she is known as Winnie Mandela. We wanted to contrast her with someone like Mabel Cetu, about whom we struggled to find a single image. Relying on Stephanie Jason's work in order to get information about her, we were able to eventually find one image of her through the Drum Magazine archive. Or someone like Nomguqo Paulina Dlamini, about whom we managed to find information in a book published by the Killie Campbell Library. We contrasted her story with the hyper-visibility of someone like Charlotte Makgomo Mannya Maxeke, who over the past 30 years has become one of the most recognizable figures of the 19th century nationalist movement in southern Africa. She was the first black woman to get a degree from an international university (Wilberforce University in Ohio, USA) in 1901. At Wilberforce, one of her teachers was W.E.B. Du Bois, an African-American intellectual whose work has shaped Pan-African and African-American scholarship.

At the heart of this research are a few questions: Do we care enough about names that fall through the cracks? Do we care enough about stories that are not "sexy"? Do we care about stories that are not about the grand narrative? We also deliberately included women who fell out of the grand narrative because of their mobility. For example, we included Pumla Kisosonkole (born Ngozwana) in *10 Extraordinary Leaders, Activists and Protestors*. She was born in South Africa and began her teaching career in missionary schools in the 1930s, but she moved to Uganda in 1939 when she married Christopher Kisosonkole. She became a prominent figure in the women's movement in Uganda in the 1950s. Her story disrupts the narrative of mobility in the inter-war period and raises questions about transnationalism on the African continent and more globally.

The third layer of care was through the design process. Design can easily be taken for granted when planning books, especially those for younger audiences, because a well-established aesthetic has been developed in the global north. We chose to include portraits of all the featured women. This was easy for the more visible women, of course, but for some women we could find no images at all, such as Emma Sandile, who was born in the early 19th century. Instead of reinscribing the absence rendered by the void of a photographic image, we communicated this absence by inserting a silhouette of a young woman's face. We did the same for Louisa Mve-mve, about whom we found only newspaper articles but no images. This became an opportunity to communicate the question of representation and whether we care enough about black women's subjectivity to render them on the page.

We were also lucky enough to engage with some of the women's family members, who generously shared their personal archives. Family members of Lauretta Ngcobo, Madosini, Princess Magogo and Nontsikelelo Qwelane all chose to trust us and give us access to private archives. They communicated with us and shared images and previous publications to assist our research, and we shared our research and gave them the opportunity to read and approve draft chapters. Though many had never met us, they trusted us to honor the stories of their mothers and grandmothers.

The categories we chose were largely subjective, led by the context of when the book was written. The growth in the genre of mini-biographies celebrating women often privileges women in politics. One of our books conforms to this standard, but we chose to foreground creatives, as well as educators and healers more broadly given the context of the 2020 pandemic unfolding when we were writing the book. Teachers, nurses, and healthcare workers were at the forefront of the health crises, and we wanted to give attention to women in professions that have been taken for granted. These categories were informed by care, as teachers and healers are seldom considered as individuals but rather as a nameless mass of people without distinguishable identities.

The series is called *Imbokodo* in recognition of the Women's March on 9 August 1956, where the chant "*Wathinta abafazi, wathinta imbokodo*" / "You strike a woman, you strike a rock" emerged. This gave us the opportunity to link the 1956 march with the stories of women from the 19th century and into the current moment. We deliberately situated these books as intellectual work, as we went through the same methodology we use in our academic work; the only difference was the audience we had in mind.

The second book project I engaged in that demonstrates the importance of care was my collaboration with Makhosazana Xaba in 2023 which is a collection of columns by Noni Jabavu written in 1977 titled *A Stranger at Home*.³ From the outset, this project was beset with questions of care, as Xaba and I show in an article that maps out the journey with the publishers (Xaba and Masola, "Few Have Ever Heard of Noni Jabavu"). Born in South Africa in 1919, Noni Jabavu was a pioneer writer, broadcaster, and literary magazine editor in the 1960s. She published two memoirs during this period: *Drawn in Colour* (1960) and *The Ochre People* (1963). Only *The Ochre People* was published in South Africa by Ravan Press in 1982. We felt it relevant to reintroduce her back into South Africa through a collection of her columns, anticipating that her books would eventually come back into circulation. Throughout this journey we were in touch with her family, as we needed their permission to publish the columns. Much like our experience with *Imbokodo*, we had to build trust with the family and give them space to make their own decisions amidst family losses. This process unfolded over a few years, over which time Xaba wrote the introduction and I wrote the afterword.

These projects have crystalized the nature of erasure and how to think about it in relation to care and the legacy of carelessness that exists in some institutions. Archivists, museum curators, and others have bemoaned the lack of state funding that has contributed to this carelessness, and it seems there is a connection between care and larger systemic decisions that affects the work we do as historians. Erasure thus happens as a result of decisions about whose stories are worth being told and whose work is worth being used and reused.

3

Makhosazana Xaba has been at the heart of resuscitating Noni Jabavu's work and life. She was an editor (with the late Bhekizizwe Peterson and Khwezi Mkhize) of *Foundational African Writers: Peter Abrahams, Noni Jabavu, Sibusiso Nyembezi and Es'kia Mphahlele*, the first extensive edited volume to feature the work of these writers. Xaba has worked on Jabavu's biography since first writing about her during her Master's in Creative Writing in 2006.

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The university does not deserve our knowledge production. Find other ways to use this knowledge. Make the archive living by gravitating to other genres.¹

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The archive is a site of past extraction, of data, of information, stored for future ages. The archive contains captured lives, extracted for value but not necessarily worthy of a real entry in the records. Or in Saidiya Hartman's description of the black enslaved women in the colonial archives, "The archive is [...] a death sentence, a tomb, a display of the violated body, an inventory of property, a medical treatise on gonorrhoea, a few lines about a whore's life, an asterisk in the grand narrative of history" (2).

How does one recuperate these lives tossed aside by history, stripped of their humanity, and purely seen for their extracted value? Hartman calls this an impossible task. Heeding her, I ask the following question: If the archive is inherently tied up with violence, what kinds of research methods would enable care for its materials? How might we, as researchers entering the archive, avoid replicating the embedded extractivist violence?

This piece is inspired by the WITNESSING panel at Inward Outward: a collaborative project *For Alberta and Victor: A Collection of Conjurations and Opacities* (2019) by Daniela Agostinho and La Vaughn Belle; the dead and inorganic bodies of migrant crossings in Amade M'charek's research project; the photographic project tracing the massacre of Kazal in Haiti by Edine Célestin; and the video/data archive for human rights defenders maintained by WITNESS as narrated by Yvonne Ng.² These archives bear witness to colored bodies living, thriving, and dying in the midst and aftermath of colonial violence. With care, the panelists reflected on how their respective research practices attend to structures of power that cut through these archives.

Methods are not just scientific modes of thinking and logic. To define methods as such is to stay within a colonial episteme that rejects other ways of knowing. Methods are ways of being in the world. They are ways of navigating relationality between researcher and research subject. The scientific method only dictates one possibility—an extractivist, colonial way of knowing that depends on the position of the all-knowing scientist. The

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Taken from my own handwritten notes during the "CARE" panel discussion, with no attribution to the speaker.

2

See the contributions from Daniela Agostinho, Edine Célestin and Yvonne Ng in this volume.

scientist defines the research subject, captures all that is observable, and turns mere experience into principles, hypotheses, analyses, neatly labeled and categorized, ready for consumption.

But what if the scientist is only able to encounter the ghost or the ghostly remains of one's research subject? How does one navigate such a research process? Hartman suggests critical fabulation to seek the conditional temporality of "what could have been" (Lowe in Hartman 11), to practice narrative restraint so as to refuse closure (Hartman 12). To be witnesses across time by attending to the unspoken and the unspeakable. I want to emphasize the necessity of becoming the haunted scientist, to allow ghosts to be ghosts, to turn to the discourse of spectrality.

Jacques Derrida asks, "What is a ghost? What is the *effectivity* or the *presence* of a specter, that is, of what seems to remain as ineffective, virtual, insubstantial as a simulacrum?" (10, original emphasis). The ghost, neither here nor there, not fully material and yet not merely metaphorical, hovers in the in-between. To conjure ghosts of history, to study through the lens of the spectral—as Blanco and Peeren aptly put it, "This quest cannot be called a science, or even a method, as the ghost or specter is seen to signify precisely that which escapes full cognition or comprehension" (9).

But it is a method. It is a method known to those of us who communicate with ancestors through spiritual practices, whose colonized cultures have been named "superstitious" and have been cast out by Western science. It is a method that calls on a multitude of voices, who speak to us from beyond to share their wisdom. Maybe the spectral is a method of interest here precisely because it is not premised on Western scientific logic of knowledge extraction and production, rationality, and mastery.

And ghosts are not unusual to any of us working in the archives anyway, where death is no stranger.

