

# UNDEAD

(Inter)(in)animation,  
Feminisms, and the Art of War

KAREN REDROBE



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Undead



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# Undead

*(Inter)(in)animation, Feminisms, and the Art of War*

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Karen Redrobe



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*For Paul M. Cobb*



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# Introduction

## UNDEATH EVERY AFTERNOON

*Undead* aims to shift the way we understand the relationship between animation and war. It asks readers to consider anew what these unwieldy and ubiquitous phenomena reveal about each other when viewed through a multiperspectival, interdisciplinary feminist lens that challenges entrenched chronologies, mappings, definitions, and epistemologies of war. Most of the works I discuss are experimental in nature, appearing in venues that include galleries, museums, film festivals, homes, and classrooms rather than on television or in commercial movie theaters. Over the course of the book, I will engage intermedial works by Maryam Mohajer, Onyeka Igwe, Mary Reid Kelley, Patrick Kelley, Yael Bartana, Kelly Dolak and Wazhmah Osman, Florestine Kinchen, Helen Hill, Paul Gailiunas, Nancy Dav-enport, Gesiye, David Hartt, and Ibrahim Nasrallah. The majority of these works have in common not their attention to a single war but their use of animation in an intermedial context to alter how war is defined and to better understand war's relationship to structural forms of violence that are often occluded by the concept of war. Rather than turning their backs on animation's proximity to the realms of the popular, comedy, and the cartoon, however, many of the works I consider actively harness the specific affinities of animation while reframing them and exploring their potential within expanded media contexts that include architecture, dance, live-action filmmaking, drawing, painting, performance, photography, and video games. The intermedial context in which animation emerges indexes a broader commitment to rethinking epistemological categories and rigid definitions. Most importantly, this book rejects the *Oxford English Dictionary's* primary definition

of war, “hostile contention by means of armed forces, carried on between nations, states, or rulers, or between parties in the same nation or state,” and even pushes past what the *OED* describes as a “figurative” use of the term that includes “any kind of active hostility or contention between living beings.”<sup>1</sup> Informed by feminist interventions into war studies, I examine a series of largely contemporary case studies in which artists and filmmakers use aesthetic tactics to enable thinking and feeling about how and what “war” might mean when engaged through more expansive definitions, temporalities, and geographies.

*(Inter)(in)animation and Feminisms*

Affirming Jacqueline Rose’s suggestion that fantasies of total knowledge generate violent repetitions, I experiment throughout *Undead* with dialogic methodologies and modes of writing that register the limitations of singular points of view.<sup>2</sup> This approach seeks to foreground how the knowledge in this book is cocreated while taking responsibility for the role of my own standpoint-inflected interpretations, mediations, and conclusions as they emerge within the format of the scholarly monograph. Throughout the book, I seek to illuminate how artists have activated the intermedial, interdisciplinary, and relational properties of animation in opposition to war, and to think in dialogue with those artists. *Undead* imports the modular, inherently relational, self-contesting, and capacious poetic concept of “(inter)(in)animation” into the toolbox of feminist animation theory, inspired in part by the affordances of postcolonial theories’ resistance to rigid systems of periodization and understandings of place. I hope that the term *(inter)(in)animation* encourages what Robert Stam and Ella Shohat describe as “a relational approach” within the realm of animation theory.<sup>3</sup> As Shohat suggests, “Analyzing the overlapping multiplicities of identities and affiliations that link diverse resistant discourses helps us to transcend some of the politically debilitating effects of disciplinary and community boundaries.”<sup>4</sup> The term brings with it a long, vibrant, and multi-sited history of usage, and this chapter explores its history and theoretical utility for engaging hybrid and experimental practices that remain marginalized within scholarly frameworks oriented toward national, often North American, industrial production contexts and medium-specific definitions of animation. I use *(inter)(in)animation* to describe both creative artistic practices and ways of thinking that respond to the oppositional values permeating the animation-war dyad—stillness and motion, aliveness and deadness, body and thing—and do so in ways that situate these tensions within relational, intermedial, and interdisciplinary frameworks. I argue that such frameworks alter how the artists I discuss activate animation’s undead qualities, and in doing so they expand our capacity to think about war as well as the challenges of unmaking it.

But where does this term *interinanimation* come from, what does it mean, and what does it offer this study of animation, feminisms, and war? While its first prefix, *inter-*, can invoke a block or a barrier, it also suggests a second meaning



of something “reciprocal,” “occurring between,” or “derived from two or more,” introducing a notion of animation that is relational at its core.<sup>5</sup> Relationality and blockage coexist in this term. And then what to make of the fact that this word presents readers not just with “animations” but with “inanimations”? Like the first prefix that both relates and blocks, this second prefix introduces a force of internal resistance to animation that threatens to bring the word grinding to a halt. This tension is further complicated by David Wills’s useful history of the word *inanimation*, which Wills explains can connote both the infusion and the deprivation of life:

[*Inanimation*] is not my own invention but came into usage, as did the corresponding verb *to inanimate*, in the early seventeenth century (1631 and 1600, respectively). For no less an authority than John Donne, *inanimate* and *inanimation* were the preferred signifiers precisely for the positive senses of “enliven(ing), animat(ing), infus(ing) life into.” To *inanimate* was to *enanimate*. The privative equivalents, deferring to deprivation of life, came later, beginning in 1647 with the verb, which nevertheless remained rare and would soon become obsolete, and in 1784 with the noun, which has managed a longer life.<sup>6</sup>

Donne uses the word *interanimation* in his poem “The Extasie,” where, like ecstasy itself, it seems to undo the subject. As Anna Fenemore argues, this early usage involves “a dialogical and, ultimately, social process whereby the ‘abler’ soul exists spatially *somewhere between subject and object*” (emphasis added).<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, as Michael Ursell observes, Donne shuttles between “interanimation” and “interinanimation” in different versions of the poem: “The first posthumous printed editions from 1633 and 1635, as well as some manuscripts, read ‘interanimates’ for ‘interinanimates,’ cutting out the extra prefix that intensifies the term’s indeterminacy.”<sup>8</sup> Elsewhere, Ursell roots Donne’s sense of interinanimation’s uncanny dimensions firmly in the realm of mediation, noting that for Donne, “books are the worldly things that shuttle between the animate and inanimate.”<sup>9</sup> Interinanimation makes books, for Ursell, “literal survivors, able to surpass the limits of biological life and mortality,” similar, in Donne’s view, “to those parts of the living body that can persist without the living body, such as bone and hair.”<sup>10</sup> Many of the works discussed in *Undead* use animation’s radical fabricatedness to pressure the presumed transparency of terms like *life* and *death*, *subject* and *object*, *body* and *thing*. *Undead* seeks to activate this poetic term in the context of animation theory, with the goal of transporting some of the term’s poetic richness into animation theory’s critical vocabulary and zones of awareness. Though it carries with it some of the resonances that are present from the moment of its invention, it also accrues different resonances as it emerges in new contexts, including, as I show below, in the realm of Black studies. These more recent accruals too present challenging possibilities to animation theory.

The works discussed here activate (inter)(in)animation within the context of other creative modes in ways that disrupt, rub against, or illuminate the contours



of existing ontologies, and not just filmic ones. They open experimental spaces through which to reimagine how terms like *war*, *world*, *life*, *death*, *feminism*, and *theory* too might be mediated and engaged. This book seeks to mobilize the poetic concept of (inter)(in)animation within the context of intermedial uses of animation that might otherwise, because of the hybrid nature of the works in question, either fall through the cracks between the categories by which scholarship and criticism is organized or be considered only partially, emphasizing only a single and isolated component of the work, such as its animated features.

(Inter)(in)animation simultaneously foregrounds this relational quality of intermedial works and animation's refusal to relinquish the tension between stillness and movement, body and thing, reality and fantasy, and lived and fabricated time and space. Many other scholars have registered the importance of this tension within the field of animation studies, which Paul Wells reviews under the title "Battlefields for the Undead."<sup>11</sup> Alan Cholodenko, for example, suggests the term *animatic* to conjure up animation's bringing together of "lifedeath" and to convey the way the apparatus "suspends distinctive oppositions, including that of the animate versus the inanimate."<sup>12</sup> Similarly, Daisy Yan Du theorizes the idea of "suspended animation" in relation to the specific phenomenon of "freeze or nearly-freeze frames in animated films," noting that this type of image "is ambiguously situated between animation and inanimation" and that "there is no clear boundary between the two, as (in)animation can often turn into (en)animation."<sup>13</sup> *Undead* builds on such work, expanding (in)animation outward into relational, interdisciplinary, and feminist frameworks to open up other ways of thinking. Thomas Lamarre has demonstrated animation's capacity to juxtapose different historical moments within a single animated sequence in a way that does not "simply melt and amalgamate the historical references into cartoonish lumps" but rather "strives to open the one set of historical and ideological references into other frames of reference."<sup>14</sup> In *Undead*, I consider works that activate this ability internal to animation to stack without merging temporal and spatial references in dialogue with other art forms, including dance, photography, fashion, live-action film, painting, sculpture, architecture, music, performance, and tattooing. I use parentheses to mark, without separating, the distinct elements contained within the unresolvable meaning of (inter)(in)animation, emphasizing the critical affordances of the term's modularity, provisionality, and flexibility for a series of case studies that resist clear epistemological categories.

### *(Inter)(in)animating Feminisms*

As the unresolved status of my title, *Undead*, suggests, this book is less interested in works that lay war to rest and celebrate idealized and finalized visions of peace than in those that develop what art historian Rosalyn Deutsche, drawing on the artist Krzysztof Wodiczko, describes as an un-war framework. "Peace," Deutsche notes, "has long coexisted with preparedness for war. . . . Un-war, by

contrast, implies disarmament, a process of un-doing war, which, as we shall see, the artist understands not only as military preparedness and combat but also as an individual and collective state of mind.”<sup>15</sup> Drawing on psychoanalytic feminism and Wodiczko’s architectural interventions, Deutsche describes un-war making as seeking to acknowledge the inescapable presence of violence within and to disarm “the larger culture of war” as it permeates our physical and mnemonic architectures and landscapes.<sup>16</sup>

*Undead* also asserts the central importance of feminist *discourses* to the project of un-war making through an (inter)(in)animated lens. Black, Global South, and decolonial feminist scholars have consistently and rigorously challenged the academy’s (including white feminism’s) complicity in epistemological structures that foreground some histories of violence in ways that, and at times in order to, occlude others. The nonsingular “feminisms” of *Undead*’s subtitle is inspired by Lila Abu-Lughod, Rema Hammami, and Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian’s assertion in *The Cunning of Gender Violence* of a plural “feminisms,” involving “always a diverse and evolving plurality of epistemologies, locations, projects, and possibilities—and yes, sometimes dominations and enclosures.”<sup>17</sup> Such feminisms, they note, make it impossible to presume that “[gender] can be disentangled from race, class, indigeneity, and other historical and contemporary forces and markers of difference and inequality.”<sup>18</sup> This book’s reconsideration of animation is made possible by the way these feminist epistemologies have generated alternative understandings of life, death, war, time, and space.

I draw inspiration too from a feminist praxis Angela Y. Davis invokes that “emphasizes not only strategies of criticism and strategies of transformation but also a sustained critique of the tools we use to stage criticism and to enact transformation.”<sup>19</sup> Such feminist models challenge me to grapple with critiques of white, cis-gender, straight, Global North feminist exclusions and to recognize and seek to counter my own standpoint limitations in their light. They have led me to prioritize practices marginalized by mainstream media industry producers and distributors, and to expand the definition of *war* beyond nationalist, official, and geographically and temporally contained narratives in order to consider war’s unacknowledged participants, costs, modes, and spatio-temporal registers. These models refuse triumphalist and uncontested narratives in favor of what Rose calls “the ethics of failure”; insist on the need for thinking in community; commit to interdisciplinarity as a methodology that shows no confidence in any single discipline; and use improvisational encounters between bodies of knowledge and media formats to illuminate and morph the borders of thinkability.<sup>20</sup> Though this has at times produced the feeling that the intellectual ground on which I have been standing is running out from under me like sand, I have been sustained through this process by the generosity and creativity of scholarly, artistic, and activist communities that are building new ground, and by the hope that these discomfiting sensations are by-products of the processes of change and un-war making.

In foregrounding the mutually influential temporal and spatial discombobulations enacted by experimental animated films about war, *Undead* offers one animation-derived response to Lisa Lowe's 2015 call for scholars to pay more attention to "the intimacies of the four continents" in opposition to the "modern division of knowledge into academic disciplines, focused on discrete areas and objects of interest to the modern national university."<sup>21</sup> My thinking here has been similarly provoked by Rey Chow's 2006 call for scholars, and particularly theorists, to acknowledge and critique the parochialism of European-derived theories in the US academy, and to recognize that World War II is as much as a marker of the continuity of imperialism, albeit in rearranged form, as a historical point of shift in the world order. Noting that the atomic bombs of August 1945 "suggest much more than the malice that is an inevitable product of warfare," enabling the United States to occupy the position of "supreme world power," Chow asks, would this not involve thinking "America not as just the land of Disney and McDonald's but also as the successor to and advancer of Europe and European imperialist intentions and tendencies over the course of modern history?"<sup>22</sup> Extending Edward Said's critique of Orientalism, Chow highlights the implicatedness of US scholars' knowledge structures in the war machine, forcing us to acknowledge that, as she puts it, "the United States has been conducting war on the basis of a certain kind of knowledge production, and producing knowledge on the basis of war."<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, like Deutsche and Rose, Chow argues that once "the relations among war, racism, and knowledge production are underlined in these terms," it is "incumbent on us to realize that the pursuit of war—with its use of violence—and the pursuit of peace—with its cultivation of knowledge—are the obverse and reverse of the same coin."<sup>24</sup>

### *Experimental Animation, History, and Deathlessness*

Constructed, animated war images can offer alternative ways to give visible form to the imbricated and continuous histories of state and corporate violence and institutions of knowledge that avoid what Jeffrey Skoller, in a discussion of narrative history films, calls "the specularization of the past."<sup>25</sup> Writing against chronological photorealist approaches to history in the context of experimental film, Skoller argues, "Such a literalization of the past through the recreation of historical events works to separate the past from the present, constructing a gap between then and now by placing each at a safe distance from the other."<sup>26</sup> In *Undead*, I explore the particular suitability of intermedially situated uses of animation for giving visual and material form to such nonlinear and sprawling experiences of war and death. The works I consider trouble some of Anglo-European film theory's medium-specific and photography-derived assumptions about the temporality of life and death in ways that make space for other memories and experiences and enrich the evolving toolbox of cinema and media theories.

With few exceptions, film theoretical discussions of cinema's ethical, moral, and political capacities either ignore or express wariness about animation because of

its seemingly inherent incapacity to convey the finality of death.<sup>27</sup> The energy and wacky humor of cartoon animation that has roots in its deathlessness can seem fully incompatible with the serious ethical concerns raised by the role of images in modern histories of violence, which frequently focus on cinematic mediations of death. These concerns have played a particularly formative role in theoretical discussions of documentary and post–World War II European art cinema.<sup>28</sup> In his short meditation on the French documentary *La course de taureaux* (*The Bullfight*) (Myriam Bortsoutsy and Pierre Braunberger, 1951), André Bazin suggests that death is both the “metaphysical kernel” of the bullfight and “one of those rare events that justifies the term . . . *cinematic specificity*.”<sup>29</sup> It is, according to Serge Daney, this “possibility of filming death” that, for Bazin, in some cases, “prohibits editing” in order, as Bazin puts it, “to reveal the hidden meaning of beings and things without disturbing their temporal unity.”<sup>30</sup> Daney glosses this passage from Bazin by stating, “This unity is never anything but that of the spatio-temporal continuum of representation. *To intern difference means saving representation.*”<sup>31</sup> While music for Bazin can only ever mediate “aesthetic time,” cinema “reproduces at will and organizes . . . the same worldly reality of which we are a part.”<sup>32</sup> This quality, for Bazin, allows cinema the unique opportunity among the “mechanical arts” to capture and represent for others “the only one of our possessions that is temporally inalienable”: “the real instant” of death.<sup>33</sup> Though Bazin describes the “eternal dead-again of the cinema” in terms of obscenity, desecration, and perversion, he ends this short essay by acknowledging that “the representation on screen of a bull being put to death (which presupposes that the man had risked death) is in principle as moving as the spectacle of the real instant that it reproduces,” and he notes that this representation has the potential to be “even more moving because it magnifies the quality of the original moment through the contrast of its repetition.”<sup>34</sup>

Foundational to Bazin’s thinking about death and cinematic specificity is both a modern understanding of the temporality of death as momentary, elusive, and purely subjective, a moment that “marks the frontier between the duration of consciousness and the objective time of things,” and a notion of the world inhabited by “beings and things” as enjoying spatial and temporal unity.<sup>35</sup> The efforts of theorists, critics, and practitioners to formulate ethical parameters for both making and watching films are inextricably bound to the temporality of death as it has emerged in what D.N. Rodowick describes as “isomorphic” filmmaking. This involves an exposure that “effects a transformation of substance in which time, light, and density are directly proportional” and “the reproduction of movement and duration in photographing equidistant frames of equal size projected at a uniform rate of speed.”<sup>36</sup> Yet the works discussed in *Undead* illuminate the inadequacy of these paradigms for addressing some experiences and temporalities of undeath and war, perhaps because ideologies of Eurocentrism and white supremacy are embedded within film ontology’s reverence for temporal and spatial unity. The fictions of this unity are protected by an entire apparatus of belief surrounding

film ethics that threatens to negate as unethical or unreal any alternative configurations of life-death-time-space-image. This helps to explain why, as Steve Reinke observed in 2005, “we have yet to develop an ethics of the animated image, apart from issues related to the socialization of children.”<sup>37</sup>

Since 2005, the question of how a specifically documentary ethics operates within animated and virtual worlds has constituted one of the most dynamic areas of the overlapping fields of cinema and media studies and animation studies. Scholars including Nea Ehrlich, Jonathan Murray, Annabelle Honess Roe, Tess Takahashi, and many others have done immensely important work at this intersection.<sup>38</sup> This body of scholarship has forcefully demonstrated what animation has to offer a range of serious topics, including war, forced displacement, gender and sexual violence, disability, slavery, memory, history, and death. During the two decades since Reinke’s observation, these and other scholars have generated a rich and expansive set of methods and terms, adapting and intervening in discussions of live-action film ethics in ways that better fit documentary animation films. *Undead* grows out of and draws on that body of work, but it also sits adjacent to this realm. Most of the works I consider are not documentaries, and they only intermittently introduce (inter)(in)animating features within a more diverse, intermedial landscape. Animated documentaries often assert animation’s superior ability to deal with serious aspects of “truth” and “reality” that elude live-action documentary formats. By contrast, several of the works I discuss deliberately harness the irreverence, humor, disrespect, and irreality of the cartoon and of feminism itself, as well as the open possibilities of fiction, speculation, and play, to engage histories of violence in ways that challenge hegemonic understandings of truth, memory, and reality and bypass ethical and ontological frameworks that render some worlds, wars, lives, and deaths unthinkable.

The Iranian-British animator Maryam Mohajer’s award-winning bilingual short *Red Dress. No Straps.* (2018) weaves together feminist animation’s long history of playful, carnal, and defiant humor with the devastating temporalities of war. Mohajer makes her saturated colorful images using TVPaint animation software, which easily combines painterly effects with a range of other animation techniques. The informational intertitle “Tehran, Iran. 1985. Iran-Iraq war” that appears early in the film does not prepare the viewer for the humor that follows. Lush and funny images frequently illustrate voice-over narration and recorded snippets of scenes of intergenerational female community: two bare feet with red-painted toenails wiggle against a black background; the little girl protagonist giggles, upside down, alongside a poster of the pop singer she idolizes; an erotic fragment shows black lacy panties and the tops of a woman’s thighs as the little girl reports, knowingly, “On Tuesday, there was a party.”

The young protagonist’s grandparents appear periodically throughout the film, often accompanied by the background sound of radio news that reminds viewers of the world outside this scene of play. As the short progresses, the young girl’s

narration switches matter-of-factly between scenes of everyday life and indexes of war. Her London-accented English suggests, especially when juxtaposed with fragments of Persian, that we are hearing diasporic memories of a time and place left behind. The voice-over abruptly jolts viewers out of the space of play when the girl reports, "On Monday in school, they told us to say, 'Death to America,'" a sentence whose repetition throughout the film suggests a temporal rut that exists in tension with the narrative's progression. As we hear the radio being tuned, wispy, translucent white lines rise up to create a lacy layer over the surface of the image. Like many of Mohajer's digital painted animations, these images enfold both Persian writing and the decorative patterns of Persian miniatures, underscoring the film's bilingualism as well as a sense of geographic and spatial hybridity. The girl continues, "Grandpa listens to Voice of America every evening," before announcing, "We're at war . . . with Saddam." Suddenly, the girl's disembodied face and hands appear against a black screen, and this disintegration of the body into parts in the wake of the war news is jarring. But just as suddenly, the mood turns humorous again as the girl cheekily sticks out her bright red tongue in the direction of the viewer, making the sound "bluuuh," once, twice, three times. She stares out at the viewer, eyes blinking, mouth unmoving, as her voice continues, "Yesterday, on Friday, Saddam tried to bomb our house." She looks up toward the top of the frame, as if momentarily conflating her home and the frame, before adding: "But he's so rubbish, he missed." Resting her smiling face in her cute, pudgy fingers, she confirms in a sing-song voice, her head rocking side to side, "Our house was not hit. We're all alive." As the sound of a sewing machine returns, signaling the grandma's liveliness, the girl adds, "And we're not dead."

Granny is sewing a version of the strapless red dress that the pop singer wears for the little girl, and the scene in which she tries it on brings viewers back from war into the realm of comedy. The child proudly lifts her arms to show off her gown, insisting with determination, "The exact. Same. Dress. Nooooo. Straps," but the dress drops to the ground, revealing a little naked body wearing nothing but pink underwear to the sound of the grandma's laughter. Subsequent scenes continue to hover in increasingly disorienting ways between everyday life and the mortal threat of war, perhaps most strikingly in a scene at the jeweler's shop, where the child has her ears pierced. She confesses, "It still hurts a bit," pressing her face against a glass jewelry case. The doubling of her face in the glass on the left of the screen seems to generate another eerie and disembodied head, which also seems to be hers (figure 1). The eyes of this second child, however, are blackened and wide with distress. Her face is cut and dirty, her hair disheveled. Mohajer creates shot/reverse-shot cuts between the two. The first girl smiles at this hurt version of herself, but the second girl just stares, emptily, panting, before humor and suffering are juxtaposed again, but in ever more disturbing proximity to each other. The smiling girl's eyes, and then her tears, fill the screen as we hear the piercing-gun while the wounded girl returns to bite the hand of the piercer, revenging her double (video 1).

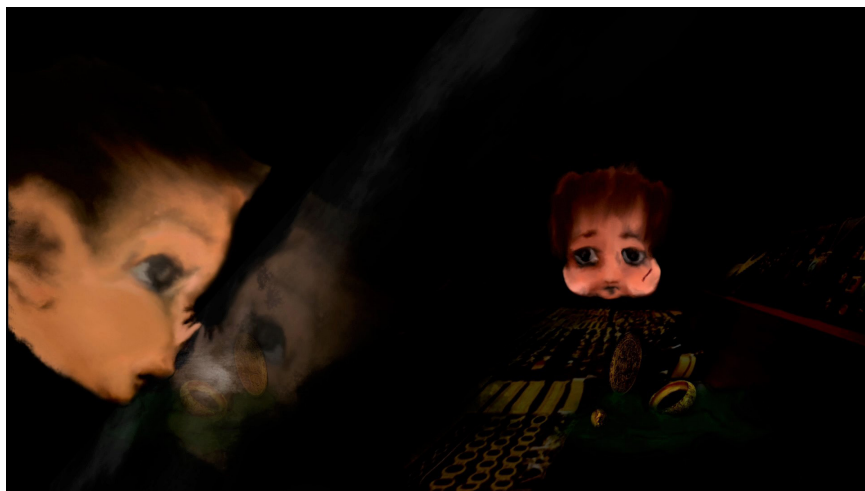
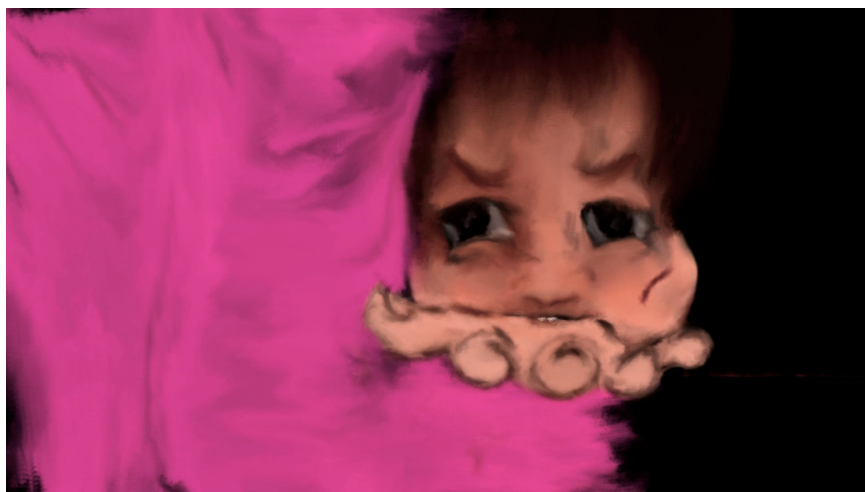


FIGURE 1. (Un)dead and living versions of the same girl meet in the jewelry shop, from Maryam Mohajer's *Red Dress. No Straps.*, 2018.



VIDEO 1. The (un)dead girl bites the hand of the man who pierces the ears of the living version of herself. Maryam Mohajer, *Red Dress. No Straps.*, 2018.

To watch this video, scan the QR code with your mobile device or visit DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1525/luminos.228.1>





"BUT I DIDN'T WANT STRAPS!," the girl moans, adding with disgruntlement, "Granny says I can't wear a strapless dress until my boobies grow bigger." This scene returns to the erotic feminist humor that has pervaded the film—that is, until the moment when the girl, swishing her dress from side to side, adds, "But my boobies will never grow." In this chilling instant, puberty's calendar switches from being an index of desire and futurity to an index of death's irreversible intervention in linear time. "Do you remember when I said that Saddam was so rub-bish?," the girl asks. "That he missed our house? That we're all alive? That we're not dead?" As the screen cuts to black, she confesses, "I lied."

In conversation, Mohajer describes being at the storyboard stage of making *Red Dress. No Straps*. The film was originally going to end simply with the grandma telling her granddaughter that she would have to wait for her boobies to come in before she could have a strapless dress. But then one evening, when Mohajer was coming back from a party, her eyes filled with tears as she thought to herself, "I know how this will end." She explains, "When you live through something like a war, it's like that war is a shadow, ready to sneak into anything you create."<sup>39</sup> Her comment emphasizes the liveliness of the dead in the minds of those who love and survive them, and the way that war's death and destruction play out, not only on the bodies of those whose lives are cut short by war, but also on those who survive, through whom war persists well beyond the official endings or geographies of any given war. Mohajer uses animation to underscore the proliferating or exponential nature of war, which multiplies different versions of the dead in the memory landscapes of those who live and seeps into the creative acts of artists who strive to be "postwar."

This undead girl mediates how those killed by war haunt the living, and also, perhaps, how the living in turn respond to this haunting by disavowing or erasing war's impact through reanimating means. Both of these phenomena, the way they drive each other and shape our relationship to war, those with whom we live, and the world, are central concerns of feminist war studies, and they persist as ongoing concerns throughout this book. The film registers and performs this entanglement of the dead and the living through the aesthetic tools of animation. The effect is disturbing. The film tricks viewers into laughing with a dead child, into gullibly going along with a narrative that asserts nobody dies even when we know that houses have been bombed. What initially felt like colorful moments of knowing adolescent feminist play in which we participate suddenly takes on shades of necrophilia. The discomfort raises complicated ethical and aesthetic questions about what it means for this animator to humorously make a puppet of a character ultimately revealed to be a dead child within a form of image making where neither life nor death is possible. Both the feelings and the questions generated within this animated treatment of undeath differ in kind from those generated by live-action documentary treatments of death and war. Because of the way animation brings its unruly and comedic irreverence, its unstable relation to the world,



even into the space of death, it may seem ill-suited for a meaningful engagement with the project of feminist un-war making. This book, however, examines work by artists who activate animated tactics within the context of other media landscapes, not to create purely animated worlds, but rather in ways that I argue help to illuminate how we might begin to unthink the givenness of violent worlds that present themselves as fixed and unchangeable.

*Undead* asks what gets included and excluded when we consider the entwined histories of animation and war. Seeking to challenge the parameters that make “animation” and “war” legible in relation to each other, *Undead* focuses on experimental and intermedial case studies that challenge coherent narrative structures or eschew narrative form altogether, turn only intermittently to animated tactics, and frequently span the categories of film and contemporary art, appearing more in museums and galleries than in festivals and movie theaters or on television. That the works I consider are only partly animated further complicates the already-manifold methodological challenges facing scholars of experimental animation. These challenges stem, Suzanne Buchan explains, both from the equally “fuzzy” meaning of *experimental* and *animation* and from “animation’s widely divergent pro-filmic materials (objects, drawings, sand, painting, puppets).”<sup>40</sup> *Undead* stretches existing definitions of both war and animation as these phenomena meet each other within a hybrid and unpredictable aesthetic field. It brings feminist interdisciplinary attention to intermedial appearances of animation that discombobulate, dissect, and détourne both subjective war stories and hegemonic war histories. In such cases, animated effects illuminate the potential continuities between war stories and national war propaganda, and the role of institutions and rituals of history and memory in sustaining amnesia, silencing, erasure, and further war making.<sup>41</sup>

*Undead* takes these persistent questions within animation scholarship in new directions by asking: What happens when questions about animated life and death are put in dialogue with the work of Black, decolonial, and Global South feminist scholars who pressure the hegemonic mappings of life and death and definitions that shore up patriarchal, white supremacist world systems of belief? As Rizvana Bradley, writing within a Black feminist philosophical tradition, starkly puts it: “Black people are no-bodies. . . . To speak of black embodiment is thus to approach the limits of phenomenology.”<sup>42</sup> To think animation at these and other limits of a representational system that determines which bodies count as living beings and which ones don’t is to recognize, as Bradley does, that “aesthetics are a matter of life and death.”<sup>43</sup> Thinking at these limits has thus less to do with “saving representation” or protecting the “temporal unity” that for André Bazin is so intimately linked to the ethical, specifically cinematic image than with experimenting aesthetically, intermedially, intellectually, and communally, albeit provisionally, with alternative ways of mediating and remembering experience, including experiences of war.<sup>44</sup>

*Undead* explores creative and scholarly work that interrupts entrenched and inherited ways of thinking about animation within the context of war, in part by de-isolating the coupling of these terms, opening animation and war out into broader aesthetic, historical, and political landscapes. By paying attention to this body of work, *Undead* seeks to respond constructively to Tess Takahashi's insightful observation at the conference of the Society for Cinema and Media Studies in 2023 that scholarly discussions of race and experimental animation tend to conflate author and object in ways that perpetuate the exact critical habits Racquel J. Gates and Michael Boyce Gillespie resist in their 2019 manifesto "Reclaiming Black Film and Media Studies."<sup>45</sup> These habits, Takahashi argues, drawing on Gates and Gillespie, involve a privileging of "raced authorship" and "authorial embodiment" over formal properties, the "tyranny of biological determinism," and the conflation of "black" and "oppositional."<sup>46</sup> Habits are, by definition, hard to break, and throughout this book I explore how the frictions generated by (inter)(in)animation reveal and/or resist entrenched, automated patterns of thought and being, including my own, that help to sustain the habit of perpetual war.

As part of this strategy of boundary crossing and habit breaking, *Undead* examines works that refuse to segregate, and indeed activate the tensions among, animation's rhetorical, art historical, and mass cultural roots. Though the book does not try to construct a history of animation, it nevertheless brings attention to underexamined, hybrid, and more experimental lineages of animation that wander across, and often disrupt in life-affirming ways, the aesthetic, temporal, and geographic categories by which many existing histories of art, war, and film are organized. Interdisciplinarity helps us notice such forms of expression and versions of reality that isolated disciplinary structures of belief might obscure.

### *War, Animation, and Undeath*

Animation scholars have long been aware that this uncanny mode of image making brings heightened attention to the boundary between life and death, human and nonhuman, and to the role of media in shaping evolving collective understandings of where such limits lie. Richard Thompson, for example, notes in 1980, "That resurrection at the bottom of every cartoon cycle exists solely and cynically so that the victim can proceed to his next debacle. More absolutely than zombies, vampires, and the undead are cartoon characters denied the solace of eternal rest."<sup>47</sup> Alan Cholodenko argues that, particularly after World War II, animation emerges as a vehicle for making sense of a new world era, haunted by the specter of zombies, in which the relationship between life and death has altered: "Not only life but death has died, each replaced by cold, clonal hyperimmortality, fulfilling the human's wish for escape from death . . . the death of death, by definition, an escape from the human itself."<sup>48</sup> And in *Shadow of a Mouse: Performance, Belief, and World-Making in Animation* (2013), Donald Crafton polemically underestimates the difference between human and cartoon characters, suggesting that "their

drawn or modeled figures are different biologically from those in live-action movies, but as screen performers, fundamentally they're the same."<sup>49</sup> Activating John Ruskin's theory of pathetic fallacy, Crafton suggests that "moving lines, colorful shapes, blobs of clay, piles of sand, furry puppets and even plain forms in motion on-screen" can be perceived as bodies, human or otherwise, and he invites readers to think of embodiment not as a biological fact but rather as a "belief system."<sup>50</sup> Here he draws on Philip Auslander, for whom "the live" is not an "ontological category," and who argues that the meaning and importance of liveness "are subject to change, especially in relation to technological development."<sup>51</sup> While Crafton rejects the "childishly naïve or delusional" position that there is no difference at all between "proximal liveness and being alive," he nevertheless pushes his readers to take seriously the question of what is collectively understood, or not, by "liveness" on screen and off, and why and when this matters.<sup>52</sup>

Animation and film historians alike have highlighted the importance of animation as a tool of imperialism and war in the form of propaganda and as a useful instrument for the day-to-day business of war (mapping, planning, training, controlling, surveilling, and destroying), both of which have shaped the everyday worlds in which we live. Thirty years ago, for example, Thomas Doherty highlighted the intertwined histories of Disney and warfare, noting that "in 1943, 94 percent of Disney's work was war-related. Sandbags and anti-aircraft guns surrounded the only Hollywood studio to be designated a 'key war productions plant' and 'essential industry.'"<sup>53</sup> Christopher P. Lehman documents how US animation's relationship to war shifted during the Vietnam War era away from paradigms established during World War II. He illustrates how, between 1961 and 1973, changes in "cartoon violence" can be understood "as a barometer to national sentiment on Vietnam," and contextualizes war-related phenomena within a broader discussion of racism in the American animation industry.<sup>54</sup> His refusal to separate these two topics—racism and war—represents a noteworthy scholarly intervention into the study of animation, and this book attempts to build on that intervention. And Bishnupriya Ghosh illustrates how animations of malaria made for scientific research films and military training films during World War II played a formative role in the "visualization of 'life itself,'" generating an "epistemology of infection" that continues to shape, and rationalize as benign, global biosecurity regimes.<sup>55</sup> The pairing of animation and war, then, is not just the focus of this book or a minor subfield; it also sprouts some of the most potent and destructive forces in the modern world. What does animation have to offer in the face of this fact?

Responding to this question, recent studies have increasingly emphasized the importance of paying attention to more than hegemonic uses of animation in war. Donna Kornhaber opens her comprehensive study of the topic, *Nightmares in the Dream Sanctuary: War and the Animated Film* (2020), by wondering, in the face

of the robust body of scholarship on animated war propaganda, “Is there not more to this story?” “Where is the animation that tells . . . stories that are personal, idiosyncratic, humane, and born from experience?”<sup>56</sup> Studies of anime, the animated documentary, and transnational wartime animation too numerous to address here have, like Kornhaber, pushed scholars to examine animation’s affinities with subjective experiences of war beyond military instrumental uses of it.<sup>57</sup> Such work illuminates animation’s well-suitedness to witnessing and mediating unfilmed or unfilmable physical and psychic experiences of war and trauma, including the chaotic rearrangements of space and time that war enacts and inflicts on lived experience.<sup>58</sup> Kornhaber organizes the films she discusses under the categories of witness, resistance, pacifism, memory, and memorial. A brief discussion of *Mickey Mouse in Vietnam* (Lee Savage and Milton Glaser, 1967), a sixty-second short that Kornhaber sees as an “archetypal example” of “protest animation,” helps to illustrate both *Undead*’s shared ground with existing studies of war and animation and the critical questions that become visible when animation scholars adopt underexplored interdisciplinary approaches.<sup>59</sup>

*Mickey Mouse in Vietnam: Interdisciplinarity  
and Animated Deathlessness*

On January 30, 1967, Mickey Mouse was shot through the head on the shores of Vietnam, (un)dying just seconds after their arrival. Mickey’s (un)death is captured, or created, in Whitney Lee Savage and Milton Glaser’s sixty-second short *Mickey Mouse in Vietnam* and was first screened as part of a compilation film entitled *For Life, against the War* (1967) in New York City as part of the Week of the Angry Arts, organized in opposition to the American war in Vietnam.<sup>60</sup> The original film involved over sixty filmmakers who responded to a call put out by a group of artists for submissions under three minutes that represented “a personal declaration by American filmmakers for life and against the War.”<sup>61</sup>

At the opening of the film, a smiling black-and-white, 1920s-style Mickey Mouse marches along before pausing at a sign that declares, “Join the Army and See *the World*.” Mickey eagerly signs up, dons a helmet and bayonet, and boards a steamer that recalls Mickey’s first distributed film, *Steamboat Willie* (1928) (figure 2). The short shifts to an aerial point of view on the vessel traveling between the USA and Vietnam, aligning the cartoon with the vantage of airpower, which, for Caren Kaplan is “a technology of war produced directly by the state” that “can only articulate nationalism.”<sup>62</sup> As the image shifts back to a straight-on perspective, Mickey disembarks and follows signs toward “Vietnam” and the “Warzone.” The mouse enters a terrain of long grasses as a bullet, source unseen, catalyzes Mickey’s fall to the ground. As the animation again adopts an aerial perspective over Mickey’s fallen body, a bullet hole appears in their forehead. The mouse closes their eyes and their head slumps as ink-blood seeps from their wound (figure 3).