In *Ghostly Matters*, Avery Gordon muses over the lack of a settled methodology in studying ghosts, and over the trouble she got when attempting to present her work in sociological circles. Like Hartman, Gordon lands in literary imagination, in the power of the fictive, a tool to conjure ghosts untold by historical facts. "As a mode of apprehension and reformation, conjuring merges the analytical, the procedural, the imaginative, and the effervescent" (Gordon 22). In other words, the analytical cannot be disentangled from the imaginative.

So maybe there is possibility in the margins of the scientific method—"For isn't it the method, the path to knowledge, that has always also led us away, led us astray, by fraud and artifice" (Irigaray in Gordon 39)? Colonial science is, after all, the

On Spectrality as a Method of Care

darker side of modernity (Mignolo). Epistemic violence is by definition narrated and embodied by the archive.

And so we turn toward what has been cast out. Toward the ghosts. Toward the potentialities of what could have been, in an attempt to decolonize our methods of knowing and being with our research subjects.

Gordon writes:

“And so we will need to invent other forms of curiosity to engage those haunting moments that take us down the path of the helplessly repetitive, of the fictional pretense, of the contradictory, of the ghostly, in order to capture back all that must be circumscribed in order to produce the ‘adequate’ version.” (41)

Hartman writes:

“I wanted to write a romance that exceeded the fictions of history—the rumors, scandals, lies, invented evidence, fabricated confessions, volatile facts, impossible metaphors, chance events, and fantasies that constitute the archive and determine what can be said about the past.” (9)

Within the scene of analysis is the reality of facts and the potentialities of fiction. Fact: We enter the archives to conduct historical research, to attempt to resurrect a truthful sketch of what has happened. Fact: We revisit the archive to come to terms with historical wrongdoings, to become accountable, to repay colonial debt. Fact: We extracted labor from colonized, enslaved bodies and enacted unspeakable violence. Potentiality: We can choose whether we wish to extract labor again from painful histories today. We can choose whether we wish to re-enact and restage the trauma and the colonial violence for the public to consume. Fact: We dredge up the most awful tales from the archive to “educate” the public, to “educate” ourselves. Potentiality: Sometimes it is more respectable to let the stories be. Potentiality: It is possible to extend care, even if this could only happen postmortem.

Option A: Let the ghosts speak and amplify their voices and their demands for justice. We turn to their multiple voices to unsettle insular logics of writing in a so-called scientific, all-knowing voice. Let their voices challenge the scientific narratives of certainty and validity, of casting the world in binaries of us versus them, colonizer versus colonized, life versus death. Crossing the boundary of death to listen to the ghosts’ unfulfilled desires, dreams, and hopes requires us to attend to “a politics of memory, of inheritance, and of generations” (Derrida xix). Derrida argues that these politics are enfolded with a sense of responsibility, of acting in the name of justice for those who were formerly victims of systemic oppression and violence, as much as those who are not yet born. Spectral

method, in this sense, works as a time-warp that enfolds the present with its many pasts and many futures, and asks us to extend care beyond those inhabiting the living. It invites us to be critical and inventive, to consider interdisciplinary tools to “explain, explore, and story the world” (McKittrick 4). It invites us to move past the disciplinary thinking that limits research to the gathering and processing of data used as a normalizing force that designates who does and does not belong and used to reduce captured subjects to points on a graph and punctuations in the grand historical narratives. It invites us to feel the data, to feel the violence embedded in archives, and to be spurred on by the calls to justice by its ghosts.

Option B: Let the ghosts rest in peace. Some stories are meant to be laid to rest and some stories are not for us to tell. We practice the method of refusal in alignment with the work of scholars like bell hooks, Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, and The Practicing Refusal Collective (Campt). In 1990, hooks had already pointed to the symbolic violence of the academy, where scientific research provides recognition for the Other only through narratives of pain and suffering (Tuck and Yang). Colored bodies often enter the academy not as full and embodied but as scarred, wounded, and not fully human. This, to Tuck and Yang, is a form of settler colonial ideology that is reified through narratives in and out of the archive. Pain narratives are attractive to Western science because they fit within the coloniality of knowledge orders,

in which the pained body (or community or people) is set back or delayed on some kind of path of humanization, and now must catch up (but never can) to the settler/unpained/abled body (or community or people or society or philosophy or knowledge system). (Tuck and Yang 231)

By letting the ghosts rest in peace in the archives, we refuse to accede to the settler colonial ideology of the academy, and we stop extracting and commodifying stories of pain and suffering in the name of science.

We work between the necessity to speak and the refusal to speak. These two options do not preclude each other. We move from the desire to extract from the archive (and to extract from the extractions) to the desire to care for what is in and out of the archive. We reject extractivist science and affirm critical and imaginative conjurings. We practice transtemporal solidarity with those whom we cannot name. We forge alliances in the interstices of past, present, and future,

wherein we read, live, hear, groove, create, and write across a range of temporalities, places, texts, and ideas that build on existing liberatory practices and pursue ways

of living the world that are uncomfortably generous and provisional and practical and, as well, imprecise and unrealized. (McKittrick 5)

We become haunted scientists, committed to narratives of desire toward what could have been and what can and will be. Turn away from the ideologies of Western colonial science that have imprisoned its subjects in a knowledge order that ignores their voices. Refuse the epistemic violence prescribed by the archive. Stand with the ghosts and their calls for justice—for an act of refusal is an act of care.

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Living Archives:

The Challenge of Capturing Memory in a Photographic Project

EDINE CÉLESTIN
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Quand un ancien meurt c'est tout une bibliothèque qui brule.

The proverb cited above and often attributed to Amadou Hampâté Bâ addresses the transmission of knowledge, memory, and traditions. It also encapsulates the experience of my colleagues Fabienne Douce, Réginald Louissaint Junior, Moïse Pierre, George Harry Rouzier, Mackenson Saint-Felix and I during our research in Kazal. As photographers from the first post-Duvalier generation, all part of the collective Kolektif 2 Dimansyon (K2D), we spent four years working together on an archival project that traced memories of François Duvalier's dictatorship in Haiti.

Our research entitled "Kazal: Memories of a Massacre under Duvalier: A Photographic Approach" focused on Kazal, a village located north of Port-au-Prince where, in the spring of 1969, Duvalier's military and militia crushed an uprising of local peasants who were protesting abusive taxes and fighting for the right to draw water from the river that ran through their village. The ensuing hostilities lasted from March 27th to April 16th and resulted in the death of at least 23 peasants, the disappearance of another 80, and the destruction of 82 houses. These numbers are approximate; we will never know exactly how many people died, how many houses were destroyed, or how many women were raped. Only rare material traces

and a few witnesses to this historical event have resisted ruin and time. During the dictatorship, the Macoutes (militias) burned down homes, destroying all reminders of their victims, and people could not afford to keep their memories for fear of reprisals. Afterwards, many of the objects and photographs that brought back these events were so painful to hold on to that surviving families destroyed them.

At the beginning of our project, we ran around in circles trying to find people who might have archives, and we treated the few objects we were able to find like treasures. Eventually we realised that what we were looking for was already in front of us: we had to work with people, their memory, their recollection of the facts. Our archives *were* these people. Haiti has a very strong oral tradition, and 20% of its population was considered illiterate in 2020, so here archives take on another dimension: they are alive, they are human, they are preserved in our memory. They are memories we cherish or pains we would like to forget; a difficult past to reckon with, or a story too strange to tell.

In her research on Dakar, Marie Gautheron describes the "living archive" as a form of cultural heritage. In this context, the living archive is linked to intangible heritage and is comprised of "the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge and know-how—as well as the instruments,



A group of fishermen embarking onto the coast of Bayèl. Cabaret, 2015 (Credit: Moïse Pierre)



Morivia Joseph's Bible, one of the witnesses of the massacre. Kazal, 2016 (Crédit: Réginald Louissaint Junior)

objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated with them—that communities, groups and, where appropriate, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage" (Gautheron 9). Haiti has experienced—and continues to experience—numerous political crises, wherein goods, cultural practices, objects, and homes are continuously destroyed. Yet peoples' memories survive despite everything, and they are preserved and passed on in the form of stories, such as the ones my grandmother told my mother, who told them to me, and that I will tell my own children. Therefore, in Haiti, bearing witness and caring for "living archives" takes on a fuller meaning: our archives are our people, who carry within them the joys and pains of history.

As photographers, we asked ourselves how we could hold these memories, testimonies, and recollections. For us, photography was first and foremost about informing, documenting, and bearing witness to a given reality. The documentary approach we used for the Kazal project was totally new to us: we now had to conduct interviews, research sources, and work in the field to create a continuous dialogue with our subjects. This was at times uncomfortable: as city-dwellers from the capital, meeting the inhabitants of Kazal—most of whom are peasants and farmers of the land—we were forced to confront social, cultural, and geographical barriers. Despite these difficulties, our unwavering determination to return to the same

Farmers taking a break in Desab, a part of Cabaret, 2016. (Crédit: Mackenson Saint-Félix)



Jérémie Eliazaire High School, named after the leader of the uprising. Kazal, 2015. (Crédit: Georges Harry Rouzier)

places and people—to listen, to show, to share—opened new lines of research, new images, new ways to circulate memory. As Édouard Glissant explains, it is through "relation" that new forms of lucidity emerge. If we want to share the beauty of the world, if we want to stand in solidarity with suffering, we must learn to remember together, across the fractures of history and memory.

Our research in Kazal was forged through ongoing relations with residents between 2015 and 2019. We developed a deep bond with the people of Kazal, building trust over the years and through the possibility that documentary photography offers to evoke memories from elements of

On the bridge of Kazal, 2015. (Crédit : Fabienne Douce)





everyday life. The medium of photography can recount memory alongside more ancient forms of storytelling such as oral narration, writing, and so on. Photographs are also material and, as a form of testimony to the past, they can reactivate past memories and invite reflection. However, they offer only fragmentary, partial, and subjective testimonies that tell us “as much about the subject as [they do] about the photographer” (Lo Calzo 168).

The result of our project designed to shed light on the period of the dictatorship is at once a book, a travelling exhibition, and a long-format website¹ funded by the Haitian Foundation of Knowledge and Liberty. The testimonies gathered online and

Commemorative plaque in memory of the victims of Kazal. “The executioners forget. The victims are forever marked.” Kazal, 2016.” Kazal, 2016. (Crédit: Edine Célestin)

Photo of one of the first commemorations of the Kazal massacre after the fall of Duvalier, March 1987.



in the book, along with the photographs that were taken as part of a master class run by Nicola Lo Calzo and coordinated by Maude Malengrez, are articulated in the present tense. Carefully framed and captured, and produced through dialogue and reciprocity (Girola), the images of people, tools and of the trees that protect Kazal prolong every word of reminiscence expressed about the village’s traumatic past. Reflecting the villagers’ testimonies, and with the aim of transcribing keywords that recur in their speech, we divided the project into five chapters: Dlo (Water), because water was one

of the elements that triggered the massacre; *Latè* (Land), because Kazal’s inhabitants were mostly peasants who worked the land; *Mystik* (Mystical); *Letat* (State or Government), because the victims have been forgotten by the State; and *Memwa* (Memory) to refer to the memory of people, places, and events.

We’ve included here some images from the project, but invite you to take a richer tour of *Kazal: Memories of a Massacre under Duvalier: A Photographic Approach* on www.memwakazal.com¹.

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¹

You can visit the project website here: <https://www.memwakazal.com/>.

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Moving Image Restitution in Australia: Towards an Indigenous Critique

As demands for the return of looted artifacts to their communities of origin are once again intensifying, what are we to make of similarly displaced and sequestered moving images, in particular ethnographic and colonial film collections which holding institutions now frequently classify as “shared heritage”? The challenges facing audiovisual archives that care for such “sensitive” collections are many and far exceed the single question of return. They include everything from uneven terms of access to forms of epistemic violence that endure in archival infrastructures and operations. While film archives in Europe are only beginning to face up to the long-standing demand for moving image restitution (Perneczky), their Australian counterparts have for several decades been engaged in a wide spectrum of archival practices we might call “restitutive” in this broader sense.

Australian Indigenous claims to moving images, as this essay sets out to demonstrate, are more than mere claims for inclusion; activating alternative understandings of possession and attribution, they offer a vision of restitution beyond the hegemony of liberal reformism. Instead of focusing on institutional actors, therefore, I emphasize the perspectives of Indigenous users of audiovisual archives. My purpose is to show how the relationships these users have formed with photographic and filmic images challenge established archival practice; how institutions have responded to these challenges and sought to accommodate Indigenous users; and finally, how Indigenous claims to moving images resist and transcend these forms of institutional accommodation.

In the wake of the watershed Native Title Act of 1993, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people frequented Australian archives in large numbers in search of evidence to support native title claims.¹ These new users not only claimed back much of what they found in the archive—images and sounds of their ancestors, knowledges, and land—but it also became apparent that the way these materials had been stored, handled, named, and transmitted was frequently inappropriate to Indigenous understandings of their cultural import. Claims by Australian Indigenous users compelled a wide-ranging process of institutional critique, which in turn spawned a body of critical

anthropological research, highlighting tensions and contradictions within such movements towards restitution and reform.² Building on this sizable pool of practical experience and theoretical reflection, I argue that, for all its flaws and limitations, the Australian example can serve as a useful precedent for reckoning with the colonial legacies that shape the field of audiovisual archiving globally.³

While Australian Indigenous understandings of archival images differ considerably across cultures and time, the research literature suggests some common uses for moving and still images originally taken for administrative or ethnographic purposes: first, to reconstruct family histories, particularly in the context of the so-called “Stolen Generations”; second, to document and revive aspects of Aboriginal cultures, from rituals to languages, that have been eroded through forced separation and other processes of displacement or assimilation; and finally, to “express connections to place” (Lydon, “Photography and Critical Heritage” 18) beyond the collection of evidence in support of native title claims, even where those might also be at stake. In what follows, I consider these three vectors of reclamation in turn: in the image of the ancestor, the image of knowledge, and the image of land. In exploring these themes, it will become clear that a Western secular conceptual framework does not do justice to the ways in which Australian Indigenous people relate with and to images. These modes of engagement with visual material, moreover, have wide-reaching implications for both film archival practice and its political-legal framings.

The Ancestral Image

In Australian Indigenous cosmologies, filmic or photographic portrayals of ancestors are afforded respect because they are more than mere representations. The ancestral image can be conceptualized as participating in what it depicts—as being *consubstantial* with the ancestor—or as a presence expressive of agency, with the subject of the image being “present in it rather than represented” (Peleggi 340).⁴ Rather than speaking of images of the ancestors, then, it would be more appropriate to consider the image *as* ancestor, or simply to speak of “ancestral images.” This move

¹ From one percent being Indigenous users in the 1990s, according to some estimates, to over 75 percent in 2004 (Anderson 238). The Native Title Act recognized the land rights of Indigenous Australians, allowing them to claim traditional ownership of land and water. It was established in response to the 1992 Mabo decision, which rejected the concept of *terra nullius* and affirmed the existence of native title.

² See, for example, Barwick et al., Fourmille, Ginsburg, and Lydon (“Return”).

³ Peterson proposes similarly. Relatedly, Rao criticizes the FIAF Code of Ethics and suggests redress drawing on Australia; and Strother looks to Indigenous activism in the US, in response to the 1990 Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), as a potential model for restitution claims (regarding human remains) in Africa.

⁴ These terms are not so different from more familiar theorizations, from Roland Barthes to Stanley Cavell, of photography-based media as a presence-in-absence, only that Barthes and Cavell secularize this effect by placing it on the side of the viewer. See also Morton.

approximates images to ancestral remains—and the archiving of such images to a mode of ancestor care.

To give an example of what that means for archival practice, we may look at the digitization of the Central Australian Aboriginal Men's Collection (formerly the "Strehlow Collection") at the National Film and Sound Archive of Australia (NFSA).⁵ Theodore George Henry Strehlow was an Australian anthropologist and linguist who produced over 160 hours of sound recordings and several reels of film, in addition to field diaries, genealogies, photographs and slides, nearly all of which relate to the Aranda (Arrernte) cultures of Central Australia, and mainly to men's business, that is, secret ceremonies, sacred sites, and other forms of knowledge restricted to men. The presence of ancestors in these media posed entirely new and unforeseen problems for digital reproduction and duplication. First, a decision had to be made, in consultation with descendant communities, whether these presences should be digitized at all. Once it had been decided, the process itself came under scrutiny. As much of the material depicts secret knowledge, the archivists were not allowed to watch the film reels and audio tapes, only to handle them. The material had to be kept in a locked container separate from other items in the archive. As most of it concerned men's business, only male archivists were permitted to work on the material. For the analogue material, these conditions, while controversial for some, were easily met in practical terms, though thinking through the implications for more exceptional scenarios (like an emergency evacuation) remained a taxing exercise for the institution. Digitization posed a further challenge: scanning and encoding the ancestral images into data would dematerialize and diffuse the bounded analogue objects into binary strings on the archive's server, where nothing, strictly speaking, kept them apart. Eventually, it was agreed that a separate server was needed to accommodate the digitized ancestors' needs.