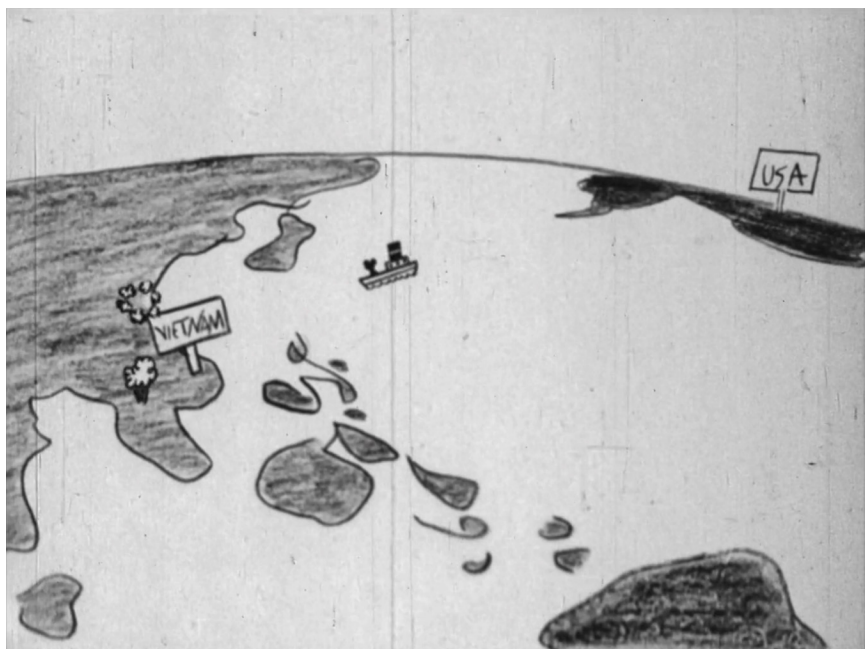


FIGURE 2. Aerial shot of the USA and Asia with steamboat, from Whitney Lee Savage and Milton Glaser's *Mickey Mouse in Vietnam*, 1967–68.

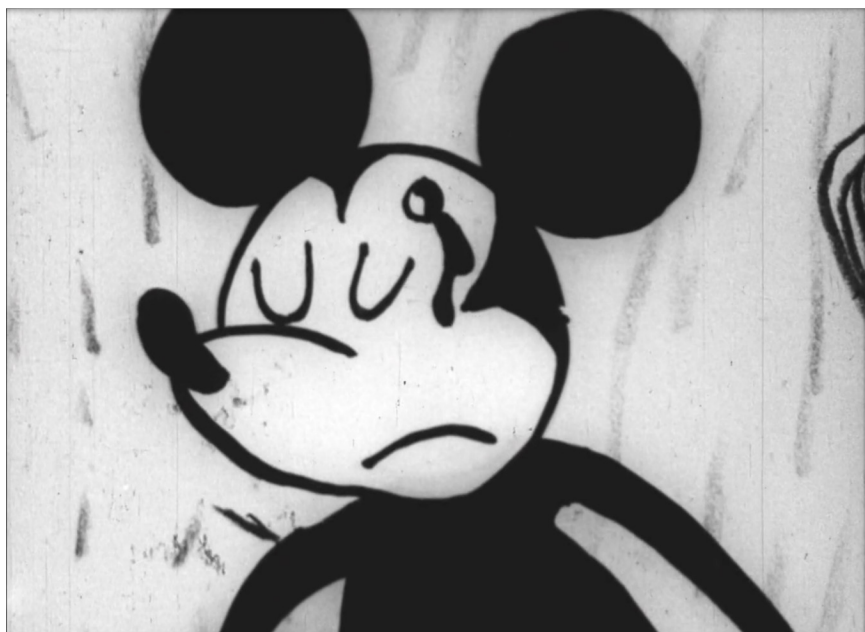


FIGURE 3. Mickey Mouse bleeding to (un)death from bullet wound in their forehead, from Whitney Lee Savage and Milton Glaser's *Mickey Mouse in Vietnam*, 1967–68.

The death of this iconic cartoon mouse becomes an animated and cognitive possibility with the transformation of a smile into a frown, the creature's rigid fall from a vertical to a horizontal posture, and the juxtaposition of Mickey's animated stilling with a continuous flow of inky blood that decouples movement from the signification of life.<sup>63</sup> Therefore, the film might be read as a traditionally sentimental antiwar film for American audiences; but other readings are also possible.

In *How to Read Donald Duck: Imperialist Ideology in the Disney Comic*, Ariel Dorfman and Armand Mattelart argue that Disney's violence is embedded in its characters' relation to time and deathlessness: "Since they are not engendered by any biological act, Disney characters may aspire to immortality: whatever apparent, momentary sufferings are inflicted on them in the course of their adventures, they have been liberated, at least, from the curse of the body."<sup>64</sup> This leads, they suggest, to an altered relationship to time where "reality is unchanging."<sup>65</sup> Dorfman and Mattelart's book suggests both that there are things to be learned about US imperialist ideologies by looking at the intertwining of suffering and immortality in popular cartoons and that spectators' ability to learn such lessons requires new reading methodologies. *Undead* is deeply invested in this dual insight. Similarly, Ōtsuka Eiji, discussing war and peace in the context of Tezuka Osamu's manga, identifies an "undying" and "deathless" quality in anime derived from Hollywood films in general, and Disney animation and Mickey Mouse (perhaps inaccurately) in particular. He writes, "Common to Hollywood comedies and Disney animation is the fact that the characters are physically 'tough to kill.' Even when Mickey falls from a cliff and is squashed flat into the ground, he reappears in the next scene without a scratch. This 'undying' or 'deathless' physicality is one of the legacies of Hollywood in anime, which comes via Disney."<sup>66</sup> Ōtsuka illustrates his argument with an image from Tezuka's June 1945 manga *Shōri no hi made* (Till the Day of Victory), which features Mickey Mouse in a war plane, goggles across their forehead, shooting a machine gun. This image links Mickey's deathlessness not to innocence but rather to an American ideology of invulnerability that Amy Kaplan, in *Our American Israel*, describes in terms of "the invincible victim" and "the pursuit of indomitability."<sup>67</sup> While this machine gun-toting Mickey Mouse makes the violence of American imperialism explicit (albeit within the context of Japanese imperialism in Asia), in many of the disastrous situations American cartoon characters experience, their violence is directed at themselves. Or, as Chuck Jones puts it, "The Coyote is his own worst enemy."<sup>68</sup> The logic of deathlessness, it seems, collapses the categories of victim and perpetrator into each other, and this can be used in different ways. Undeath has clearly been used to help sustain a totalizing system that makes illegible all experiences of life, suffering, violence, and death that do not relate to the Coyote-like protagonist. But Dorfman and Mattelart suggest that there are also ways to read and think that illuminate and mobilize animation's logic of deathlessness in the service of un-war making. This book goes in search of those ways.



*Mickey Mouse in Vietnam* offers the viewer an image of a singularly imagined and visually conquerable “world,” available only to vision from above, that functions as both touristic lure and the path to war.<sup>69</sup> But how does the film shape the way viewers understand the relationship between two worlds that momentarily merge here—the world of cartoons and the world of operational images, the graphic images used to conquer and control space—in ways that differ from military uses of cartoon characters in the service of war? The answer to this question depends in part not only on who the “we” in question is but on how that “we” understands “the world” outside of the experience of the film. Viet Thanh Nguyen succinctly articulates the reasons for resisting contained, compartmentalized, and consecutive ways of thinking about modern war’s temporality and spatiality in *Nothing Ever Dies: Vietnam and the Memory of War*. There Nguyen offers paradigms that enable more “just” forms of memory that remember “others” as well as “one’s own” and that provide yet another framework through which to consider what *Mickey Mouse in Vietnam* may or may not offer to un-war making. He writes,

The inclination is to remember wars like individuals, separate and distinct. Wars become discrete events, clearly demarcated in time and space by declarations of war and ceasefires, by the inscription of dates in history books, news articles, and memorial placards. And yet all wars have murky beginnings and inconclusive endings, oftentimes continuing a preceding war and foreshadowing a later one. These wars often do not take place only in the territories for which they are named, but spill over into neighboring countries; they are also shaped in war rooms and boardrooms distant from the battlefields.<sup>70</sup>

Nguyen takes issue with the way wars are named and challenges the way naming limits what he calls “war’s scale in space and time.”<sup>71</sup> Writing about whether to speak of “the Vietnam War” or “the American War,” he states, “Either name effaces how more than just Vietnamese or Americans fought this war, and how it was fought both inside and outside Vietnam. When it comes to time, other American wars preceded it (in the Philippines, the Pacific Islands, and Korea), occurred at the same time (in Cambodia, Laos, and the Dominican Republic), and followed it (in Grenada, Panama, Kuwait, Iraq, and Afghanistan).”<sup>72</sup>

*Mickey Mouse in Vietnam*’s focus on the moment of Mickey’s (un)death is clearly designed to generate antiwar feeling in American audiences, but reading the film in the context of anti-imperialist and antiwar feminisms enables reflection on the contradictory and historically charged range of feelings that the film might generate, including grief and invulnerability. Affectively and politically, *Mickey Mouse in Vietnam*’s most direct antiwar strategy is deeply rooted in a sentimental investment in Mickey Mouse. Does the film still work as an antiwar film if audiences are indifferent or even hostile to Mickey? Maybe, but in a way that, to echo Martha Rosler, also usefully brings the war home. *Mickey Mouse in Vietnam* is solely concerned with Mickey Mouse and seems indifferent to and/or unaware of

Vietnamese people, combatants or not. Vietnamese existence is registered solely as a threat to American life, as a bullet that comes from nowhere and no one. In this purportedly “antiwar” film, Vietnam appears only as a fully depersonalized “War Zone,” structurally disavowing rather than grieving lost Vietnamese lives. Though the film may awaken antiwar sentiment in American audiences chilled by the prospect of the death of their loved ones, it also disavows Mickey’s (and the United States’) own perpetrator violence, rendering it unimaginable through the combination of Mickey’s innocence and the visual absence of Vietnamese life. *Mickey Mouse in Vietnam* constructs a vision of “the war” as a self-enclosed world generating grief for deathless Americans who still manage to play the roles of both hero and victim, thus generating opposition to an American imperialist war while simultaneously sustaining American imperialist ideology and the war making that accompanies it.

The complexity of how to evaluate this film’s participation in making and unmaking war is further complicated by the fact that this (un)dead American mouse-soldier takes the form of *Steamboat Willie*’s Mickey Mouse in particular, who, at least according to Nicholas Sammond, is not just like, but *is* “a minstrel.”<sup>73</sup> Thus this scene may, albeit unthinkingly, extend the film’s affective combination of grief, loss, and animated deathlessness into the realm of blackface minstrelsy in ways that reinforce the already-contradictory temporality and affects of minstrelsy and its afterlife. Understood within this framework, Mickey functions as both an individual character and an allegory of the nation in which the presence of Black life is simultaneously invoked and sacrificed, at once disavowed within an apparently unstoppable white performance and mourned nostalgically as a body killed by invisible forces of a violence marked as foreign that actually comes from within.<sup>74</sup>

Yet Racquel J. Gates’s powerful Black feminist reflection on the affective experience of a particular screening of *Dumbo* (Samuel Armstrong, Norman Ferguson, Wilfred Jackson, et al., 1941) offers a useful caution to scholars theorizing American animation’s rootedness in racism. Gates describes watching this Disney feature with her children during Covid-19 lockdown in the summer of 2020 while people protesting the murder of George Floyd marched in the street below.<sup>75</sup> She acknowledges the “clear racist instances” in *Dumbo* as well as American animation’s rootedness in minstrelsy. But she also contextualizes such instances within an omnipresent antiblack racism that haunts “the entire history of American mainstream cinema” and notes, crucially, “how Black people regularly engage with films that were created with little care or regard for their experiences or humanity.”<sup>76</sup> Gates challenges assumptions derived from the “discourses on blackness and film that take the white gaze as the unquestioned and rigid norm” and that assert “definitive” readings, calling instead for analyses that take the specific circumstances of watching into account and that lead “with resonance rather than with a politics of representation.”<sup>77</sup> Just as Rose links delusions about ending



war to delusions about finite models of knowledge, so Gates's intervention suggests that the (inter)(in)animating work of un-war making requires scholars to find intellectual, political, and stylistic alternatives to authoritarian, triumphalist, or single-minded arguments and to acknowledge the role of styles of thought in perpetual war making.

To date, film theory has offered scholars a fairly limited toolbox with which to grapple with issues raised at the intersection of war and animation. The complex reasons for these limitations derive, in part, as I suggest above, from film theory's antianimation bias, especially within medium-specific frameworks that have considered live-action film in isolation from more diverse media landscapes. Scholars in animation studies and cinema *and media* studies pose continuous and generative challenges to these isolationist tendencies. Yet there is more to the story than this. Thinking about film theory's limitations simultaneously in the dual light of *Mickey Mouse in Vietnam* and Gates's reading of *Dumbo* has led me to consider more deeply the vital contributions Black sound and music studies, Black feminist film studies, and Black studies in poetics have to make to war and animation scholarship. In particular, in the remainder of this chapter, I explore what animation theory has to gain from paying close attention to Black studies responses to critical theory's understanding of jazz as well as to what Matthew D. Morrison has recently theorized as "Blacksound." Morrison writes of this neologism, "The singular, compound noun 'Blacksound' is employed to unpack the legacies of popular music that have developed during chattel slavery and out of blackface."<sup>78</sup> He uses this term to slow automatic reactions to sounds and images in the popular music industry that have roots in the cultural landscape generated by the intersecting realities of American anti-Black racism and Black life. Gates's reading of *Dumbo*, which notes the effect of the presence of something akin to Morrison's "Blacksound" in the film, illustrates the benefit of this kind of slowing. Interrupting animation theory's reliance on critical theory's understanding of jazz and "Blacksound" through a more robust engagement with Black studies is a necessary step, I suggest, in developing more nuanced approaches to feminist thinking about war, racism, and animation together.

#### BEYOND MICKEY: CRITICAL ANIMATION THEORY, JAZZ, AND "THE BREAK"

Film theoretical discussions of war and animation frequently return to Walter Benjamin's early twentieth-century fragments on Mickey Mouse. Although Benjamin becomes increasingly ambivalent about animation's utopian possibilities, he initially imagines Mickey as capable of activating in mass audiences visual and cognitive awareness about the dismantled coherence of time, space, subjectivity, and the biological body that world-destroying forces such as fascism, imperialism, modernity, technological warfare, and forced exile enact.<sup>79</sup> Benjamin sees

this cartoon character as having the potential to offer audiences in the 1930s what Miriam Hansen, in her brilliant analysis of Benjamin's debate with Theodor W. Adorno, calls "a rhetorical emergency brake."<sup>80</sup> And Hansen demonstrates how Benjamin's hesitation about the cartoon's political potential emerges in response to Adorno's more negative view of cartoons, which he compares with jazz.<sup>81</sup>

In his 1936 essay "On Jazz," Adorno describes "the break" as "a cadence which is similar to an improvisation, mostly at the end of the middle part two beats before the repetition of the principal part of the refrain."<sup>82</sup> While he recognizes that jazz's syncopations can, in virtuosic examples, "yield an extraordinary complexity," he argues that in all cases, "the fundamental beat is rigorously maintained; it is marked over and over again by the bass drum."<sup>83</sup> While acknowledging that the "decidedly modern character" of jazz is "sorely in need of analysis," "musically," Adorno insists, jazz's "'modernity' refers primarily to sound and rhythm, without fundamentally breaking the harmonic-melodic convention of traditional dance music."<sup>84</sup> This, for Adorno, puts jazz at odds with what he regards as modernist avant-garde music's more radical departure from musical traditions and freedom-restricting forms of rhythm. "Jazz," "dance," and "dance music" become synonymous with the militaristic march, with the "rigid" musical disciplining of the body, and with the deluded identification of "dependent lower classes" with the upper classes.<sup>85</sup> Doubting the extent to which "jazz has anything at all to do with black music" and describing this possibility as "highly questionable," Adorno suggests that "even the much-invoked improvisations, the 'hot' passages and breaks, are merely ornamental in their significance, and never part of the overall construction or determinant of the form."<sup>86</sup>

Hansen's 1993 "Of Mice and Ducks" essay explicitly, albeit too briefly, identifies the imbrication of animation, Blackness, radical politics, and jazz in and through what Adorno names "the break." Fred Moten, working within a tradition of Black studies and poetics, takes up and redirects this key term in his influential study *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition* (2003). Without engaging animation as a key priority, Moten's recontextualization of "the break" unleashes a language of (inter)(in)animation, suggesting an affinity between these terms and modeling the possibility of redirecting existing intellectual trajectories. The verb *to animate* permeates Moten's *In the Break* in ways that are distinct from Adorno's more constraining and subject-bound uses of this term, without ever becoming a primary concern in its own right. Moten explicitly engages Adorno in chapter 3, "Visible Music," a title that strongly echoes "visual music," a common synonym for abstract animation, and especially the form of avant-garde animation that is driven by sound.<sup>87</sup> There he notes that "black aural culture" is, for Adorno, "defined by its fetish character," and jazz by its affinity with "the spontaneous singing of servant girls . . . the domesticated body in bondage."<sup>88</sup> Moten focuses less on what Adorno hears than on what he doesn't in order to "establish black aurality as the site of an improvisation" and to locate something other than loss and trauma

in what is variously described as the cut, the wound, and the break.<sup>89</sup> In particular, the notion of the “ensemblic” plays a crucial role in preventing improvisation and freedom from either taking the form of a redeemed subjectivity unimplicated by subjection or “fixing” the (jazz) break.<sup>90</sup> I try to center these irresolvably intertwined histories of subjection and the ensemblic through my use of the term *(inter)(in)animation*.

More recently, in *Jazz as Critique: Adorno and Black Expression Revisited* (2018), Fumi Okiji, a Black feminist scholar of critical theory and sound and music studies, develops this line of thinking, offering a powerful critique of, as well as better alternatives to, Adorno’s occlusions of black sociality in his writing on jazz. Okiji too does not focus on animation. But her revisionist account delineates the limitations of Adorno’s imagination of freedom and life in his writing on jazz, and this intervention matters for the project of theorizing animation, which has been unproductively constrained by Adorno’s jazz-inflected understanding of animation as a political dead end. Okiji’s Black feminist rethinking of jazz illuminates how life-affirming possibilities of animation might be both practiced and theorized through a differently imagined sense of the world. Without denying that Adorno may be right about the “complicity” of some jazz music, Okiji rejects Adorno’s “near-silence on African American and, more generally, black sociohistory” and his use of New World slavery as a mere preview of the “alienation and neutering of the bourgeois subject” rather than as a topic of interest in its own right.<sup>91</sup> Furthermore, Okiji dismisses jazz scholarship’s frequent emphasis on the individual in favor of different ways of thinking, being, and creating that foreground community and relationality, again suggesting generative possibilities for animation practice and theory. Taking inspiration, like Bradley, from Hortense J. Spillers, Okiji insists that in spite of ongoing efforts to occlude black sociohistory, “black life *is* lived, although often invisibly, alongside its appropriated and transformed mainstream uses.”<sup>92</sup> And crucially, Okiji argues, “It is this deviance from mainstream ideals and imaginings, rather than liberty or democracy, that jazz works through.”<sup>93</sup> *Undead* leans in the direction of works that experiment with communal, relational, ensemblic, and deviant forms of animation that, like the jazz Okiji describes, counter totalities that support white supremacist, patriarchal, singular, and belligerent worldviews in improvisational and unpredictable ways.

Jazz holds an understandably privileged place for both Moten and Okiji, as it does, along with “Blacksound,” in the formation of early American cartoons; but the *(inter)(in)animating* works featured in *Undead* draw on a broader array of ensemblic creative practices. Some are musical, like the traditions of Black experimental music and Dub activated by David Hartt and Tomeka Reid in *Et in Arcadia Ego*; but other un-war-making forms of *(inter)(in)animation* I discuss are rooted rather in collective practices of dance, theater, storytelling, fabric design, tattooing, healing, cooking, sewing, praying, being in nature, traveling, resisting, and joking, offering expanded forms of queer, decolonial, antiracist, and feminist ensemblic

imaginings. Charging animation with collective and relational connotations, (inter)(in)animation invites theorists to broaden experimental animation discourse beyond the singularly imagined animator's vision and body that Takahashi pinpoints as a problem. Studies of industrially produced, commercial animation often, almost by necessity, address questions of collectivity involving labor, mass audiences, and intermedially generated fan cultures. By contrast, experimental animation, existing outside of or in tense relation to capitalist structures of production, has the potential to bring different modes of collectivity into the picture, and yet it rarely does. This raises interesting questions about how humanities disciplines prepare scholars to notice or ignore different forms of social life. While Moten and Okiji's emphasis on the ensemblic recognizes black sociality and creative lifeways, attention to the ensemblic within the context of a predominantly white experimental film history is more likely to illuminate the numerous historical biases and exclusions built into many experimental film communities. This paradigm also foregrounds the question of how experimental film discourse's investment in "personal vision" affects the legibility of community within this context, and how a given filmmaker's access to or exclusion from hegemonic modes of personhood shapes what counts as "experimental" in the first place.<sup>94</sup> Though it is beyond the scope of this book to respond systematically to these questions across experimental film history, I hope that *Undead's* interventions may prove useful for the larger historiographic project that such questions invite.

The radical potential found at the crossroads of animation and music opens for Moten imaginal possibilities that Adorno's worldview blocks. By thinking black performance in the spatial and temporal specificity of downtown Manhattan in the early 1960s, "the beat" appears in Moten's text, not as a force of militaristic control that puppets the body, but rather as "an arrhythmia," an "irregular beat."<sup>95</sup> The rhetoric of animation pervades *In the Break*, continuously and suggestively interacting with notions of relationality, improvisation, desubjectivization, breakage, and the ensemble. The term is there in the opening lines of the Acknowledgments, where Moten thanks the grandparents by whom his work is "animated" and recognizes the work of Saidiya Hartman, whom he describes as "animated" by a "critique of the subject."<sup>96</sup> For Moten, both the "real problem" and the "real chance for the philosophy of human being" stem from "the animative materiality—the aesthetic, political, sexual, and racial force—of the ensemble of objects that we might call black performers, black history, blackness," elsewhere described as "the freedom drive that animates black performances."<sup>97</sup> "Really listening" in the break where improvisation happens cannot involve a singular self, Moten shows, because it "is something other than itself."<sup>98</sup> "You must have faith," he suggests in his discussion of Amiri Baraka, "in some animus that allows the continual projection of discontinuity," elsewhere invoking "the frame" as spirit, as breath, and, again in the context of Baraka's poetry, as "the ongoing held within a fundamental, local, even national *anima*."<sup>99</sup>

Animation limns the language and thought of *In the Break*, inviting readers to improvise new ways of understanding animation practice through Moten's revised understanding of what happens "in the break." This invitation is reinforced by the fact that while "the frame" often emerges in the form of spirit and breath, Moten does also explicitly relate this language of the frame to experimental film practice. "Eisenstein is essential here," he declares, highlighting the filmmaker's "pursuit of a theory of montage as nonexclusive totality," with "the interval" emerging as "the motive force and form or dynamism that infuses and animates 'the ensemble of social relations.'"<sup>100</sup> Moten also stresses Eisenstein's "theorization of movement in/of the frame," which deconstructs the frame's singularity, its "staticity," and indeed the "very idea of the frame."<sup>101</sup> This leaves those interested in the politics of animation, often understood as a frame-by-frame type of filmmaking, with the question of how to define animation once the frame as an individual unit has become unthinkable.<sup>102</sup>

Moten introduces the plural term *interinanimations* to describe the entanglement of "the concept of race" and the idea of the frame, the "full ensemble of the determinations and indeterminations of race and the frame, their interinanimations and interruptive encounters."<sup>103</sup> *Undead* underscores and experiments with the theoretical and political possibilities of this term as both noun and verb, rhetorical figure and aesthetic technique, for the feminist study of intermedial and experimental animated works about war. These works challenge scholars to reimagine their existing critical frameworks by raising unusual questions that we are ill equipped to answer: How might abstract animated black circles and chalk stick figures alter the contemporary viewer's experience of colonial footage of dancing West African people? What does the interaction of doggerel puns, animated letters and objects, and physically embodied animation do to the mnemonic landscape of World War I? How should viewers understand the relationship between a gallery-installed digital animation and proliferation of World War I veterans, redrawn from a Nazi-destroyed painting and transferred onto a film loop with an experimental soundtrack; a speculative live performance of a fictional political movement; and a live-action film trilogy, all occurring simultaneously and in proximity to each other in the city of Berlin? What happens when Wile E. Coyote, an emblem of deathlessness, makes his permanent home in a German military museum?

#### *(Inter)(in)animation and Feminist Critique*

*Undead* seeks to build on Sianne Ngai's recognition that while "animatedness" inescapably belongs with "ugly categories of feeling" that perpetuate racial stereotypes, such categories can also help to "highlight animation's status as a nexus of contradictions with the capacity to generate unanticipated social meanings and effects" and to undermine "animation's traditional role in constituting bodies as raced."<sup>104</sup> Ngai's work on "animatedness" constitutes an important antiracist and decolonial feminist intervention into more utopian theorizations of animation,

including “Sergei Eisenstein’s praise of ‘plasmaticness’ in his analysis of Disney cartoons.”<sup>105</sup> It is remarkable, in part, for its simultaneous consideration of Fox Television’s US animation comedy *The PJs* (1998–2000) and a feminist theoretical discourse of animation that includes Barbara Johnson’s essay, “Apostrophe, Animation, and Abortion” (1986) and Rey Chow’s critical discussion in “Postmodern Automaton” (1993) of animation as a mediator of mutually imbricated scholarly desires and political responses to them across different positionalities and histories of violence.<sup>106</sup> Summarizing and citing Chow, Ngai explains that “the main question facing third-world subjects constantly invoked, apostrophized, or ventriloquized by first-world theorists is the question of how to turn automatization into autonomy and independence: ‘The task that faces “third world” feminists is thus not simply that of “animating” the oppressed women of their cultures but of making the automatized and animated condition of their own voices the conscious point of departure in their interventions.’”<sup>107</sup>

Ngai’s juxtapositions are discomfiting because they illuminate how seemingly distinct forms of animation both enact a similar “thinging of the body.”<sup>108</sup> At one point, sensing that “the act of animation begins to look inherently and irremediably violent,” Ngai interrogates “the possibility of foreclosing comic animation altogether as a strategy for representing nonwhite characters.”<sup>109</sup> Buried within this potential cancellation of specifically comic animation is the suspicion that there may be more and less acceptable forms of animation for progressive creative and intellectual work. Many of the artists I consider in this book run toward rather than away from comedic and belligerent forms of animation with noxious histories in order to make use of the knowledge embedded in these forms about how violent structures sustain themselves. Similarly, Ngai ultimately rejects the proposal she considers, noting the critical and political possibilities that such animation—“a nexus of contradictions”—offers in the face of racial stereotypes. These might be countered, Ngai suggests, not only by being stopped or made “more dead” but also, “though in a more equivocal fashion,” through acts of “reanimating.”<sup>110</sup> *Undead* grapples with what such equivocal modes of animation make available to antiwar feminist praxis and with the methodological challenges that such works pose. *Undead* imports (inter)(in)animation from the realm of poetics as a useful critical term for thinking with, against, across, and about the equivocal, entangled, hesitant, jerky, and tense histories, feelings, and politics that animation mediates in the works I bring together. Like each of the case studies, (inter)(in)animation resists belligerent singularities of heroism, experience, and reality through its own internal contradictions, providing a rich framework through which to think the relationship among feminisms, animation, and war.

Inspired by both Moten and Ngai, Michael Boyce Gillespie’s potent reading of the animated film *Coonskin* (Ralph Bakshi, 1975) not only “reanimates” the anti-black stereotype against itself but in doing so simultaneously transforms the critical tools of film analysis by using them within an interdisciplinary and intermedial

Black film and media studies context.<sup>111</sup> Gillespie writes, “*Coonskin* reanimates the iconography of antiblack visual culture as a metapicture that cogently contests the rendering of blackness, national mythology, the circuits of pop culture, and cultural memory in the key of the racial grotesque.”<sup>112</sup> The reanimating potential of this film relies, Gillespie suggests, on viewers moving past offensiveness for the purpose of a critical undeading that operates in part through offense: “The film’s acrimonious emplotment of the racial grotesque acts as a metacritical impulse to strike back (‘Fuck you’) and to disinter the liminal black figure from the deadening rhetoric of black inhumanity and white paternalism.”<sup>113</sup> Critical reanimation here might seem to recenter white supremacist associations between blackness and death via the language of disinterment. But a precise reading of Gillespie’s word choice here makes clear that it is in fact the “rhetoric of black inhumanity and white paternalism” that is yoked to death, and noticing this allows the “liminal black figure” to be unburied without being undead. By putting deathliness in its proper place, Gillespie contributes to a broader project that Fatimah Tobing Rony describes as putting an end to the “visual biopolitics” that constructs a history of violence by occluding “violence that implicates whites.”<sup>114</sup> I hope *Undead* will also contribute to this collective project. Not only do the works discussed in this book aim to make hidden histories of white war making more and differently available to thought; they also bring attention to alternative models of relational being and looking and experiment with what (inter)(in)animating practices illuminate about the possibility of sustaining life and each other instead of war.

Chapter 1, “(Inter)(in)animating the Archive,” focuses on British-Nigerian artist Onyeka Igwe’s 2023 MoMA PS1 installation, *A Repertoire of Protest (No Dance, No Palaver)*. There I introduce (inter)(in)animation to describe Igwe’s shaking of the apparatus, a mobilization of the site of projection occurring at the intersection of the dancing body and the moving image. I consider Igwe’s activation of a relational exchange across dance, the animated image, language, and the colonial archive in dialogue with the Aba Women’s War of 1929. This major and woman-led anticolonial uprising in Nigeria took the form of dance and is not, in part for that reason, always recognized as war. This chapter raises new ways of thinking about the relationship between war making and antiwar movements. Chapter 2, “Rubbing Memory the Right Way: Whiteness, (Inter)(in)animation, and Monumental Frottage,” examines how Mary Reid Kelley and Patrick Kelley put verbal nonsense and humor in dialogue with expanded forms of animation that include the physical act of rubbing one’s body against monumental facades to discombobulate stone-faced, Eurocentric, and entrenched narratives of World War I memory. Chapter 3, “(Inter)(in)animated Loops and the Feminist Politics of Return,” asks what happens when Yael Bartana’s live-action films and performance works engaging the entwined histories of anti-Semitic ideologies, political Zionism, and the politics of return are considered alongside a minor animated work that the artist made around the same time: *Entartete Kunst Lebt (Degenerate Art*



*Lives*). This short, animated loop sets in motion, proliferates, and reframes redrawings of an Otto Dix painting of veterans returning from World War I that is presumed to have been destroyed by the Nazis. The chapter examines what histories and historiographic challenges come into view when this animated short is considered not in isolation but rather in relation to the larger body of work. In chapter 4, “(Inter)(in)animation in Exile,” I explore to what effect Kelly Dolak and Wazhmah Osman animate children’s war drawings and cutouts from family photographs and old Afghan tourist brochures in their personal essay film about gendered Afghan and Afghan American experiences of war across multiple generations. Chapter 5, “Unnatural Disasters: Unfinishable (Inter)(in)animation,” considers Helen Hill’s community-based (inter)(in)animating response to the handmade dresses of Florestine Kinchen, found on a New Orleans sidewalk, as an evolving feminist un-war-making practice within the context of Hurricane Katrina, the effects of which Hill increasingly began to understand within frameworks of war.<sup>115</sup> In chapter 6, “Inter/in/animating the Museum: Architecture, Place, Memory,” I return to the concept of (inter)(in)animation to consider how three artists—Nancy Davenport, Gesiye, and David Hartt—intervene into museums grappling with their own complicities with different forms of war. I conclude the book in dialogue with the Palestinian artist and writer Ibrahim Nasrallah about his (inter)(in)animated “video poem” entitled “Mary of Gaza,” translated by Huda Fakhreddine.

This book makes no claim to systematicity or coverage, in part because (inter)(in)animation disrupts habits of thought regarding how wars are mapped and memorialized. I have selected works that allow me to explore a range of the aesthetic and critical possibilities that (inter)(in)animation offers for engaging the entanglement of violence and its antidotes, and the silencing and intellectually petrifying effects of hegemonic war chronologies that work via rigid, linear, and unidirectional constructions of time and experience. As a scholar rooted in the research university, I am also invested in (inter)(in)animation’s activity within institutions of war memory, including archives, museums, historical sites, and classrooms. These institutions participate in forms of war that operate through the dispersed force of social structures targeting vulnerable populations as well as through support for officially declared and covert wars. (Inter)(in)animation provides strategies for reflecting on as well as resisting war’s seepage into the structures of our lives in ways that make accountability and agency elusive. (Inter)(in)animation spotlights the role of automaticity, discipline, and obedience in sustaining war. Let the feminist (inter)(in)animated un-war making begin!



## (Inter)(in)animating the Archive

How might artists and scholars respond, with care, to the type of call Fatimah Tobing Rony, in her recent book *How Do We Look? Resisting Visual Biopolitics*, imagines hearing from a person she describes as “the dead girl at the center of [*Aita tamari vahine Judith te parari*, by Gauguin],” known as Annah la Javanaise: “Do not leave me in the archive”?<sup>1</sup> How, Rony asks, can those who have been visualized “as subhuman or nonhuman” “challenge the biopolitical tendency in visual culture and politics”?<sup>2</sup> Introducing these feminist questions into the realm of (inter)(in)animation and war brings further questions into view: How can artists and scholars respond to the archive without ventriloquizing or making puppets of the people whose images and movements have been fixed, pinned, collected, and analyzed as part of colonial warfare? What even counts as war? British-Nigerian artist Onyeka Igwe takes up such questions in her 2023 installation at MoMA PS1 entitled *A Repertoire of Protest (No Dance, No Palaver)*.<sup>3</sup>

The audiovisual installation, curated by Kari Rittenbach, travels, in various combinations, but often in triple-screen formations, across five different screens: three screens suspended from the gallery ceiling, an outdated box television set that introduces the specter of remembered domesticity and family into the scene, and a larger cinematic screen on the gallery wall. The installation involves three short films projected sequentially under the umbrella title of *A Repertoire of Protest (No Dance, No Palaver): Her Name in My Mouth* (2017, 6:24), *Sitting on a Man* (2018, 06:56), and *Specialised Technique* (2018, 06:57), each of which combines contemporary dance, material culture, spoken and written text, music, and frame-by-frame treatments of images from colonial films, punctuated by scanned chalk-drawn and digitally drawn chalk stick figures of West African dance notations

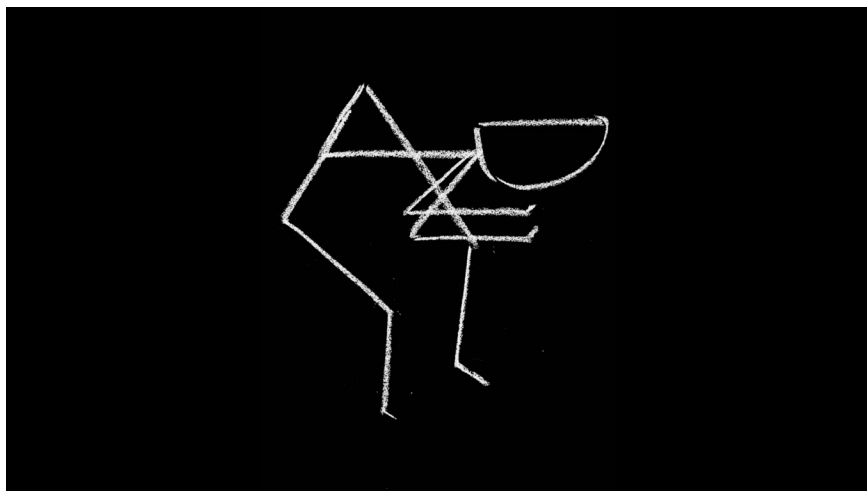


FIGURE 4. A stick figure from West African dance notation, in Onyeke Igwe's *Notes on Dancing with the Archive*, 2023.

(figure 4). The seriality of the figures might suggest the pages of a flip-book, the frames of an animated filmstrip, or the implied progressive movement of a cartoon strip, as if the stick figures were dancing across the screens; but the identical nature of these images suspends or resists that imagined motion, recalling effects Daisy Yan Du describes as “suspended animation,” “deep hibernation,” and dormancy.<sup>4</sup> This tension between stillness and movement, this quality of (inter)(in)animation, pervades Igwe’s engagement of colonial archives, but to what effect? As a feminist media theorist who is neither an Africanist nor a dance scholar, the questions I am able to ask and answer are limited, and my discussion of the historical events referenced by this work depends upon the scholarship of others, including of Igwe herself.