Some of these considerations are more widely applicable. Looking at photographic images of colonial subjects in the Dutch Virgin Islands, Temi Odumosu has similarly framed these images as "ancestor remains," thus raising a whole new set of questions about responsibilities of care also in film archives of

colonial and ethnographic provenance. Respecting cultural restrictions on reproduction and circulation is an important part of returning the "cultural authority" over images, even where physical image carriers are retained in the archive. Data sovereignty, i.e., control of access and dissemination of digitized images and other digitally stored information, including names and categories used in catalogs and databases, should therefore be understood as an intrinsic dimension of moving image restitution.⁶

The paradigm of "shared heritage," which in the European context has established itself as the institutional euphemism of choice for colonial and ethnographic collections, too often remains wedded to a Western liberal conception of "sharing" as free, unhindered circulation. To this understanding of sharing on the model of universal free exchange, we might contrast the logic of the gift. Where the former relationship is extinguished in the moment of its realization, the latter weaves enduring ties of mutual recognition and responsibility. Take the recommendations in Felwine Sarr and Bénédicte Savoy's 2018 report on the restitution of African heritage held in France. In this document, which is rightly considered a landmark statement in the current debate, the authors propose the blanket digitization of all audiovisual materials pertaining to African cultures, to be made available under an Open Access license on a centralized online portal custom-built for this purpose. This recommendation, however well-intended, reflects wider institutional attitudes to shared film heritage. When audiovisual archives in Europe mandate "access" to such collections, it is usually they who set the terms of accessibility, whatever they may be. They determine how far access should extend, how this heritage can be exploited (or not); they assess collections, decide what will be digitized to what standard and how it will be datafied, all the while precluding alternative conceptions of what it might mean truly to share this archival responsibility and authority. All such decisions are cultural and curatorial prerogatives that should belong to communities of origin, making necessary close consultation—not as an afterthought, but as a central feature from the earliest stages of any restitutive effort, including, for instance, the placement of community stakeholders in museums and archives to engage in their own provenance research.⁷

Images-in-Place

Images of country, like ancestral images, are presences rather than representations, of particular lifeworlds and the lifeways they hold. While many Australian Indigenous people turned to the archive in search of evidence for native title claims, their relation to the land *in the image* frequently transcends this evidentiary impulse. Claims to land are inextricably entangled with the ownership of songs, stories, and knowledges (Koch et al. 83). Land, as a cultural landscape, is not separate from these other forms of cultural expression. Ancestry, likewise, extends metonymically from kin to country. Still and moving images inscribe the land in these multiple, overlapping, and interconnected dimensions. Aboriginal land claims, then, are also claims to a different understanding of ownership and belonging, which extends to the land present in the image.

One way of operationalizing these observations for archival practice is by linking them to the idea of "provenance-in-place" (Ghaddar). In this view, which was at the center of Third World struggles for archival self-determination during the long 1960s, archival provenance ought to be anchored not in authorship or property, but in the place to which the archive in question pertains. Considering films and photographs as "images-in-place" also raises the question of archiving "on country," or of the decentralization of the archive, moving away from monolithic repositories located in urban centers towards a proliferation of self-run and self-determined "gathering places." In the context of European-held shared heritage, by contrast, and in North-South archival cooperation more generally, the building of archival capacity "on the ground" is a secondary concern at best—and is framed as development aid extended by generous Western donors rather than as a form of archival restitution or reparation.

Against Copyright

Aboriginal or Indigenous claims to moving images thus move us beyond a narrow understanding of restitution as "return" and towards a comprehensive view of restitution as a form of reparative worldmaking whose field of action encompasses all aspects of archival practice and infrastructure, including how we understand the authorship and ownership of images. Understandings of ownership do not spring up spontaneously from the whims of archival practitioners, but have an "objective" basis in law, where they are codified, for instance, under the title of "intellectual property" (or IP). Indigenous people have leveraged intellectual property rights to reclaim sovereignty over their cultural heritage, including over images, effectively couching their claims "in a language that power understands" (Handler in Coombe). However, extant legal frameworks often do not serve them well at all. In Rosemary Coombe's words, IP "fail[s] to reflect the full dimensions of

Native aspirations and impose[s] colonial juridical categories on postcolonial struggles in a fashion that reenacts the cultural violence of colonization" (232). In the realm of the image, copyright rules supreme. This legal framework yokes image property to a narrow understanding of authorship which does not recognize filmed subjects—let alone other, non-human, agencies—as co-creators and thus co-owners of the image. Jane Anderson describes the author as "a figure of dispossession, working to legally and socially reduce and exclude other cultural forms of articulation, expression, and association with cultural knowledge products" (237). As Brenna Bhandar has shown, authorship and property are entwined concepts with common colonial origins: it is through mixing their labor with land presumed to be "undeveloped," "improving" it in the process, that the settler first establishes their claim to Indigenous land.

Indigenous claims to moving images do not simply reproduce the legal categories of the West—which are the legal forms of global capitalism—they also push against and exceed the limits of the Western legal imagination, exposing its historical contingency and cultural specificity. Authorship is individual, whereas Indigenous claims to possession are often collective or, more accurately, *dividual*. Unlike in the European tradition, where "belonging divides and property disowns" (Strathern 531), Indigenous understandings of possession entail enduring connections. In this view, ownership does not imply the free disposition over what is owned but instead generates new obligations and responsibilities. Possession, we might also say, is here defined not as a *right* of property but as an *obligation* of care.⁸

Film and photographic media have historically acted as conduits for processes of objectification, commodification, and property-formation; they have served to record, objectify, and separate land and populations. At the same time, as Marxist legal scholar Bernard Edelman has shown, the invention of photography and other means of mechanical reproduction initially troubled and perplexed the law. With their strange, "automatic," and "objective" subjectivity, Edelman argues, these media destabilized and disrupted prevalent conceptions of authorship and property alike. To become property, they first had to be legally aligned with the property form, which in turn required a change in perception, whereby the act of taking a picture came to be seen as a *new* modality of *older* forms of expropriation. Australian Indigenous claims foreground and reactivate these suppressed potentialities of film and photography to destabilize the property form—which has important implications for moving image

5

The policies and practices developed by the NFSA in dealing with footage pertaining to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures include digital repatriations or "returns to country," community consultations regarding culturally appropriate archival protocols for dealing with sensitive or restricted images, the implementation of Indigenous knowledge labels in databases and interfaces, as well as infrastructural support for

alternative gathering places on country. My reconstruction in the following is indebted to insights generously shared by Tasha James, an archivist of Wiradjuri descent who was the NFSA's Indigenous Connections Manager at the time.

6

For a detailed discussion of issues relating to digital colonial archives, see Agostinho.

7

As stipulated in the Australian government's official Repatriation Policy. See https://www.arts.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/australian_government_policy_on_indigenous_repatriation.pdf. For a critique of Sarr and Savoy along these lines, see Pavis and Wallace.

8

On this last point, see Tomba and see Loick.

restitution. As Jane Anderson, Ariella Azoulay and others have pointed out, restitution narrowly understood as repatriation or return presupposes and maintains the legal regime of property and authorship. It does nothing to address the original violence of dispossession and objectification—in this instance, the taking of images as property—but rather entrenches its power in the present. While I do not wish to diminish more pragmatic approaches embodied by archival protocols and the entire discourse of moral rights, I would argue that restitutive efforts should be complemented by a more radical critique of these underlying legal and political forms, with a view to their ultimate abolition.

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Strengthening Community- Based Human Rights Video Witnessing

YVONNE NG
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This text is adapted from a talk I gave as part of a session on “Witnessing” at the Inward Outward Symposium on Witnessing/Care and the Archive in March 2023. Appropriate to the theme of the session and the symposium, I actually work at an organization called WITNESS¹ Our mission is to support people to use video and technology to protect and defend human rights. We are a nonprofit organization made up of over 50 people from many different walks of life based in about a dozen different countries. We are all connected to diverse communities and human rights movements across the globe.

Here is a photo of our team:



WITNESS team, Mexico City,
October 2023.

I am an audiovisual archivist, and I oversee WITNESS's archives program. I am part of a team organized into six regional programs and three cross-regional thematic programs. We work directly and collaboratively with human rights defenders in all of our regions to support their advocacy goals. With our partners, we also learn and co-create guidance² that we share and use to engage with the human rights community more broadly. In addition, we advocate to large video and technology companies to ensure that their tools and services support human rights rather than hinder and endanger the most marginalized.

For the Inward Outward session, I was invited to speak about our work and to reflect on the practice of witnessing as an embodied practice, and what that means in terms of how I approach archival work.

“When Is Archival Evidence of Colonial Violence Evidentiary Enough?”

The Inward Outward organizers gave us a prompt: “When is archival evidence of colonial violence evidentiary enough?” My response to that question

¹
See: <https://www.witness.org/>.

²
See: <https://library.witness.org/>.

is, unfortunately, that evidence often *is not* “evidentiary enough” in the context of achieving justice, accountability, or human rights change. That is, we live in a time that often offers more than enough audiovisual evidence of human rights violations for all of us to know what is happening. However, because of global power structures, having evidence—even lots of it—often does not in itself lead to change, unless such accounts are also deployed strategically to reach the people or institutions who can influence change—and, moreover, unless those people and institutions listen to, believe, and act on that evidence.