I argue that by employing (inter)(in)animating tactics, Igwe centers uncertainty, care, relationality, and multimodal forms of memory and expression, including dance, gesture, fabric design, sound design, and drawing, as part of an anticolonial feminist strategy that seeks to resist repetitions of violence while responding to the traces of it left in colonial film and paper archives. The artist’s Black feminist-informed response to colonial archives involves aesthetically reimagining the moving-image apparatus to prise open alternate cinematic interactions with Black female embodiment. This work recalls and highlights the limitations of earlier feminist expanded-cinema experiments that foreground the (white) female body’s relation to the apparatus, such as Valie Export’s *Tap and Touch Cinema* (1968/1989), while simultaneously building on the antiracist and anticolonial archive-based work of speculative filmmakers such as Cheryl

Dunye and Fatimah Tobing Rony.<sup>5</sup> Central to Igwe's intervention into existing configurations of the relationship between feminism, animation, and war is her intellectual and aesthetic engagement, through dance, with the powerful Igbo women's collective practice of expressing gendered and communal dissent known as "Sitting on a Man," a tradition also known as "making war."

Writing about the meaning of *repertoire* within the context of postsocialist Guinea, Adrienne J. Cohen suggests that the word connotes "embodied practice that plays a role in generating and activating history and memory," revealing "attachments to the past and possibilities for the future," enacting "social continuity across radically different political-economic eras," and signaling the "dynamism" of the relationship between place and dance.<sup>6</sup> But what places, histories, memories, attachments, and social continuities does Igwe's repertoire (inter)(in)animate, and what do these interventions contribute to feminist thinking about the relationship between war, animation, and the archive?

Across the three films that make up the installation, Igwe responds to and speculates about her own filmmaking process, the production circumstances of particular colonial films, and the Aba Women's War of 1929, a major, woman-led anticolonial uprising in Nigeria that is not always recognized as a war. The installation aims less to inform audiences about the "facts" of this war than to aesthetically experiment with, and thereby transmit something about, the purposes and possibilities of modes of "war making" expressed through the moving body, song, ornament, gesture, and female collectivity. Before turning to the installation, I want briefly to describe the series of events named by this war, the history of how Igwe became interested in it, and the feminist scholarly debates that brought transnational academic attention to it and to the historiographic and political issues it raised.

Igwe's brilliant dissertation, entitled "Unbought and Unbossed: How Can Critical Proximity Transfigure British Colonial Moving Images?," lays out the theoretical conversations informing her creative work and the contributions her creative work makes to those discussions.<sup>7</sup> "Unbought and Unbossed" includes an analysis of the role of *A Repertoire of Protest (No Dance, No Palaver)* in Igwe's research as well as her reflections on postscreening discussions with audiences. I cite this document occasionally, particularly those parts relating to either animation or the feminist politics of the archive. But in order to distinguish my engagement of the installation from Igwe's own scholarly work on it, I draw here primarily on an interview I conducted with Igwe on May 11, 2023, as well as on my analysis of this work through the triple lens of feminism, animation, and war.<sup>8</sup>

The artist first learned of the Aba Women's War when her great-uncle gave her a copy of his autobiography. In it, he tries to date his birth by saying that "it was around the Aba Women's War," itself an act of historiographic resistance in its rooting of a life's timeline in an anticolonial women's protest. Igwe, however, had never heard of this event, even though it took place in the area where her uncle is from, where her mum grew up, and where some family members still live. Her

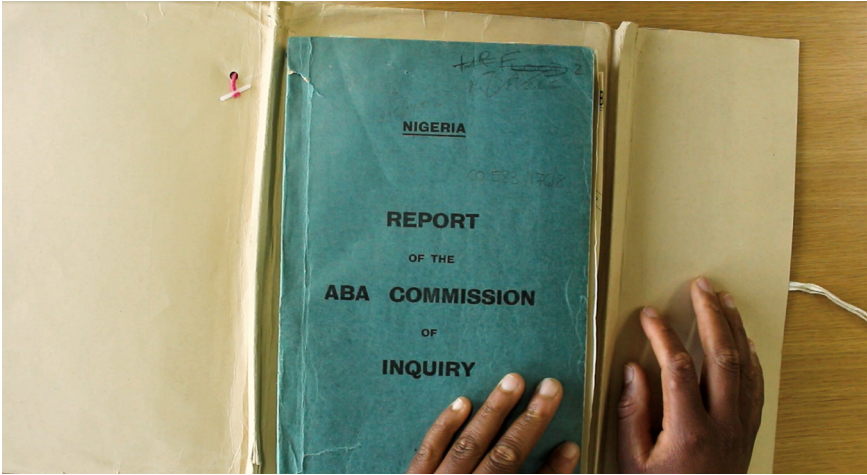


FIGURE 5. *Report of the Aba Commission of Inquiry*, from Onyeka Igwe's *Her Name in My Mouth*, 2017.

interest led her first to the National Archives in Kew (UK), where she discovered and read the *Report of the Aba Commission of Inquiry* (1930), which plays a central role in the first film, *Her Name in My Mouth*, and then to other colonial film archives (figure 5).<sup>9</sup> Most striking to her in the colonial report was the way this “really dead, written report” erased “all the life and embodiment” from the performative protests that used dress, dance, singing, and bodily gesture as collective tools for political expression and resistance.<sup>10</sup> Igwe found no footage of the Aba Women’s War, opening up complex questions about her decision to disregard the taxonomical organization of these collections in favor of something that is more gestural or disorganizing in approach. The installation also makes no claim to represent documentation of Aba women or the Women’s War, although it constitutes a response to them both. It does, however, make extensive use of Colonial Film Unit footage as well as footage from the Mill Hill Missionaries archives. This material was shot between 1930 and 1956, not just in Nigeria but also in Sudan and Tanzania, showing people involved in activities such as dancing, cooking, working, and talking. While Igwe’s dissertation at times identifies and gives background information about the people in these films, the installation withholds this information, underscoring how racialization happens through image making and archiving. As Rony writes of Félix-Louis Regnault’s ethnographic films, such films “deny the voice and individuality of the indigenous subject. . . . Their names and history are not given. . . . Emptied of history, their bodies are *racialized*.”<sup>11</sup> Thus Igwe’s films activate questions in viewers about what they know, don’t know, think they know, or desire to know about the people on screen, as well as about what types of events get recorded or not, and what demands these images make on twenty-first-century viewers.

Half a century ago, in 1975, the Africanist and political scientist Judith Van Allen, a white feminist scholar, published “Aba Riots or the Igbo Women’s War? Ideology, Stratification and the Invisibility of Women,” in *Ufahamu: A Journal of African Studies*. This publication is significant, both as a backdrop to Igwe’s installation and for some of the methodological questions central to *Undead*. Van Allen highlights the terminological disparities she found in the written record when researching her article, including references to both the “Aba Riots” and the “Igbo Women’s War.” She argues that this disparity is not simply a question of how dominant and subordinate groups name conflicts; rather, it reflects specific problems that must be thought in the contexts of gender and colonialism. Drawing on a conference paper by the Nigerian feminist sociologist Kamene Okonjo, Van Allen explores what she calls “the sexist bias of Western scholars” who demonstrate an “inability to ‘see’ what is before one’s own eyes” because of their incapacity to conceptualize group solidarity, structured female political empowerment within a community, or ways of settling grievances or expressing political opposition without armed violence.<sup>12</sup> Van Allen argues that those who use the phrase “Aba Riots” erase the central role of women and fail to understand that in this context, “making war” refers to the Igbo women’s collective practice of voicing dissent through the practice also known as “Sitting on a Man.”

In response to a series of structural acts of colonial violence, including the 1925 imposition of direct taxation, the exclusion of women from the recently formed “Native Courts,” and, simply, the presence of white men, who the protesting women demanded “should go to their *own* country,” thousands of women from the Ngwa clan towns in Aba and Owerri gathered to “make war” by “Sitting on a Man.”<sup>13</sup> Van Allen writes, “Their faces smeared with charcoal or ashes and their heads bound with young ferns, the women had all worn short loincloths and carried in their hands sticks wreathed with young palms—the dress and adornment signifying ‘war’ and the sticks being those used to invoke the power of the female ancestors.”<sup>14</sup> Unable or unwilling to process what Okonjo calls the “traditional ‘bisexual’ system” of power, British soldiers described the women who used collectively organized gestures and dance to protest colonial administrative decisions and express their demands, in terms of “frenzied mobs” and “savage passions.”<sup>15</sup> While the written record describes the British as baffled by the events, their execution of fifty women and injury of another fifty testifies to the fact that the British understood that the women’s movements threatened their presence, denied their authority, and rejected their right to be there.<sup>16</sup>

More than forty years after the 1975 publication of “Sitting on a Man,” Van Allen reflects on the relation between the historical and political context of her writing of this essay and the Aba Women’s War. These reflections underscore the impossibility of thinking war in isolation. “I wrote ‘Sitting on a Man’ because I was angry,” Van Allen begins, describing the political context of the war in Vietnam, the “secret” war on Cambodia, Nixon and Kissinger’s support of apartheid and of

Portuguese colonial wars, the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. and Robert Kennedy, the factionalization of Students for a Democratic Society, the murder of Fred Hampton, the defeat of Biafra, and women's rebellion against male domination in the civil rights movement and the New Left. Eventually, in a section entitled "Women's War and Women's Liberation," she acknowledges, "Once I started pursuing the origins of the Women's War and learning about the strong women's institutions and practices that made it possible, my first reaction was envy. . . . Oh, how I wished that the women in my small group could sit on certain men!"<sup>17</sup> This intellectual history not only provides some historical and historiographic transnational and intersectional feminist context for the event at the heart of Igwe's installation; it also recognizes the complex catalysts, including envy and desire, for interdisciplinary feminist work.

#### HER NAME IN MY MOUTH

Igwe describes *Her Name in My Mouth* as invoking "a lineage of female ancestors" through embodiment, gesture, and the archive.<sup>18</sup> She began with an interest in how to "transform" the deadened archival material back into some kind of "embodied" and "communal" knowledge, cognizant of the ways colonial infrastructures had blocked, and continue to block, the transmission of collective memories of anti-colonial protests, in part by the British government's recordkeeping practices and its outlawing of the community gatherings—"palavers"—at the heart of the Aba Women's War.

When I ask how Igwe understands the word *palaver*, she observes, "It seems like a very Victorian, very British word," and explains that she took the installation's title from a colonial bureaucrat's letter reporting on the state of things in Aba: "No Dance, No Palaver." The term *palaver* is saturated in colonialism's hierarchical organization of speaking and listening, with the *Collins English Dictionary* definition in June 2023 reproducing colonial rankings of being: "a long parley, esp. one between primitive natives and European traders, explorers, colonial officials, etc.," "profuse and idle talk, chatter," "tedious or time-consuming business," "loud and confused talk," and then, for the "British English" definitions, under the sub-heading "West Africa," "an argument" or "trouble arising from an argument."<sup>19</sup> Francis Anekwe Oborji, a Nigerian theologian and diocesan priest, offers a deeper history of a term with layered meanings and usages. For Oborji, *palaver* suggests the communitarian "art and discipline of public discourse within a participative assembly in public space: in an open courtyard or under a tree" as a response to social conflict and violence, a definition that invites us to consider Abderrahmane Sissako's *Bamako* (2006) as a palaver film. For Oborji, it is also "a technical term" that may have derived from "the Portuguese *wotpa/apra*, a talk between tribal people and traders, or from the French word *palbre*, which connotes a lively debate or the process of a tribunal in a village."<sup>20</sup>

Each work in the installation offers a contemporary response to a war in which adorned women's dancing bodies expressed what Okonjo summarizes as protesters' "dissatisfaction with the native administration, the colonial system, and the exclusion of women from politics."<sup>21</sup> Igwe's installation demonstrates an interest in, and (possibly failed) attempts at, being close to the historical women who performed a collective refusal of the system of life the British left behind. This was a system of individual achievement in which, Van Allen explains, "there was no place for group solidarity, no possibility of shared political authority or power of enforcement, and thus very little place for women."<sup>22</sup> If "no dance" = "no palaver," Igwe's activation of contemporary dance in a space shared by projected colonial images of dancing people from across the African continent under this title invites viewers to receive this work as an act of defiance, as a nonviolent expression of feminist refusal, dissatisfaction, and power that might paradoxically be understood as a feminist act of both war and un-war making.

Although Igwe is not a dancer, she is inspired by Rizvana Bradley's notion of "gesture as a migratory language of black sociality" and describes wanting both the audience and the contemporary dancers with whom she collaborated "to make a connection to this event [the Aba Women's War], to these women, to the people in the archive, through the language of dance as opposed to the kind of colonial language of this written report."<sup>23</sup> *Her Name in My Mouth* opens with contemporary color footage of hands touching, scrunching, opening, turning (like the pages of a book), and refolding two different pieces of Golden Realm Tex African fabric. In our conversation, Igwe notes that her mother's village in Nigeria, located not far from the site of the Aba Women's War, has a uniform that "has certain kinds of animals and symbols on it that depict the way the village wants to understand itself and communicate to other people."<sup>24</sup> She thinks of fabric and textile, like dance, as "a way of archiving, telling stories"; fabric, Igwe suggests, can "expand what an archive can be," and in this work she explores how "body and archive can communicate."<sup>25</sup> This statement alone has implications for feminist thinking about what it might mean to "animate" the archive. It rejects "the archive" as something singular, solely created by and belonging to those in power; it asserts alternative registrations and ways of interacting with West African feminist memories and histories; and it employs dance and animation to create modes of interaction with alternative archives that are not necessarily legible or transparent to the work's viewers. Within Igwe's work, the possibilities and modes of memory, adornment, and embodiment multiply and interweave. If textiles and dance can each serve archival functions, and if the body can "wear" both, how do these entities—body, dance, textile, and colonial archive—affect and shape each other? I argue that they open new ways for organizing, experiencing, mediating, and mobilizing history that involve attending to the entangled histories of different types of war making, colonial and anticolonial. They also use embodied movement in partnership with audiovisual technology to develop and share modes of exercising anticolonial



agency outside of colonial frameworks. This affects what those looking, but not dancing, are permitted to see and suggests that *A Repertoire for Protest* might be regarded as sitting on not just the archive but also the viewer.

Inspired by bell hooks's *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*, Igwe further blurs the line between archive and fabric by printing on a white T-shirt a still of the face of a woman who makes a marginal appearance in one of the archival films. "I had the intention of bringing the women who were in the background or in the corner somehow a little bit more into the center," Igwe recalls.<sup>26</sup> The artist intercuts shots of herself wrapped from the waist down in the two pieces of cloth—(the archive)—shown in the film's opening while wearing the T-shirt that bears this colonial archival image. Igwe's reproduction of the woman's face in this way was inspired by her experience of a broader Nigerian culture's commemoration traditions. She notes: "If you're celebrating someone, if it's their birthday, if it's a wedding or graduation, you'll make all this kind of ephemera around them. You'll make a T-shirt, a pen, a calendar, and it'll have their face on it. So I wanted to do something like that for one of the women in the film."<sup>27</sup> And in her article, Igwe explains that she designed this first film "as a memorial to the women of the Aba Women's War."<sup>28</sup>

This centering of a woman simultaneously fixed and marginalized in the colonial archive by a double cinematic violence might be read as a form of mediated choreography that shapes how contemporary people encounter the archive. There is a tension within the work that never abates between an imagined community of women protesting together, through movement, across time and space, against past and perpetuated colonial violences, on the one hand, and, on the other, the concern that this act of imagination might, by recirculating the archive or imagining solidarity in this way, be implicated in the archive's violence, treating people as movable objects. The films run the risk that they might end up "sitting on" themselves as well as on those who view them.

Igwe resists conflating "dancing with" the archive and "animating" the historical people whose images she finds by drawing attention to the materiality of these images *as images*, and through the silence that greets the questions she poses to the people in them. The work uses the archive's contents while reminding viewers of the violent context in which it is produced and stored by refusing the codes of behavior the archive imposes on its visitors, such as silence and prohibitions on reproduction, touch, and defacement. Across these films, Igwe presents archival images as objects that can be cut up, drawn over, relocated, pondered, and refused, recalling Gil Z. Hochberg's claim, in *Becoming Palestine: Toward an Archival Imagination of the Future*, that digitization—and to this I would add the discombobulating practice of (inter)(in)animation—alters how such images "are shared, circulated, and manipulated."<sup>29</sup>

Here it is not an archival box but Igwe's chest, the container of her heart, that functions as the living place of reception, exhibition, and mobilization of this



colonial image. The T-shirt, combined with filmed performance, transforms the question of how to engage colonial archives from an abstract problem into an embodied, proximate, material, interpersonal, and unfolding reality. Igwe's body offers an animated and embodied displacement of the white screen, gesturing more to a holding than to a projection of the image, even as images of Igwe's own performance are then projected, offering a contrast to the direct projection of the colonial footage, which the work also includes. Igwe's physical (inter)(in)animation of a single, stilled archival frame by dancing with it, drawing on contemporary Nigerian commemorative practices, never allows the viewer to feel that the woman depicted on the T-shirt has magically been brought back to life.

Igwe fundamentally disrupts or even short-circuits conventional configurations of the moving-image apparatus. Using an (inter)(in)animating configuration within the space of the moving image, Igwe replaces the screen with a performer-receiver, but this person is also simultaneously a type of spectator of the image in question. This spectator-screen performer now cannot look at the archival image without looking at herself and also being on display herself for others, making the process of looking at and sharing the archive an inescapably relational and self-implicating act. In addition to foregrounding the appropriated liveliness and embodiment of the depicted woman, Igwe simultaneously, through a mise-en-abyme structure, provokes viewers to consider their relation to Igwe's own recorded image and embodied gestures. These gestures frame the image in relation to Igwe's own living body before the camera, folding and distorting the image, preventing rather than enabling full access to it. This experience of blocked or incomplete access is underscored when Igwe looks away from the camera or when she faces the camera but with closed eyes, resonating with an image of a different woman with closed eyes from the colonial archive that appears in the third film, *Specialised Technique*, accompanied by Igwe's typed and unanswered questions to the woman, which include, "Is that why you never open your eyes?"

"I was trying to dance with the people in the archive," Igwe states. "I was trying to see what that would amount to. And I think wearing a shirt, and me performing certain gestures, was a way of dancing with them."<sup>30</sup> This "dancing with," this physical, embodied animation of a single still image, involves the relocation and reproduction of the filmed woman's image as a mnemonic act of celebration. Bradley, building on Joseph Roach, calls such gestures "surrogation." "Dancing with" also involves the stilling of the archival film's captured and mechanically replayable movements.<sup>31</sup> In this surrogated performance, the photographed face reproduced on Igwe's T-shirt cannot change its expression or speak, reminding viewers of the gap between the archive's petrified bodies or "replicas" and the historical, living people caught on, intruded upon by, film. This work suggests that while acts of reparation cannot undo past atrocities, they do have the potential to allow prohibited protests from the past to find pathways into the present, thereby animating, by which I mean acting on and in, the present and future. The archival photograph

of the woman is here recontextualized through inter(in)animation in at least three ways. First, Igwe's stilling and moving of colonial images refuses the archive's desire to offer permanent access to recordings of the life forms it simultaneously destroys. Second, the woman's face is relocated from the filmstrip, the archive, and the archive's projector screen onto the embodied heart-space of a British-Nigerian artist, who wraps her body within a fabric archive whose meaning is not necessarily available to the viewer. These textile archives are, like the T-shirt, physically animated by Igwe's living, moving, gesturing body. And third, the soundtrack lives, somewhat dissonantly, and also breaks into silence, alongside the images.

Igwe films her hands untying a white bow that keeps closed the archival book box that encases the *Report of the Aba Commission of Inquiry* (1930), underscoring striking disparities between the British treatment of their colonial documents and the British (self-documented) murder of the warring women of Aba. Igwe's finger runs down the table of contents until it locates "Owerri Province" on page 35; her hand opens maps of Aba and Opobo, turning pages as the camera lingers briefly on dates ("Certain Incidents" from December 1929), names (Enyidie, Nwannedie, Onueluka, and also "Igwi," which comes close to the artist's own name), and descriptions of events ("They made palaver that day"). But the camera never lingers long enough for the narrative content or point of view of these violent pages to be properly read, fully remediated, or understood. In this way, as well as through a blurring of focus and sound that works contrapuntally against the image's legibility, Igwe communicates her own ambivalent relationship to recirculating or reanimating this material in her work.

The film's soundtrack is composed by C-Scraaatch and features drumming, electronic sound, and cowrie shells, as well as the voice of Igwe's mother, Calista Feltham. Noticing the absence of women in the *Report of the Aba Commission of Inquiry*, Igwe "borrows" her mother's voice to read aloud the names of the women identified in the colonial report, vocally marking both the being and the absence of the women named.<sup>32</sup> After reading the report's description of the women singing "scurrilous songs," Igwe, in her dissertation, describes turning for the soundtrack to her mother and her mother's "network of Igbo women in the UK and Nigeria" and their shared recollection of songs. She states:

I thought a lot about who this film was for, who the intended audience was. The answer to this resided in the ideas of relationality and accountability that come with seeking proximity. This film was expressly for the women of the Aba Women's War, the women in the archive films that I had selected and those who descended from them. So, none of the Igbo words are translated and some people are in the know and others aren't. This goes a way to reinforcing gesture, another way of knowing, as the central mode of communication in the film.<sup>33</sup>

The soundtrack also features what Igwe describes as a "residue" from the images. At one point, for example, after male dancers wearing cowrie shells are shown in

some of the images, cowrie shells are used in the soundtrack, but the absence of synchronization prevents the audience from being lulled into an illusion of direct access to a reanimated or completed past. Igwe describes a wide range of feelings when watching the archival footage of African dancing. She acknowledges the films' paternalism, how stereotypes of black women dancing are used in colonial films, and describes her frustration with not being able to establish the "level of engagement or agency from the people that were being filmed."<sup>34</sup> And yet, she adds, "I got a lot of pleasure from watching these people dance, and I felt . . . a strong connection to their dancing. And that was something that I didn't want to lose, or that I wanted also to foreground. And the dancing was a mode of communication. It was a mode of protest."<sup>35</sup> Wanting both to move away from and draw attention to colonial worldviews, Igwe encouraged C-Scraatch to build "breaks" in the composition, and she notes with satisfaction that sometimes during the screenings, "people look around because they think it [the sound] is broken."<sup>36</sup>

In the final two minutes of the first film, Igwe cuts to black-and-white archival footage of the African women's faces, the smooth consumption of which she interrupts by freezing and slowing the frames and jerkily editing clips together. Around 5:24, we see footage of the woman whose face had earlier been singled out on Igwe's T-shirt, but at this later point she reappears within the context of community. The women are singing, but installation audiences do not have access to the sound the women make or to the meaning of that sound. As the colonial camera seems to collect the women with its sweeping pan from right to left, the sequence cuts to a closeup of the same woman's face, shot from a different angle, and soon cuts again to a similar close-up image that has been stilled. A shadow falls across the surface of this iteration, giving the image a different material quality. As an uncanny quality of movement appears in the face, it soon becomes clear that Igwe's camera here is filming the face as it is re-mediated on Igwe's T-shirt. The movement of the face, accompanied by the sound of C-Scraatch's soundtrack and Igwe's mother's voice, is caused by Igwe's performance of a series of slow-moving and deliberate arm gestures that the camera gradually reveals as it zooms out, gestures that indirectly move the T-shirt and the still image printed on it. Igwe crosses her hands over each other in front of the picture of the woman's face, blocking the camera's and the gallery viewer's direct access to the image. As Igwe's hands, facing toward the camera and across the body, switch places with each other, they seem to push the camera and the viewer away—away from the reproduced picture of the woman's face and perhaps also from Igwe's own performing body. Punctuating this gesture is another one in which Igwe's hands and arms move swiftly apart from each other, gestures that in an Anglo-European context might signal "Enough!" or "Cut!" But just as the Igbo words spoken are not translated for non-Igbo audiences, so these gestures are not explained. After this sequence is repeated a couple of times, Igwe reframes the scene, cropping the image to show first just her own left arm and hand, held out to the left side of her body, then her right, before

closing on a profile shot of part of her face and torso. Having brought the archived woman's face from the margins of the archive to the center of both Igwe's body and this animating gestural performance, the film resituates the woman in a different kind of archive that begins with the textile wrapping. This new archive withdraws the viewer's access to the woman's image. While this cannot alter the colonial violence that has been inflicted on the woman in the past by camera, archive, viewers, and scholars, this work suggests the tentative possibility of another archive, perhaps one that has to be embodied and lived, that seeks to prevent further acts of violence being carried out on and through such images via acts of remembrance.

#### SITTING ON A MAN

Suggesting that the entanglements of histories require an ensemblic, proximate, and collaborative methodology rather than the heroic intervention of an individual artist or scholar, in the second of the films in *No Dance, No Palaver, Sitting on a Man*, Igwe works with contemporary dancers Emmanuella Idris (on behalf of Uchenna Dance) and Amarnah Amuludun, as well as "with" a girls' dance group featured in the colonial archive, credited pointedly by Igwe as "Unnamed girls' dance group."<sup>37</sup> Igwe states that "the expressed goal of this film was to visually show what it might look like to be 'sat on.' The camera, and so the audience, became the man in question and the dancers could conceive of this protest in any way they desired."<sup>38</sup> This film also includes the voices of Beatrice Loft Schulz and Nikki D., who read excerpts from the anthropological reports of Sylvia Leith-Ross, *African Women: A Study of the Ibo of Nigeria* (AMS Press, 1978), and Margaret Mackeson Green, *Ibo Village Affairs* (Sidgwick and Jackson, 1947), in "Queen's English."<sup>39</sup>

Anticolonial feminist scholarship has highlighted the fraught nature of scholarly efforts to "animate" the traces left by harmed subjects and communities in colonial archives. Yet in spite of or, perhaps better, in response to this, *No Dance, No Palaver* experiments with how Igwe might ethically keep, not proximity to, but remoteness from, the archive's content at bay. Igwe describes the installation as "an attempt to use critical proximity, being close to, with or amongst, the visual trauma of the colonial archive to transform the way in which we know the people it contains."<sup>40</sup> Recognizing that she cannot fix harms, Igwe seeks to consciously to avoid the forms of violence she perceives in past images in the way she films the living dancers she works with in the present, developing a dialogic process in which filmmaker and dancers work together to decide what types of images they will cocreate. This cocreation across the realms of dance and film occurs in dialogue with a history where West African women dancing and a life-continuing, anger-affirming form of "making war" are intertwined. Igwe explains, "I wanted the dancers [I worked with] to have agency; I wanted it to feel more like a collaboration so that they would be in some way involved in how they were being filmed. So I shared with them the archival material and the story of

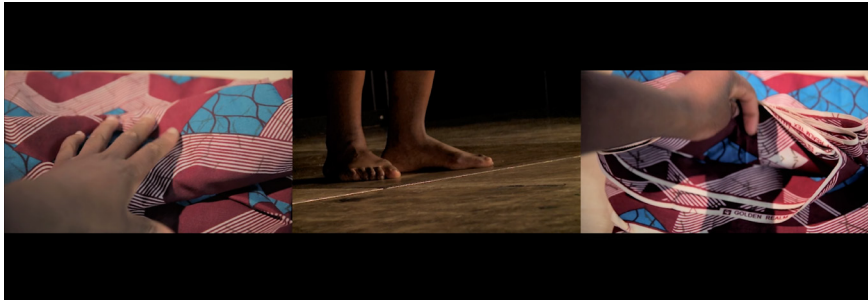


FIGURE 6. Onyeka Igwe, *Sitting on a Man*, 2018.

the *Aba Women's War* and my intentions. And then I was asking them questions about how they wanted to be filmed, what angles, what they wanted to wear while I was filming them.”<sup>41</sup>

*Sitting on a Man* involves three horizontally adjoined screens. A hand touching one of the same pieces of fabric-archive that appears in the first film emerges on the first and third screen while the second screen shows Idris's two bare feet (figure 6). Idris expressed a desire to dance barefoot after having seen the archival films with which Igwe was working in order to experience something of the sound of feet moving that is missing from the colonial films of West Africans dancing.<sup>42</sup> Though audience members see bare feet dancing in this opening shot, however, we hear no sound. This doubly silent dancing seems to recognize the impulse to animate those lives caught in the archive through supplemental sounds and reenacted movements, to experiment with the possibilities of “dancing with” or “dancing alongside” the archive, while withholding whatever sounds were generated by Idris's barefoot movements from the museum visitor in acknowledgment of the impossibility of enlivening the dead. As the screens on the left and in the center cut to black, the third screen shows black-and-white footage of Amuludun folding another piece of African cloth into a headscarf, which she puts on. Fragments of white female anthropologists' reports are read aloud on the soundtrack by a posh English voice that connotes whiteness and elite education. A low-lit color image of Idris dancing appears in the middle screen while black-and-white footage on the third screen shows Amuludun's two hands, wearing a variety of rings, in closeup. Igwe notes that the use of both color and black and white reflects the preferences expressed by each dancer, and these differences register something of Igwe's aspiration to explore ways of filming black women dancing that give maximal agency to the contemporary dancers with whom she works. This shift from imposed technique to collaborative creative process has (inter)(in)animating aspirations. As Igwe explains in a description of the third film, *Specialised Technique*: “William Sellers and the Colonial Film Unit developed a framework for colonial cinema, this included slow edits, no camera tricks and minimal camera movement. Hundreds of films were created in accordance with this rule set. In an effort to

recuperate black dance from this colonial project, *Specialised Technique* attempts to transform this material from studied spectacle to livingness.”<sup>43</sup>

After all three screens go black, the left and right screens briefly show two shots from different angles of the same necks and necklaces, as if to disrupt viewers’ access to bodily wholes, before the title of this second film, “SITTING ON A MAN,” appears in white capital letters in the middle screen. Colonial sepia footage of a young African girl dancing appears as drumming and electronic sounds appear on the soundtrack. A few seconds later, color shots of Idris appear on the left screen, her back turned to the camera in striking contrast to the colonial camera’s frontal framing of the girl. Idris slowly and decisively turns to look at the camera in a performance of agency, and there seems to be a reciprocity between the arm gestures of Idris and those of the girl depicted in the middle screen, even as the gap between the screens suggests an unbridgeable divide. As Amuludun appears in black and white on the right-hand screen, more brightly lit and now closer to the camera than Idris is, the middle screen goes black. More sepia archival footage, this time of a group of African people dancing, appears on the middle screen, with Idris and Amuludun’s dancing on the other two screens while two overlapping and mutually distorting women’s voices on the soundtrack read anthropological descriptions of “the distinctively women’s gesture,” the “elusive” nature of African dance, and the spectacle of African girls dancing as a chance to see “Africa itself.”<sup>44</sup> The mismatching of the two voices, which read the same text but are not synchronized with each other, along with the additional sounds added to their speech, troubles the transmission of colonial interpretive frameworks. Subsequent images show one of the dancers’ bare feet dancing on the screen to the right of the colonial footage of group dancing. Again, while the audience hears sounds of breath, feet, and drumming, these sounds are not synchronized to the images, in recognition that the pieces cannot be stitched together, even as the desire to do so is recognized. Amuludun appears in black and white on the right-hand screen, back turned to the camera. Idris then appears in color, back also facing the camera, on the center screen. Both move and make arm gestures, but apparently not for the museum viewer.

Toward the end of the film, a head-and-shoulder shot of Amuludun in black and white appears on the right-hand screen, and she turns her head slowly from right to left without engaging the camera, as if watching the dance that Idris performs in color and low light at some distance from the camera on the center screen. Three different black-and-white head-and-shoulder shots of Amuludun then appear across the screens as the dancer performs a series of gestures involving hands, face, eyes, and mouth. These gestures alternately seem to shush the view, beckon the viewer deeper into screen space, shut out the viewer with closed lids, or simply stare back at the viewer (figure 7). As the images shift from one screen to another, the triple screen visualizes dancers across time, space, and screen-breaks, dancing and looking. Their proximity to each other as well as to the gaps that separate



FIGURE 7. Onyeka Igwe, *Sitting on a Man*, 2018.

them provokes audiences to consider what kinds of reciprocity and responsiveness are im/possible and un/ethical. Meanwhile, the soundtrack includes syncopated rhythmic breaths, recalling Ross Gay's articulation of a less violent mode of looking that does not "fix anyone": "this looking makes me breathe, / this looking holds / my breathing."<sup>45</sup>

#### SPECIALISED TECHNIQUE

Is it possible to activate such a mode of looking, one that does not "fix" anyone, when the recirculation of violent colonial archival images is involved? Igwe engages this question directly in the concluding pages of her dissertation, where she reflects on some of the responses she has received to her work, noting that the most challenging responses came from diasporic audiences "who came from similar experiences and backgrounds to my own."<sup>46</sup> Drawing on Raymond Bellour's theorization of "the pensive spectator," as well as on animation's frame-by-frame process, Igwe writes,

In attempting to shake the stereotype out of the colonial footage, I tried in as many ways as possible to change the way in which the audience saw the various people on camera. Converting the film to individual frames and then reanimating them or digitally drawing on them, slowing them down or tripling them and reprojecting were all techniques utilised in order to create a pensive spectator, '... uprooting us in the film's unfolding [to] situate us in relation to it. . . .'<sup>47</sup>

She also notes her growing unease with archivally based artistic projects in which "whiteness remained absent and under interrogated," an observation that foregrounds the need to make whiteness present and a topic for examination in histories of war.<sup>48</sup> Igwe signals the importance of rendering the whiteness of the archive visible in the opening seconds of *Her Name in My Mouth*. Black-and-white footage shows a pile of leather briefcases being carried on someone's head down a corridor by an undisclosed person who walks past a wall of portraits of white, militarized men sporting beards and moustaches on the way to the colonial archive. This scene then cuts to archival footage of white scholars, presumably



anthropologists, sitting around a table in the colonial archive surrounded by documents and ethnographic images.

As if talking back to this classroom, *Specialised Technique*'s title appears on a black chalkboard with some white chalk markings on it, announcing this work's emphasis on the transmission of different types of knowledge. The soundtrack begins abruptly as drums alternate with a voice that repeats the word *pulse* while the image shifts between still fragments taken from archival footage of an African woman dancing with digitally drawn white stick figure notations on a black background that try to document each of the dancer's moves.<sup>49</sup> The stick figures are derived and adapted from a notation system developed by Felix A. Akinsipe, a choreographer and professor of performing arts at the University of Ilorin. Igwe came across Akinsipe's system of notation when looking for African alternative methods to those she found in the colonial film archive for sharing and documenting the techniques of African dance, and she describes wanting "to explore in as many ways as possible how to write dance, or dance as some kind of language."<sup>50</sup> Such figural systems risk codifying dances in ways that echo the anthropologist's desire to know, document, and reproduce the movements of an other; yet they also make possible the transmission of movements, including protest movements, across generations using systems that seek alternatives to or revisions of colonial and externally imposed grammars. In taking graphic rather than embodied form, they do so without reproducing the dance itself. And as dance proliferates new possible meanings in an embodied, nontextual way, the introduction of the notation system visualizes dance's complex relationship between past and present while leaving the dance itself unfixed.

Igwe's filmed drawings appear not in isolation from but alternating with live-action images, preventing either form of image from being uninterruptedly available to the viewer. These juxtapositions invite relational questions about bodies and power, about animation's preoccupation with labor, worldmaking, and the capture and control of movement.<sup>51</sup> By making the artist's hand—along with the artist's voice, and the difference between the work's modern dancers and the dancers filmed by colonial filmmakers—explicitly present in *Specialized Technique*, Igwe visually acknowledges and aesthetically negotiates the dangers for the artist in the archive of puppeting, ventriloquizing, reanimating, or, to use dance scholar Rachmi Diyah Larasati's term, "replicating" figures from the past. Larasati writes, "Thus, I trace the history of the female dancing body that vanishes and is then 'replaced,' its experience and the fact of disappearance erased from view by new, highly indoctrinated, strictly trained female bodies."<sup>52</sup>

The installation's three films are connected to each other by the 1929 *Aba Women's War*, by a variety of formal techniques, and, in the 2023 MoMA PS1 installation, by the punctuating appearance of dance notation stick figures like those used in *Specialised Technique*.<sup>53</sup> While the figures that appear within the third film are digitally drawn, Igwe drew the figures that (inter)(in)animate the installation's three films on chalk and paper. She then scanned them into a digital format for



incorporation into the films, as if “translating the many different dances within all the films” into this chalky format.<sup>54</sup> The filmed dusty marks on paper might well evoke William Kentridge’s “drawings for projection,” which also “edge” animation as they combine filmed drawing and erasure, primarily using the ephemeral media of charcoal, pastel, and chalk, to engage layers of colonial history.<sup>55</sup> Kentridge, a white South African artist of Lithuanian and German-Jewish descent, has frequently used this provisional form of image making to engage the instabilities and uncertainties of history and memory, especially with reference to the legacies of the apartheid regime. Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev convincingly argues that Kentridge employs a time-based, nondefinitive form of drawing to visualize “openness to change,” a “refusal of all authoritarian and authoritative forms of communication embedded in most usages,” and a “new, flexible model of parallel thinking” that makes space for the inevitability of epistemic uncertainty.<sup>56</sup>

Igwe’s use of animated chalk drawings in the interstitial spaces between the films across the installation’s screens similarly underscores the entanglement of colonialism with educational institutions, while also resisting, through chalk’s ephemerality, the stance of the heroic, knowing artist. On numerous occasions, the artist makes explicit her own uncertainty about her emplacement in the images as well as in the histories of violence and collective feminist resistance that they invoke.<sup>57</sup> These expressed uncertainties exist in a continuum with Rose’s psychoanalytic feminist exploration of “absolute or total knowledge” as “one cause—if not *the* cause—of war.”<sup>58</sup> Igwe foregrounds her concerns regarding her own proximity to these violent archival images, and this opens a different, and relational, set of possibilities for thinking about colonial archival films via remediating gestures. “Is that ok?,” asks one of the titles in *Specialized Technique*. Another set of titles asks first, “Did you want your whole body in shot?” and then “I don’t know if I am being a prude by asking that.” Some titles reflect on the artist’s own implicatedness, as when Igwe asks: “Is that why I look down? Or away?” or “Do you not want me to see your face?” These texts express interest in what the original conditions of shooting were like, reminding viewers of the colonial context under which these dance performances are recorded, without being too sure that the dancers involved were stripped of all agency. This not-knowing activates an ethical space: “What happened when you looked down the lens? Or did they tell you not to?” The absence of responses from the dancers caught on film and stored in archives visualizes not just the impossibility of restoring agency to these dancers through conversation with them but also Igwe’s and the gallery visitor’s desire for just such a conversation, acknowledging that this desire is entangled with the colonial drive to know and understand an other. The relational and dialogic approach Igwe adopts in her visual work repeats in her scholarly work, as when she responds openly and self-reflectively to the question posed by Marius Kothor (then a PhD student at Yale, now a professor of women, gender, and sexuality at Harvard) to Igwe: “Why do we still bother with archives?”<sup>59</sup>



FIGURE 8. Defacement of colonial image, from Onyeka Igwe's *Specialised Technique*, 2018.

It is in this third film that Igwe most extensively uses frame-by-frame interventions into the filmed image that stop, start, slow, and begin to graphically overwrite the colonial archival project. This brings attention and a slower, or more varied, pace of thought to the question of not just *why* contemporary artists and scholars bother with such archives but *how* we might bother with them, or simply bother them. Having stilled completely many of the archive's moving images in the first minute and a half of *Specialized Technique*, Igwe shifts her technique (around 1:29) to single- and variable-frame animation. Dancers from the colonial footage begin to move jerkily rather than fluidly. This pixilation denaturalizes the scene, inanimating colonial attempts to render reproducible the performed movements. Underscoring the film's status as a material strip of still images, Igwe digitally draws on the surface of the individual [digitized] frames (from about 1:33) with what looks like a thick black marker. This might read as an act of vandalism that helps to disrupt any conflation of the dancers themselves and these images of them (figure 8). These marks shift the viewer's attention from the people arrested on the strip to the makers, collectors, and curators of these images that have both a material and digital presence, asking how to look at, think with, and act in response to *their* existence.

Several types of marks and lines appear across these jerky scenes. Layered black circles evoke the deterioration of film over time; they visually echo the round beads worn by some of the dancers, as if the material adornments of the women were invading the colonial images with a life of their own. Different circles seem to move in a line as if to take over or blot out the image. Around 1:30, an arc, a string of large black circles, appears around the upper-left quadrant of the image, the part of the image in which the women wearing necklaces appear. As the film shuttles between the languages of dance, film, adornment, and drawn animation, it gradually seems as if these large graphic shapes are beginning to encircle, protect, or block visual access to the women on screen, as if abstract animation has become a new component or character in this dance-film. Some marks briefly blot out the faces of the women, recalling the blocking gestures Igwe performs in *Her Name in My Mouth*. As the pixilated braids trace jerky arcs across the upper third of the

screen, they seem to catalyze or prefigure a series of parallel wavy drawn black lines. They appear first horizontally in the top right-hand corner of the screen and then elsewhere, pulling the viewer's eye away from the dancers, perhaps interacting with the dancers using a drawn or graphic language of dance that better registers the impossibility of this scene. Two thin, almost-parallel, black undulating lines appear horizontally across the image. The upper line traces the outline of the tops of the heads of the women in the dancing group while the lower runs across the hands of the women. Does this emphasize the women's collectivity, a history of entrapment and constraint, and/or the entanglement between these histories? Do these lines refuse the isolating framing of the colonial camera that pans across the line, then closes in on one woman at a time? Maybe.

At 1:36, four curving vertical lines made up of a series of black circles, again evoking a string of beads, drop down from the top of the frame to touch some of the women's bodies. Two lines touch women at the juncture of the neck and the shoulder; two others meet the fingertips and back of another woman. While the verticality of the lines resonates to some extent with the vertical lines ephemerally traced by the women's braids in motion, the artificiality of these drawn lines over the images seems more disruptive than resonant. One reading might view these drawn lines as puppet strings, as if to highlight through visualization the animating desires and fantasies involved with both colonial image-making practices and later artistic and academic archival interventions. Perhaps these lines trace an Afro-futurist and speculative technological connection between past and present; mark the difficulty of locating such a "cable" with just the drawn artificiality of the line; disrupt the givenness of these images; and question what the various audiences for these colonial images want from them and why. (Here, it is useful to recall Episode 5, "This One Went to Market," of the Nairobi-based Nest Collective's satirical series *We Need Prayers*, in which a Kenyan photographic model prepares herself for a photo shoot for a gallery project geared at a white Western art market. As the model, wearing black makeup on her face, places a series of electric cables over her head and braids, the woman taking the photograph asks, "What have you put on your face?" The model replies, "I want to try this thing. Have you heard of 'Afrofuturism'? It's this thing. . . . It's everywhere right now. . . . And white people really like it for some reason" [figure 9]. Just as Racquel J. Gates describes the African American performer Bert Williams as finding that the makeup of blackface "created a separation between his performative and real selves," so here the Nest Collective's use of makeup seems similarly to distance itself from and make comedy of the "African" images that the art market desires in the service of different image-making practices and audiences.<sup>60</sup> If the vertical line suggests puppet strings or electrical cords capable of animating these archived images in a way that is disconnected from the liveliness of the women caught in these images, it also abstractly, formally, evokes the violence of lynching, especially because these lines occur in the upper third of the image, which is often filled with trees and branches. These visual disruptions, refusals, and ambiguities firmly locate viewers in the present



FIGURE 9. Jim Chuchu, “Afrofuturism,” from the Nest Collective’s *We Need Prayers*—Episode 5: “This One Went to Market,” 2017.

while looking across time, across and through histories, mediations, and living perpetuations of violence. They are reinforced by the shifts in the soundtrack, which move from drumming to experimental electronic sounds. Throughout the work, Igwe alternates showing fragments of colonial footage in pixilated, overlapping, drawn-on, and stilled images with black screens and clips shown without disruption, as if the work is training contemporary viewers, albeit provisionally and with self-questioning, to unlearn learned habits of colonial looking.

Four minutes into this last film, the screen fills with an abstract image of black leather reflecting light, and it almost instantly becomes clear that the reflected light comes from a projector. Further colonial footage of Africans dancing flickers unclearly on the surface of this black leather screen, whose materiality is itself a reminder of the cinematic apparatus’s implicatedness in the logics of animal extraction.<sup>61</sup> A complex soundtrack, designed by Kiera Coward-Deyell, includes an alarm-like bell ringing continuously, signaling urgency, while a reframing reveals the screen to be Igwe’s leather skirt. The images appear on the center panel of the skirt as Igwe’s hips, moving side to side and back and forth, animate, make “dance,” or set into motion, not individual frames, but rather the screen itself. If this is the most literal iteration of the artist’s desire to dance with or animate the archive, it also takes the form of the artist physically shaking, animating, and/or embodying the cinematic apparatus itself. Igwe’s body at first moves rhythmically with the music without creasing the skirt or distorting the projected image, but then this mobile screen starts to fold in on itself, making the projected, archived, dancing bodies harder to see and recalling Igwe’s earlier use of an image reproduced on a T-shirt to reframe, commemorate, and withhold. This difficulty of access makes viewers more aware than they were of their visual desire to grasp these colonial images. Viewers also only gradually realize that they are staring at Igwe’s hips,

raising a different set of questions about how the viewer views Igwe as she takes on the role of an animated and embodied screen that re-presents, enfolds, and jostles projected colonial images. A black screen interrupts these scenes of (inter) (in)animation as printed text asks: “Should I move?” and “Further back?” reflecting once again Igwe’s attitude of uncertainty about the film’s experimental gestures. Igwe then overlays stilled archival images with still more questions and suggestions: “To the side?” “In the middle?” “I could circle around you.” “I want to make the camera move too.” “Am I ok?” wonders a title on a black screen, before the film ends with a brief clip of the woman shown in the opening sequences dancing again. These proliferating questions perform a certain stubborn disavowal of the impossibility of animating the archive, as if refusing to give up the possibility of dialoguing and dancing with, or better put, in relation to, the dead; but for Igwe it also has to do with “other ways of knowing” that are “outside of the bounds of which I have been taught to know.”<sup>62</sup> This (inter)(in)animation, this collaborative slowing or stopping that intervenes into drilled ways of knowing, is part of the process Igwe audiovisualizes for opening up spatial and temporal paradigms. The paradigms allow us to develop new moves for choreographing collective protests under the restrictions of our own moment, and to forge different ways of being and learning together, and of understanding ourselves, the past, and our relation to each other and the living world as we attempt to make sense of our shared present and, I hope, shared futures.

Igwe’s scholarly and artistic work explores the artist’s evolving relationship with colonial archives and the images and narratives contained within them through the interlocking processes of doing research, nationally and transnationally; making, sharing, looking at, and discussing artwork; and discussing research, theory, and practice also with family, friends, and community who exist beyond university walls. In doing so, Igwe generously shares her commitments, questions, uncertainties, and archival desires—even when she knows or suspects, or perhaps *because* she knows and suspects, that some of these elements might be at odds with what she wants to achieve in her work. But in addition, she presents a powerful model of multimodal research and shows the potential of research that explores questions in more than one way for broadening the circle of participants (inter)(in)animating the practice of feminist film and media history and theory.

# Rubbing Memory the Right Way

## *Whiteness, (Inter)(in)animation, and Monumental Frottage*

*Hang on to failure, hang on to derision—a failure and derision that would not invite a reactive triumphalism but pre-empt it—if you want to avoid going to war.*

—JACQUELINE ROSE, *WHY WAR? PSYCHOANALYSIS, POLITICS,  
AND THE RETURN TO MELANIE KLEIN*<sup>1</sup>

### FEMINISM, HISTORIOGRAPHY, AND THE WORLD WAR I CENTENNIAL

Around 2007, while an MFA painting student at the Yale School of Art, Mary Reid Kelley, in partnership with Patrick Kelley, began making a series of feminist video works about World War I, prompted by feelings of being “bogged down by contemporary war,” the approaching centennial of the declaration of World War I, and the deaths of the world’s last surviving World War I veterans. For an artist wanting to work on war in the mode of farce, as Reid Kelley did, these deaths permitted “a certain kind of freedom.”<sup>2</sup> The series, in explicit dialogue with feminist counterhistories of World War I, was preceded by experiments that used the technique of rubbing known as frottage. The video work that emerged in the wake of these experiments incorporated different forms of animation, including stop-motion and a form of embodied animation performed by fluidly gendered actors painted like black-and-white cartoon characters in ways that close the gap between drawn animation and mortality. Reid Kelley and Kelley locate these stylized performances within virtual 3D digital environments that collage together a variety of historical referents in both serious and farcical modes. These artists bring feminist humor, irreverence, and experimental animation techniques to bear on fixed patriarchal war narratives. By discombobulating linear times, mapped space, and assigned gender roles, their (inter)(in)animating works disrupt ostensibly

untouchable and petrified spaces of memory, making room for, without prescribing, other ways of understanding World War I.

My interest in Reid Kelley and Kelley's (inter)(in)animations dates back to 2008, a paracentennial moment that coincides with the emergence of a substantial body of scholarship that insisted on the importance of reexamining World War I within global, decolonial, and antiracist frameworks.<sup>3</sup> The geographic and temporal paradigms proposed by this work underscore the limitations of white feminist scholarly approaches to war that attend to masculinist militarism and white female-identifying actors while ignoring questions of race and empire. Yet these decolonial interventions had also adapted and extended feminist methodological innovations to address the occluded entanglements of war, race, and empire, suggesting both shared ground with and the importance of interdisciplinary critique for future feminist work. These dynamic discussions about war historiography challenged how I had learned to understand World War I through scholarly training, national rituals of remembrance, and family histories. Amid this tension between the feminist World War I scholarship that was an explicit touchstone for Reid Kelley and Kelley's 2008–10 (inter)(in)animations and the rapidly evolving insights of decolonial and antiracist World War I historiography, I became increasingly curious about the experimental prehistory of the four World War I video works. Thanks to the generosity of the artists, I found myself examining Reid Kelley and Kelley's art school-era experiments. They reveal the artists' attempts to reconfigure the relationship between the physical body, language, material culture (including art, archives, film, and architecture), and war. These early frictional engagements with built memorials and war heroes register, albeit elusively, like a haunting, the entanglements of World War I memory with white supremacy and colonialism. This chapter explores what can be learned about the task of unlearning and intervening in entrenched war memory by juxtaposing these two proximate and (inter)(in)animating bodies of work.

#### GENDER, ANTIHEROIC COMEDY, AND THE QUESTION OF WHITENESS

Four World War I video works hover in a disorienting space between sexual humor and mourning. *Camel Toe* (2008, 1:28, standard-definition video with sound) features Reid Kelley as an airman who marries a ballerina who replaces him with a vibrator; *The Queen's English* (2008, 4:20, standard-definition video with sound) centers on a World War I nurse; *Sadie, the Saddest Sadist* (2009, 7:23, standard-definition video with sound) tells the tale of a munitions worker who contracts syphilis from Jack the sailor; and *You Make Me Iliad* (2010, 14:49, high-definition video with sound) depicts a young poet's perspective on life and death on the Western front as well as his encounter with a Belgian sex worker.<sup>4</sup>



In these works, embodied animation combines with 3D digital design and bawdy poetry to pressure delusional mythologies of white normative masculinism and femininity, particularly as these mythologies flourish under the banners of heroism, war, nation, and linear wartime chronologies, all sites of antiwar feminist critique. As characters share their affective investments in war using doggerel rhyming couplets full of allusions and puns, meaning spins out of control. Reid Kelley explains that the persistent presence of the rhyming couplets aims to strip the soundtrack of the emotional musical cues usually found in war cinema, making the speaking voice “the sole presence on the soundtrack . . . right in the ear,” “intimate but unrelenting and aggressive in an insistent way.”<sup>5</sup> This sonic aggression combines with verbal and visual farce in ways that suspend viewer empathy and sentiment, not to cultivate disregard for the war’s dead, but rather to bring attention to how reverent memorialization rituals can block memories excluded by these rituals as well as nuanced reflection on war.

A 2008 Beinecke Library fellowship enabled Reid Kelley to view the manuscripts, letters, and photographs of many writers who had experienced World War I. She studied the diverse ways in which artists and writers in World War I had responded to the war in which they participated, from what she calls the “grotesque and overwhelming realism” of Otto Dix, to the persistence of Cubism in Fernand Léger’s post-Verdun work, to the uses of satire and collage of the Berlin Dadaists.<sup>6</sup> Magnus Hirschfeld’s *The Sexual History of the Great War* (1930), as well as the film for which he cowrote the screenplay, *Different from the Others* (Richard Oswald, 1919), both became important sources. Paul Fussell’s *The Great War and Modern Memory* (1975) introduced Reid Kelley to Eric Hiscock’s *The Bells of Hell Go Ting-a-Ling-a-Ling* and to the trench writing found in *The Wipers Times*, an often-farcical newspaper written by British soldiers on the Western Front.<sup>7</sup> “Nothing can compare to *The Wipers Times*,” she states. “It’s really antiheroic—they are making fun of themselves. The types of parody in just that one publication! It’s hard to know where to begin, but one remarkable example: they parody war correspondence. . . . This was incredibly liberating, to not only see and read witnesses talking about their own experiences, but also making fun of it. And this wasn’t published after the fact, this was published in 1916.”<sup>8</sup>

At the level of performance, the artists experimented with the implications of having female actors (most frequently Reid Kelley herself) playing “macho roles,” putting pressure on binary gender paradigms. But this work also reflects the influence of feminist scholarship on World War I that sought to counter the paucity of material about women in official war archives by using oral histories, personal ephemera, period literature, and popular culture. The project was inspired, for example, by the short stories of the American-British writer Mary Borden, who funded and nursed at her own field hospital at the French front, by Angela Wool-lacott’s *On Her Their Lives Depend: Munitions Workers in the Great War* (1994), and by English-language scholarship on the role of “Comfort Women” in World



War II.<sup>9</sup> Reid Kelley and Kelley spotlight the occluded role of white women in particular as actors in warfare, dismantling patriarchal infrastructures of war remembrance and historiography while rendering visible both the complicity in the war machine of the characters they feature—nurses, munitions workers, and sex workers—and the specifically gendered and sexual forms of violence that mark these actors' wartime experiences.

In some ways, Reid Kelley and Kelley's focus on white women's roles in war risks reinforcing the separation between World War I and the history of empire that a subsequent generation of scholars, such as Santanu Das and Nadia Atia, seek to undo.<sup>10</sup> As Atia points out, "Imperial nations harnessed the power of their colonies in a time of crisis. Yet the presence of these men—and unspecified numbers of women . . .—has largely been erased from popular media representations of the First World War, especially outside Europe."<sup>11</sup> Reid Kelley and Kelley's work visually exaggerates the often-unspoken role of whiteness and heroism in maintaining hegemonic landscapes of World War I memory but without offering more capacious or corrected histories. This brings attention to whiteness in a somewhat unstable way, bearing traces of both the rewards and the risks that Shohat and Stam attribute to whiteness studies. They point out that "whiteness studies at its best denaturalizes whiteness as unmarked norm, calling attention to the taken-for-granted privileges that go with whiteness." But, they caution, "At the same time, whiteness studies runs the risk of once again narcissistically recentering whiteness and can reproduce the same isolationist approaches to races, ethnicities, and nations."<sup>12</sup> Through these works, there exists a tension between doing and undoing—between the pathos evident in their feminist treatment of characters such as Sadie, a munitions worker who contracts "the clap," and the (inter)(in)animating humorous tactics that threaten either to bring the whole world of war memory to rubble or to reinforce a sense of an all-white, albeit a denaturalized all-white, world. The characters in these works seem stuck, unable to give form or sense to better alternatives, suggesting the inadequacy of simply supplementing existing memory landscapes with additional narratives. In this chapter I am interested in thinking with this "stuck" space by considering these pieces and the student-era experiments that led up to them and by attending not only to finished works but to unfinished and minor works, as well as to the sites at which they were produced.

As Reid Kelley and Kelley's works unravel dominant heroic narratives of World War I through the limited worldviews that accompany antiheroic characters' pattern, a type of political failure or bathos emerges that resonates with the "failure and derision" that, for Rose, is central to the avoidance of going to war. This absence of artistic triumphalism grounds the works' farcical and antimilitaristic approach to war, and it is rooted in the interaction between multiple types of animation, including Reid Kelley's and other actors' embodied performances, which are all inseparable from a whiteness given form by stark black lines. The interaction of these elements—failure, farce, animation, black-outlined whiteness, and war—

overlaps in some ways with tactics Mignon Nixon describes when writing in a later context about the Japanese artist and war survivor Yayoi Kusama. Nixon argues that Kusama manages anti-Japanese public responses to her pacifist work during the Vietnam War by turning to puns, playfulness, “the ludic,” and performative politeness, modes that reveal and bypass “the extent to which women [are] obliged to play up their submissive femininity for the privilege of even the most circumscribed public speech.”<sup>13</sup> This ludic element, Nixon argues, allows the artist to foreground, in a way that would otherwise have been foreclosed to her, how “Cold War politics had descended into gender farce, that the hyperbolic masculinity responsible for a genocidal war in Vietnam was inextricably bound up with the anxieties and repressions of nuclear-mentality culture.”<sup>14</sup> Though Reid Kelley and Kelley’s World War I work situates itself in relation to a different war history and point of utterance, it too activates the punning, playfulness, and ludic performance strategies found within the tradition of feminist antiwar art that Nixon outlines. Their use of these tactics draws attention to the taboos that surround and uphold the structures and effects of World War I history and memory within western Europe and North America. The bodies of Reid Kelley and Kelley’s performers seem caught between embodied flesh and representational drawings, suspended between early American black-and-white cartoons and twenty-first-century video game worlds.

From 2008 on, Reid Kelley and Kelley paint all their actors white with black outlines and features. These drawings/paintings are animated by living bodies, with Reid Kelley often in a solo or lead role (figure 10). This black-and-white palette explicitly references the political and ludic avant-garde practices of Dada artists, most explicitly Kiki de Montparnasse’s high-contrast makeup in Fernand Léger and Dudley Murphy’s *Ballet Mécanique* (1923–24). The works resonate with experimental uses of animation in Berlin Dada theater, discussed in chapter 3, as well as the world of dazzle camouflage, the “strategic distortions” of which, Emily James argues, reflect a “symbiotic relationship” among the military, avant-garde design, and modern women.<sup>15</sup> In the video work, these modernist interactions encounter the black-and-white world of early American comics and cartoons, particularly those of George Herriman’s androgynous Crazy Kat, introducing, perhaps unwittingly, the performance traditions of blackface minstrelsy and whiteface too into both Reid Kelley and Kelley’s painted-body (inter)(in)animations and World War I history.<sup>16</sup> If cross-racial blackface performances in the United States seek to displace Black life and disavow the difference between it and caricature, Reid Kelley and Kelley’s embodied whiteface animations activate a tension between white embodied being and caricature within their broader inquiry into the affective landscape of war making and memory. Though whiteface performances by white actors do not function in the same way as Racquel J. Gates describes Eddie Murphy’s whiteface performance of the character Saul operating in *Coming to America* (John Landis, 1988)—that is, as a “flipping of the script”—they do,



FIGURE 10. Graphically painted nurse and patients, from Mary Reid Kelley and Patrick Kelley's *The Queen's English*, 2008.

I suggest, jostle the white normativity of World War memory narratives, including some revisionist ones, in ways that attract (inter)(in)animating attention.<sup>17</sup>

When I ask Reid Kelley in 2023 to address, retroactively, how she understands the whiteness of her painted characters over time in relation to race and colonialism, she reflects, "My characters are all white. . . . White people have so much that they need to work out amongst and to each other, and to work out not just between contemporary white people but between living and dead white artists. . . . I feel like the central theme in all of the work is delusion. . . . Somebody is under a delusion that kills them. And to me this is intimately connected to whiteness."<sup>18</sup> The artists' work foregrounds what Reid Kelley describes as "this totally seamless mechanism of confirmation that you are in the center" that accompanies "the state of being white" and invites reflection on the relationship between whiteness and war. The extreme painted whiteness of Reid Kelley and Kelley's characters creates a stark, cartoonish world in which blackness serves only to outline white characters and render them visible within environs where anything other than white liveliness seems structurally impossible. The title of *You Make Me Iliad* explicitly links these works' prevailing whiteness with classicism and classicism's powerful hold on modern ways of dealing with the aftermath of war. But Reid Kelley and Kelley simultaneously undermine modernity's reach for classicism through bathos, puns,

satire, farce, rhyme, nonsense, shattering, cartoons, the abstract animation of letters and object fragments, obscenity, and disorienting combinations of two and three dimensions. These strategies, piled on top of each other, refute any possibility of coherence or stability within the white classical worlds they invoke, even as no other world is indexed or even hinted at by these works.

#### SKINANIMATION, STOP-MOTION, AND THE DISMANTLING OF CLASSICAL UNITY

In her brilliant study of the entanglements of modernity and classicism in the wake of World War I, Ana Carden-Coyne argues that “transcending racial diversity and weaving bodies together as one, classicism evoked a shared humanity and a universal vision of peace through respect for the dead.”<sup>19</sup> Reid Kelley and Kelley’s practice draws attention in farce-laden but often affectively poignant ways to the work that this “respect for the dead” does. They explore how memory cultures and institutions have the potential to both entrench and scramble hegemonic narratives of war. Their work refuses to allow memorials to function smoothly as what Carden-Coyne describes as “a strategy of forgetting,” and seems to respond to one of Carden-Coyne’s closing questions: “Can mourners of the war dead be co-opted by the state?”<sup>20</sup>

In this chapter, I continue to stretch (inter)(in)animation’s operations as a world-dismantling and world-creating tool. As the live-action performances of Reid Kelley and Kelley’s black-and-white figures bring war-related cartoon forms to life, these filmed drawings on skin test the limits of available critical vocabulary for describing visual movement effects. The boundaries between painting, drawing, performance, video, and animation start to blur as the actor’s painted skin serves as both ground and animating force for a multimedia drawing: “skinanimation”?<sup>21</sup> This embodied animation is juxtaposed with the digital stop-motion animation of hand-sculpted objects as well as of letters made in historically charged fonts that trigger a gamut of memories, from German militarism to home movie intertitles, suggesting that this animated intervention into the landscape of World War I memory involves personal and familial memories too.<sup>22</sup> In *The Queen’s English*, flimsy 3D shapes made out of paper and plaster figures connoting the rubble of war—teeth, hooves, a hand, a horse’s tail, a bone—move independently around the screen (video 2). In *Sadie, the Saddest Sadist*, letters swirl around, occasionally colliding as if by accident, making and unmaking words—WORK, FUNCTION, CUNT—phrases, or letter piles, encouraging the eye to make new letters from the piles—*cut* from *cun/t*, *off* from *on/ffff*. The digitally mediated physical materiality of these animated shapes and fabricated parts—made not of enamel, dentin, keratin, bone, or flesh, but of paper and bright white plaster—brings them into a sculptural, memorial register that is more mobile and fluid than many non-digital sculptural works might otherwise seem. Furthermore, the mediation and



VIDEO 2. Body parts. Mary Reid Kelley and Patrick Kelley, *The Queen's English* (2008).

To watch this video, scan the QR code with your mobile device or visit DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1525/luminos.228.2>



frame-by-frame animation of these objects provokes thought about how white heroic war victory narratives are materially constructed and fixed, as well as how we would remember war otherwise if horses were memorialized not beneath triumphant bronze generals, but through the mediation of war's fragmenting force, through unstable sculptural piles of teeth, hoof, and hair.<sup>23</sup>

While plaster and paper are materials of memory, they nevertheless suggest fragility and mutability, a quality underscored by the work's low-budget, jerky animation. The seemingly autonomous movement and self-rearrangement of each war fragment reveals an unruly gap between the ideological aspirations and material realities of fixing official war memory in place. Reid Kelley and Kelley visualize the specters of animation and provisionality that haunt war memorial landscapes. In the wake of World War I, official memory's material mutability was literally on public display as some of the monuments that were supposed to be made in bronze ended up being made in plaster because of lack of funds. Such was the case with the Versailles monument, two equestrian statues of General John J. Pershing and General Lafayette erected in October 1937 to glorify the American army. Less than

four years after the statues were erected, the *New York Times*, under the heading “Pershing Statue, Plaster, Crumbling at Versailles,” reported that these statues had become unintentionally animated and were “threatening to fall on passers-by.”<sup>24</sup> Monuments fall and are pushed, statues crumble, new narratives and memories rise in the cracks. It is within and toward such cracks, often evoked through indecent bodily puns, that Reid Kelley and Kelley’s work occurs.

#### DIGITAL ANIMATION AND THE VISUALIZATION OF HISTORY

Layering different types of (inter)(in)animation, Reid Kelley and Kelley’s stop-motion and performed elements take place against the backdrop of virtual sets created by Kelley using the 3D animation, modeling, simulation, and rendering software Autodesk Maya. Much of the critical potential of this work lies in its activation of a dynamic relationship between virtual and embodied space, between 2D and 3D images, and what this relationship reveals about how war and media alter the lived realities and spatial perceptions of those who experience it.

Suzanne Buchan and James J. Hodge have, albeit in distinct ways, argued that in the twenty-first century animation is ubiquitous in our lives. For Hodge, the ubiquity of animation is intimately linked to, but not conflatable with, the pervasiveness of digital media. In considering Reid Kelley and Kelley’s work, it is helpful to foreground the relationship between these two concepts as Hodge does, arguing that this relationship structures the very possibility and contours of historical consciousness within the digital realm. Hodge states, “To be clear, animation is not synonymous with digital media. Animation appears, instead, as the fundamental mode of phenomenal address by digital machines to human perceivers. So, while animation and digital media are both everywhere, they are not the same. And this is precisely what gives animation its critically expressive power to address the experiential opacity of the digital age.”<sup>25</sup> Hodge demonstrates how attending to animation can expand contemporary efforts, including feminist ones, to grapple with the occlusions of history and historiographic challenges and possibilities in the digital age. He makes the suggestive claims that animation has become the “aesthetic correlate” of digital media and that the “emergent ubiquity of animation . . . unmistakably parallels the popular dissemination of digital technologies and the diffusion of digital cultures into culture as such.”<sup>26</sup> For Hodge, drawing on Czech media theorist Vilém Flusser, animated images in the digital age help to make visible an opacity that emerges at the moment of a shift away from a mode of writing that is accessible to human consciousness. This leads not to an anti- or ahistorical state, contrary to our fears, but rather to what Flusser calls “another history.”<sup>27</sup> “History continues,” Hodge suggests, “but no longer by and for human minds.”<sup>28</sup> What this line of thinking about the opacity of the specifically digital present perhaps does not recognize, however, are the occlusions built into



the earlier mediations of history “for human minds” within white supremacist and patriarchal institutions of memory that rely on racist epistemologies of the human. Thinking about the mnemonic exclusions of predigital, human-oriented media in dialogue with the opacity Hodge identifies in the digital realm raises questions about the opacities in war historiography to which these (inter)(in)animations that span digital and predigital eras and media might give form. Considering Reid Kelley and Kelley’s work within such an expanded version of Hodge’s framework posits (inter)(in)animation across virtual and physical spaces as an aesthetic correlate for aspects of World War I history that have been rendered structurally opaque by white supremacist, anthropocentric, and patriarchal institutions of memory that operate in continuous, pervasive and evolving ways.

Like Helen Hill, whose work I discuss in chapter 5, Reid Kelley grew up in South Carolina, where she learned, in part by stopping at every memorial with her parents and siblings, that history is always contested. She explains, “In the South, at least in terms of the Civil War, there’s this historical burden. You’re aware pretty early on that there isn’t just one version that’s accepted, that people are kind of tugging at this historical record . . . wanting to manipulate the history one way or another.”<sup>29</sup> When asked how her sense of historical time has changed over the last decade as her work has shifted its focus from World War I to the violence of neoliberalism, often through a classical mythology lens, Reid Kelley responds: “The work is maybe made to have time for us to ask the question ‘what is history’ in a way that we could properly answer it. To ask the question in the right medium for us . . . I guess I . . . think of history as a building, that you’re constantly in one room or another and the shape is different.”<sup>30</sup> Though Reid Kelley sees each “room” as distinct, each also “has a door, each has a window,” and she states that it helps “to know the previous rooms and the previous eras, because people take something from each era, each scenario.”<sup>31</sup> She describes “looking back on art” as “a reliable indicator of belief and delusion,” suggesting how an artist’s engagement of history might differ from that of a historian. She asks, “What’s the prevailing status quo or line, the mythology? I think that’s really revealed in what artists are doing. And that’s why I think a lot of the characters [in my work] are artists.”<sup>32</sup>

Reid Kelley and Kelley’s (inter)(in)animations set in motion bawdy and disruptive versions of World War I narratives that have become petrified in university archives and architecture, museums, personal memory, and monumental, militarized spaces of national remembering. They mine raw material from these sites only to re-present these looted fragments in (inter)(in)animated, humorous, nonsensical, and vulgar ways that often border on derision. These gestures neither celebrate the ahistorical nor generate better, fuller histories. Rather, they activate ludic feminist strategies to contest and disrupt entrenched forms, delusions, mythologies, and exclusions of war memory and the way these things shape daily life.<sup>33</sup> This work employs an often-aggressive process of reanimation and reordering in both verbal and visual realms to illuminate from within the violent but normal-

ized operations of history on the present, as supported by the intertwined infrastructures of war, capitalism, and culture. Supplementing Reid Kelley's spatialized and delusional framing of history in her scripts and performances, Kelley's lighting, shooting, virtual digital set designs, and stop-motion scenarios underscore the potential of digital illusions of space and mobility to pressure, and provide alternatives to, existing models of historical time. He observes,

We started off very tightly on a specific time-period in World War I; things have . . . I don't know what the right descriptive word is . . . "expanded"? . . . or have a less strict focus on a time setting, and that has shifted. And the reason I bring this up is . . . how animation breaks open time. . . . It frees the maker from a kind of tyranny of time—both in the process of making, because you're no longer in a 1:1 time frame, but also with what you make. I think there's this interesting analogue between . . . breaking from a strict time setting to a . . . more open field of history, of jumping back and forth.<sup>34</sup>

When evaluating Reid Kelley and Kelley's use of early twentieth-century modernist and satirical vernacular responses to World War I in their twenty-first-century farcical aesthetic, it is worth recalling historian Jay Winter's critique of what he calls the "modernist hypothesis." Winter warns against the danger of teleological, tendentious, and oversimplified histories of World War I's memory culture. He argues against an unhelpfully rigid divide between traditional responses ("classical, romantic, or religious images and ideas"), which he insists had enduring appeal because they created spaces of mourning in a context of mass death, and modernist (or "iconoclastic") ones, the importance of which he suggests has been overstated by cultural historians such as Fussell. Winter writes, "Irony's cutting edge—the savage wit of Dada or surrealism, for example—could express anger and despair, and did so in enduring ways; but it could not heal. Traditional modes of seeing the war, while at times less profound, provided a way of remembering which enabled the bereaved to live with their losses, and perhaps to leave them behind."<sup>35</sup> Winter cautions against oversimplifying tradition, not to fix or protect certain modes of memory, but to keep in sight the "messiness" of the past, "its non-linearity, its vigorous and stubbornly visible incompatibilities," and the importance of "an historical sense of the meaning ascribed to war memorials at the time they were constructed," which, he notes, was "highly personal."<sup>36</sup>

Reid Kelley and Kelley use (inter)(in)animation to activate and foreground this messiness, placing incompatible fragments in the same frame to illuminate the failures and strains of war narratives. These failures are refracted partly by performing the limitations of a supplemental historiographic logic that proceeds by adding white heroines, such as female munitions workers and nurses, to the hero's story. Such additions render visible in the memory landscape the occlusions and operations of gender in the history of war. One scene in *You Make Me Iliad* shows Reid Kelley playing both Humble, a soldier-poet who ends up dying of gas poisoning, and a Belgian sex worker. As the sex worker gives herself an abortion,



her speech, full of rhymes and puns, highlights the challenge of giving verbal form to the experiences of those rendered helpless by overwhelming violence. She asks Humble, the soldier-poet, “Do you recall my home? It was en route, / Your army sacked it as I bawled my eyes out— / Quite helplessly—but in this setting / I’m Alpha Female, and I’m Alpha Betting / That you can author, but can’t spell, disaster.” The speaker claims the status of an Alpha Female in the midst of her abortion as digitally animated letters tumble into the bucket below, something she narrates by talking of the “Refugees that trickle down my leg.” This visualizes and animates the space of unspeakability, the limits and exclusions of the language of history, and perhaps suggests, albeit through the nonsense language of puns, an affinity between the power of the Alpha Female in war and the detritus of life that here takes the abstracted form of random animated letters. Here too the role of the poetic is foregrounded as part of the work’s (inter)(in)animating methodology. The Belgian sex worker describes herself as “a Whore for Metaphor,” declares, “Hyperbole is my internal organ,” and confesses, “I shit vowels.” What, the work provokes viewers to ask, should feminist revisionist war narratives look, sound, and feel like, and what can (inter)(in)animation contribute to necessarily contested feminist efforts to remember war differently?

Angela Y. Davis, speaking about the relationship between feminism and anti-war activism, underscores the importance of interdisciplinary feminist methodologies that “impel us to explore connections that are not always apparent.”<sup>37</sup> She continues, “They enable us to inhabit contradictions and to discover what is productive about those contradictions. These are methods of thought and action that urge us to think things together that appear to be entirely separate and to disaggregate things that seem to belong together.”<sup>38</sup> Resonant with Hodge’s discussion of the affinity between animation and historiographic opacity, Reid Kelley and Kelley’s (inter)(in)animating World War I work makes new connections where there were none and disaggregates fixed couplings to enable different ways of thinking, not only about war and feminist modes of resistance to it, but also about the experiences of failure and incompleteness endemic to all ongoing resistance efforts.

#### SPOLIA AND BELLICOSE ANTIWAR CRITICISM

There are no triumphs in Reid Kelley and Kelley’s historical returns; the artists offer no better monuments of memory. These are, rather, disaggregating artists in search, like Walter Benjamin, of disruptions to our current trajectory. In *the Body of the Surgeon* (2017), Reid Kelley and Kelley link settler colonialism and US imperialism by rearranging Henry Wadsworth Longfellow’s 1855 epic *The Song of Hiawatha* into a narrative about the Hiroshima bomb. Tate Liverpool curator Lauren Barnes usefully suggests that these verbal rearrangements “could be understood as a linguistic parallel to architectural spolia.”<sup>39</sup> This suggestive analogy gives a nod to Reid Kelley’s architectural and spatial understanding of history and paves

the way for thinking about (inter)(in)animation's spoliating possibilities, including in built space.