There is also the question of what is “enough” in terms of what the world asks of human rights documenters. Front Line Defenders³ publishes their annual Global Analysis⁴ which tracks the number of human rights defenders killed each year. In 2022, it identified the killing of 401 human rights defenders in 26 countries. These numbers do not include the countless other human rights defenders targeted with surveillance and false charges, or who are attacked with smear campaigns for the work they do to defend their communities. Human rights documenters take on a huge burden and physical risk when they record video evidence of violations. The Inward Outward session description states that “Witnessing [...] always combines the aural and the ocular.” In fact, human rights witnessing involves more than just the eyes and ears; it can implicate one’s entire body, one’s life. What lengths should documenters go to, and what lengths can we expect them to go to, to collect the evidence necessary to meet our increasing standards for reliability, especially in contexts where repressive regimes overtly target human rights defenders and clamp down on freedom of expression?

Who We Center, Serve, Support

In our work at WITNESS, we aim to center the people and communities most impacted by human rights violations, and to serve and work alongside local activists and experts who are using video and technology to advance human rights. To the participants at this symposium, this may seem an obvious and straightforward choice, but in many spheres it is not the common perspective. Consider, for example, the gaze implied in language like “user-generated content,” “open-source intelligence,” or “open-source investigation,” and the dehumanizing and disembodied effect of conceiving of documenters and documented people as “users” or “sources.” In addition to those we serve and support, our work also involves collaboration with others for support and solidarity, working together to ease the burdens and mitigate the risks to documenters.

³
See: <https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/>.

⁴
See: <https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/en/global-analysis>.



Promotional material from our #RightToRecord engagement campaign.

Our orientation to documenters and communities is reflected in the image above, from our recent global digital engagement campaign on the Right to Record.⁵ For this campaign, we shared case studies, tip sheets, blog posts, and material from different regions to show solidarity with filers around the world and to share information on how people can exercise their right to record safely and effectively.

Fortifying the Truth

One troubling trend that makes our mission more challenging is the rise of misinformation and disinformation. Authoritarian regimes are increasingly attacking the truth, and new AI-enabled deep fakes and synthetic media are on the rise. As a result, the trust in visual evidence that underlies the notion of “evidentiary enough”—the idea that “seeing is believing”—is being undermined. In such a climate of misinformation, for example, the Nigerian federal government and military were emboldened to reject the findings of a judicial panel of inquiry investigating police violence and killings during the 2020 EndSARS protests, claiming that videos showing people being hurt were faked (Onuah).

In a context where the truth of accounts of human rights abuses is under attack, we strive to honor the risks that documenters take, helping to ensure their videos have the most impact possible. A key theme in our current strategic vision is “Fortifying the Truth,” meaning that we aim to strengthen the credibility, integrity, and power of human rights defenders’ videos, to amplify their voices and narratives, and to help them to create trustworthy

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See: <https://lab.witness.org/projects/right-to-record/>.

videos that can be used effectively. We approach this from multiple angles—by supporting activists with skills and capacity building, helping to develop new tactics that can be shared with the wider human rights community, and by influencing technology and infrastructure to support human rights.

To be clear, when I use the word “truth,” I do not mean it in the sense of cold impartiality or so-called “objectivity.” I invoke a conception of truth that emanates from embodied experience rather than as a technically defined outcome of procedure and distance. Lillie Chouliaraki and Mette Mortensen capture this idea well in the term “flesh witnessing.” In calling for a shift in how journalists perceive “user-generated content” (UGC) as just free-floating disembodied content, they argue that the concept of

flesh witnessing invites us to examine UGC in terms of its modes of address (who it speaks to and how), its acts of claim-making (what it is saying and to which end) and the moral and political communities it calls into existence (what kind of response it invites and from whom). (594)

In such an approach, the so-called users in user-generated content

can no longer be seen solely as impersonal producers of news narratives of violence, but become instead fully (or at least more) human—that is, they become social and political actors that aspire to intervene in global public spheres, communicate their predicament and speak their truth. (594)

Archive as a Verb

Just as this symposium speaks of deploying “witnessing” and “care” as verbs to highlight their sense of implication and activity, at WITNESS we also tend to use “archiving” or “archive” as a verb. Archiving, or caring for archives, is an act and a means to achieving other human rights goals, rather than an end in itself.

Our collaboration with Berkeley Copwatch.⁶ a volunteer-run organization in Berkeley, California, is an example of our archiving work. Berkeley Copwatch has been active for over 30 years and has pioneered approaches for the direct observation of police using cameras as part of their organization against police violence, injustice, and overreach. By documenting such incidents, they aim to keep the police accountable and to assert the rights of detained persons. They provide support to victims when possible, educate the public about their rights and about police conduct in the community, and organize to unite the community to resist police abuse.

We started working with Berkeley Copwatch in 2018. They had been collecting incident data and video for years by this point and had started thinking about how they could make better use of it. From our conversations, we learned that they wanted to use videos from their cop-watching shifts and videos from the community to identify patterns and repeated police misconduct, and to use in their campaign work. Over the course of many in-person workshops, work sessions, and calls, we collaborated on the design and build of a database.⁷ to track videos, policing incidents, and the officers involved in these incidents, as well as a workflow to manage video files.



Walkthrough of the People's Database for Community-Based Police Accountability.

Open Video >

6

See: <https://www.berkeleycopwatch.org/>.

7

See: <https://lab.witness.org/berkeley-cop-watch-database/>.

By 2020, Berkeley Copwatch had incorporated the database into their workflow, entering and using it to pull up information and videos for use in campaigns. In the same year we also co-hosted workshops and one-on-one sessions to share our learnings with other cop-watch groups. We published the project documentation and a template of the Filemaker database.⁸ for other groups to freely examine, adapt, and use (this template was recently updated based on learnings from Berkeley Copwatch usage in 2023).

However, making the template and documentation freely available has not been enough to enable many other groups to adopt the tool. Despite their stated interest and the limited support we could offer, there still appears to be a significant capacity barrier to getting started. We are keeping this replicability challenge in mind for future projects.



From the CORAL website, <https://redcoral.la/>.

Looking Ahead

Looking ahead, our collaborative work to fortify the truth with communities impacted by human rights violations will take place within two main initiatives. One initiative focuses on protecting the Earth and supporting land defenders resisting extractive industries, displacement, and persecution, within the context of a long history of colonization and present-day capitalist, extractive, and hegemonic systems. In this work, we center indigenous peoples and young people, and their visions and solutions for the world that include the use of video. The initiative builds on the work our team has done over the last decade in Latin America, and it builds on movement strategies like freedom schools to create spaces for weaving resistance and coming together to formulate solutions. Through this framework, for example, our teams in Brazil and Latin America co-created an intergenerational network of audiovisual collectives called Colectivos Reunidos de America Latina, or CORAL. The project will build the capacity of the network and the movements of which they are a part through collaboration and by training trainers at convenings in the region.

8

See: <https://lab.witness.org/berkeley-cop-watch-database/#download>.



From the Rohingya Genocide Archive website, <https://rohingyagenocidearchive.org/>.

The second initiative focuses on strengthening the knowledge, skills, and capacity of human rights defenders and communities in three fields of practice that are key to using video for justice and accountability—archiving, analysis and verification, and curation and presentation—and building stronger connections between frontline communities and distant witnesses who could provide more solidarity and support. This includes exploring

ways to make approaches and tools in these subject areas (often developed in the Global North and within dominant communities of practice) more accessible and better suited to the financial, technological, infrastructural, security, linguistic, cultural, and other contexts of the rest of the world. It also involves helping to ensure frontline defenders are included in the development and setting of standards that reflect the realities of their contexts. To this end, we are working with grassroots partners such as the Rohingya Genocide Archive⁹ to support their capacity and develop practical new approaches. We will also work to connect our partners to relevant communities of practice and help make those communities of practice more aware and inclusive of the needs and innovations coming from grassroots human rights defenders.

In closing, witnessing as an embodied practice is a deeply human act that we approach with as much thoughtfulness, presence, and self-awareness as we can, and through which we continue to learn and evolve.

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[Deep Breath] Witnessing beyond Discourse in Colonial Sound Archives

LUC MARRAFFA
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I take my glasses off, pull my chair closer to the desk, and adjust the slightly uncomfortable headphones over my ears. The sounds of the other bodies in the archive's reading room fade away; I click on the 'play' arrow on my screen and close my eyes. After a few seconds of soft crackling, the sound of old radio programs washes over me. Sometimes I can barely hear the voices through the thick fuzz of time and distance.

Typing away on my laptop, I transcribe not only the words I hear but the sounds that accompany them (sighs, stutters, giggles). As I encounter elements that exceed textuality, I bend my ear to a world I am reconstructing through archived sounds: the world of colonial domesticity shaped by radio programs emitted from Europe to the colonies between 1945 and 1950. Through these archival snippets of radio shows, I witness the sounds that organized the domestic sphere of colonizers.

SOURCE : Tetau Paul JOU « Il faut connaître l'Indochine en guerre », 20.03.1945, INA, Bibliothèque Nationale de France. Translated by the author.

In practice, my experience of the archive is heavily mediated. Before I can sit down and press play, I must submit myself to a series of disciplinary measures. Some are bureaucratic (showing an ID, applying for a pass...), others are physical (passing through a metal detector, showing the contents of my bag...). To find the right recordings, I must familiarize myself with the archival catalogues and interfaces mediating my access to the sounds. These are all elements I am a witness to, elements I am meant to set aside when producing academic work, to focus on the materials instead.