*Spolia* is a bellicose word connoting the spoils of war and an aggressive, and at times masculinized, attitude to the authority of the past. As architectural historian Dale Kinney explains regarding the sixteenth-century antiquarian circle that included Raphael, "Deliberately or not, their choice of *spolia*, Italian *spoglie*, implied violent removal from a violated source, a rape of the classical past."<sup>40</sup> While some *spolia* uses suggest "an acceptance of the authority of the Latin/Roman past"—Kinney calls these "flaccid" examples—others adopt a "strong" relation to the Roman precedent, which can involve both "repulsion and attraction."<sup>41</sup> Referencing the use of classic colonnades, the language of *spolia* suggests both the desirability and precarity of the "reliable infrastructure of empire."<sup>42</sup> For Kinney, *spolia* are intriguing because they are fundamentally ambiguous; shafts can shift.<sup>43</sup>

The bellicose masculinism charging these ancient examples of spoliation has at times also characterized more recent critical debates about the artistic reuse of earlier aesthetic strategies, especially in the context of antiwar aesthetics reused for the purposes of nationalism and the deflection of the nightmares of the present. Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, for example, forcefully condemns German neoexpressionism, and more specifically a "homogenist neoexpressionist style," for its apolitical and ultimately nationalistic (both German and American) "quotations of history" and for "keep[ing] at bay our worst fears about the present . . . by projecting them onto the distant historical reality of authoritarian politics in other countries."<sup>44</sup> Donald B. Kuspit responds to this charge in part with a critique of Buchloh's tone (but in a matching tone), describing Buchloh's essay as "a Marxist blitzkrieg" and dismissing his criticality and that of his fellow leftists as "impotent," "ineffectual," "directionless," and "vicious."<sup>45</sup> Though Reid Kelley and Kelley's work is littered with carnivalesque quotations of the past, it is not despairing, ahistorical, or invested in what Buchloh calls a "static view of history" that is nostalgic for "an obsolete code."<sup>46</sup> It does, however, fundamentally challenge how patriarchal historical authority is created and upheld.

While it is imperative to identify the ideological instrumentalization of past histories of violence in the present, anti-imperialist feminist scholars remain wary of rigid linear chronologies that generate "befores" and "afters," the "authentic" and the "mock," noting that such chronologies ultimately serve to protect imperial historiographic models and the linear and exclusive models of modernity that they sustain. Furthermore, numerous antiwar feminist scholars have warned against the rise of warlike criticism when war and other forms of political violence are in the picture. Rosalyn Deutsche, for example, in her response to the 2008 *October* "Questionnaire" about art and activism around the US invasion of Iraq, challenges the utility of this antiwar critical analogue to heroic military masculinism. Building on the work of Linda Nochlin, Deutsche suggests that "more important in the present context is the possibility that the idealization of earlier forms of

protest—and along with it, the paternal demand that younger generations identify with a supposedly authentic antiwar politics—might be part of, or at least go hand in and with, the contemporary regression to heroic masculinity that Nochlin warned against” (in a 2001 conference, “Women Artists at the Millennium”). Deutsche continues, “For such regression isn’t confined to pro-war forces. It extends to sectors of the Left opposition, which use the urgency of the war situation to legitimize a return to masculinist political analysis that disavows and sometimes ridicules the last few decades of feminist interrogations of the political and of the limits of knowledge.”<sup>47</sup>

Reid Kelley has a long history of embodied feminist engagement with the structures governing knowledge about the past. While at Yale, she noticed how the built environment of the university immersed students in gendered memories of war and even shaped the very idea of the university itself. Each day, on the way to meals at “Commons,” she wandered past both the Cenotaph and the walls of Memorial Hall, into which are engraved the names of Yale faculty and students who died in war. Contrasting the masculinity of scholar-heroes with a feminized space of learning amid iconography that includes imperial eagles and garlands as well as guns and tanks, the Cenotaph stands “In Memory of the Men of Yale who true to Her Traditions, gave their Lives that Freedom might not Perish from the Earth.”<sup>48</sup>

#### FROTTAGE AS (INTER)(IN)ANIMATING METHOD

While Reid Kelley was still a student at the Yale School of Art, she and Kelley began to make paper rubbings in Memorial Hall. They then experimented with using stop-motion digital animation to (inter)(in)animate the words extracted from Yale’s walls. In this way, Reid Kelley and Kelley’s early work can be usefully compared with the artist Krzysztof Wodiczko’s imaginative un-war making of architectural interventions that interrupt and symbolically destroy “a Culture of War” that sustains “the motivation to fight and die in war.”<sup>49</sup> For Wodiczko, this culture is evident in “uniforms, war games, parades, military decorations, and war memorials (including statues and shrines, triumphal arches, cenotaphs, victory columns, and other commemorations of the dead); the creation of war art and military art, martial music, and war museums; and the popular fascination with weapons, war toys, violent video and computer games, battle reenactments, collectibles, and military history and literature.”<sup>50</sup> In 1983, for example, Wodiczko projected images of grieving mothers from Jacques-Louis David’s *The Lictors Bring to Brutus the Bodies of His Sons* (1789) onto the surface of Dayton, Ohio’s Memorial Hall, a 1910 building that now commemorates soldiers who fought in the US Civil War, the Spanish-American War, and World War I.<sup>51</sup> These projections activate an (inter)(in)animating relationship across painting and memorial architecture that results in “a highly critical reading of history and the ways of remembering it.”<sup>52</sup>

Wodiczko's temporary counterprojections are technologically "thrown" from a distance over institutional and national narratives that help to sustain and sanitize cultures of war, altering how such narratives are understood long after the projections have disappeared. By contrast, Reid Kelley and Kelley's interventions into war memorials involve manually unfixing the words of memory from their architectural sites of origin using the (inter)(in)animating and intimate movement of Reid Kelley's own body up against the wall. The artists then relocate and recombine letters and words in different media contexts. In a series of early experiments described as "mosaic poems," Reid Kelley and Kelley use stop-motion tactics to (inter)(in)animate words and letters by rubbing into being the potential for unforeseen lives, locations, and meanings, even as the text retains an indexical relation to the original site of the war memorial. The strong sense in the four World War I videos that violence is "graphic" has roots in these early frottage experiments, which use animated rubbings to visualize the paradox of how memorialization can operate as a force of erasure and forgetting. The later World War I videos build on these earlier explorations of the relationship between body, memorial text, and medium, which reveal war's violence as something that confounds divisions between the body and language. In *The Queen's English*, for example, a World War I nurse treating many conditions, including impotence, reports, "I write their letters for them, / Since they can't control their diction," linking war's destructive impact on both linguistic and sexual agency. Similarly, in *You Make Me Iliad*, the poet-hero is described as being "punctuated / By shrapnel that cruel fate has fated."

The mosaic poems simultaneously index and obscure histories of violence that exceed the official parameters of World War I, as if these minor works are in search of an appropriate aesthetic analogue for unremembered wars. And precisely for this reason these rubbings offer some useful friction to the later work. Reid Kelley and Kelley's experimental mosaic poems stretch the temporal and geographic parameters of interest in the memorialization of violent conflict beyond the World War framework that becomes more entrenched in later work. The minor works also lead to a differently (inter)(in)animated rubbing made by Reid Kelley at around the same time. These generative preludes to the World War I video series are worth considering in their own right since they unsettle the later work and illuminate the un-war-making potential of feminist frottage.

#### WHERE'S THE RUB?

The mosaic poems' experimental pairing, fragmentation, and (inter)(in)animation of words relocated from the walls of Yale's war memorial suggest entanglements of religious missions, research universities, sexual bodies, language, memory, and the technologies of war. One example combines two frottaged words that appear and disappear in alteration with each other: *Private* and *Island*. Another alternates the words *Missionary* and *Frolic* (video 3). Framed by a graphite oval, the



VIDEO 3. Mary Reid Kelley and Patrick Kelley, *Private Island Experiment* (2007).

To watch this video, scan the QR code with your mobile device or visit  
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1525/luminos.228.3>



words themselves seem like islands floating in a white sea. In “Private Island,” this strange, incomplete, animated fragment links the university war memorial to narcissistic fantasies of land possession, notions of interiority inflected by military rank, and confluences of the self and physical space. These experiments model an easily accessible and valuable methodological, artistic, and political tool that can be adapted to other times and places, catalyzing future (inter)(in)animating community dialogues and creative practices. Yet as the words *private* and *island* come and go before my eyes, I wonder exactly what islands are registered in the stony memories of Memorial Hall. Curiosity sends me back to the original site of rubbing and this site-specific research alters my experience of the mosaic poems.

Walking through the space of Yale Memorial Hall, I find interspersed among the long lists of names of those who died in the World Wars a smaller number of names below the headings “War with Mexico” and “Spanish-American War & Philippine Insurrection.” These sit beside a large memorial dedicated to Horace Tracy Pitkin, “three years missionary in China killed at his post in Pao Tinc Fu by the Boxers 1 July 1900.” Photographs from the Reid Kelley and Kelley archive confirm that this is the source of the capitalized word *MISSIONARY* in the second mosaic poem, “Missionary Frolic.” A different wall reveals this “frolic” to be a gunboat used in the suppression of Philippine resistance to American occupation. The discomfort

caused by Reid Kelley and Kelley's playful and "improper" (inter)(in)animations of these memorial words spotlights the different and violent improprieties that catalyze the work's mood, such as the fact that a gunboat is named *Frolic*, as if to declare without shame that the US military takes pleasure in the death of its victims.

Through digital stop-motion animation, the letters of these alternating words magically appear through pencil rubbings made by an invisible hand, unfurling in different directions before retreating into invisibility again, suggesting a more elusive mnemonic mode. At times, only a fragment of a word appears, inviting viewers playfully to complete the meaning: *Missionary* becomes *ona*: On a mission? On an island? Onanism? *Frolic* becomes a bawdy *lic*, prefiguring the belligerent sexual punning later uttered by Sadie, the Saddest Sadist, who "want[s] to give the Huns a licking." The words appear jauntily in a variety of diagonal positions, as if they themselves were frolicking. These ribald and irreverent (inter)(in)animating experiments with relocation and fragmentation activate the body's movements in dialogue with the mediating technologies of paper, pencil, and camera to loosen fragments of engraved memory and unleash them into poetic, recombinatory, provisional motion.

It is also in the context of imperial wars and the suppression of resistance movements that the word *island* appears repeatedly on Yale's walls. We find it, for example, in the memorial to Joseph W. Alport, who was "mortally wounded . . . in a skirmish near Manghinao Samar Philippine Islands while rescuing a wounded comrade under a heavy fire," and again in the entry that Reid Kelley rubbed for "Private Island," which memorializes Augustus Canfield Ledyard (BA, class of 1898), a first lieutenant in the Sixth Infantry of the US Army, who "died on the Island of Negros, P. I., December 8, 1899 from wounds received at La Granja, P.I." This particular island, which comes and goes like a ghostly gray and white apparition in the mosaic poem, is haunted by a white supremacist and settler colonial history that imposes a black-and-white worldview on people and space.<sup>53</sup>

(INTER)(IN)ANIMATING HEROISM:  
*THE AMERICAN SOLDIER* (2008)

In *The Dream of the Moving Statue* (1992), Kenneth Gross suggests that the fantasy of bringing stone to life is fed by "the strange complicities of the living body and the dead monument."<sup>54</sup> Mobilizing stone with the living body, Gross suggests, raises questions, such as "What crisis does the animation of the unmoving statue thereby entail, what is lost or transgressed or restored in that abandonment of stillness and silence?"<sup>55</sup> Such questions pulse through Reid Kelley and Kelley's work, as well as through the untimely and disruptive appearances of (inter)(in)animating undeath considered throughout this book. Gross rightly identifies such unexpected (inter)(in)animating moments as transgressive and potentially destructive, as "a kind of substitute for iconoclasm."<sup>56</sup> The outcomes

of such unruly liveliness are unpredictable, he warns, and “may entail a violation rather than a recovery of the world.”<sup>57</sup>

If the stillness of war memorials serves to help people living on in the wake of war to “overcome their problems” in response to societal expectations, as Carden-Coyne argues they do, then the act of animating memorials runs the risk of returning public attention to what Deutsche calls “the war-wrecked body.”<sup>58</sup> For Deutsche, “The censorship of the wounded body resurrects the very condition that, according to Sigmund Freud, makes war possible: regression to the fantasy of the invulnerable body, or, as Freud calls it, heroism.”<sup>59</sup> Perhaps refusals to turn away from the hurt and the dead challenge the inevitability of future wars? Reid Kelley and Kelley seem willing to take the risks that enlivening stone through touch involves, a touch that, for Gross, brings the taboo subject of necrophilia to mind, in order to render more available to thought the phantasms that sustain war making and that are otherwise, by definition, hard to grasp.<sup>60</sup>

Energized by having rubbed Yale’s white walls of war memory, Reid Kelley and Kelley pursued further embodied and collaborative responses to Yale’s intertwinement with World War I. With the help of a 1920s Yale memorial book, the two went to Europe and visited as many graves of alumni who had died on the Western Front as they could find. Reid Kelley read war poetry to the fallen, describing the futility of her effort to commune with the dead as a “wild goose chase on the western front.”<sup>61</sup> Though most passersby had ignored her when she was rubbing Yale’s walls, Reid Kelley recalls that at the European graves and war memorials, people sometimes stopped to ask “if that was my grandfather,” implying that only a familial relationship would warrant such intimate, physical attention. She continues, “When I was making a rubbing at a place where it was obvious I was not doing a personal act of remembrance, it was more tense,” creating a sense that she was rubbing memory in the wrong way.<sup>62</sup> Nevertheless, the taphophilic Reid Kelley and Kelley gathered images and text along the way, producing new image-texts that I argue we can usefully read as (inter)(in)animations, deliberate feminist acts involving rubbing the female body against official war memorials in ways that refuse to accept the white, heteronormative, masculinist, and nationalist war narrative as necessarily protected, untouchable, and unmovable, even when literally written in stone.

*The American Soldier* (2008, figure 11) is a crayon rubbing made at the World War I memorial in Montfaucon, France, which was completed in 1933. On the northeast wall of its vestibule, a monumental ornamental colored map, prefiguring the animated propaganda maps of World War II, is carved into polished marble. Each color indicates the operations of various divisions, as if the war had been petrified and suspended permanently in process. The monument is distinguished by its 180-foot “imposing” “massive shaft” atop whose tip “Liberty” stands.<sup>63</sup> For this project, Reid Kelley unfixed and rearranged the words of a text from the southeast wall that celebrates General of the Armies John J. Pershing (1860–1948)





FIGURE 11. Mary Reid Kelley and Patrick Kelley, *The American Soldier*, 2008.

and his men, generating a new text that discombobulates the memorial narrative. The relevant sections of the original passage read: “THE MEUSE-ARGONNE BATTLE PRESENTED NUMEROUS DIFFICULTIES SEEMINGLY INSURMOUNTABLE. SUDDENLY CONCEIVED AND HURRIED IN PLAN. . . . THIS BATTLE WAS PROSECUTED WITH AN UNSELFISH AND HEROIC SPIRIT OF COURAGE AND FORTITUDE. . . . PHYSICALLY STRONG, VIRILE AND AGGRESSIVE, THE MORALE OF THE AMERICAN SOLDIER DURING THIS MOST TRYING PERIOD WAS SUPERB.”<sup>64</sup> Through the back and forth rubbing of Reid Kelley’s hand and crayon against the monument, words are set afloat to reframe military masculinism and heroism with the spoliating technique that Barnes brilliantly names “inappropriation.”<sup>65</sup> The new text reads: “THE AMERICAN SOLDIER IS PHYSICALLY STRONG AND VIRILE, AGGRESSIVE AND VIRILE, LOYAL AND VIRILE, VIRILE AND VIRILE, HURRIED AND VIRILE, AND SEEMINGLY INSURMOUNTABLY VIRILE.”

For the *American Soldier* frottage project, Reid Kelley could not have selected a more apt or contemporary “hero” than General John J. Pershing on whom to focus her discombobulating attention. While Pershing, a white man known as “Black Jack Pershing” because of his command of the Tenth Cavalry, a regiment of Black troops, is best known for his leadership of US troops in Europe during World War I, he rose to prominence through his leadership of settler colonial expeditions. A *New York Times* article from 1917 entitled “Pershing Won Fame in Moro Campaigns” and subtitled “FOUGHT SIOUX AND APACHES” celebrates



Pershing's service. The article lauds his leadership of "the fierce border campaigns against the Apache Indians of Arizona"; the "turbulent Sioux wars of the early nineties"; resistance to "the Spaniards in Cuba in 1898"; the "pacification of the Moros" in the Philippine Islands (1909–1913), which included the brutal murder of approximately five hundred people from the Muslim-majority community of Bagsak cotta, up to 10 percent of whom were women and children; and the US punitive expedition into Mexico of 1916 to suppress the Villista soldiers.<sup>66</sup>

Pershing's impact on the national landscape of the United States, and indeed his vision of the United States and its relation to the world, loom large in a history that is both selectively memorialized and in the process of being expanded. This expansion makes a return to Reid Kelley's 2008 rubbing particularly timely. It is not just the Pershing II ballistic missiles that are named after this figure, missiles that, in 1981, catalyzed the UK's Greenham Common Peace Camp's successful feminist antimilitarism campaign.<sup>67</sup> Daily life in the United States of America seems to be mediated through Pershing's ubiquity, whether one is passing through Pershing Square on the way out of Grand Central Terminal in New York City; attending one of the eighteen K-12 schools named after him; learning, residing, or healing in one of the many college, dormitory, or hospital buildings that bear his name; relaxing in one of the seven Pershing parks; climbing Washington State's Pershing Mountain; driving down one of the seventeen roads named after him; or having academic freedom and DEI efforts at your university threatened by the founder and CEO of Pershing Square Capital Management.<sup>68</sup> In 2014, the World War I Centennial Commission, in collaboration with the National Park Service, proposed to "enhance" the area around what had been known as "Pershing Park" to create a new, national "World War I Memorial" with an estimated cost of \$42 million, after the efforts of a private group wanting to expand D.C.'s own World War I memorial on the National Mall into a national memorial were refused.<sup>69</sup>

The original park, which had been deliberately designed as an open, multiuse modernist space, was the site of mass protests against the World Bank and the IMF, as well as over four hundred, sometimes illegal, arrests of protesters in 2002. (One of the people arrested was a high school student filming the protests.)<sup>70</sup> Pershing Plaza sits adjacent to Freedom Plaza, named to honor of Martin Luther King Jr., and one of the two main sites inhabited by the Occupy D.C. movement. These two spaces, Pershing Park and Freedom Plaza, were realized in relation to each other as part of a design competition in the late 1970s, with M. Paul Friedberg winning with his design for Pershing Park and Venturi, Rausch, and Scott Brown and George Patton winning the Freedom Plaza commission.<sup>71</sup> The competition guidelines for the recent so-called enhancement of Pershing Plaza described the existing park in vague, coded terms, such as "uninviting" and "problematic," suggesting anti-urban bias; discouraged use of the space; and failed to recognize the modernist design significance of the original park. Landscape architect Laurie Olin, one of



FIGURE 12. Placeholder for Sabin Howard's bronze relief in progress, *A Soldier's Journey*, June 2022.

the judges for the project, resigned after seeing the planned demolitions for the site, stating simply, "I don't approve of this project."<sup>72</sup>

Sculptor Sabin Howard, considered "a master of modern classicism," was commissioned to make *A Soldier's Journey* as the final component of the Pershing Park "enhancement."<sup>73</sup> While Reid Kelley's (inter)(in)animations set the rigidity and singularity of war memory in motion, Howard describes turning to a frame-by-frame animation logic in what would otherwise be "static forms." Howard explains, "The sculpture mimics film, going from image to image to image. . . . It's very kinetic and emotional."<sup>74</sup> Yet for all its implied mobility, there's nothing provisional or transient about the sixty-foot bronze relief, which the Doughboy Foundation declares will be "the largest freestanding high relief bronze in the Western Hemisphere" (figure 12).<sup>75</sup> Planned for installation in 2024, the relief will depict the journey of a single American hero, starting with his departure from home, wife, and daughter, through battle, until his return home. The US National Park Service presents World War I and Howard's sculptural reflection of it as uniting a diverse nation through war, all under the watchful gaze of Robert White's eight-foot bronze statue of Pershing, field glasses in hand. Echoing Pershing's own view that universal participation in the military would unify the body politic and reduce "talk of hyphenated Americans," the US National Park Service celebrates

Howard's project by noting that "the parade, and the work as a whole, includes African Americans and other ethnic groups who answered their country's call."<sup>76</sup>

*The American Soldier's* rearrangement of Pershing's words prefigures Reid Kelley and Kelley's later rearrangement of letters using stop-motion animation—anagranimation?—instead of frottage to reorganize the language of official war memory. Such reorganizations challenge a particular type of respect for loss and suffering that is designed primarily to suppress historical and political thinking about the forms of violence and war in question. The resulting silence constitutes a collective form of collaboration with past violence as well as with present and future inflictions of mass death. Though this type of (inter)(in)animating friction does not guarantee that the histories of violence suppressed by fixed nationalist war narratives will come into view—and they do not in Reid Kelley and Kelley's World War I work—this work effectively draws attention to the role of social etiquette in both sustaining and erasing the atrocities of war, imperialism, and heroism.

#### PROVISIONAL MONUMENTS

If, as Winter suggests, World War I memorials aimed symbolically to mark a definitive end to a devastating war, allowing mourning to begin and life to go on, Reid Kelley and Kelley's animating acts of frottage catalyze a bawdy curiosity regarding what exactly war memorials remember, honor, forget, and fix in place. Their feminist (inter)(in)animations suggest the need to chip away at authoritative petrified histories in order to prepare the ground for different narratives and otherwise-imagined monuments. Any rubbing is an intimate mode of text and/or image (re) production requiring the artist to move a pencil or other mark-making tool, as well as the hand and arm that hold the tool, back and forth across an original surface. Without the presence of the thin veil of paper, this repetitive physical movement over the surface of a grave would border on defacement if the hand holds a writing implement, and on obscenity, a too-physical encounter with the memorial, if it doesn't. Even with the presence of paper, there is a sense of transgression encapsulated in the French term used to describe this form of image making—*frottage*—which also describes the practice of rubbing one's body through clothing against another for sexual pleasure. In its bridging of sexual pleasure and grave rubbing, frottage's desire to touch or possess something of the dead is haunted by necrophilia. Some graveyards prohibit frottage altogether as an art that harms the grave; others simply find the practice disrespectful to the dead, leading one knowledgeable member of the "usurnsonline.com" community to advise "gravers": "The best rule of thumb is *to ask before you rub*."<sup>77</sup>

Exceeding this already risqué way of being intimate with the nonfamilial dead, Reid Kelley and Kelley's further transgression lies in rearranging or (inter)(in)animating the inscriptions being rubbed, moving each word to alter its

relation to the other words, producing new meanings to comical effect.<sup>78</sup> Reid Kelley and Kelley refuse not to see and not to speak about nationalist war heroism's erotic attachment to death. Frottage is an indexical art in which works on paper possess a one-to-one relation to the engravings from which they are taken, and one of the unspoken rules of rubbing is that the "rubber" will hold the paper that is receiving the marks in a fixed position. Reid Kelley and Kelley refuse what I'll call the Rule of Obedient Transmission (ROT). Their refusal takes the form of a defiantly mobile piece of paper that sculpts meaning as it rubs, recalling the way that Onyeka Igwe uses her body to physically animate the cinematic apparatus and the projection screen to expand the possibilities of (inter)(in)animating feminist media practice in the face of world-destroying violence in which cinema has participated.

Just as the images found in frame-by-frame filmmaking may be indexical and profilmic in nature without giving an isomorphic imprint of the world, so Reid Kelley and Kelley mobilize the words of official war memory in a different order, asking, if not answering, "What other sense might be made of this?" In this way, the paper rubbing might be read almost like the animator's dope sheet that lists each individual shot, a storyboard for an animated history in progress, memorial narratives examined word by word, even letter by letter. Through the transforming energy provided by one hand's manual back-and-forth and the other's shifty sleights of hand with the paper, Reid Kelley and Kelley create a mobility across the monument's surface that becomes Ouija-like in its unexpected revelations of new derisive meanings and suggestions. Frottage brings a feminist frame-by-frame attitude and attention to stone-faced history, discombobulating the memorial's fixed elements to examine, disrupt, and reconfigure its components, investments, and occlusions. Animated embodied feminist rubbing rejects efforts to mobilize the war dead in order to silence the living's questions about, critiques of, and thoughts about militarism, monuments, history, and nationalist memory. Feminisms' (inter)(in)animations risk being charged with disrespecting the dead in the service of life. In place of the script as given, Reid Kelley literally puts her body on the memorial's lines, activating obscenity in a way that brings the graphic throbbing of flesh—both its life-affirming, bawdy eroticism and humor and its life-destroying appetites—into the entrenched, carefully controlled linguistic, cognitive, and material realm of official war histories. Through such actions, she and Kelley cultivate flexible mental spaces that encourage people to adopt experimental approaches to how we write and live in relation to landscapes that seem to be automatically and inescapably structured by war. These acts of frottage model nonsubmissive ways of living with and against these monuments, un-shafting freedom with a flick of the wrist.

Such unfixings of monumental, nationalist war narratives do not articulate the suppressed histories and experiences of war, but they do loosen or till the ground of nationalist memory, contributing to the possibility of what Angela Davis describes as "a more thoughtful, a more radical, feminism."<sup>79</sup> In this sense, Reid

Kelley and Kelley's earliest war projects share some common ground with the collectively enacted challenges to public monuments articulated a few years later by the Rhodes Must Fall and Black Lives Matter movements, the Mellon Foundation's "Monuments Project," and Salamishah Tillet and Paul Farber's exhibition *Pulling Together: New Perspectives on the National Mall*, which featured "prototype monuments that respond to the question, 'What stories remain untold on the National Mall?'"<sup>80</sup> These later projects both refuse the respect demanded by a discriminatory memorial landscape and begin the work of developing multiple, alternative, and more uncertain (inter)(in)animating mnemonic repertoires.

In August and September 2023, coincident with the development of the massive World War I national memorial, six artists working with Tillet and Farber's "Beyond Granite: Pulling Together" project were invited to install nontraditional monuments that question what Tillet describes as "a particular story of American unity at the expense of our very difficult history of segregation, of colonization, of LGBTQ discrimination, and of slavery."<sup>81</sup> For example, in *For the Living*, Tiffany Chung used colored rope to create a world map on the grass near Lin's Vietnam Veterans Memorial. Like Reid Kelley, Chung riffs on the speculative futures diagrammed by ornamental and animated war maps, but Chung does so by tracing, not the movement of battlefronts, but rather the routes traveled by Vietnamese and other Southeast Asian refugees displaced by the Vietnam War. In doing so, the artist visualizes the impact of the Vietnam War on the living as well as on the dead and highlights the Vietnam Veteran Memorial's exclusive focus on American deaths, occluding the nearly two million Vietnamese war deaths from the North and South of the country.<sup>82</sup> (Inter)(in)animating each other, these provisional memorials challenge the social utility of silencing, fixing, and/or separating entangled histories of violence and insist upon the inescapable contemporaneity of supposedly bygone acts of war.

## (Inter)(in)animated Loops and the Feminist Politics of Return

In World War I, the new injuries inflicted on soldiers by trench warfare generated medical innovations, particularly in the realm of prosthetic medicine, catalyzing formal innovations in the work of artists seeking to respond to war's stretching the limits of the body through experiments that were at once political and aesthetic. Walter Benjamin, in his unpublished fragment from 1931, "Mickey Mouse," articulates through the cartoon mouse how the violence of war exceeds the temporal and geographic delimitations of the battlefield and is mediated perpetually in the bodies of combatants. In the cartoon body, Benjamin suggests, "we see for the first time that it is possible to have one's own arm, even one's own body, stolen."<sup>1</sup> This notion that the fluidity of animation's drawn line suggests an image to come was central to Eisenstein's writing about animation's plasmatic quality, which emphasizes the quality of alteration over liveliness, and any attempt to think about the historicity and political resonance of the animated image has to grapple with this quality of futurity.<sup>2</sup> Discussing the "defining aspect of animation—its creation of a moving image," Tom Gunning advocates for thinking movement alongside the implied "ability of an image to transform," seeing the animated image as "vibrating with the possibility of change, unstable in its identity and clearly different from the inert and static form of the traditional picture."<sup>3</sup> These is a tension between the sameness that the notion of return implies and the unexpected transformations that both cartoon and veteran bodies endure. In this chapter, I argue that the political possibilities of Yael Bartana's deep engagement with gendered militarism and the past, present, and futures of Zionism lies in her (inter)(in)animating pre-enactment of a reconfigured relationship between returning and changing. Bartana's transmedial efforts to audiovisualize the dynamic and often affectively



charged exchanges between spaces of war and home exist in a lineage with Dadaist experiments that combined animation, live performance, and puppetry and that were similarly preoccupied with the politics of return in the context of fascism, nationalism, and militarism.<sup>4</sup>

The (inter)(in)animating fulcrum of this chapter that holds its other pieces together and that catalyzes alternative ways of periodizing and narrating the (pre) histories and legacies of the World Wars is Bartana's Dada-inspired *Entartete Kunst Lebt* (*Degenerate Art Lives*) (2010), a five-minute sound installation and digitally rendered animated loop transferred onto 16mm film. Bartana is an Israeli-born, feminist, queer contemporary artist now living between Berlin and Amsterdam. She is a self-described "observer of the contemporary and a pre-enactor," who "employs art as a scalpel inside the mechanisms of power structures."<sup>5</sup> This loop redraws as puppets with movable parts returning German World War I veterans as they are depicted in photographs of an Otto Dix painting from 1920. The painting, known both as *Kriegskrüppel* (*War Cripples*) and as *45% Erwerbsfähig!* (*45% Fit for Work!*), is presumed to have been destroyed by the Nazis.<sup>6</sup> The painting depicts four prosthetically mended and medal-laden veterans marching home against the backdrop of a German main street, whose buildings interact dynamically with the physical bodies and perhaps even psyches of the veterans. Bartana redraws the figures from a variety of perspectives and framings beyond those offered in the painting. She also animates and proliferates them and alters the space through which they move, thus endowing Dix's World War I veterans with an expanded set of possibilities in the present.

Here, I consider Bartana's Dada-inspired animation through a relational feminist framework that is both implied by Bartana's oeuvre and explicitly developed by intersectional feminist scholars working in the overlapping fields of diaspora studies and memory/postmemory studies. This paradigm involves considering the charged concept of "the right to return" in relation to the intersecting histories of colonialism, war, and diasporas, as well as to the rites, beliefs, feelings, individual and collective identities, and survival strategies to which these histories of violence give rise. Such an approach requires attention to what Marianne Hirsch and Nancy K. Miller describe as our "mutual imbrication," to a twenty-first century intensification of "the desire for return to origins," which calls for a parallel intensification of attention to the concept, and also, Saidiya Hartman insists, to "the incommensurability between histories."<sup>7</sup> Much of Bartana's early twenty-first-century work engages both the imbrication and the incommensurability of European Jewish and Palestinian as well as other more contemporary histories of annihilation, forced displacement, diaspora, and nationalism through the language of returns. Reflecting on past experiences, Hirsch and Miller acknowledge in 2011 that, "as academic feminist critics in the United States, we lived through and participated in critical and sometimes bitter conversations about the conflicting claims of identity animating the phenomenon of return."<sup>8</sup> These experiences generate the question

that drives their book: “How, in particular, does a feminist subject negotiate the intensities and contradictory impulses of diasporic return?”<sup>9</sup> Among other things, Hirsch and Miller model a feminism that remains “critical of a politics of identity and nation” while trying to foster collective and multiperspectival dialogue about the longings for and lures of return, even when such dialogue is difficult to sustain.

Writing in the context of the Palestinian-led Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) campaign, Nasser Abourahme points out that the intense charge around the question of displaced Palestinian refugees’ right of return derives in part from the way that “return is always read as a euphemism for (vaguely defined) destruction” and is misperceived as a desire necessarily requiring the “continuous dispossession and displacement of others.”<sup>10</sup> Also speaking within the BDS context, Kareem Estefan suggests to Eyal Weizman that “return” has to be imagined “as transformative,” as something that involves, “not a return to the past, but to a new collectivity.” To this, Weizman responds, “A return is not an inversion of time. It is a creation of a new situation and a new mode of living together as equals.”<sup>11</sup> These conversations and the commitments that ground them provide important contexts and interpretive paradigms for my writing about Bartana’s engagement of acts of return.

Bringing attention to Bartana’s minor animated loop within the context of feminist- and boycott-rooted discussions of rights of return on the one hand and of the live-action films and performances that Bartana was producing around the same time on the other offers a number of critical affordances. It brings into focus a history of avant-garde artists who, after World War I, grappled with the enduring effects of war by engaging the movements and transformations of veterans’ bodies through intermedial strategies including printmaking, puppetry, conveyor belts, projection, cartoon animation, documentary film, and performance. By doing so, Bartana’s (inter)(in)animating loop creates a temporal and historical *mise-en-abyme* that allows the effects of multiple wars, as well as what Hartman, speaking in the different context of the slave trade, calls “the long *durée*” of “nonevent[s],” to be simultaneously considered.<sup>12</sup> This chapter expands existing scholarship on anti-imperialist, antimilitarist feminist art that engages Dada by focusing on the specifically animated legacy of Dadaism and by considering this minor work of Bartana beyond its immediate installation context. In doing so, I highlight the feminist theoretical utility of attending to the animated immortality Bartana activates, creating a space for thinking critically about the often-incompatible politics, mythologies, chronologies, geographies, and intermedialities embedded in nineteenth-, twentieth-, and twenty-first-century narratives of return.<sup>13</sup>

The almost life-size figures in the original five-by-eight-foot painting may also have had some collage additions that would have materially reinforced the hybrid and fabricated nature of the bodies Dix depicts. Given the composite nature of his



veteran bodies, it is not surprising that Dix is supposed to have subtitled this work “These Four Don’t Add Up to a Whole Man.”<sup>14</sup> Bartana runs with the purported subtitle’s mathematical framing of the human, but through a logic of multiplication rather than addition, until the four distinctive men disappear into an army of digitally proliferating, ever-more-tiny clones. While Dix’s painting presents only a lateral view of the veterans, at least outside of its original exhibition context, Bartana switches between grotesque, animated visual close-ups of individual veteran body parts, including grimacing faces and blinking eyes, and ever more distant aerial views of the proliferating collective body of damaged men. Sonic closeups and pull-backs reinforce these visual shifts in perspective and proximity. As the aerial perspective transforms the wounded bodies into mere dots or pixels, the bodies gradually spell out the work’s slogan, “*Entartete Kunst Lebt (Degenerate Art Lives)*.”