Witnessing is intertwined with knowing. *Witness*, from the Old English *gewitnes*, compares to the Middle Dutch *wetenisse*: knowledge (OED). The genealogy of witness in knowledge still haunts our current understanding of witnessing, although witness today seems distinct from knowledge. I account for the historicity of these terms to render underlying power matrixes audible: witnessing is not only a matter of having seen or heard, but also of being sanctioned to tell the event again. While certain bodies are considered knowledgeable, others are displayed as objects of knowledge. Not all bodies are afforded the privilege of telling their own stories, of determining the terms in which their stories will be told.

How can I, as someone whose heritage is entangled with histories of colonialism due to my European whiteness, and as someone whose queerness inflects their attunement to the archive, ethically share this position as witness without feeding into a culture that amplifies my voice at the expense of others and normalizes the consumption of media depicting racial violence?

This entails witnessing and being careful with my own emotions: using them as guiding hands while remaining careful of how they might be molded by white supremacy. As I write, I seek a balance between imposing my reading of the archival materials and inviting readers to reflect on the terms of their empathy.

*"Here is radio Brazzaville [...]
For me, who doesn't know Santa Claus, I have still received, before the little whites, a beautiful present, as I've found my daddy again. My daddy had gone a long time ago to wage war. But the daddies of many other little blacks died in the war. They will never find them again. They are very sad, and me, I don't dare to show my joy"*

SOURCE : Le quart d'heure colonial, Madagascar et les lettres, 01.01.1945, INA, Bibliothèque Nationale de France. Translated by the author.

"... He who is talking to you at the moment, with an emotion all the more intense because he can believe his voice to be well known and heard over there [strong emotion in his voice] in the beautiful country where he had the honor to speak and act in the name of France, never believed for his part that Indochina, transformed by our national engineering after so many happy creations, could be lost forever, and indefinitely subjugated to the yoke of an invader without scruples and ideals. With all French people, he awaits the hour, that everything announces to be near, of deliverance for this last piece of our Empire. He asserts his conviction that the metropole will, by new benefits, by a liberal politics of large cooperation inspired by its own traditions and in accordance with the best of our Indochinese associates, know to reinforce the ties which unite their country and ours for their common good and general progress. This is why he feels entitled to call... [stutters - due to emotion?] ...to appeal to France in its entirety, to [inaudible] overseas, so that as of now we unite all of ourselves to provide those over there who await the end of their trials with a blazing mark of our confidence, our solidarity. Friends of Indochina, see you soon. France will come. More affectionate, more loyal than ever [voice falters, from emotion] and together we will resume, with ardor and a new faith, this work of human regeneration, which we had undertaken together and which, in recovered peace, we will achieve together [music]..."

46 On the next two pages, below and alongside my writing, are excerpts from my transcripts of three radio programs. Two are in French from 1945 and one is in Dutch from 1949—my English translations of the two French programs appear in the previous pages (see above for an example). The original speech is in light grey italics, and I have highlighted in bold and dark grey the mention of emotions by the speakers and my annotations of non-speech sounds that attest to the presence of emotions. In juxtaposing these excerpts with my own writing, I extend my care to the emotions encountered in the archives, prioritizing them as sources of knowledge over the supposedly rational speech they appear in.

« Celui qui vous parle en ce moment avec une **émotion** d'autant plus intense qu'il peut croire sa voix bien connue et entendue là-bas [**strong emotion in his voice**] dans le beau pays où il eut l'honneur de parler et d'agir au nom de la France, n'a jamais cru pour sa part que l'Indochine, transformée par notre génie national après tant de créations heureuses, pouvait être per... The care I extend to the emotions I witness in the archives is conditional because of the materials I listen to (white Europeans talking on the radio to white Europeans in the colonies). Emotions by people in dominant positions within hierarchies of class, race, and gender have been—and continue to be—prioritized over emotions of marginalized people. I am thus weary of the emotions that are tolerated in radiophonic archives while others are disciplined. *dochinois, renforcer les liens qui unissent leur pays et le notre pour leur bien commun et le progrès général. C'est pourquoi il se croit autorisé à appel [stutters – due to emotion ?]... à faire appel à la France entière pour [inaudible] White men tearing up on air, as in the transcript below this text (see first page for translation), are a surprisingly common currency. Often, they yearn for colonialism's continuation or praise the glory of colonialism: *is d'Indochine, à bientôt. La France va venir. Plus affectueuse, plus loyale que jamais [voice falters, from emotion] et ensemble nous reprendrons, avec une ardeur et une fois nouvelle cette œuvre de régénération humaine, qu'ensemble nous avons entreprise et qu'ensemble dans la paix retrouvée, nous achèverons [music].* » Men on the radio expressed a wide range of emotions, two of which I found to be recurring: anger over decolonial uprisings and melancholy for imminent decolonization. I focus on the emotions transpiring through their speech to challenge the portrayal of colonialists as benevolent, rational white men.*

SOURCE : Tetau Paul JOU, Il faut connaître l'Indochine en guerre, 20.03.1945, INA, Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

I am careful to situate these emotions in the frame of white innocence (Wekker 17), and I read them as instances of violence rather than care for them as moments of vulnerability.

In comparison to white subjects, colonized subjects' emotional expressions were only recognized and engaged with if they corresponded to a very narrow palette of emotions, mainly happiness or thankfulness for colonialism. The transcribed radio talk below is by a Congolese child (see previous page for English). Musing on his joyous Christmas, he comments about his friends whose fathers died fighting for France in World War II: ...]

« Pour moi, qui ne connais pas le père Noël, j'ai reçu quand-même, avant les petits blancs, un très beau cadeau, puisque j'ai retrouvé mon papa. Mon papa qui était parti il y a longtemps pour faire la guerre. Mais les papas de beaucoup d'autres petits noirs sont morts dans la guerre. Ils ne les retrouveront jamais. **Ils sont très tristes et je n'ose pas, moi, montrer ma joie.** »

“They are very sad, and me, I don't dare to show my joy.”

I am practicing tuning in to his agency as a witness of colonialism, to make his intervention audible for my readers. Here I like to think with Saidiya Hartman that caring for this child from Bacongo implies being careful not to reproduce harm when introducing his speech into academic texts (34–36).

SOURCE : Le quart d'heure colonial, Madagascar et les lettres, 01.01.1945, INA, Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

By attuning to this child's emotional repertoire, I turn away from his scripted radiophonic speech and focus instead on traces of emotions exceeding the colonial narrative: sadness erupting where joy was expected for instance.

In the transcripts below, pain resonates in the undertones of supposedly cheerful radio messages by Dutch mothers to their sons fighting in the Indonesian War of Independence.

“Opgelet dus, hier komen de groeten uit het vaderland. ¶ In recordings of this show, undertones upstaged the joy, and one can hear the host chide speakers for the audibility of their grief (Kuitenbrouwer 54). In uninterrupted interviews like the one transcribed here, emotions are audible in the sounds surrounding the messages: sorrow, heartache, and worry sound in labored breaths and veiled voices. AT. *Tinus opletten, hier komt moeder, en je jongste broertje Koenie. Je moeder: 'Lieve*

47 *jonge, met ons alles goed. Ali is niet erg prettig, [deep breath] kan nu niet spreken. Vele zoenen van moeder [deep breath] Ali, Ri, Cori en kinderen, [deep breath] Annie, Hennie [voice slightly veiled from emotion] een stevige handdruk van vader en Wim en groet van de familie. Dag schat! [Broertje komt, spreekt veel te luid] DAG...TINNIE en dit is een... goeie dag [singsong]” – Not These interviewees bear witness to the violent underbelly of colonialism. Bearing evokes the act of carrying, supporting, enduring... it is a formative practice, as the image of bearing a child: an always already transformative act of molding and carrying along before releasing into the world. *djes joh, wat is gebeurd hoor! Graag zou ik nu even bij je een kijkje willen nemen, miep. Hoe is het daar, goed? Liefste ik moet eindigen met een gemeente welterusten zoen van mij – van Weep. Dag [voice (barely audible) breaks a little] ... [sniffles – crying?].” Dan is hier Mieke “Dag Pappie kom je gouv naar huis, enne... zoen op u neus... [inaudible], Lieke” [nervous?] Goed afvegen die natte zoen, ik heb trouwens nog een vergissing vergaan, het was uw vrouwtje moest ik speciaal zeggen, dat doe ik achteraf nog maar een keer, en ze verlangt toch wel erg naar uw thuiskomst. The care involved in the process of bearing a child is continuous and diffuse—it is care both for the entity being carried and for one's own vessel. It is an ethical act that I too come into as**

SOURCE : Koninginnedag Programma PROGRAMMA_VOO-AEN560400NC, Beeld & Geluid

Finally, I am careful with the emotions I invite in my readers as I ask them to participate in the act of becoming witnesses, making them accomplices in the undoing of the colonial pretense to rationalism. I hope to find community with my readers in the absurdity of colonial rhetoric by eliciting laughter in the face of a discourse fueled by hate and filled with gaps, inconsistencies, and absurdities. In this, too, I need to be careful to distinguish when laughter is harmful from when it is necessary.