Daniel Meir’s soundtrack for *Entartete Kunst Lebt* functions as a syncopated sonification of the original artwork’s potential motion, with the implied rhythm and materiality of the bodies’ movements brought into the three-dimensional space and lived time of the viewer through sound. Hadar Landsberg’s digital animation of the cutout puppet veterans’ movements is synchronized to sounds conjuring the creak of metallic joints, the thump of wooden limbs, the squeak of metal wheels, the clacking of artificially hinged jawbones and the gasping puffs of smoke that go up like prayers. As the bodies proliferate, this layered sound devolves into an industrial cacophony, reflecting the more distant noise of the undying mass of bodies that the war machine has made.<sup>15</sup>

The soundtrack competes with, or is supplemented by, the rattling sound of the 16mm projector that is part of the installation, the digital animation having been transferred onto film. As gallery viewers share space with the three-legged metal projector stand, its animated “upper body” sonically evokes the rhythms of machine-gun fire. This celluloid remediation of digital animation conflates the mechanical sound of war with the apparatus, as if the remediated bodies of these metallicized veterans, and indeed war itself, were invading the lived present of the gallery. Remediation and animation blur here as they both participate in realizing the potential motion implied in the painting by the veterans’ prosthetic mobility aids. This potential is further reinforced by the installation’s historical wink to Dziga Vertov, who juxtaposes dancing limbs, an animated tripod, overhead warplanes, and film spectators in *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929). The work transforms gallery visitors into what Donald Crafton describes “as coanimators, as fellow performers of the films,” locating art and its viewers within, and not outside of, the space of war.<sup>16</sup>

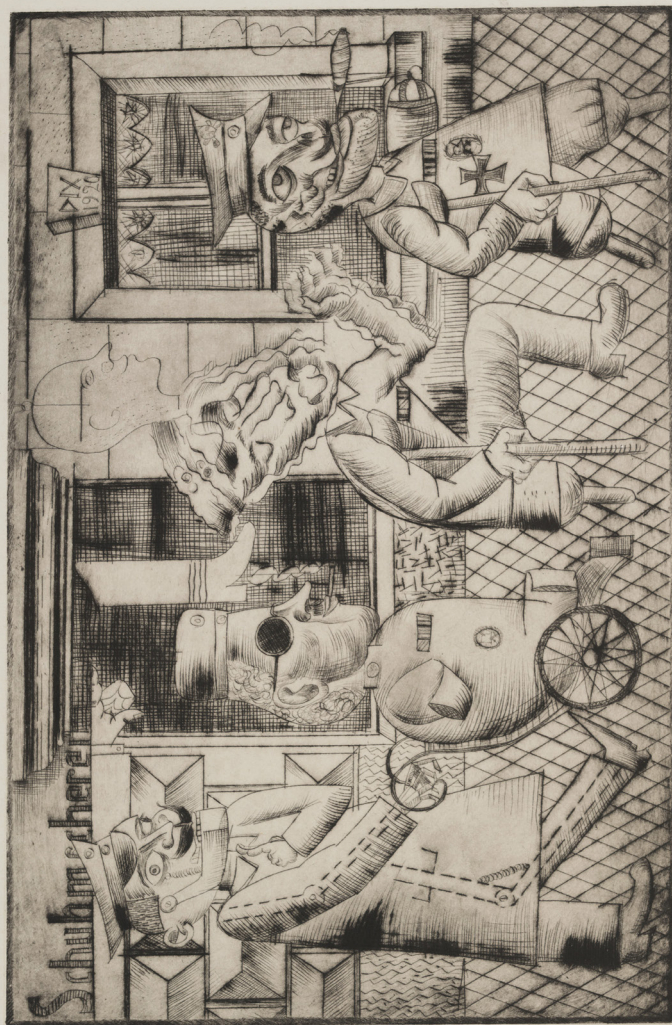
Bartana’s transfer of digital animation to celluloid also resists linear, teleological, or progressive media chronologies that might line up painting, printmaking, photography, celluloid film, and digital animation one behind the other, like soldiers. Instead, these media exist in a flexible relation to each other, recalling Thomas Elsaesser’s description of a media archaeological approach to digitization

and film history. This allows historians to displace themselves “in relation to a number of habitual ways of thinking,” disrupting “chronological uni-linear accounts,” and permitting “a look at multi-media across a number of other, more abstract or general parameters, such as: fixed and/or mobile perceiver; image and/or text; distance and/or proximity; passive reception and/or interactive participation; two-dimensional ‘flat’ image and/or three-dimensional virtual environment; looking through a ‘window on the world’ and/or ‘immersed in a horizonless space.’”<sup>17</sup>

#### (INTER)(IN)ANIMATION, REMEDIATION, AND THE POLITICS OF RETURN

Bartana’s twenty-first-century animated, self-reproducing puppet veterans do more than set Dix’s destroyed painting in motion, although this gesture is important for its refusal of the annihilating logic of national socialism and its assertion of the centrifugal, unforeseeable, and proliferating possibilities of even-destroyed anti-fascist, antiwar art in the present and future. But the loop simultaneously (inter) (in)animates several other moments in the history of early twentieth-century art and film. These include Dix’s 1920 drypoint reproductions of his own painting (figure 13); Abel Gance’s aerial shot of World War I soldiers spelling out the title of his pacifist film *J'accuse* (1919 and 1937); and Erwin Piscator’s collaborative, multimedia Berlin stage adaptation in 1928 of Jaroslav Hašek’s unfinished novel, *The Adventures of the Good Soldier Schwejk*. Bartana does not, to my knowledge, ever directly reference Piscator’s unwieldy production, but I argue that this work, contemporaneous with Dix’s antiwar work and produced by artists with whom Dix was in active dialogue, “pre-enacts” Bartana’s (inter)(in)animating exploration of the entanglement of colonialism, war, homes, and returns. *Entartete Kunst Lebt* solicits an unruly temporal framework that academic disciplines are ill equipped to describe as it unleashes sprawling and intersecting histories of violence that challenge existing war periodization models. Even the present tense of the loop’s title—“Degenerate Art Lives!”—pushes against the idea of finite wars. If this risks the kind of “back-shadowing” interpretation of World War I through the lens of World War II that Anton Kaes suggests results in a diminished understanding of history, Bartana’s use of the material loop resists a linear, unidirectional backward gaze and instead invites more multidirectional approaches to the temporal life of war.<sup>18</sup>

This animated short is further inflected by its proximity to two other major, intertwined, and temporally convoluted projects by Bartana that received much more critical attention than *Entartete Kunst Lebt*. These two projects conflate propaganda aesthetics drawn from the film histories of both Zionism and Nazism. The first involved a series of live performances / public discussions occurring under the banner of the Jewish Renaissance Movement in Poland (JRMiP), a speculative movement Bartana founded in 2007. These events included “We Will Be Strong in Our Weakness: A Presentation of the Jewish Renaissance Movement in Poland,” a “collective process” (in which I participated) that, along with *Entartete Kunst Lebt*,



*Volkmann 4/15*

*Kriegskrüppel*

*20/1*

FIGURE 13. Otto Dix, *Kriegskrüppel* (War Cripples), 1920.

appeared in the 2011 Berlin Film Festival's Forum Expanded; and "And Europe Will Be Stunned: First International Congress of the Jewish Renaissance Movement in Poland (JRMiP)" (May 11–13, 2012), which took place at the Seventh Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art and was documented in the film *JRMiP Congress* (2012).<sup>19</sup> Simultaneously, Bartana produced a video trilogy entitled *And Europe Will Be Stunned* (2007–11), which included *Mary Koszmary (Nightmares)* (2007), *Mur i wieża (Wall and Tower)* (2009), and *Zamach* (2011).<sup>20</sup>

These works together elaborate the fiction of a speculative movement that calls on 3.3 million Jews to return home to Poland, bringing critical attention to the utopian mythologies of Zionism, to the taboo history of Europe's broad implicatedness in the Holocaust and the Israel-Palestine conflict, and to the way narratives of postwar return pressure collective understandings and contestations of "home."<sup>21</sup> While a full discussion of both the JRMiP performances and the trilogy is beyond the scope of this book, these nonanimated projects provide an illuminating historiographic and political context through which to understand Bartana's turn to the animated loop. Arielle Azoulay and Adi Ophir argue that the trilogy represents a mode of return that holds at bay the potential violence embedded in return narratives through the prevalence of "mixing" and hybridity. While in *Entartete Kunst Lebte* the repeating and structurally determined temporality of the loop is hybridized through the intermediality and mixing that digital animation enables, in the trilogy "mixing" takes narrative form, activating two distinct iterations of hybrid historicity.<sup>22</sup> Azoulay and Ophir understand this work as responding to Palestinian refugees the world over, to the distinct but related "dead ends" that both Poland and Israel have reached through combining ethnic cleansing and political sovereignty, and as exposing "the extent to which we have become reconciled to the lack of hope and solution to the cycle of governmental catastrophes in which we, Israelis, are caught as direct victims, collaborators or perpetrators."<sup>23</sup> For them, the trilogy pre-enacts alternative models of return founded on Europe's taking full responsibility for its anti-Semitic, nationalist, and colonial projects and for its neglect of the violence that followed in these projects' wake, resulting in "new models of citizenry and citizenship."<sup>24</sup> This chapter considers the animated loop of *Degenerate Art Lives* and the mode of thinking it (inter)(in)animates against the backdrop of these models.

#### INTER(IN)ANIMATING PAINTING AND DRYPOINT

Dix's painting was acquired in December 1920 by the Stadtmuseum in Dresden, Dix's birthplace and a city to which I return in chapter 7.<sup>25</sup> After having been put into storage in 1924, it traveled with the Nazis' *Images of Decadence in Art* show between 1933 and 1936, and then again with the *Degenerate Art* show between 1937 and 1938, where it was reproduced in the catalogue under the section entitled "Painted Acts of Sabotage against the Military."<sup>26</sup> According to Adrian Sudhalter, the painting is presumed to have been burned in a public bonfire in Berlin in 1942, so

our knowledge of what it looks like depends on the Stadtmuseum's photo-card, on the photograph of its exhibition at the first Dada Fair, on the *Degenerate Art* exhibition catalogue, and also, to some extent, on the drypoints that Dix made from the painting.

Dix's marching veterans made their exhibition debut in the summer of 1920 within the radical political context of the First Dada Fair in Berlin, which featured many of the artists who would later collaborate with Piscator's production of *The Good Soldier Schwejk*. A photograph of the exhibition shows that the painting always exceeded itself. The head of the first of Dix's veterans was covered by George Grosz's painting-collage *Ein Opfer der Gesellschaft* (*A Victim of Society*), later titled *Remember Uncle August, the Unhappy Inventor* (1919), which, as Brigid Doherty has argued, performs on the face of the Weimar president Friedrich Ebert "the reconstructive plastic surgery practiced on wounded World War I soldiers."<sup>27</sup> This was only the first of many adaptations of this never-static image.

The drypoints reproduce, reverse, horizontally orient, and shrink the scale of the painted soldiers, illustrating that from the outset Dix's veterans—and perhaps militarism more generally—inspired remediation, proliferation, miniaturization, and a shift in point of view, even in the artist himself.<sup>28</sup> Sudhalter explains that Dix initially planned to sell the drypoints at the Dada Fair. Though this did not happen, this plan invites a stereoscopic, multiplying, transmedial, and animated mode of looking—prints are portable—and extends the spatial reach and singularity of the original painting.<sup>29</sup> Dix's remediation pre-enacts, and perhaps even catalyzes, Bartana's later remediation, multiplication, and animation of the painting using ever-increasing, ever more tiny veterans seen from varying points of view.

The earlier images are internally animated in other ways too: by the involuntary quaking of Dix's traumatized second veteran, depicted in the drypoint by a series of parallel wavy lines, and in the painting by overlapping iterations of the veteran's war-damaged face, a traumatic analogue to modernist depictions of dynamic motion in painting.<sup>30</sup> Bartana's animation activates and unleashes Dix's implied movements in the service of other histories and movements. This works in part through a redrawing that is also a displacement, for in the loop there is no street. These digitally animated "returning" veterans appear against a plain gray background. Gone are many of the features that grounded their broken bodies in a particular time and place: the German store signage; Dix's name carved above a doorway alongside the date, 1920. The digital veterans return to a virtual terra nullius, suggesting both the violence of settler colonial mythologies and the possibility, as in the live-action film trilogy, that histories of violence might be redirected in the service of alternative trajectories. If the formal structure of the loop insists on the inescapability of the past, both Dix's and Bartana's transmediations suggest the multiplicity of ways in which the past might enter the present and future.

Bartana's erasure of place and time marks a shift into a space that is not quite, but close to, allegorical, an unfixed space allowing for differently imagined histori-



cal relationships and opening up a variety of possible political trajectories. This removes—or perhaps translates into actual movement—the implied dynamism and dimensionality created within both the painting and the drypoints through visual interactions between the veteran bodies and the built space of the street that visualize how the returning veteran's body shapes the space of home to which it returns in a dynamic process. Wavy vertical lines representing the exhaled smoke of the first and third veterans make visible the life force of the men, marking a portal between bodily interiors and the street. The street seems to record or take up these tremoring gasps in the white wavy lines of a storefront's curtains. The business signs hanging from shops—a phrenological head, a boot, and a pointing arm—explicitly, almost mockingly, mirror the veterans' lost and damaged parts, as if magically relocating them in the space of commerce and suggesting a partnership between war's damage and commodity culture. Formal symmetries pull the eye among the crosses of cobblestones, a veteran's Iron Cross, the skull and crossbones on the same veteran's cap, and the "X" of Dix's name. These Xs remind viewers of the cross's resonance with death and resurrection and recall the comic artist's long tradition of using Xs to indicate the eyes of the cartoon dead. In the drypoint only, bullet holes scar the buildings' facades, including the sign in the shape of a head. These holes echo the hair follicles and pockmarks of the first veteran's disfigured face, which seems to have grown grassy trenches in its cheeks, as if the veterans have absorbed the landscape of battle and are now infected their surroundings with it, remediating and relocating the battlefield onto home ground as if bodies were both cameras and projectors.<sup>31</sup>

The painting and drypoint also imply animation through their X-ray-like attention to the mechanisms that enable veteran movement in spite of the ten limbs that the four men are missing. These include peg legs affixed to amputated stumps, crutches, a wheelchair, artificially implanted arm and leg bones connected by movable joints, and a claw-like mechanical hand that grips the wheelchair of the man in front. The last veteran also has a spring mechanism attached to his artificial jaw, and Dix's placement of this curly line beneath the man's eye suggests the path of a mechanized tear. It's as if feelings, like limbs, have been prosthetically implanted, and mechanical movement is both physical and emotional.

#### (INTER)(IN)ANIMATING TIME AND SPACE: WORLD WAR I GEOGRAPHY AND PERIODIZATION

Priya Jaikumar has argued that modernist images of broken bodies reference far more than the damage done to the bodies of European soldiers in World War I or the foreseeable violence that would accompany the rise of fascism that was already under way (Hitler joined the *Deutsche Arbeiterpartei* (German Workers' Party) in 1919 and became its leader in 1920). She explains,

Alongside the rise of fascism and the two world wars, decolonization provoked European modernism's agitation around existing presumptions of wholeness, wherein progress, teleological history, state rationality, and the representation of reality were interrogated as fictions or illusions. The impossibility of experiencing moral horror at the genocide of the European Jewry without meditating on Europe's colonial rampage rang out in the words of the black-diaspora intellectual and surrealist Aimé Césaire, who saw the world wars as an exposure of the culpable "Christian bourgeois of the twentieth century" harboring a "Hitler inside."<sup>32</sup>

Rethinking World War I and its aftermath within its colonial and imperial contexts requires moving beyond monolithic periodizations of war in general and of the World Wars in particular. Shifting the ending of World War I from 1918 to 1923, Jay Winter offers one possible reframing as he resists the idea of French and British winners, noting, "For Britain, and for France, success in the Great War was a Pyrrhic victory. The Great War stripped Britain of the global economic power that had underpinned her pre-war global political power."<sup>33</sup> And 1920, the year of and in Dix's painting, marks the Treaty of Sèvres, that, Winter argues, "grew out of dreams of imperial mastery" rooted in European delusions about racial and cultural superiority that were rapidly being exposed as such.<sup>34</sup> The reorganization of power that Winter describes within this extended World War I includes the British government's "Balfour Declaration" of November 2, 1917, which communicates that government's support for "the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people," and the League of Nations' granting mandate over Palestine to the United Kingdom in 1922. Both of these dates are central to the history and possible futures of Zionism that Bartana's speculative pre-enactments engage. But Winter's is only one alternative periodization offered by historians writing about, through, and against the World War paradigms. Rashid Khalidi, for example, provides a historiographic framework of twentieth- and twenty-first-century war that centers Palestinian perspectives in a way that differently disrupts both standard periodizations of the World Wars *and* Winter's revisionist alternative. Khalidi sees 1923 not as a conclusion but rather as a middle point within a different system of periodization for twentieth-century war. He describes instead "the First Declaration of War" on Palestine, dated 1917–39, whose unfurling exists in a continuum from both the violence and the "peace" of World War I.<sup>35</sup>

In *Entartete Kunst Lebt*, an aerial point of view, a "nowhere" and blank geography, and the film strip's looping repetitions convey a time and space inhabited by Bartana's animated, endlessly returning European veterans that evokes some the structural features of western European colonial projects and twentieth-century wars. Writing of the air wars conducted in the aftermath of World War I up until the present, particularly in relation to the Middle East, Africa, and parts of South and East Asia, Caren Kaplan describes "a century or more of carnage and destruction," noting that "the trauma of violence moves around, making its own chaotic time and space, generating its own unruly intensities, so that the force of these histories is always 'now here' even as some events may have moved into

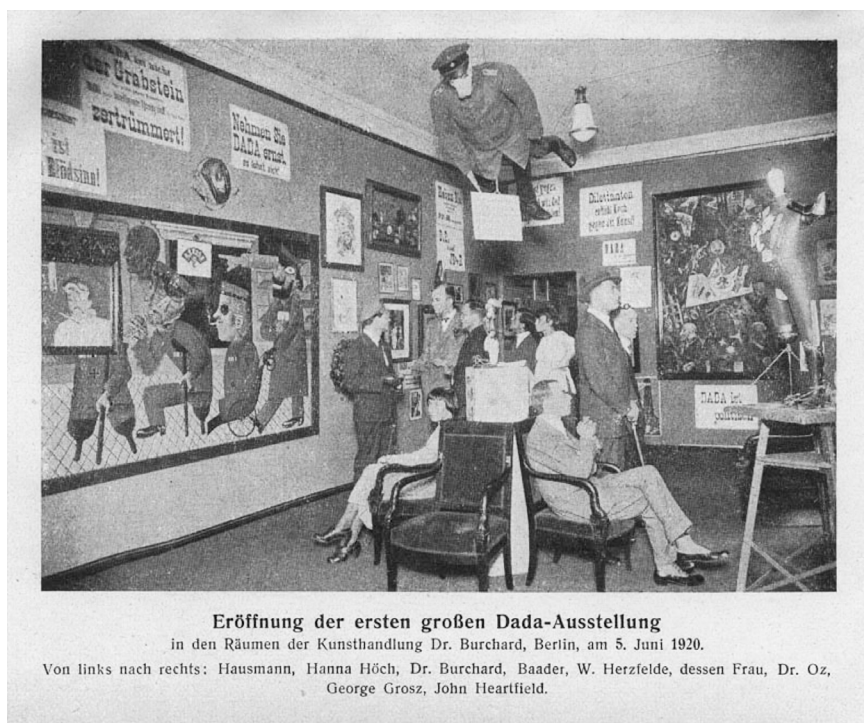


FIGURE 14. Grand opening of the first Dada exhibition, Berlin, June 5, 1920. The central figure hanging from the ceiling was an effigy of a German officer with a pig's head. *From left to right:* Raoul Hausmann, Hannah Höch (sitting), Otto Burchard, Johannes Baader, Wieland Herzfelde, Margarete Herzfelde, Dr. Oz (Otto Schmalhausen), George Grosz, and John Heartfield.

the less tangible but still palpable zone of 'no where.'<sup>36</sup> In *Entartete Kunst Lebte*, Bartana uses animation's spatio-temporal illogical capacities to write European participants in the World Wars into the chaotic times and spaces symptomatic of the perpetual wars often occluded by established journalistic and historiographic methodologies, multiplying the perspectives from which any individual war might be regarded.

The 1920 exhibition photograph of the first Dada Fair shows that Dix's veterans had been imagined "from above" long before Bartana's (inter)(in)animation of the work (figure 14). There they marched under the watchful gaze of one of the exhibition's "grotesque puppets," John Heartfield and Rudolf Schlichter's pig-soldier or "Prussian Archangel" (1920), which Piscator later references in his production notes for *Schweijk*. Suspended from the ceiling of the gallery and cobbled together like the veterans themselves, the mannequin sports a papier-mâché pig's head and wears a blasphemous poster that cites a Christmas carol, "I come from Heaven, from Heaven on high." This underscores the pig-soldier-angel's aerial point of view, marking it as at once militaristic, animal, human, and divine.





VIDEO 4. Title spelled out using veteran bodies, recalling *J'accuse* (Abel Gance, 1919). Yael Bartana, *Entartete Kunst Lebt* (*Degenerate Art Lives*), 2010.

To watch this video, scan the QR code with your mobile device or visit DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1525/luminos.228.4>



Another sign explains, “In order to understand this work of art completely, one should drill daily for twelve hours with a heavily packed knapsack in full marching order in the Tempelhof Field.”<sup>37</sup> This invites viewers to reflect on war art not at a distance but from within the military experience in the manner of the drill. Here too the context of the 1920 Berlin Dada Fair resonates with Bartana’s use of pre-enactment, remediation, animation, and ritual performance to dispel the barriers separating art from militarism, histories of genocide and displacement, and mass political movements.

#### (INTER)(IN)ANIMATING SOLDIERS AND VETERANS I: ABEL GANCE

The first Dada Fair prefigures Bartana’s adoption of an aerial point of view on Dix’s veterans, her extension of the painting into three-dimensional space, and her proximate use of live performance. But Bartana’s adoption of the aerial point of view, especially in combination with militarized bodies that mobilize themselves into letters, simultaneously puts *Entartete Kunst Lebt* into dialogue with Abel Gance’s film *J'accuse*, the first version of which appeared in 1919 (video 4). Gance

famously presents the film's title using a sequence shot from above involving a massive number of French soldiers on leave from Verdun, 80 percent of whom were killed before the film's release. Like living puppets in the hands of the filmmaker, the soldiers form organically animated letters to spell out the trembling phrase "J-A-C-C-U-S-E."<sup>38</sup> The film's title accrues political credit by citing Émile Zola's impassioned 1898 accusatory letter to the president of the Republic, "J'accuse . . . !," opposing militarism and anti-Semitism and decrying the wrongful conviction and imprisonment of Captain Alfred Dreyfus, who was of Jewish descent, although Gance's film lacks Zola's clarity and commitment.<sup>39</sup> In this sense *J'accuse* is politically quite distinct from both Dix's and the Berlin Dada group's scathing critique of nationalism.<sup>40</sup> Gance's choreographed formations even suggest parallels between the filmmaker's and the military leader's exploitation of soldiers. Bartana's choice to (inter)(in)animate two such divergent responses to war provokes reflection on the different ways artists use bodies touched by war in antiwar art.<sup>41</sup>

Drawing on Winter, John Horne identifies Gance's 1919 version of the film, which premiered "between the Armistice and the peace treaty," as "a film made inside the war," with the narrative emphasizing not opposition to war, nationalism, or militarism but rather "the fidelity of the home front."<sup>42</sup> Reviews register the film's unclear political message. In April 1920, one British reviewer concluded, "'J'accuse,' *whatever its object*, will rank high among the very finest pictures ever made" (emphasis added).<sup>43</sup> A subsequent *New York Times* review, published October 10, 1921, also suggests an increased depoliticization in later versions of the film: "The scenes and subtitles of 'J'Accuse' which made it a sweeping accusation of war and everyone everywhere who promoted it or profited by it have been deleted. . . . 'I Accuse' does not accuse anything or anybody in its final scenes."<sup>44</sup>

Through animation, Bartana fuses the antinationalist, antimilitarist, and transmedial work of Dix and the Berlin Dada artists with Gance's unstable, nationalist, and monumental work and does so, moreover, in proximity to the video and performance works of the JRMiP. This juxtaposition implies a willingness to structure collective explorations of potential political futures, including the future of political art, in unwieldy ways that engage rather than repress both the artist's and viewers' implicatedness and investments in militarism, settler colonialism, and war, and embrace the significant role that the possibility of failure plays in antiwar art, with its unknown timelines and trajectories.

#### (INTER)(IN)ANIMATING SOLDIERS AND VETERANS II: ERWIN PISCATOR

German theater director Erwin Piscator's collaborative, overambitious stage adaptation of *The Adventures of the Good Soldier Schwejk*, which tells the tale of a hapless World War I soldier named Schwejk, anticipates Bartana's speculative and multimodal engagement of war's psychic, spatial, and temporal dimensions in its combination of humor, animation, live-action film, embodied performance,

sound, and technological experimentation.<sup>45</sup> The stage production ran from January 23, 1928, to April 12, 1928, on the Piscator stage in Nollendorfplatz, Berlin, and featured a forty-five-minute film that included animated or “trick films” by George Grosz, whom Dix knew from student days in Dresden prior to 1914.<sup>46</sup> Because the animated film no longer survives, my discussion of the play’s projected animation necessarily draws on descriptions of it, and on Grosz’s surviving portfolio of prints, entitled *Hintergrund* (*Background*), published by Malik-Verlag in conjunction with the performance.<sup>47</sup>

From the moment Piscator took his creative team on a planning trip to Neubabelsberg, the project involved the training of the human body-as-machine, as if to close the gap between artists and soldiers, and to improvise with the promise—often broken—of technologically enabled movement. Fritz Sommer led daily fitness classes. Some artists embraced this physical movement while others satirized it. Piscator, for example, notes that Grosz “liked to take part in these exercises and took particular delight in jogging through the woods for a quarter of an hour in his neat blue tracksuit,” while Brecht tinkered with his first car, which Piscator describes as “an object of great wonderment” in spite of the number of times the “the ignition failed and we had to push him to a slope.”<sup>48</sup> The perennial failure of mobilizing humans and machines infuses the play’s resistance to war, nationalism, and heroism. Piscator rejected the first heroic adaptation by Max Brod and Hans Raimann, who held the rights. He subsequently worked with Felix Gasbarra, Bertolt Brecht, and Léo Lania on translating for the stage the novel’s attempt to realize never-ending movement, which gradually “assumed the concrete form of a conveyor belt.”<sup>49</sup> Piscator hoped this technology would enable a sense of constant and automated flux. In practice, it more closely resembled its military cousin, the tank, which historians describe as “a lumbering and unreliable weapon, in need of constant attention and coaxing by mechanical attendants to keep it in action.”<sup>50</sup> Though Gasbarra’s January 1928 review celebrates the belt as the “skillful touch” that captures “the epic movement of the novel,” Piscator tells a different story that reveals the proximity between war, cartoon animation, and slapstick: “When we heard the belts in action for the first time . . . [they] rattled and snorted and pounded so that the whole house quaked. Even at the top of your voice you could hardly make yourself heard. . . . Every application of the machinery somehow made you want to laugh.”<sup>51</sup> Piscator’s conveyor belt carried various types of bodies across the stage: “semipuppets, puppetlike types, semihumans.” “Some of the puppets,” Piscator notes, “were really to be lifeless dolls in horribly exaggerated poses and masks (like the grotesque puppets made by Grosz, Heartfield and Schlichter during the Dada period).”<sup>52</sup> Piscator’s parade of real, injured veteran bodies amid live action and animated projections seems to bring to life not just Dix’s *Kriegskrüppel* (*War Cripples*) but its Dada exhibition context too.

The Piscator collective struggled to bring the lumbering *Schwejk* to a halt. Hašek died before the novel was complete, and the work’s unfinished status, combined with

the stage production's emphasis on war as a "ceaseless, uninterrupted stream," made closure counterintuitive.<sup>53</sup> This too prefigures Bartana's 16mm loop, an eternal animated veteran parade. One ending, attempted in a private club, featured a parade before God that included amputees, life-size dolls, and bloodied children, as well as gruesome props such as trailing entrails and "arms and legs hanging out of rucksacks, smeared with mud and blood."<sup>54</sup> It was rejected because, as Piscator puts it, "the horror . . . was more than the play could carry at the end."<sup>55</sup> Describing how technological mobilization of the body interacted with military music, animation, and the shifts in scale made possible by projection, Piscator continues, "The bloody, mutilated band of soldiers marched across the stage on the conveyor belt to the strains of the Radetzky March, led by a man who had had both legs shot away. . . . God was the antagonist in this scene, and Grosz had drawn him as a horrifying grotesque, which shrank visibly in size during the conversation with Schwejk."<sup>56</sup>

The combination of still images and jerky motion in the simple drawn-animation projections resonates with the stiff human cutouts interspersed among wounded living veterans. These veterans and cutouts are passively moved across the stage by the automatic, faltering motion of the belt, recalling the scene in *Modern Times* (Charles Chaplin, 1936) where Chaplin, playing a factory worker, is increasingly mechanized by his proximity to a conveyor belt. This tension between stillness and movement, organic and mechanical, activated by Piscator in the space between stage and screen, body and drawing, resonates strongly with the paradoxically "static" animation or "inanimation" that Spyros Papapetros finds in the uncanny architectural spaces of Weimar cinema. For Papapetros, such spaces reflect "the uproar in the external world" in which "subjects are reduced in a mechanical existence" while "external objects become even more vividly tumultuous."<sup>57</sup>

Lutz Becker has established that the forty-five-minute film used in the production was projected at 16 fps and was edited by J.A. Hübler-Kahla. He also combined Grosz's satirical animated drawings with animated maps, text, and "naturalistic" or documentary sequences that Hübler-Kahla had shot in Prague. Animation was intercut with many other forms of image, as if to stress the irreality and incoherence of the war-scape. Piscator hoped these sequences would "establish the atmosphere of specific scenes, e.g. the streets of Prague, the railway journey, etc.," but this effort largely failed because of poor-quality footage and the difficulty of synchronizing it with the movement of the belt.<sup>58</sup> Piscator wanted the footage to give viewers a realistic sense of the view from a forward-moving train, but Hübler-Kahla had to excerpt short adequate clips shot from a moving car and loop them. Of necessity, editing transformed the recording of linear time and motion into the projection of circular time and motion, establishing an affinity between the supposedly realist street images and the looping structure of the conveyor belt that seems to migrate into Bartana's twenty-first-century work.<sup>59</sup>

From 1917 on, after Grosz had been discharged from the military as "permanently unfit for service," he went in search of alternative drawing styles that would

better suit the times, finding inspiration in children's drawings and the graffiti in public urinals.<sup>60</sup> His artistic development had always been shaped by comic and cartoon forms, including those of Wilhelm Busch and Lyonel Feininger, who worked as illustrator for *Ulk*, the *Berliner Tageblatt*'s comic supplement, to which Grosz sold his first cartoon in 1910.<sup>61</sup> Grosz also worked alongside John Heartfield at the Military Education Film Service (later Ufa, the *Universum-Film Aktiengesellschaft*) making animated propaganda films after being discharged. Andrés Mario Zervigón has documented the ideological reasons why Heartfield and his brother Wieland Herzfelde minimized discussion of their animated work in favor of their photomontage and publishing projects, noting: "By agreeing to make propaganda films for Germany's Foreign Office during the war, they and Grosz would seem to have favorably 'enlightened' audiences about a conflict they later claimed to have rabidly opposed."<sup>62</sup> In animation and puppetry, however, Heartfield, in dialogue with Grosz's drawing, saw possibilities for "a radical new film technique of ordering and spatial planning," "a new form of visual thinking" within the war context beyond what photography, live-action film, and montage made possible, something Zervigón describes as "a release from the live action of human actors."<sup>63</sup> Many of the artists and filmmakers in *Undead* pick up the (inter)(in)animating possibilities described here.

By 1915, long before Annabelle Honess Roe, Donna Kornhaber, Susan Sontag, Barbie Zelizer, and others highlighted the limits of evidentiary war photographs and films, World War I audiences were already, Zervigón demonstrates, dissatisfied with documentary war footage that "looked nothing like the images movie audiences expected."<sup>64</sup> Zervigón continues, "Heartfield's sensorial surplus of animation and puppet play would return an authentic sense of the violent war by sidestepping live-action cinema altogether, avoiding the photographic basis of film that had now been discredited through its flaccidity before war."<sup>65</sup>

In 1917, Benjamin reflects on the orientation of pictures and argues for a fundamental distinction between painting and drawing. While a painting is usually viewed vertically, he suggests that with drawings, verticality "usually contravenes their inner meaning."<sup>66</sup> Though Benjamin makes this claim specifically in relation to children's drawings, he adds, "It is the same with Otto [*sic*] Groß's drawings."<sup>67</sup> Regarding this difference as two entirely distinct ways in which the artist approaches the world, Benjamin suggests: "We might say that there are two sections through the substance of the world: the longitudinal section of painting and the transverse section of certain graphic works. The longitudinal section seems representational—it somehow contains things; the transverse section seems symbolic—it contains signs."<sup>68</sup> In seeking examples of graphic verticality, Benjamin's mind turns toward the architectural, the monumental, and the memorial. As if anticipating Reid Kelley's frottaged mosaic poems discussed in the previous chapter, Benjamin muses, "And is there such a thing as an originally vertical position for writing—say, for engraving in stone?"<sup>69</sup>

For Grosz, Piscator's use of projected animated drawings on stage represented nothing less than a brand-new form of vertically oriented drawing. In 1928 he described it as

more tempting for graphic artists of today than all that stuffy aesthetic business or the hawking around of drawings in bibliophile editions for educated nobs. Here's a chance for our often-quoted latter-day Daumiers to paint their gloomy prophecies on the walls. . . . Naturally a new area requires new techniques, a new clear and concise language of graphic style. . . . The line must be cinematographic—clear, simple, but not too thin, because of over-exposure; furthermore it must be hard, something like the drawings and woodcuts in Gothic block books, or the massive stone carvings on the pyramids.<sup>70</sup>

Bartana's five-minute intermedial loop invites reflection on the overlap and differences between Grosz and Gance, both artists who mobilized the war wounded and even the war dead in the service of writing on the wall. Grosz imagines animated projection's vertical drawing in terms of an amplified prophecy of catastrophe. Meanwhile, Gance, who venerated Napoleon while claiming pacifism, theorizes the disruptive possibilities of this "vertiginous vision of the fourth dimension of existence," not as an intervention into or a correction of Europe's catastrophic and militaristic path, but rather triumphantly and in racialized terms as a new settler colonial war in which the screen is a battlefield: "Already some Christopher Columbases of the light are emerging . . . and the good fight of blacks and whites is about to begin on all the screens of the world."<sup>71</sup>

From the *Hintergrund* portfolio, as well as from photographs of the performance of *Schweijk*, we grasp some sense of the play's use of animation. Grosz's images contain traces of a world in which war, closely linked to law and intimately bound to language, throws any natural order dividing the animate and inanimate, the organic and graphic, into chaos. Fountain pens become soldiers; a commanding officer appears as an animated, coin-operated, human-gramophone-typewriting machine; and stick figures hang on the tree of life, made up of printed section signs, echoing Dziga Vertov's 1924 Goskino animated ad *Soviet Toys*, which ends by hanging the bourgeoisie from a human-tree formation (figure 15).<sup>72</sup> The section sign, a symbol of legal order, strangles bodies, morphs into a question mark over piles of skeletal remains, and hovers exultantly under a crown and over a corpse. In other portfolio images, technology, rather than printed legalese, deforms the human and threatens life through violent movements across borders separating outside and inside: military medics inject and force tubes into skeletal patients they promise to reanimate for war; a preacher shoots bullets, guns, cannons, and swords out of his mouth; the crucified Christ wears a gas mask, while poison gas emerges from within the animated skeleton of a human who seems to have organically incorporated a gas-dispensing machine.<sup>73</sup>

Grosz's animated images trace violent pathways between the body's inside and outside, often signaling the reanimation of subjects who have been marked, in the





FIGURE 15. George Grosz, *Tree of Life*. In George Grosz, *Hintergrund: 17 Zeichnungen zur Aufführung des "Schwejk" in der Piscator-Bühne* (Berlin: Malik-Verlag, 1928).

words of Jasbir K. Puar, as “preordained for injury and maiming” by a capitalist and imperialist “war machine.”<sup>74</sup> These pathways imply a sense of depth and movement that stands in tension with the two-dimensionality of the drawn image. This reinforces the war-inflicted crisis of dimensionality and spatial orientation being presented on stage through the alternation of animated drawings with documentary footage of profilmic space, and the automated on-stage movement of a wide variety of flat and fleshy bodies, including those in which organic and nonorganic materials coexist. Complicating the spectator’s ability to distinguish clearly between history and allegory, real and represented, human and nonhuman, experiences of and statements about war, some of the live actors wore masks, turning them into a form of puppet while also echoing the “broken faces” or “gueules cassées” of World War I veterans who wore masks as prosthetic aids. Both this performance and the war itself give the two-dimensional drawings in Grosz’s portfolio a kind of flat realism.<sup>75</sup> Piscator’s use of the bodies of veterans as manipulable puppets, underscored by the living, debilitated body’s juxtaposition with actual puppets and animated drawings, spotlights militarism’s disregard for, and manipulation of the limits of, life. But the production also does more than this. By foregrounding the bodies of German veterans, Piscator’s visualization of the catastrophic effects of war, like Dix’s, restricts his concern to how war’s effects play out on the white male bodies of the Global North and the physical spaces to which they return. As the artists remobilize war-damaged bodies for the purpose of political as well as aesthetic critique, their work invites uncomfortable comparisons between the



antiwar artist and military leaders. Bartana situates herself within, not outside of, the conflicts and histories her work engages, and this quality of her work resonates with antiwar feminism's refusal of both innocence and antiwar stances that position violence outside the self.

Dora Apel has highlighted how Dix both "opposed the consequences of militarism and the nationalist ideology that supported it, offering stark and shocking evidence of its meaningless devastation," and presented himself as "a knowing participant," "a willing belligerent, replete with the cynical, hardened face of the 'soldier-hero,'" infusing both his self-portraits and his "limbless veterans" with a "manly swagger" that is not just ironic.<sup>76</sup> Like Dix, Bartana is clearly interested in the relationship between gender, nationalism, and violence, performing a certain affinity with the ambivalence toward masculinism and virility that Apel identifies in Dix's "chilling veristic style."<sup>77</sup> But for Bartana, women, often excluded from political life, hold no inherent answers to what she describes as a misuse of masculinity. Deeper transformations are required, as she explains with regard to her project *What If Women Ruled the World* (2017): "Women as well as Palestinians were excluded from the Zionist narrative. Women have a different understanding of the state and of the land. I'm so fed up with masculinity being used in the wrong way. My hope is that we realize that achieving equality is not just about having women rule the world, but about transforming our language, structures, and priorities."<sup>78</sup> I share Gil Z. Hochberg's assessment that the potential of Bartana's work lies in "its growing ambiguity and instability vis-à-vis the political sphere," the way her work asks viewers "to recognize our manipulability and seductions alongside those of others."<sup>79</sup>

#### (INTER)(IN)ANIMATING RETURNS, REPETITIONS, AND CHANGE

The performance-conferences of the Jewish Renaissance Movement in Poland (JRMiP) feature delegates of the movement discussing three primary questions with live audiences: "How should the EU change in order to welcome the Other? How should Poland change within a reimagined EU? And how should Israel change to become part of the Middle East?"<sup>80</sup> These performances, along with the film trilogy, catalyze collective contemplation of what twenty-first-century futures are possible and imaginable, in part by activating and destabilizing mythologies involving the idea and ideology of returns—to homeland as well as to earlier artistic and political discourses. These returns are physical, affective, and aesthetic. Bartana stages her movement's calls for a return of 3,300,000 Jews to Poland in order to "heal our mutual trauma once and for all" using strategies drawn from both Zionist and Nazi propaganda films. Addressing this controversial combination, Bartana tells Erika Balsom, "The images and aesthetics are very similar. . . . They all use the same angle."<sup>81</sup>

"Return," in the context of Israel-Palestine, is perhaps the single most highly charged concept. The animated loop's material structure signifies differently when regarded in the broader context of Bartana's contemporaneous work on the past, present, and futures of Zionism. On the one hand, in response to pervasive European anti-Semitism, the Zionist movement of the nineteenth century proposed the idea of a Jewish state. As political scientist Ian Lustick writes, "Zionists proposed to solve this problem [of an anti-Semitism derived from being a "minority everywhere"] through their normalization of Jewish life by concentrating Jews in a country where they would be the majority. Because of traditional Jewish attachments to the Land of Israel and imperial control of the territory (first Ottoman, then British), Palestine was the place on Earth where that solution was most feasible."<sup>82</sup> Speaking in 1946 in the wake of the Holocaust, David Ben-Gurion naturalizes the idea of the formation of a Jewish state in Palestine by using a mythology of familial returns to assert an indigenous right to an already-occupied land, stating, "I know that the Arabs, at least some of them, don't want us to return and I understand it. . . . We will return, and there will be understanding between us and the Arabs. . . . The conflict between us today is the most tragic, for it is in a way a family conflict. But it will not last long."<sup>83</sup> But for Palestinians since 1948, the concept of "return" primarily evokes the United Nations General Assembly's Resolution 194 in December 1948. This resolution calls for Palestinian "refugee return, property restitution and compensation" in the wake of the Nakba, or "catastrophe," through which more than half the Palestinian population was forcibly displaced from their villages by Jewish militias during the 1948 Arab-Israeli War.<sup>84</sup> And as Ambassador Cheikh Niang, chair of the United Nations Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, insists, the Nakba is not a past event but rather "an ongoing process affecting the Palestinian people over generations."<sup>85</sup>

Yifat Gutman and Noam Tirosch demonstrate how Israel's contemporary memory laws, including the 2011 and 2014 Nakba laws, seek ever more forcefully to suppress open discussion of Israel's treatment of Palestinian people and to impose what they call "forced forgetting" of the Nakba.<sup>86</sup> Bartana's work on Zionism and ideologies of return emerges in the context of this increasingly repressive memory culture. These legal efforts to suppress criticism of Israel's treatment of Palestinians also extend beyond Israel, as the recent and widespread use of force and emergency silencing regulations in response to the pro-Palestinian encampment movement in the United States has demonstrated. Such repressions, it is important to note, are not limited to criticisms of Israel. They find analogues in the efforts of both the federal and individual US state governments to stifle open discussion and learning and to prevent the teaching of critical race theory, gender and sexuality studies, and other subjects that challenge hegemonic, normative, triumphalist, and amnesiac approaches to history.

Ideological suppression of this kind frequently drives artists toward metaphorical or allegorical forms, and there exists, I think, a complex affinity between the

structure of allegory, which relies on repetitions that are at once legible and hidden, and Bartana's "pre-enactments" and (inter)(in)animations that set in motion competing narratives of return. Azoulay and Ophir strongly reject the utility of allegorical models for understanding Bartana's work, perhaps because of allegory's association with repetition rather than change. They insist, "Seriously. Bartana's trilogy is not an allegory," arguing instead that Bartana invokes elements from both national socialist and Zionist "repertoires," not in order to ironize or despair in the present, but to explore alternative futures from "a legacy we have inherited and refuse to transmit."<sup>87</sup> I agree with this analysis of Bartana's rationale for turning to past "repertoires." But I also see Bartana employing what Peter Burke describes as "pragmatic allegory" as a strategic tool to bypass both formal and informal censorship, especially in relation to the taboo topic of the Nakba and Palestinian right to return claims.<sup>88</sup> "Pragmatic" allegory, Burke suggests, is just "a means to an end, not an end in itself," used when "direct means of political comment are suppressed."<sup>89</sup> Bartana exhibited this work in countries, including Poland, Germany, the United States, and Israel, that share a repressive culture around political criticism of Israel, albeit for different, if related, reasons.

By contrast, Burke illustrates the concept of "metaphysical" or "mystical" allegory with tales of kings, nationalism, and religious wars seeking to confirm "a future destiny."<sup>90</sup> In "mystical" allegories, Burke suggests, "the present is experienced as a kind of 'replay' or 're-enactment' of past events . . . as if someone, perhaps God, is writing our script."<sup>91</sup> Though Bartana may not create mystical allegories herself, the "pre-enactments" of Zionism that she stages nevertheless seem deeply interested in the role played by nationalist "mystical" allegories in sustaining repetitions and in blocking the collective imagination of different, less militarized, less nationalist, and more capacious futures. In dealing with the fraught phenomenon of return, I suggest that Bartana activates both forms of allegory simultaneously, the first strategically, the second critically. Pragmatic allegory enables a space for critical reflection on Zionism's and Europe's mystical national allegories in places where more direct modes of engagement would likely be suppressed. As a result, the question of Palestine is both present and absent. Does this allow Bartana, politically speaking, to have it both ways? Perhaps. But it also creates space for reflection on the politics of going home within a temporal mode involving past, present, and future tenses that (inter)(in)animate each other in unpredictable and disruptive ways.

Jacqueline Rose notes that Bartana's own homecomings are only ever "partial" and that the artist describes herself as an "ongoing returnee."<sup>92</sup> There are temporal as well as spatial dimensions to the way these returns emerge. Bartana speaks of being interested in "going back in history in order to think about the future. . . . It's about the possibility of seeing the present through different eyes. Poland is used so much by Israeli politicians to explain why we need to be soldiers, why we need to protect our land. It's very much about the politics of memory and the hegemony

of the nation-state.”<sup>93</sup> Rose’s analysis of the second of the live-action trilogy’s films, *Wall and Tower*, highlights the shattering effect on memory brought about by the film’s return to and conflation of propagandas around the idea of “home.” This leads Rose both to introduce Palestinian experiences into her discussion of Bartana’s work and to acknowledge the prohibition that exists for some on thinking comparatively across histories of persecution. Rose observes,

As we witness the barbed wire and the building of the watch tower, memory splinters among its myriad associations: from ghetto to concentration camp to kibbutz, and from there to the checkpoints and the wall in Israel today that scar the landscape in the name of security, seizing the land and cutting off Palestinian villagers from their schools, fields, and homes. To many for whom no such link is permissible between the persecution of the Jews in Europe and the Israeli government’s policy today, such a mental trail would be pure scandal.<sup>94</sup>

Rose’s essay, like Bartana’s animation and the JRMiP performances-conferences, demonstrates that Bartana’s complex and speculative infrastructure of returns does not make the question of Palestinian persecution unthinkable. In many ways, engagement with Palestine is invited—albeit allegorically—through the multiple connotations of “return” within the context of Israel-Palestine; through Bartana’s earlier work that foregrounds solidarity between Israeli activists and Palestinian people; and through the participatory structure of the JRMiP Congresses.<sup>95</sup> J. Hoberman notes that when he first saw the trilogy in 2011, it seemed “of a piece” with the Arab Spring, the Occupy movement, and Pussy Riot. He further observes that the resolutions of the First Congress of the JRMiP “were uniformly anti-Zionist: to guarantee a Palestinian right of return, strip Israel of its Jewish character and create a state for the stateless,” and describes elements of the trilogy working as “psychological jiu-jitsu meant to encourage Israeli identification with uprooted Palestinians and thus make an argument for a binational state.”<sup>96</sup> Similarly, in interviews reflecting back on this body of work between 2007 and 2011, Bartana is explicit about its political focus: “The Zionist movement was driven by the search for a homeland for the stateless and persecuted Jewish people. Yet, it trampled over the rights of Palestinians. I became interested specifically in the use of the tragedy of the holocaust in relation to the right parties’ politics in Israel.”<sup>97</sup> Nevertheless, Palestinian voices are not centered in the video trilogy in the way that other protagonists in the history of Zionism are explicitly foregrounded. Bartana also readily acknowledges her reluctance to completely let go of the utopian aspects of Zionism, describing the second of the films, *Wall and Tower* (2009), as “a criticism of a positive utopia that turned into a tragedy.”<sup>98</sup> This narrative of a shift from utopia to tragedy, however, would be incompatible with Khalidi’s aforementioned historiographic framework, where utopia and displacement co-emerge.

Khalidi cites an 1895 journal entry in which Theodor Herzl, one of the early leaders of the Zionist movement, writes, "We must expropriate gently the private property on the estates assigned to us. We shall try to spirit the penniless population across the border by procuring employment for it in the transit countries, while denying it employment in our own country."<sup>99</sup> Following this, Khalidi refutes any innocent early Zionist utopia and insists on understanding the modern history of Palestine as "a colonial war waged against the indigenous population, by a variety of parties, to force them to relinquish their homeland to another people against their will."<sup>100</sup> For Khalidi, recognizing the imbrication of the history of Zionism and a century-long war on Palestinians constitutes the foundation for interrupting repetitive acts of displacement and building a relational and more peaceful future imagined not from a utopian past but from the entangled present. Albeit differently from Bartana, Khalidi too holds at bay any narrative of return that negates the presence of the other: "While the fundamentally colonial nature of the Palestinian-Israeli encounter must be acknowledged, there are now two peoples in Palestine, irrespective of how they came into being, and the conflict between them cannot be resolved as long as the national existence of each is denied by the other. Their mutual acceptance can only be based on complete equality of rights, including national rights, notwithstanding the crucial historical differences between the two."<sup>101</sup> Although Bartana activates the narratives of Zionist utopian innocence whose unsustainability Khalidi demonstrates, she seems to do so less to recover that innocence than to render thinkable the force of collective affective attachments to it, fed by European anti-Semitism, and the need to find ways to redirect those attachments in order to leave the loop.<sup>102</sup>

Bartana does not hide how the aspects of her work that can analogically be understood to support the Palestinian right to return have been edited away by others when convenient. In dialogue with Balsom, for example, she describes an interview with the Israeli journalist Yaron London, who appears in *Zamach (Assassinat)* (2011), the third film of the trilogy: "He said, 'So Yael, if you want to send 3.3 million Jews back to Poland, do you mean that 3.3 million Palestinians can return?' I said, 'Yes!' But they cut it from the published interview because they needed to represent the majority."<sup>103</sup> Yet part of what Bartana's art offers to contemporary engagements with nationalism in general, and with Zionism in particular, is how her acknowledged implicatedness constitutes a foundation for her work. This implicatedness includes a period of service within the Israel Defense Forces, and her multimedia, queer, and feminist engagement with the role of ceremonies, rituals, and other repetitions in both sustaining and illuminating political blind spots and affective attachments. In conversation with Galit Eilat, distinguishing herself from a younger generation, Bartana asks: "How does the army generate the discipline of faith that what you do is indisputably the right thing? . . . We know that we are recruited to the army at a young age, before we develop solid

independent perceptions. . . . The draft objectors today are an amazing phenomenon to me. Those young people are super conscious of what they do. . . . They have the ability to object . . . and they are at a different place than my generation when we were recruited to the IDF about 17 years ago.”<sup>104</sup>

If Bartana’s speculative returns animate critical reflections on Zionism in mainstream spaces where such reflection is discouraged, the edit-out-ability of Palestine as an explicit concern seems central to that possibility. This is the danger of the allegorical element. The implied comparative framework between displaced/returning Jews, displaced/returning Palestinians, and other displaced/returning/arriving refugees also risks occluding key differences between specific historical situations and power differentials, that, as Hartman underscored, cannot be collapsed. Both the possibilities and the potential limitations of this body of work stem from these instabilities. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak writes, “In today’s divided world, to discover varieties of sameness is to give in too easily to the false promises of a level playing field.”<sup>105</sup> Yet in many ways, it is the very idea of “today” as a contained present that Bartana holds at bay as her works activate multiple pasts, presents, and futures, including at a material level through the looping animation’s conflation of painting, photography, digital animation, and celluloid film from different historical moments, in a shared space. Spivak describes the expectation that a humanities discipline might fix the uneven playing fields left in the wake of colonialism as “absurd,” but she also allows that the objects that humanists study—literature, film, and art, for example—help to make something about such situations available to thought that would otherwise be available to thought only through the reality of death.<sup>106</sup>

Palestinian writer Ghassan Kanafani’s 1969 novella *Return to Haifa* offers one example of a work that explicitly involves multiple legal and felt rights to return, including Palestinian points of view. As Gil Z. Hochberg notes, “Return, impossible return, failed return, promise of return, future return, fight for return—these are all positions outlined in Kanafani’s novella. To enter an intertextual relationship with Kanafani’s text is to open anew the question of return.”<sup>107</sup> Hochberg sees Kanafani’s return narrative and the intertextual afterlife to which it gives rise as catalyzing a “back and forth” mode of reading that generates “new archival imagination” and “alerts us to the urgency of breaking the chain of ongoing trauma.”<sup>108</sup> Kanafani’s story, I suggest, provides a useful parallel text to the time-bending animations and speculative mythologies that Bartana activates.<sup>109</sup> Kanafani tells a tale, set in 1967, of Said S. and his wife Safiya, a Palestinian couple who, in 1948, were made to leave both their home and their five-month-old son Khaldun by Jewish forces. The couple board a British ship that takes them to Acre. When they eventually return to see their home twenty years later, they find not only that Miriam, a Polish Jewish woman, and her husband, Evrat Kushen, occupy their home, having been housed there by the Jewish Agency after they fled Europe, but also that this couple has adopted the son they left behind, Khaldun. He now identifies as Jewish,

serves in the Israeli army, and has been renamed Dov. Kanafani's multiperspectival story activates fiction as a vehicle capable of tracing the entanglements and divergences of time, space, and experience involved in competing claims on "home" and the right to return by different groups of displaced people. As Miriam looks around her home that is also the home of Said S. and Safiya, Said "began looking where she was looking, moving his eyes to where she moved hers. When Safiya did the same thing, Said said to himself: 'How very strange! Three pairs of eyes all looking at the same things . . . and how differently everyone sees them!'"<sup>110</sup> In this time-collapsing and perspective-multiplying moment of return in which it appears "as if the twenty intervening years had been put between two giant presses and crushed until there was nothing left but a transparent sheet which you could barely see," Said asks, "What is paternity after all?" and "What is the homeland?"<sup>111</sup> Even as it registers the ways in which military and genocidal violence shatter people's sense of place and time, the experience of return leads the narrative to question the utility of thinking about family and home in propertied or singular terms. Instead, Kanafani emphasizes the characters' awareness of difference and confusion within their shared experience and the way that these shared experiences threaten existing certainties.

In a feminist reading of the story that is infiltrated by the rhetoric if not the aesthetics of animation, Marianne Hirsch asks, "How can divergent histories that expose children to danger and abandonment be thought together without flattening or blurring the differences between them?"<sup>112</sup> She suggests, in a passage to which I will return in chapter 4, "Perhaps in a feminist, connective rather than comparative, reading that moves between global and intimate concerns by attending precisely to the intimate details that animate each case even while enabling the discovery of shared motivations and shared tropes. Such a feminist reading, as I see it, pays attention to the gender and power dynamics of contested histories. It foregrounds affect and embodiment and a concern for justice and acts of repair."<sup>113</sup> Although Bartana and Kanafani are themselves positioned differently within the entangled histories that shape contemporary Israel and Palestine, the two share an explicit interest in the vital potential of weakness when grappling with intersecting narratives of return. In response to Dov's criticism of his parents, Said and Safiya, both for leaving their son behind and for being weak ("You're weak! Weak!"), Said asks, "When you no longer respect the weakness of others and their mistakes, who is there to protect your own rights?" concluding: "I know that one day you will understand these things. You'll understand that the greatest crime any man, whoever he is, can commit is to think, even for a moment, that the weakness of others and their mistakes give him the right to exist at their expense and that this absolves him of all his own mistakes and crimes."<sup>114</sup>



## (Inter)(in)animation in Exile

### (INTER)(IN)ANIMATING CONTESTED REALITIES OF WAR AND OCCUPATION

The attack on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001, and the subsequent and controversial decision of the Bush Jr. administration and the UK to begin aerial bombardment of Afghanistan, launching the geographically and temporally sprawling “War on Terror” as a response to attacks committed by nonstate actors, immediately gave rise to a proliferation and looped broadcasting of documentary and fiction films foregrounding the plight of Afghan women and children.<sup>1</sup> Some of these had been made before 9/11, but they took on new meaning, purpose, and interest after it. As Martin Kramer wrote in 2002 in *The Middle East Quarterly*, “The Western publics hungered for images from inside Afghanistan. . . . Afghanistan had long appealed to a few adventurous filmmakers, and their work quickly began to fill television screens, engaging vast audiences that otherwise would not have given a moment of their time to a film on Afghanistan.”<sup>2</sup> Feminist media scholarship has highlighted the ways in which US- and European-funded media projects in Afghanistan, often themselves under a liberal feminist banner, mobilized and fetishized images of Afghan girls as silent, passive, and tragically doomed, of Afghan men as misogynists and religious extremists, and of Afghan women as a homogenous and isolated group of people incapable of helping themselves. Wazhmah Osman, a scholar of Afghan media and one of the filmmakers discussed below, describes Afghan women in these films as “caught between the ‘white saviours’ and Islamic extremists.”<sup>3</sup> Such media descriptions imply comparisons with western European and North American contexts that posit an absolute separation between Afghan and other identities, occluding the

diversity and power of Afghan and Afghan-diaspora feminist resistance movements and disavowing the gendered, cultural, political, racial, sexual, and religious oppressions (among other forms of oppression) experienced by people in Western contexts. As Osman argues, “The reality is that Afghan women and Afghan women’s rights movements are not monolithic or singular entities. There are many different groups that range from communist to secular to moderately religious to more religious,” and she describes herself as working most closely with “feminist activist and media rights groups who are more on the left-of-center.”<sup>4</sup>

*Postcards from Tora Bora* (Kelly Dolak and Wazhmah Osman, 2007), selected for the Tribeca Film Festival in May 2007, is an eighty-five-minute film that is categorized as a documentary.<sup>5</sup> Kelly Dolak, now a television production professor at Ramapo College, shot and coproduced the film. Prior to making *Postcards*, she had worked in television production and, with Liss Platt, had made the short experimental video *Purse*, which humorously explores the relationship between purses and two butch women.<sup>6</sup> Dolak has gone on to make documentary films about a range of topics, including *Loyalty Code* (2017), which examines Penn State students’ relationship to football coach Joe Paterno.<sup>7</sup> Osman’s story is quite different. She was born in Kabul into a secular Muslim family but came to the United States via Pakistan in her adolescence and grew up in New Jersey and New York.<sup>8</sup> Prior to making *Postcards*, Osman, now a media studies and production professor at Temple University who specializes in Afghan media networks, worked for six years at Millennium Film Workshops and Cooper Union School of the Arts as a film technician, film instructor, and curator. She had also made several experimental Super 8 and 16mm shorts, as well as a human rights short entitled *Buried Alive: Afghan Women under the Taliban* (1999).<sup>9</sup>

At various moments throughout the predominantly live-action film, *Postcards* activates (inter)(in)animating effects done by Stephen Jablonsky, who was also a producer for the film.<sup>10</sup> These effects, which invade and sometimes replace photorealistic, documentary images with graphic elements, catalyze explorations of the interconnectedness of personal and collective experience, memory and history, self and other, foreign and domestic. Throughout, the filmmakers juxtapose archival political news footage, family photographs, and Super 8 home movies with animated tourist brochures from the 1970s geared toward people the young Osman knew as “heepees,” animated Afghan children’s drawings of war experiences, and an animated masked superhero version of Osman’s childhood self who sneaks into a variety of photographed scenarios. *Postcards* pressures the category of documentary or nonfiction film through its visual experiments, particularly its use of animation, special effects, and intertextual references, and these experimental, intermedial occurrences often coincide with moments of unreliable memory and unstable source materials. This chapter asks what these playful and basic animation techniques created in Adobe AfterEffects and Apple Motion contribute to

the filmmakers' temporal, affective, and generic toolbox as they grapple with the challenge of filming the gendered and multigenerational experience of continuous war across the geographic spaces of the United States and Afghanistan.<sup>11</sup>

Animation, which constructs time and space frame by frame rather than recording it continuously, can help to visualize these unruly and collaged experiences of war's fraught, fracturing, and amalgamating temporalities and displacing geographies. *Postcards* is made from multiple and hyphenated points of view, times, and places, and animation is mobilized by the filmmakers to convey something of the compound, taut, and straddling positionalities forged by the experiences and legacies of occupation. Here the filmmakers do not seek to mobilize a convincingly realist animated aesthetic but rather employ visually disjunctive animated effects to signal the impossibility of a smooth and coherent aesthetic for some lived experiences and memory landscapes. This film's use of intermedial and fragmentary animated disruptions to the coherence of the image thus represents not only a mode of talking back to post-9/11 totalizing media narratives but also a broader form of resistance to a much longer and more widespread use of documentary and ethnographic misrepresentational practices by colonial and imperial powers to manage, smooth, and control how the experiences of occupied people, practices, and histories are understood and transmitted across time and space.

For this chapter, it is useful to adapt the critical framework that Colleen Jankovic develops for thinking about animated and "hybrid animated/live-action" films within the Palestinian context. Though Afghanistan and Palestine have quite distinct histories, they have in common long and evolving violent histories of occupation. In the decades following World War II, these occupations have been in part driven and sustained, as Adam Hanieh recently argued, by the centrality of Gulf oil to global energy economies. Hanieh delineates how, with the shift from coal to oil, both the United States, as the new global power, and allied western European countries identified Middle Eastern allies to facilitate the ongoing suppression of Arab nationalist movements to protect post-World War II Western interests in "fossil capitalism."<sup>12</sup> Although the roles played by Palestine and Afghanistan in this economy are distinct, US and western European strategic interests in forging extraction-driven alliances with Israel and Afghanistan have inflicted massive numbers of deaths and maimings on both Palestinian and Afghan civilian populations.<sup>13</sup> Afghanistan and Palestine share the experience of having histories marked by charged ideological differences that are often legacies of colonial and imperial projects, resulting in powerfully contested national narratives that shape the landscape of documentary filmmaking about these places. In both contexts, Western media outlets depict civilians as either helplessly incapable of resistance or, as Fathi Nimer argues in a discussion of the "enduring and racist trope of Palestinian rejectionism," participants in modes of resistance framed as "regressive," "rooted in a fear of ingenuity and prosperity," "intransigent," incapable of being "reasoned with," and "extreme."<sup>14</sup>

Jankovic writes,

I begin with the understanding that cartoons and animation have a specific historical and political relevance in the Palestinian context; this sets them apart from most Western animated cinema, which informs Western animation theory, and which has tended to dominate the field of animation studies. . . . Palestinian animation, especially the prevalence of documentary, political, and serious animation, foregrounds a unique Palestinian realist aesthetic, one born of conditions of occupation and visions of resistance, that confounds many definitions and theorisations of animation, and that both broadens and further unsettles the field of Palestinian cinema studies.<sup>15</sup>

Jankovic highlights the way that animation might offer Palestinian filmmakers “an alternative representational route” to modes of cinema that have denied Palestinian characters agency, or that, sometimes inadvertently, reinforce settler colonial paradigms as the only reality.<sup>16</sup> “Animated, hybrid, and experimental modes,” Jankovic suggests, “provide the world with a new way to engage with diverse Palestinian stories, the ongoing struggle against Israeli occupation, and the struggle for justice for Palestinians.”<sup>17</sup> *Postcards*, a film about a dispersed population facing similar challenges, explores animation’s possibilities for mediating a particular Afghan American person’s narrative within a hybrid form that combines 8mm home movies and contemporary live-action documentary and newsreel footage with graphic, often-playful, and at times even comical animated effects.<sup>18</sup>

#### CHILDREN’S MEDIA/WAR MEDIA AND THE PERIODIZATION OF VIOLENCE

To describe the film’s use of animation and special effects in *Postcards* as “playful” or “comical” does not underestimate these techniques’ aesthetic potential for intervening in how experiences of war are mediated. In this chapter, I am particularly interested in tracing how animation renders a world in which “childhood” and “war” threaten to collapse into each other. Numerous twenty-first-century animation scholars, including Annabelle Honess Roe, Donna Kornhaber, Tess Takahashi, and Stefanie Van de Peer, have challenged film historians’ and theorists’ tendency to deprioritize animation as a childish form of media and to favor documentary and live-action, realist cinema as more appropriate for the depiction of major events of world history, including war. Yet *Postcards* offers a view of life, often filtered through the perspectives of children and young people, suggesting that the conditions under which late twentieth- and twenty-first-century children in Kabul live begin to dissolve divisions between categories such as “children’s media” and “war media,” or “memories of childhood” and “memories of war.” Furthermore, the temporality of this state of being is inadequately expressed by habits of periodization that date “war” according to formal declarations of war and peace. These habits ignore the persistent life-destroying “aftereffects”

of war, the morphing of one violent conflict into another, and the future-oriented and unpredictable timeline and targets of unexploded munitions, not to mention the nonlinear operations of trauma on the mind and body, the day-to-day effects of community dispersal and fractured and leveled material infrastructures.

Children are the most vulnerable to all of the literal and figural as-yet-unexploded devices thrown into the future. As Brown University's "Costs of War" project reports on the contemporary situation in Afghanistan, "Even in the absence of fighting, unexploded ordnance from this war and landmines from previous wars continue to kill, injure, and maim civilians. Fields, roads, and school buildings are contaminated by ordnance, which often harms children as they go about chores like gathering wood."<sup>19</sup> The fact that children as well as other civilians in the contemporary war context are being maimed and killed by devices from past wars creates perpetrator-victim relationships across massive temporal distances, and even at times across the line dividing the living and the dead, the born and the unborn, making nonsense of the ways in which war's agents, victims, and agendas, or the duration of its beginnings and endings, are calculated, recorded, and assessed.<sup>20</sup>

#### LOCATION SHOOTING, HYPHENATED HISTORIES

While the opening of *Postcards* suggests that Osman is returning to Afghanistan to shoot the film after an absence of twenty years, in fact Osman had actually already visited Kabul both in 1997 and then again in January 1999, where she shot secretly during the height of the Taliban regime at a moment when the US government was still working closely with Unocal in the hope of building a trans-Afghan pipeline.<sup>21</sup> The 1999 trip was funded by the US-based Feminist Majority Foundation (FMF), an organization that worked briefly with RAWA (the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan) from 1997 to increase awareness about the Taliban's treatment of women until differences ultimately divided the two feminist organizations, and the footage generated during this trip was employed to support the liberal agenda of FMF.<sup>22</sup> This difference between how Osman, the character in *Postcards*, represents the timeline of her presence in Afghanistan and the filmmaker's actual history of return to the country might suggest a need to recategorize *Postcards* as something other than a nonfiction film. And yet even in this seemingly clear example of a discrepancy between fact and fiction, I wonder about the impact of shooting undercover, invisibly, on a filmmaker's sense of presence in time and place. In response to this observation, Osman describes the difference between the earlier trips, which involved being in Afghanistan during times of active war that were "filled with danger," and the later trip, which was the first time she found herself able "to reflect on [her] home and its destruction."<sup>23</sup> Such conditions introduce existential ambiguities and spectral presences into historical and film historical narratives, and the film's animated effects arise particularly at such moments when the very question of existence seems to be at stake.

What, the film seems to ask, does location shooting mean for a diasporic subject? How might (inter)(in)animated modes of filmmaking capture the condition of living simultaneously in multiple places? Such questions are brought into the foreground in a scene where Osman travels with Dolak and her aunt, an Afghan American doctor who has returned to do aid work, to Quar-Ga, a lake on the outskirts of Kabul. There they encounter slightly older male youths, and the film shows the aunt asking, "Brothers, why are you looking at us this way? We are all Afghan." One responds, "Where are you from?" to which the aunt replies, "We are from Kabul." When the man presses and asks, skeptically, "These other sisters too?," the aunt replies, "Almost, close to Kabul. . . . She's from New York." Although there is tension, they all laugh together as the man rejects the reality offered by the aunt, insisting, "New York is so far and Kabul's so close." Though the scene is clearly presented for its humor, this humor also makes space for the mutually imbricated geographical imaginations of diasporic subjectivity and occupation that complicate how subjects and geographic spaces are narrated in relation to each other over periods of time that are similarly complicated. The film's use of (inter)(in)animation, an intermedial, relational, still-moving experimental practice, works in parallel ways.

*Postcards* reflects not just the hyphenated and evolving consciousness of Osman, an Afghan American diasporic filmmaker, over the course of her life up to the point of filmmaking but also the specific experiences of Dolak, a queer, white, American filmmaker, and this further complicates the film's place of utterance. The two filmmakers collaborate to shoot a documentary about Afghanistan during a four-month visit to the country through a relationship involving a partnership that is both personal and professional. The film's experimental, (inter)(in)animating tactics, added during the inappropriately named "postproduction," occur within a landscape of broader resistance on the part of the experimental filmmaking team to certain industry expectations for a film on the topic of Afghanistan, even within the independent sphere. For example, in spite of pressure exerted by an independent publicist at Tribeca to market the film through a focus on the filmmakers' personal relationship for a North American audience growing tired of films about Afghanistan, the filmmakers refused. The film's associate producer, Elissa Federoff, confirms that this resistance added to the challenge of finding a publicist for the film, which she describes as having "just missed the window" for interest in films about Afghanistan by about a year, although she supported Osman's resistance to having the film be packaged on these terms: "I understand that [Osman] didn't want criticism of the film in Afghanistan; didn't want it to be an LGBT film—that's not what the movie was. It made no sense to have that as an angle."<sup>24</sup> At Tribeca, some film industry professionals further advised Dolak and Osman to shed Osman's voice and replace it with "a celebrity voice-over," which the filmmakers also refused to do (Angelina Jolie was suggested). Prior to the film being picked up by Documentary Educational Resources, HBO, IFP, Women Make Movies, and

the PBS documentary series *POV* looked closely at it, but perhaps as a result of some of the filmmakers' experiments and refusals, these all ultimately chose not to accept the film.

Historian Michel-Rolph Trouillot has highlighted the way that linear chronologies of "facts" produce historical silences, tending to erase process and context, as well as nonhegemonic ways of conceptualizing time and narrating experiences of the past.<sup>25</sup> *Undead* foregrounds work in which artists use animation-based techniques in dialogue with other media modes to create intermedial spaces that offer the viewer simultaneous access to competing ways of mediating temporality, place, and experience. In doing so, although there is no outrunning the historical impact of the history of representation, such works intervene into hegemonic and singular historical narratives and genres and make more room, through the formal layering of image types, for occluded aspects of hegemonic war narratives.

In *Postcards*, the animated pictures of, and drawings by, children combine with low-budget animated effects to become vehicles through which to express past and present Afghan children's experiences of war, experiences that may exceed the representational capacity of more conventional documentaries about Afghanistan. The filmmakers' (inter)(in)animations can be divided into three primary categories. First, they use animated special effects embedded within live-action footage and photographs to disrupt the selected images and to stage encounters between contemporary realities and prevalent fantasies regarding Afghanistan and its people. Second, Dolak and Osman cut up, collage, and animate drawings made by Afghan children orphaned by war to depict not only the child-artists' experiences of war but also Osman's own early childhood experiences of war in Afghanistan in the 1970s, as narrated by Osman's adult, Afghan American self. Finally, the filmmakers cut up and animate a childhood photo of Osman as a young child, introducing her as a powerful, fantastical, and superhero-like avatar of the filmmaker's childhood self into an otherwise realist narrative. This animated avatar crosses the boundaries of time, space, and medium, offering narrative and audiovisual possibilities that would otherwise have been harder to access in the documentary mode. This chapter focuses on understanding these (inter)(in)animating tactics individually, as they interact with other aspects of the film, and in the broader discursive context of war media.

#### (INTER)(IN)ANIMATING EFFECTS

Prior to boarding the plane at Dubai, Osman examines her ticket for the Ariana Airlines flight. Her voice-over explains the nationalist importance of Ariana Airlines, something reinforced by the map of Afghanistan hanging at the front of the plane. The camera zooms in on the dated tourist photographs that illustrate the back of the ticket as Osman points out the Intercontinental Hotel, explaining that "half of it is shelled." She then highlights the image of the Bamiyan



Buddhas, commenting, “And that doesn’t exist anymore either,” adding that it is “sad and funny at the same time” that the airline is using 1970s images for “selling Afghanistan.” These verbally articulated discrepancies between the idealized photographic images of Afghanistan on Osman’s plane ticket and the material reality of the sites in the film anticipate *Postcards*’ subsequent visual strategy of presenting the viewer with a variety of possible realities.

Once the filmmakers are on the plane and in the air, the camera looks out of the window onto Afghanistan’s mountain ranges. The film cues viewers to understand that this returning-exile story will differ from other, more nostalgic versions of the genre when the narration that accompanies this mountainscape does not foreground Osman’s longing for Afghanistan, although Osman will later describe such feelings. Instead, this aerial view of the mountains leads the filmmaker to discuss the media infrastructure of Afghanistan during the US occupation and the fact that the Americans have taken control of the higher airspace, causing civilians traveling with Ariana to fly uncomfortably close to these nation-defining peaks. This gesture positions the film between earlier media fantasies of Afghanistan and what Lisa Parks describes as the United States’ “broader struggles for aero-orbital domination since 9/11,” and underscores Osman’s performance of herself as a hybrid figure who is both a returning exile and a transnational feminist media scholar.<sup>26</sup>

The tourist images on the plane ticket dominate the film’s first extended animation sequence, which brings to life these and other anachronistic views of major cultural sites in Afghanistan. In these early sequences, an animated Ariana plane flies ominously close to key landmarks, including the Intercontinental Hotel and the Minaret at Jam, built in 1165 by the Ghurid Sultan. The plane casts a shadow on the Bamiyan Buddhas as it sweeps past the rockface, but it fails to disturb a circle of hippies sitting around in canvas deck chairs as it flies, to the tune of an upbeat, electronic 1970s soundtrack, over their straw huts located somewhere on the hippie trail. But as the film cuts to a closeup of the nose of this animated tourist plane, the sky turns from sunny blue to black and cloudy. In the next mountainous scene, the hippies seem to have been replaced by a circle of Afghan men and children, playing and listening to music while animated flames dot the landscape behind them, as if an aerial bombardment has just occurred. The plane now circles past the same famous monuments that the viewer has just seen, as featured on the back of Osman’s anachronistic plane ticket. Although the tourists continue to sunbathe by the Intercontinental’s pool, fixed by the photograph’s static form, animated effects bring the scene into the twenty-first century (figure 16). A hotel marquee, some rooms, the hotel roof, and a distant building flicker with flames as smoke rises up to meet the Ariana plane flying overhead. At the moment the animated plane starts to climb up over the Bamiyan Buddhas, we see and hear a fiery explosion where the photographic Buddha was just a moment earlier. In a painfully ironic cut, the film returns the viewer to an inside shot of Osman and



FIGURE 16. Burning Hotel Intercontinental with plane, in Kelly Dolak and Wazhmah Osman's *Postcards from Tora Bora*, 2007.

Dolak's plane, as if nothing had happened, just in time for an announcement that thanks passengers for flying with Ariana and welcomes them to Afghanistan. This sequence conveys some of the structural damage done to Afghanistan's infrastructure and cultural heritage by decades of war and the disavowals required for "moving on" in the wake of wars that fail to end. It also prepares the viewer for an animated, temporally and spatially composited picture of this place and fosters a somewhat skeptical relation to the film's presentation of reality.

Osman's own authority as a returning exile similarly either falters or is contradicted throughout the film, but in ways that reinforce what the film achieves through its use of animation. Early on, Osman tells viewers that we are looking at her family photos, only later to reveal that her own family photos were stolen and that she has actually had to beg and borrow the images in the film from other relatives. The instability of the authority of the film's images is further undermined when viewers gradually realize that the film moves, sometimes in unmarked ways, between subjective and objective points of view, between personal images from the present shot by the filmmakers and archival footage that stands in for personal memories from the more distant past. For example, as Osman recalls memories of standing with her sister on the family's balcony, spitting or throwing plant pots at Soviet soldiers as they marched through the streets below after the 1979 invasion,

her voice-over acts as a bridge linking footage shot by the filmmakers on the balcony in the present with archival news footage shot from a similar angle. This suggests that remembered media images loop in Osman's mind and fuse with her personal memories as she stands on the balcony in the film's present, shaping her perception of the street in both the past and the present.

Something complicated is happening here in terms of the way that images mediate authority, truth, and time throughout the film. By using archival footage of the Soviet presence in Kabul to visualize a personal memory, the filmmakers risk undermining the historical index and truth claims of these images they present. In *Postcards*, Osman's private experience of her youth in Kabul and Peshawar is set against and interwoven with key moments from the political history of Afghanistan. On numerous occasions, personal and political memories are narrated chronologically over newsreel montages of political events and regime changes. Although the film plays with narrative linearity, it is not indifferent to historical time, and at moments it slips into the register of a more traditional documentary, providing viewers with thumbnail historical overviews. Shortly after the film intercuts Soviet footage from the 1970s to the present, Osman's narration takes viewers systematically through a series of political disruptions to government stability from the late 1970s on. The filmmakers use matches on action and sound bridges to bring archival footage from different moments along this political timeline spanning several decades into dialogue with the subjective space of Osman's memory landscape. This effort seems to mediate Osman's inner and outer vision for the film viewer, occasionally injecting Dolak's perspective, perhaps as a reminder of the film's present and of points of view that exist beyond Osman. Jablonsky's experiments with animation and special effects reinforce the film's pervasive disruption of coherent relationships among time, space, and authorial identity, which is also achieved through the juxtaposition of different points of view, moments in time, and image formats.<sup>27</sup>

After a roll call of "Soviet puppets" that coincides with the merging of Osman's present-day vision with that of her six-year-old self, the character of Osman begins to separate into adult and childhood selves. This splitting further multiplies the already-complex authorial point of utterance and uses a combination of animation and feminist humor to resist the ways in which Afghan children, and especially Afghan girls, have historically been used in liberal human rights documentary films and photographs. This mode is exemplified in Steve McCurry's photograph *Afghan Girl*, which first appeared in *National Geographic* in June 1985 with the caption, "Haunted eyes tell of an Afghan refugee's fears."<sup>28</sup> Such images introduce Afghan girls as aestheticized victims, as puppets for ventriloquizing American foreign policy priorities as if they were the personal dreams of the appropriated, decontextualized, and anonymized girls. Such images and their framing, which often demonize Afghan men as they render Afghan women and girls helpless, exemplify Spivak's succinct formulation of gendered colonial

fantasy—“White men are saving brown women from brown men.”<sup>29</sup> *Postcards* tries to refute these clichés, which influence Afghan identities across the spectrum of gender and time.