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In order of appearance

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LUC MARRAFFA is a PhD candidate at the Amsterdam School for Cultural Analysis (University of Amsterdam). They research French and Dutch colonial radio archives from circa. 1945 and develop transcription methods that challenge colonial narratives. Their current work interrogates the queerness of glitches and sound parasites. Previously they taught philosophy at CUNY and attended NYU as Fulbright bursar, after a philosophy MA at Paris VIII Vincennes/Saint-Denis. At the UvA, they teach classes in sound studies and decolonial approaches to archiving.

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Dreaming in Public

What are the different ways we can approach the “work” we do while asleep, and treat dreams as stories that can be shared, circulated, and stored, keeping the record of the past and the present as letters *from* and *to* the future? How can we attend to the ways dreams reflect collective experiences, thoughts, predicaments, desires, and anxieties—and attend not only to what they say about the ones who dream but about the realities that the dreamers inhabit? With these questions in mind, I have been collecting dreams in different periods and have worked with them in diverse forms. I started by collecting people’s dreams about obligatory military service in Turkey (for people who are assigned male at birth). I continued, collecting dreams about the Gezi resistance in 2013 and then dreams about the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 in Turkey. I made short documentary films based on these sound pieces, trying to make dreams meet on the filmic surface in different forms, talking to each other through sound and image. I explored how dreams, when woven into each other, can turn into larger narratives that unwrap the affective patterns and shared memories of particular periods and contexts. Inspired by Ismail Kadare’s 1981 novel *The Palace of Dreams*,¹ I wanted to attend to how dreams can cease being personal and become a public archive of collective responses to repressive realities.

While making the documentary *The Balcony and Our Dreams* about pandemic dreams, I was engrossed by recurrent themes: masks, injections, hospitals, disquietingly approaching bodies, and forbidden kisses—but also zombies, German occupiers, police violence, assassinations, coup d’états, and surveilling politicians. Shared memories of political resistance and state oppression seemed to surface through the disorientation and disturbance generated by this global health crisis. In this period, I encountered a book I could not have even dreamt existed: *The Third Reich of Dreams: The Nightmares of a Nation 1933–1939*. Written by Charlotte Beradt (1966), a Berlin-based Jewish journalist, the book consists of dreams collected by Beradt under the Nazi regime, through which she explores the relationship between war, fascism, and dreams. Beradt explains how she came to the idea as follows (33–37):

¹ In which a young Ottoman Albanian man, Mark-Alem, is hired by a ministry to classify and interpret dreams capable of shaping the empire’s destiny.

I AWOKE bathed in perspiration, my teeth clenched. Once again, as on countless previous nights, I had been hunted from pillar to post in a dream—shot at, tortured, scalped. But on this night, of all nights, the thought occurred to me that I might not be the only one among thousands upon thousands to be condemned to such dreams by the dictatorship. The things that filled my dreams must fill theirs, too—breathless flight across fields, hiding at the top of towers of dizzying height, cowering down below in graves, everywhere the Storm Troopers at my heels. I began to ask people about their dreams.

Beradt collected almost three hundred dreams between 1933 and 1939, mostly from the people around her, such as her hairdresser, neighbors, doctor, milkman, friends, and family. She first hid the record of these dreams in her house, then later sent them by mail to friends living outside of Germany. She eventually fled to New York, where she entered an exile community that included Hannah Arendt, who helped her publish a collection of the dreams in 1966 (Sliwinski). In my imaginary library of dream-texts, this book finds its place next to the dreams of Walter Benjamin, who described one of his dreams in a letter he sent from an internment camp, and the dreams of Theodor Adorno, who recorded his dreams in the same dark period.

Daringly collecting dreams in a period where people dream that even dreaming is forbidden, Beradt’s book offers great insights into how fascism can sneak into our daily lives and shape how we think and how we relate to the world and to each other. They reveal fears, anxieties, feelings of isolation, disorientation, predicaments, and predictions, but they also open up a space to reflect on them.

Let us consider Beradt’s words again:

point. The dreams we are concerned with were not produced by conflicts arising in their authors’ private realm, and certainly not by some past conflict that had left a psychological wound. Instead they arose from conflicts into which these people had been driven by a public realm in which half-truths, vague notions, and a combination of fact, rumor, and conjecture had produced a general feeling of uncertainty and unrest. These dreams may deal with disturbed human relations, but it was the environment that had disturbed them. This “bond of union between dreams and the waking state,” these “transparent pseudo-dreams” (to quote Jean Paul), stemmed directly from the political atmosphere in which these people lived—a fertile soil for such dreams. They are al-

In the first pages of Beradt's book, she quotes Robert Ley, a high-ranking administrator in the Nazi regime: "The only person in Germany who still leads a private life is the person who sleeps" (3). *The Third Reich of Dreams* proves the inaccuracy of this quote on every page, reminding us that people who sleep are not alone, and that sleeping is part of public life. Politics haunts sleepers, and all dreams are dreamt in a context; they grow in fertile soil. Some dreams are, in Beradt's words, "dictated by the dictatorship," reflecting how people become complicit and internalize power in varying degrees, while other dreams provide the arsenal "to describe the structure of a reality that was just on the verge of becoming a nightmare" (9). Others are dreams of resistance, trying to find ways to get away, fight, and act together.

Let us read one of these dreams (5).

"Goebbels was visiting my factory. He had all the workers line up in two rows facing each other. I had to stand in the middle and raise my arm in the Nazi salute. It took me half an hour to get my arm up, inch by inch. Goebbels showed neither approval nor disapproval as he watched my struggle, as if it were a play. When I finally managed to get my arm up, he said just five words—"I don't want your salute"—then turned and went to the door. There I stood in my own factory, arm raised, pilloried right in the midst of my own people. I was only able to keep from collapsing by staring at his clubfoot as he limped out. And so I stood until I woke up."

And another one (116).

"Celebrations were going on for 'National Unity Day' [which actually was observed, although under a different name; it is quite revealing that she chose this name in her dream]. Long rows of people were sitting at long tables in the dining car of a train that was traveling along. I was sitting by myself at a small table. They were singing a political song that sounded so funny that I had to laugh. Moved to another table, but still had to laugh. There was nothing

116

to do but stand up—I wanted to go out, but then I thought if I sang along maybe it wouldn't seem so funny—so I sang, too."

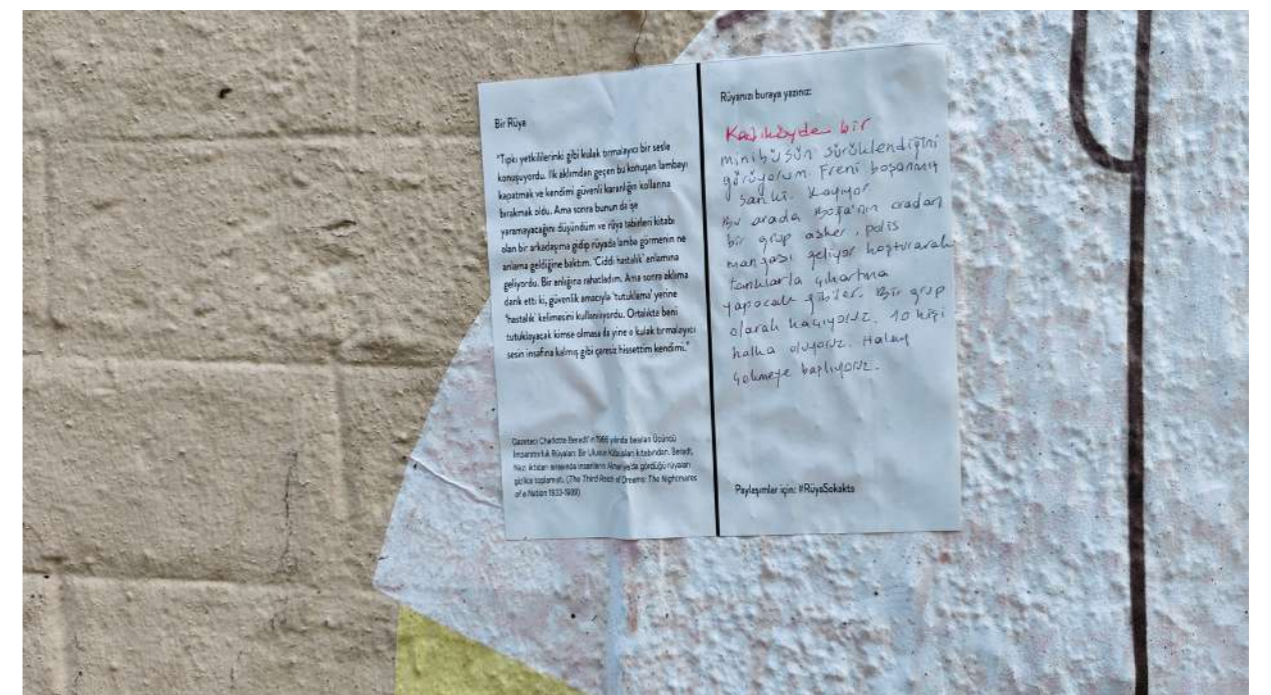
One of the most remarkable and terrifying aspects Beradt identifies in dreams is that some images appear in dreams before they even happen in reality: people dream about mass displacements and concentration camps before they become reality; people dream they perish at the borders, lose their passports, forget their native tongue, and are subjected to torture in the places they migrate to before these things happen. In this sense, dreams appear as letters both from and to the future, as spaces of interpretation, prediction, action. This is why Beradt comes to see them as warnings that can help detect totalitarian tendencies and practices, the future of wars, at times signaling that the worst is yet to come.

Maybe not all these dreams are stories of survival, nor are they stories of survivors, but they are definitely stories that survived. They open up a space to share anticipations, experiences, and even tactics. Dreams resist forgetting; they archive past, present, and possible future atrocities, offering ways to share how we are broken. An archive that manifests how political violence penetrates into daily lives, everyday spaces, bedrooms, and sleeps; and how our stories are part of a larger history, experienced collectively. Meeting in dream-spaces is meeting in spaces of intimacy, which requires patience, at times generating discomfort and boredom, other times the joy of chance encounters. These are spaces of sharing, especially in dark times when public thoughts and bodies are increasingly restricted by openly fascist or neo-liberal capitalist regimes that employ comparable forms of violence.

I see Beradt's collection as a form of resistance, storing, shipping, and publishing dreams, making them meet and talk to each other, collaborating to tell the stories of fascism.

I wondered how dreams under Nazi Germany would resonate with dreams under the current authoritarian regime of Turkey. I asked myself: How to carve out a space in which dreams—or perhaps nightmares—of the past resonate with those of today? How to expand the dream-archive by making them talk to each other in a way that manifests how bodies and emotions are mobilized and violated in similar manners throughout history? How to confuse the assumed spaces of private and public in rethinking collective forms of repair? So I translated some of the dreams in Beradt's book into Turkish and prepared stickers, divided into two, where one side contained the dream from *The Third Reich of Dreams* and the other side was left empty, inviting people to write down their own dreams. I put these stickers up on public walls in Istanbul. Some were filled in with handwritten dreams; some were left empty; most were eventually soaked in rain and torn apart.

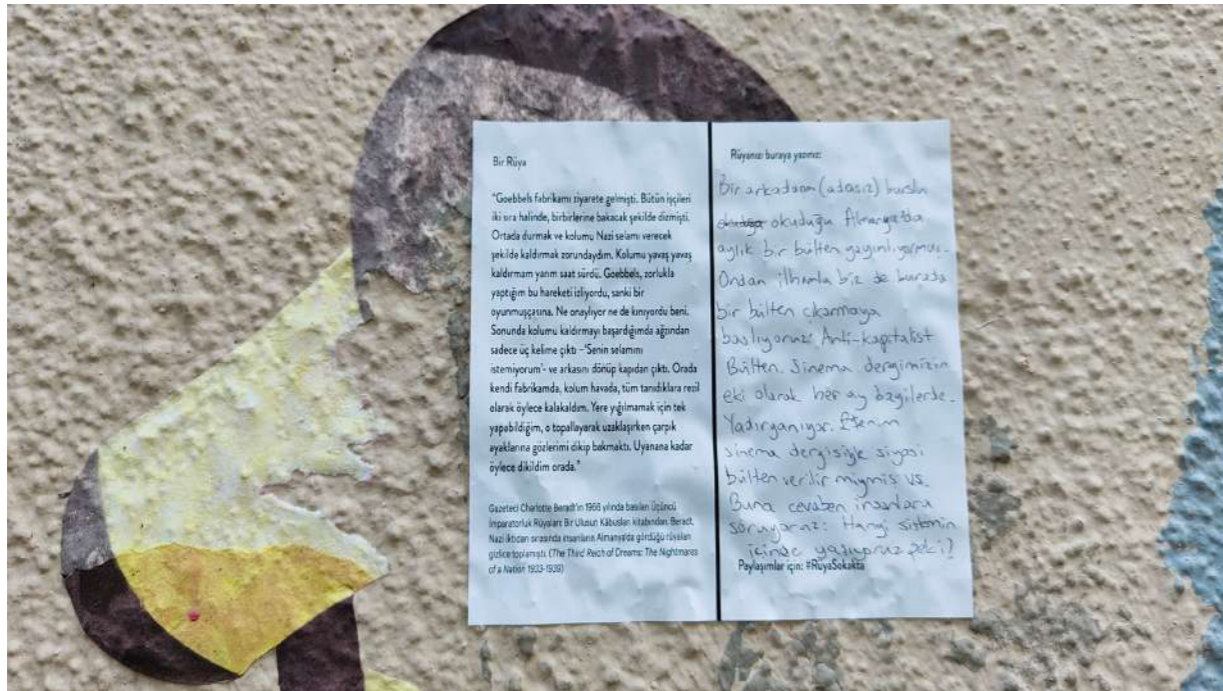
I finish with two examples of people who went to bed and fell asleep under varying degrees of violence, oppression, and surveillance in different moments of history, speaking to each other to "meet in dreams."



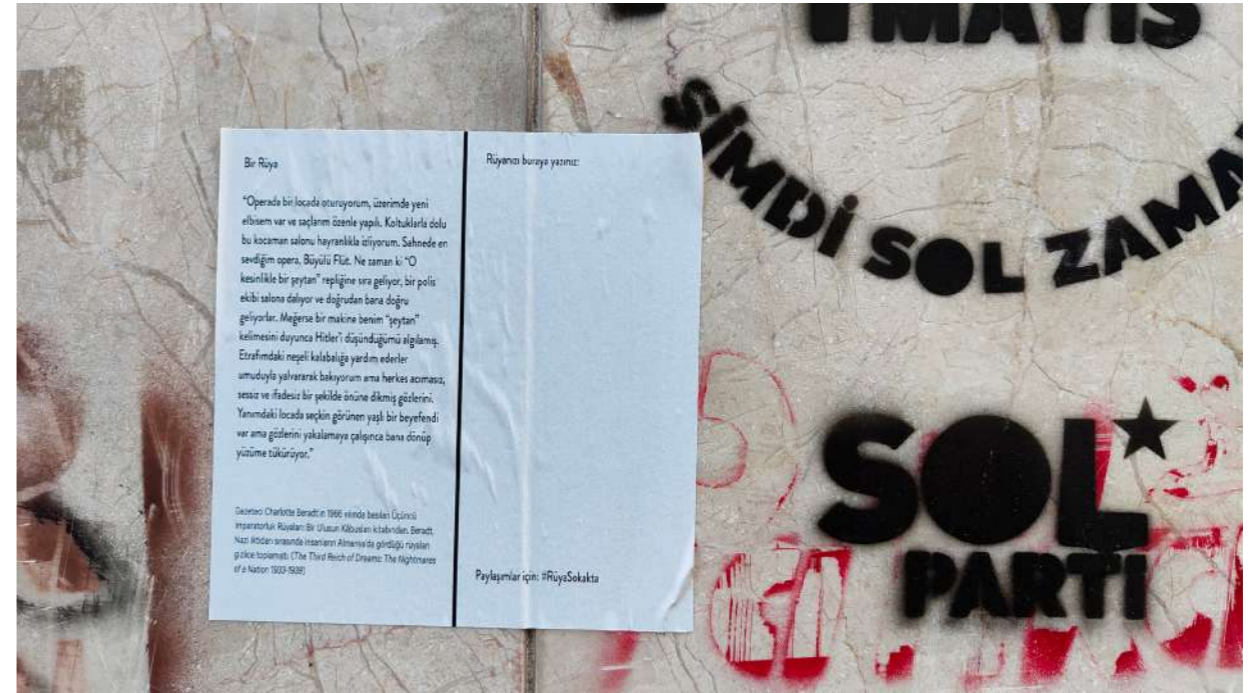
Handwritten dream: "I see a minibus being dragged in Kadıköy. Seems like a brake fail. At that moment, a group of soldiers, a police squad appear at Boğa, as if they plan a military landing with tanks. We run away as a group. We form a circle with ten people. We start dancing the *halay*."



Handwritten dream: "A police-man is coming on a horse. I have eye contact with the horse. (I have seen this dream for 5 times ☺)"



Handwritten dream: "A friend (we have the same name) publishes a monthly bulletin in Germany, where he studies on a scholarship. We get inspired and do the same here. Anti-capitalist Bulletin. A monthly supplement to our cinema magazine. People find it weird. Well, why would you have a political bulletin with a cinema magazine, etc. We ask people in return: What is the system we live in then?"



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Critical Archival Engagements with Sounds and Films of Coloniality