#### (INTER)(IN)ANIMATING UNSTABLE WAR MEMORIES

The temporal compression of the balcony scene dissolves into a view of Afghan children playing on a climbing frame (one child is dressed in camouflage pants, visualizing the banal and early permeation of militarization into everyday life). Osman's voice-over describes the split from which her animated avatar springs: “My six-year-old self is forever stuck in Kabul. It's a part of me that I left behind. I may have moved on as an adult, but my six-year-old self is still searching, trying to make sense of what happened. Maybe I'm trying to make sense of something that doesn't make any sense at all, because how does one make sense of war?” (Inter)(in)animation becomes a tool for mediating this memory landscape that is dynamic and static, and for visualizing, albeit incompletely, the interactions among parts of a nonsingular self that exists simultaneously in multiple temporal and geographic locations. From the space of her childhood living room, Osman recalls her misperception of an aerial bombing as fireworks until her balcony windows shattered, a moment that marks her awareness of the beginning of decades of war. Speaking over archival footage and photographs, Osman's narration illustrates the challenge of disentangling personal and national histories as she describes the Soviet installation of Nur Muhammad Taraki (1978) in what she calls a “bloody coup” alongside the imprisonment of her father.

In her scholarly book *Television and the Afghan Culture Wars: Brought to You by Foreigners, Warlords, and Activists*, Osman provides a specific and linear narrative about how her family was affected by the Soviet-Afghan War. She writes:

My father, Dr. Abdullah Osman, a physician, was actively involved in helping different sectors of Afghan society in exile. During the Soviet invasion, the Soviet-backed government imprisoned my father, and my family fled Kabul to refuge in neighboring Pakistan. While most of our extended family and other Afghans moved from the refugee camps of Pakistan to other countries, when my father was released after serving a year and a half as a prisoner of war he stayed in the camps to help with efforts to assist an estimated three million Afghan refugees of all *quowms*. He set up multiple free health clinics and medical training workshops. He along with my mother, Mina Osman, a teacher[,] also established the first girls' school in the refugee camps, Nahid-I Shahid (Nahid the Martyred) School, which my sisters and I attended. With the help of the Inter-Aid Committee he also started the collective Union of Muhahid Doctors and became its director. He is well known and respected as a humanitarian and human rights advocate for all Afghans.<sup>30</sup>

I quote this passage at length because it provides a striking contrast to the audio-visualization of the family memory Osman offers in *Postcards* in a scene that takes

place in front of the family television. Rather than narrating a full and accurate personal and political history, the film mediates the point of view of a child's only partially comprehending experience of the impact of war on her life. As Osman states in the film, "I didn't understand the details; all I knew was that Boba [Osman's father] had disappeared."

The historical narrative of the film is unstable not only because of its focus on Osman's and other children's confusing experiences and memories of war in Afghanistan but also because of the broader historiographic challenges posed by a lack of collective consensus on the history of Afghanistan. Here it is helpful to consider the work of another Afghan American artist, filmmaker, and teacher, Mariam Ghani. In her experimental film *What We Left Unfinished* (2021), which addresses the state-run Afghan Film Archives, as well as in the research-based collaborative workshops she runs, Ghani stresses that any Afghan national memory project attempting accurately to reflect shared experiences of war is necessarily fraught. Of the period of communist rule in Afghanistan, for example, Ghani insists that there is "no fixed history of this time" because it was experienced as a civil war. The "ways of telling" that time, Ghani states, are internally "contested and conflicted." Thus the filmmaker sees her own work as seeking, not to close the "historically unsettled epistemic gaps," but rather to consider Afghanistan *through* what Najrin Islam describes as "the gaps between lived realities and totalizing aspirations."<sup>31</sup> For Ghani, "Art is a really powerful space both to recover forgotten histories and to imagine possible futures. . . . Afghanistan's artists should be encouraged to play that role, and to play it to a much greater extent than they have so far."<sup>32</sup>

*Postcards'* (inter)(in)animating effects often underscore how Osman's personal experiences shape and misshape her understandings of the past and present too, and she acknowledges that the way this happens at times eludes her grasp. The film repeatedly experiments with how the simultaneous use of different filmmaking modes might mediate what Judith Butler describes as "the subject opaque to itself."<sup>33</sup> For Butler, this opacity is not first a symptom of war trauma but rather an inescapable general condition, fundamental to being. Yet their illuminating discussion of this opacity, which asks readers to consider "what it might mean to continue in a dialogue where no common ground can be assumed," has important consequences for thinking about what Butler describes as "the determination of agency and the possibility of hope," particularly in contexts where seemingly perpetual war challenges the possibility of shared understandings of the past.<sup>34</sup>

Even in the absence of the film's animated effects, the status of Osman's voice-over is somewhat slippery as it moves across remote childhood memories and adult observations in the film's present. But the film's use of animation gives visual form to these narrative instabilities and foregrounds the operations of fiction, fantasy, adaptation, and desire in the historical and mnemonic landscapes of and around war. Although grainy archival news footage imposes an authenticating reality effect throughout the film, Osman repeatedly undercuts this authentication

by drawing attention to her failures to grasp accurately what she sees and hears as a child. In one humorous example of the discrepancies between perception and reality in her youth, she describes confidently singing with her sister along with Joan Jett's "A LO MAMA LO," only later to learn that the actual lyrics were "I love Rock 'n' Roll."

As Osman and Dolak repeatedly try and fail to locate idealized sites from Osman's childhood memories, Osman acknowledges that she is "beginning to think that I had made it all up in my head . . . the good old days." Eventually, she finds "evidence" of the "Kabul of my past" in a tourist brochure from the 1970s aimed at what Osman, as a child, used to call "heepee" tourists. But here too, the viewer wonders how many of Osman's childhood "memories" derive from, or at least are blurring with, these recently discovered images of the past. Osman shows the brochures to bemused taxi drivers, asking them, as if they were time-machine pilots able to traverse the space between the past and the present, to take her to these idyllic-looking places, to (inter)(in)animate these static and obsolescent tourist photographs using the kinetic energy of their vehicles. One driver simply refuses; another tries to help the two filmmakers with their seemingly hopeless and somewhat surreal quest. After the filmmakers are dropped off on a hillside, they try without much success to match what they see with the brochure's images. Signaling the disorientation of this moment of arrival and the failure of this effort to animate an Afghanistan that is simultaneously remembered and fantastical, we hear Dolak's uncertain voice from behind the camera asking, "Where's the river?" "Where's the mosque here?" Many of the sites they seek turn out to be either prohibited by the American military occupation, rubble-strewn, or simply unidentifiable. Recalling Reid Kelley's poetry recitals at the graves of World War I's fallen soldiers, the filmmakers' search risks being an exercise in futility, except for what these performances of mnemonic desire render visible and thinkable: the interaction between people and places bound together by long-lasting experiences of perpetual, if evolving, war contexts.

Throughout *Postcards*, Osman and Dolak focus less on how epistemic gaps play out in Afghanistan's national narrative than on how to mediate the contestations, contradictions, and fusions of childhood memories of war and place as they play out within a single person's interior landscape. As memories invade Osman's present and future, the film collages and (inter)(in)animates different types of images to visualize how fusions and contradictions in memory can shape war survivors' interactions with the exterior world, resulting in complex and abstract mediations of time and space that challenge existing scholarly frameworks for conceptualizing and analyzing historical images.<sup>35</sup> Osman describes longing to return to Kabul, but once she is there, she repeatedly performs her uncertainty about where she is and what she's looking at, an uncertainty brought about both by the impact of war on the city and by the role that she documents fantasy to play in her memory of home. Though this might undermine Osman's authority as a reliable or objective



guide through Kabul, Afghanistan's political history, and perhaps even the "facts" of her own biography, this dynamic also sets up a relationship between live action and animated/drawn images that cannot simply be mapped onto simple binaries that separate subject and object, self and other, home and away, fact and fiction, past and present, war and peace, living and dead. In this film, as in many of the other works discussed in *Undead*, (inter)(in)animating effects exist not in isolation but in an amplifying continuum with other experimental techniques that make available for thought war's impact on subjective integrity, semantic stability, and the possibility of life.

Donna Kornhaber describes something akin to this in her reading of a different hybrid film that combines animated and live-action footage, *Waltz with Bashir* (Ari Folman, 2006, Israel). She argues that "the nature of war's *unmaking* involves a fraying of set narratives and a destruction of normal boundaries: a making real of the unthinkable."<sup>36</sup> Both *Postcards* and *Waltz with Bashir* combine documentary footage and animation to grapple with the instability of subjective war memories and narrative, and this invites comparison. Yet in other ways, these films might also be understood as opposites to each other, and it is worth taking time to explore some of the crucial differences between them, and how those differences advance understanding about the potential uses of animation in films about war memory. *Postcards* is an experimental documentary that primarily uses live-action footage, with only occasional animated effects, to foreground the multigenerational experiences of children of war in Afghanistan over a period of decades. By contrast, *Waltz with Bashir* is a feature-length animated docudrama that turns only in the final minutes of the film to live-action news footage of a specific event: the 1982 Sabra and Shatila massacre, in which members of the Phalange, supported by the Israeli military, killed as many as 3,500 Palestinian refugees and Lebanese civilians. The United Nations General Assembly declared the massacre be "an act of genocide."<sup>37</sup> While Dolak and Osman foreground the experiences of children of war, Folman focuses on his own landscape of memory and forgetting as a former Israel Defense Forces soldier struggling to establish his degree of complicity as a perpetrator.<sup>38</sup>

Kornhaber highlights Folman's audiovisualization of war's "total unmaking," the "total victimization of all involved in war," and the way Folman "found himself turned into a *thing*—not a casualty or a victim but a person stripped of agency nonetheless."<sup>39</sup> This does not exempt Folman from his culpability, and Kornhaber acknowledges this. Yet as I compare these two films' related aesthetic strategies, it is necessary to distinguish this temporarily thinged combatant Kornhaber describes from the "thinging" that occurs when civilians are rendered corpses by war. It is also necessary to distinguish Folman's inaccessibility to himself in this particular situation not only from Osman's confused memories as a child survivor of war but also from the different visibility problems Jankovic identifies within the context of Palestinian documentaries that turn to animation. Jankovic writes, "If



traditional documentary modes fail Palestinians due to insurmountable representational and visibility problems like those described by Said—animated, hybrid, and experimental modes provide the world with a new way to engage with diverse Palestinian stories, the ongoing struggle against Israeli occupation, and the struggle for justice for Palestinians.”<sup>40</sup>

Yet in spite of these delineated differences, Folman’s use of the interaction between animated images and documentary footage highlights an important arena for the unending work of unmaking war. For *Waltz with Bashir* renders visible and available to thought not just the perpetrator’s “thinging,” militarization’s ability to transform living agents into seemingly automated actors operated by forces beyond themselves, but also the claimed inability of the “thinged” perpetrator to become aware of this process of “thinging” as it happens. There is some kinship, in spite of many other differences, between Folman’s film and the (inter)(in)animating war projects of both Mary Reid Kelley and Patrick Kelley and Yael Bartana, which use animated effects alongside other tactics to explore not only the relationship between victims and perpetrators of war but also the mechanisms by which perpetrators are able to move into that world-destroying role in the first place. While perpetrators may lose agency in the context of militarism, Bartana’s comparison, in the preceding chapter, between her own generation and contemporary Israeli “draft objectors,” young people she describes as being “super conscious of what they do,” having “the ability to object,” and being “at a different place from [Bartana’s] generation when [they] were recruited to the IDF,” testifies to the possibility of disrupting collective delusions of an obligation to militarism.<sup>41</sup> Art, activism, and forms of education that are fully disentangled from militarism have key roles to play in realizing this possibility. As Mariam Ghani insists,

More than any dispute over which objects end up on the walls or plinths and which names are included in the curricula, the questions of where and how museums and universities choose to expand, and which compromises they are willing to make along the way, will determine how culture is preserved, distributed, and extended. If we are to have any say in this debate, the workers who provide the currency for this sector of cultural trade and services must hold our institutions accountable, and we must begin now.<sup>42</sup>

If war unmakes the contours of familiar narratives and boundaries of the self, the process of unmaking war seems to require inventing ways of writing and teaching histories, including film histories, that are better capable of accommodating the world-obliterating changes and various forms of opacity that war inflicts. Kornhaber suggests that *Waltz with Bashir* aesthetically establishes two worlds—one animated, one documentary—to facilitate at least the viewer’s experience of this world-rupturing violence, even if that experience remains “totally inaccessible” to the character of Folman.<sup>43</sup> Her reading of the film concludes on a personal note that recognizes the film’s unfinished business, observing, “There is tremendous

work that still remains for Folman beyond the film, work that will likely take the rest of his life. The ending of *Waltz with Bashir* is in this sense just the beginning of his journey to reclaim some sense of his self and to understand his past.<sup>44</sup> But the project of feminist un-war making asks for more than this. Beyond personal confrontation with one's own complicity with past acts of violence—although this too—feminist un-war making seeks to identify and disrupt the steps and structures—often, perhaps unavoidably, from within those structures—that precede and enable the world-annihilating massacres that make things of us all.

#### (INTER)(IN)ANIMATING CHILDREN'S IMAGES OF WAR AND IMAGES OF CHILDREN

For Osman, family memories and popular media are closely intertwined. The opening line of the filmmaker's book on Afghan television confirms this sense as Osman reports, "One of my fondest memories as a child growing up in Kabul in the 1970s was gathering with my extended family to watch television at my grandparents' house."<sup>45</sup> In *Postcards*, after cutting swiftly across a variety of media formats, including home movie footage, a photograph of Osman's parents, and blurry footage of prison cells, the film settles on a photograph of Osman as a purple-clad child while Osman continues to narrate her experience of everyday life and war: "Although my Boba was in prison, life moved on. I was at school one day playing on the jungle gym one day with my classmates when dust clouds rose all around us." At this point, the whistle of approaching missiles and explosions appears on the soundtrack as the voice-over describes bombardments occurring during a school day. Throughout this description, the film remains fixated on the childhood photograph of Osman, which at this point is located in a family photo album. This still photograph of Osman as a child becomes inundated with childish crayon drawings of animated rockets, which start to fly and explode across the surface of this still photograph. Animated crayon fire burns at the feet of the smiling child, who seems hyper-rigid, frozen in time in comparison with the missiles' movements and Osman's description of those around her: "Everyone was running and screaming." Later in the film, in a reversal of this scene's choreography of the frozen child and the animated machines of war, this photograph becomes unmoored from its context to make a comedic animated comeback, which I will discuss below, in the supercharged form of a masked superhero version of Osman's younger self.

Following more archival news footage, extended animated sequences depict Osman's subjective experience of the night of December 24, 1979, a date that marks the official invasion of Afghanistan, after which follows the installation of Babrak Karmel (1979) in what Osman describes in the film as another "bloody coup" (figure 17). This animated scene is preceded by a composite image in which a hand-drawn television is added to a cozy family photo depicting Osman watching



FIGURE 17. Hand-drawn TV watched by Wazhmah Osman's family, in Kelly Dolak and Wazhmah Osman's *Postcards from Tora Bora*, 2007.

"a variety show" with her Aunt Maryam's family, asserting Afghan people to be modern consumers of everyday media and not just subjects of documentary or victims of war. Indeed, one of the distinctive elements of this film is that Afghan people, and especially women and children, repeatedly appear as viewers and image makers rather than only objects to be observed and spoken for. This view of Afghan people as makers, controllers, and consumers of images and narratives is reinforced throughout the film. The scene of family relaxation and popular entertainment in front of the TV begins about thirteen minutes into the film. As Osman describes her memory of the broadcast beginning to flicker, the photograph of the family watching a hand-drawn television starts intermittently to feature screen "snow." The voice-over is similarly disrupted by "white noise," conflating past and present experiences of broadcasting failure in a way that creates an intersubjective time and place now shared not only between Osman's past and present selves but also with viewers. This intersubjective entangling of the operations of memory and mediation has the potential, as Vivian Sobchack has argued, to prevent the physical body from being regarded "primarily as an object among other objects," perhaps offering ethical and political alternatives for better ways of being in the world and with each other.<sup>46</sup> Three hand-drawn, animated cutout paper planes fly across photographic footage of a dark and cloudy sky as Osman's voice, talking over the sound of the plane, describes how the family heard "military plane after



FIGURE 18. Child's drawing of war landscape with animated figures, in Kelly Dolak and Wazhmah Osman's *Postcards from Tora Bora*, 2007.

plane after plane roaring in the late night sky." Soon the sky fills with hand-drawn, multicolored animated paper helicopters that make their way across the screen to the rhythmic sound of propellers as Osman narrates her memories of that world-altering Christmas Eve.

At this point, photorealist images disappear entirely as the landscape gives way to a series of crayon-drawn, brightly colored Afghan landscapes brought to life by a soundscape that combines Osman's voice, drum music, and the sound of bombardment; by camera movements and zooms; and by the animation of cutout drawings of red tanks, shooting rockets, planes, helicopters, exploding bombs, and human and animal figures that make their way across the surface of this two-dimensional landscape. As special-effect bombs explode within the crayon-drawn landscape, cutout animated figures scurry between the buildings of this town that is nestled at the base of a green crayon mountain range. One front-facing crayon figure with a drawn fixed smile seems to run toward the camera and away from the bombs, the combination of frozen expression and rapid movement conveying something of the experience of war trauma, until the crayoned face almost fills the screen (figure 18). Eventually, an explosion vaporizes the figure along with this scene into a cloud of smoke, leaving the viewer to decide the appropriate affective response to the loss of this piece of paper.

The animation here immerses twenty-first-century spectators in the six-year-old's remembered sensations of an earlier war and visualizes the perpetuation

of childhood war trauma into adult life. But giving visual form to Osman's past experiences of war in the present is not the only way in which animation here bends or confuses war time and historical time. It soon becomes clear that Osman's "remembered" animated images of the Soviet invasion have in fact been drawn, presumably in response to the post-9/11 US aerial bombardment and invasion of Afghanistan, by children in a school for orphans that Osman visits in 2004. This substitution raises questions about the difference between one agent of bombing and another as well as about how the decision to use these twenty-first-century images positions Osman, who at this point in the film is already a composite entity, in relation to the child-artists.

The full drawings from which the earlier animated planes and bombs are taken show detailed depictions of children's lived experiences of war, including tanks rolling through streets, houses being bombed, and people being shot, mined, and stabbed, and they are, even without Osman's recontextualization and animation of them, complex artifacts in their own right. The presence of Dari writing in some of the images prevents them from being fully available to those unable to read that script. The text inscribes mountains with their names, such as the Fairoz Koh, a twin range that is an extension of the Hindu Kush in Chaghcharan, a region of Afghanistan. The writing also inscribes buildings and drawings with the names of fathers and sons (Moharram and his father Jomeh, Mohammadreza and his father Ibrahim) or with boys' nicknames, as with the inscription that reads "Qandaghah," which means "Mr. Sweet" (*Qand* is sugar cane, and *Agha* is mister), a name often given to nice kids.<sup>47</sup> The presence of the name of a sweetie-pie kid on the roof of a building in the midst of a scene of aerial bombardment reminds those who can read it of the civilian loss of life and human specificity that goes along with so-called collateral damage.<sup>48</sup> The writing that is cut out of the animated uses of the image serves to situate the depicted experiences in relation to very specific people, cultures, and places.

In relocating and animating these contemporary children's images to illustrate war memories from Osman's earlier past, the film risks generalizing, or appropriating, individual experiences of war and removing their specificity, transforming them into what Susan Sontag describes as "plangent denunciations of war."<sup>49</sup> That risk is real; but the film also provides other ways to make sense of the blurring of Osman's story into that of the children she documents. In the earlier scenes, the use of animated parts of the children's drawings visually illustrates the phenomenon Osman describes of feeling a kind of dissociation when she notes that her six-year-old self is stuck in Kabul, fixed in time, left behind by her adult self. Part of the work of animation in the film seems to involve in-animating or stilling these cut-up drawings and returning them to their original state, to their own authors and stories, while simultaneously reuniting the adult Osman with her own, animated, six-year-old Kabul self.

During a filmed scene in the orphans' school that Osman's father helped to found, a scene that documents the production of the children's drawings that

*Postcards* cuts up and sets in motion in new (old) contexts, Osman seeks to put the pieces into their proper place. First, she names the specific agents of violence that have affected distinct generations of children at different moments in Afghanistan's modern history of war, and only after that does she establish a cross-generational kinship among those children of war. She states, "I was part of the first generation of war. Unfortunately, the legacy continues with these children. They are the second or third generation who have experienced the hellish aftermath of the Soviet invasion, the bloody civil wars for control of Kabul, the Taliban, and now the US War on Terror." Though Osman and Dolak posit an affinity across generations catalyzed by the childhood experience of war, here too it is perhaps useful to recall Marianne Hirsch's distinction, noted in chapter 3, between a "feminist connective" reading and "comparative" readings, as well as her question, "How can divergent histories that expose children to danger and abandonment be thought together but without flattening or blurring the differences between them?"<sup>50</sup> Such distinctions seem particularly important to make within a context in which a neoliberal feminism and anti- or ahistorical rhetoric of helpless women and children in need of saving has been instrumentalized to justify US military actions that have further destroyed life and the infrastructures that support it.<sup>51</sup>

Instead of "flattening" historical differences, *Postcards* juxtaposes animated effects and live-action documentary footage to experiment with "feminist connective," or perhaps (inter)(in)animating, mediations of young life in and after war. The film does not pretend to offer solutions to the political situation in Afghanistan. Instead, it focuses throughout on presenting a variety of ordinary Afghan people across generations involved in different ways as active producers, consumers, and circulators of images, images that depart from those created and circulated by mainstream Western media infrastructures. Within the context of the orphanage, the film foregrounds crayon drawing as a low-budget and easily accessible form of image production that gives the war-orphaned children an opportunity to mediate war as they see and feel it and thus to assert some control over their own, violated stories.

#### MEANING IN MOTION: OSMAN TO THE RESCUE!

In a scene following Osman's father's release from prison and his family's attempt to follow him to Pakistan, a red line on an animated map traces Osman's route from Kabul to Peshawar. Over this is superimposed a reenactment of a young child, presumably Osman, dragging a suitcase of family photos up a mountain. The film connects this depiction of Osman's remembered journey as a refugee with contemporary children in Afghanistan when, a few minutes later, it shows a little boy walking through "Chicken Alley," a market street lined with walls of Afghan images for sale. The boy calls out to the filmmakers to buy his "big map" of Kabul and they discuss, off-camera, whether or not they should. Osman and Dolak film the boy removing the map from its plastic casing and opening it out fully until the



map almost seems to have legs of its own as it is moved through the street, another case of embodied animation, this time in the form of an animated map. Perhaps this scene offers one embodiment of the queer global cinema that Karl Schoonover and Rosalind Galt suggest requires us to approach cinema as “meaning in motion” in a way that “resists hierarchies of production value, taking seriously cheaply made films and the political economy of perpetually minoritized audiences.”<sup>52</sup> Osman reinforces this sense of a refugee cinema, a cinema of, for, and animated by the children of war, a few scenes later. As she describes her mother’s decision to take her children to America, a suitcase appears on screen and becomes a provisional mobile screen across which indistinct moving images of refugees flicker. Perhaps this is even the same suitcase that Osman discovers in Kabul, full of family photographs, the personal archive now turned inside out in this film where private images become part of transnational histories, setting both images and histories literally and figuratively in motion.

As Osman describes losing her personal relationship with her father during the collective struggles he engaged with in various capacities, she narrates a recurrent dream she has of entering Kabul and other Soviet strongholds to save Afghanistan so that the family can return. This dream generates one of the most extended, jarring, and often comic sequences of (inter)(in)animation in the film. Here, once again, photographs of the Afghan landscape taken from 1970s tourist brochures form the backdrop for a variety of animated scenarios. Humor and horror, stasis and motion, history and imagination, warriors and children, coexist. After the photograph of Osman as a young girl begins to be bombarded by animated paper bombs, as if by contagion, the young Osman depicted in the image seems to absorb the energy of the weapons assaulting her childhood photograph to fuel a fantastical animated life of her own. With the young Osman now sporting a black stealthy eye mask drawn over the photographic image with marker, first one and then multiple animated photo-puppets of the child-superhero parachute into the image (video 5), raining down from the sky. She sneaks between rocks and in rivers, popping up suddenly and comically between child and adult male soldiers as she calls out to her absent father through the intertitles, “Boba! Boba! I’m saving Afghanistan!” If these sequences poke fun at the delusions and false narratives of supposed-heroes and drop-in saviors, they also express the child of war’s desires—for political agency, for home, for proximity to family, and for home: “Boba! Boba! We can go home now!” the masked super-Osman cries out.

Animation enables Osman at least visually to take control of her young self in the form of a puppet in a context where she, like the other children around her, many of whom lacked her class privilege, had their lives, educations, and support structures blasted, and sometimes ended, by war. Osman’s puppet may also serve as an act of (inter)(in)animated resistance to the way Afghan children have been weaponized like objects, treated by all sides as pawns in a war game, including through educational and development-funded institutions. Mahmood Mamdani, for example, cites Pervez Hoodbhoy’s research on children’s textbooks





VIDEO 5. Masked Wazhmah. Kelly Dolak and Wazhmah Osman, *Postcards from Tora Bora*, 2007.

To watch this video, scan the QR code with your mobile device or visit  
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1525/luminos.228.5>



designed for the mujahideen's Educational Center for Afghanistan "by the University of Nebraska under a \$50 million USAID grant that ran from September 1986 through June 1994. A third-grade mathematics textbook asks, 'One group of mujahidin attack 50 Russian soldiers. In the attack, 20 Russians are killed. How many Russians fled?'"<sup>53</sup>

*Postcards* seeks out other types of classrooms. In the wake of young Osman's animated puppet adventures, the film shows Osman visiting the orphanage classroom where the children's drawings are produced. The film refuses to sentimentalize these children, instead affirming them as agents in their own lives and stories by listening to their illustrated war stories, however strange or surreal they may be, and by documenting their drawn experiences in synch with their narratives. Cutting between talking head shots in which each child is named, and shots of each child's drawing, brought to life by camera movements, zooms, sound effects, and the child's own narration of events, the film returns the drawings to their original creators, as if to establish a new level of stability in the landscape of childhood war memory. Akeem explains that his drawing depicts a plane that fired a bomb which hit the truck driver and caused the truck to crash. One man shoots another

dead. Someone else is blown up by a mine. This is a world of weapons, helicopters, and planes. Naqeebullah, son of Sader Shah, explains that his father was working at his vegetable stand when he was “martyred by a rocket.” Mohammad Wasser Waled Mohammad reports on the death of his father, an engineer. He explains that his father died by a poisoned orange. The camera zooms in on a drawn orange that has arms and legs, conjuring up associations, at least for me, with Agent Orange and a longer history of US imperialist violence. But for this boy, this image gives a face to the agent of his father’s death. He explains, “[My father] ate it, and he couldn’t make it home.” As the drawings move across the screen, we recognize green helicopters and red rockets from the earlier scenes depicting Osman’s own childhood memories of war. Though these sequences make clear that these are particular images that belong to these particular children, with Osman in the role of witness and listener, the film’s experiments have set in motion something like a transgenerational community of children of war that evolves out of the combination of childhood experiences of war and the process of making images about those experiences and animating those images by sharing them with others. As the principal distributes art supplies that the filmmakers have brought to the school, the children scramble for materials. “Calm down, calm down,” she says. “It’s as if I’m handing out food.” This is image making as a mode of staying alive, of sustaining and animating oneself in the face of war.

It matters that the children Dolak and Osman film in the orphanage are all boys, for the film’s resistance to imperialist Afghan stereotypes of femininity goes hand in hand with its reimagining of how a documentary film might represent Afghan masculinity differently for an international audience. The children’s drawings of aerial bombardment and landmines depict the death of fathers and the losses of sons. In contrast to fetishized media images of silent and helpless Afghan female victims of repressive Afghan men, *Postcards* depicts sons as young artists who express and mourn their losses and who are proud of the drawings they share.

This commitment to dismantling associations between Afghan masculinity and violence, including but not limited to violence against women, persists throughout the film. This occurs in numerous ways, including through the visualization of an international community of war makers and through its development of complex and nuanced frameworks for the film’s male characters, including Omar, who runs a mine museum, and Osman’s father, known as Boba. The scenes shot in Omar’s Mine Museum systematically resist connotations of Afghanistan and Afghan men with violence. Omar provides a tour of the bombs and other war materials in his collection, as if the children’s drawings have taken on three dimensions, explaining for the filmmakers how cluster bombs work and highlighting the bombs’ diverse points of origin as the camera pans over Soviet, American, British, Israeli, Czechoslovakian, Iranian, Pakistani, Italian, and Chinese weapons. He comments on one bomb that has been turned into a plant pot on which is painted in Persian, “Peace, not war,” and affirms that he is antiwar. Osman subsequently asks whether

it is the mine museum that has made him antiwar, to which Omar responds, “No, from the beginning I was a lover of peace. There shouldn’t be wars in Afghanistan. The mines created by the wars should never have been in Afghanistan. We had a program called the ICBL. Countries came together to petition that landmines be banned. To be banned forever. Many countries have signed this request.” A title appears to supplement Omar’s narrative, stating: “China, Israel, and the United States have refused to sign the petition banning anti-personnel landmines.”

The film’s depiction of Boba, Osman’s father, further challenges rigid stereotypes of Afghan masculinity as aligned with violence. “Boba” signals a greater range of possible identities than any other character in the film, for over the course of his life he has been an elite psychiatry professor, a frontline surgeon, a resistance fighter against the Soviets, a prisoner of war and torture victim, an often-absent father and husband, and a long-standing leading figure in the fight to build free orphanages, schools, and hospitals in war-torn Afghanistan. A scene depicting Osman interviewing her father about his experiences in Pulcharki prison shows the inadequacy of separating identities such as victim, guerrilla fighter, and aid worker. Although a closeup shows Osman at one point with a tear in her eye as she listens to her father’s report, this tear is not the abstracted and universalized tear of the Afghan girl type but rather the specific, empathetic, and (inter)(in)animating response of a daughter listening to her father as he describes experiences of solitary confinement and torture.

While Osman, like her aunt, appears as a technologically and educationally empowered woman, her performance in the film also resists the trope of the indefatigable and empire-affirming returning exile. Occasionally we see a shot of her looking depressed as she lies on her bed, just as her aunt declares wearily in the film’s epilogue, “No good news from Afghanistan.” But this heaviness is held in tension by (inter)(in)animating scenes of togetherness, intimacy, and filmmaking. Osman seeks out sites of memory and longing together with Dolak, albeit with little success. Meanwhile, the aunt keeps herself going by cooking traditional meals in inadequate circumstances and by fostering community conversations about gender roles and expectations in which she articulates her thoughts on these topics with a blunt humor. Osman seems to survive in the face of rolling war through recourse to acts of imaging alternative worlds, while rigorously trying to understand the world as it is. A visit to the open-air pool that she used to visit as a child generates the only other scene in which we see Osman shed tears. The pool is empty, dilapidated, and graffitied with cartoon images of tanks, here stilled by the act of drawing. Osman states that she keeps on imagining the water and that it is better sometimes “not to see what used to be,” adding that this is the reason she cannot walk across the pool. But in the following sequence, she begins traversing the pool in spite of her stated inability to do so. As if by magic, but in fact by the same special effects that have been activated as a tool of visual transformation throughout the film, beautiful blue tiles appear and the animated water rises.

## Unnatural Disasters

### *Unfinishable (Inter)(in)animation*

Helen Hill (1970–2007) was a white experimental animator/filmmaker and social justice activist from Columbia, South Carolina. Her filmmaking gained national attention after an intruder entered her New Orleans home and murdered her on January 4, 2007, also shooting Hill's husband, Paul Gailiunas, several times as he protected the couple's son, Francis Pop, although both Gailiunas and Francis Pop survived. Hill's was one of a spate of murders in the city that included the shooting of the twenty-five-year-old drummer of the Hot 9 brass band, Diner-al Shavers, on December 28, 2006.<sup>1</sup> These two fatal shootings, along with many others, remain unsolved.

Hill began making animated films as a fifth-grade public school student at a moment when, in the wake of desegregation's implementation, the majority of white students began attending "Segregation Academies," and segregation became a primary concern of her final project.<sup>2</sup> After graduating from Harvard University in 1992, Hill relocated to New Orleans with her classmate Gailiunas. She then completed a master of fine arts at CalArts in 1995 and moved to Nova Scotia while Gailiunas finished his medical degree. There she made films and taught animation before returning to Mid-City, New Orleans, in 2001. While Gailiunas founded an affordable health care clinic, she taught animation through the New Orleans Video Access Center and cofounded the New Orleans Film Collective.<sup>3</sup> The couple was involved in a variety of community activist projects, including Food Not Bombs, sometimes attending protests against racist and gentrifying local government policies, and the meetings of an antiracism group, "Eracism."<sup>4</sup> They participated fully in the creative landscape of New Orleans: in Mardi Gras and Halloween, punk anarchism, and a DIY culture that Dan Streible describes as "rooted in anti-corporate

grassroots practice.”<sup>5</sup> For Hill, this landscape involved undoing the infrastructures and inevitability of patriarchal capitalism and war.

#### COMMUNITY-BASED PRACTICE AS UN-WAR MAKING

Nothing more clearly illustrates Hill’s understanding of the link between unmaking the mutually reinforcing structures of war and capitalism on the one hand, and her community-based and participatory animated media practice on the other, than a hand-drawn flyer that she produced to advertise her millennially framed instructional film, *Madame Winger Makes a Film (A Survival Guide for the 21st Century)* (Helen Hill, 2000). She reproduced this flyer in black and white in *Recipes for Disaster: A Handcrafted Film Cookbooklet* (2004, revised and reissued 2005) and in color on a watercolor calendar that she made for her mother and stepfather (figure 19). It features four comic strips of different possible landscapes in the future. The first features an apocalyptic scene of war. Nuclear bombs rain down from the sky; trees are burned; fish are skeletal; buildings are ruined; a matchstick corpse lies splayed and alone; antennae poke up from an underground bunker, as the caption asks, “Will you be trapped in a tiny underground bomb shelter?” The third, more utopian, scenario asks, “Will you be making your way in a better world, where all work and industries are devoted to serving basic human needs?,” and links peace and human thriving to a full restructuring of society. The “Beauty Emporium” has been replaced with a “Free Medical Clinic” that is open twenty-four hours a day; an expensive film lab has become a free food bank; “TV REPAIR” is replaced by the cozy-looking Shelter #394; a café provides “free vegan hot lunches.” And the final caption asserts the importance of access to creative outlets that exist outside of capitalist circuits, juxtaposing the question “Will you be surrounded by big machines you don’t understand?” with a TV ad stating simply, “Coke!” as well as a projected “Digi-Pro” ad, while a child cries out in a speech bubble, “Please help! I just want to draw with a pencil and paper!”<sup>6</sup> A close-up diagram of the bunker on the following page of *Recipes for Disaster* adds a small footnote that recognizes both the financial and technological factors that inhibit collective participation in filmmaking and encourages readers to overcome these obstacles in an environment that is imagined as a war-scape. The footnote urges, “In this new century of changing digital technology, you may want to hide out in your own homemade film lab/bomb shelter. Or you might take the barest of materials into your kitchen and make a lovely little flick about something you love. Filmmaking is so fun, so get going.”<sup>7</sup> The image visualizes both present and future. If the future bears some traces of nostalgia for a predigital and handmade past, it also imagines the antidote to war in terms of a restructuring of an antiwar society through adequate food and easy access to both health care and creative expression. And as Streible suggests, it is *The Florestine Collection* that “best encapsulates this connection between [Hill’s] art and activism.”<sup>8</sup>

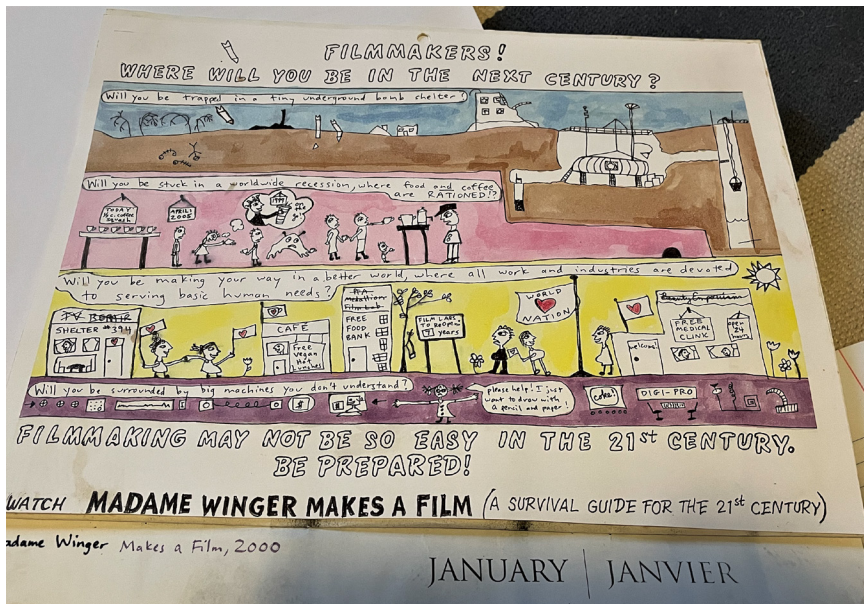


FIGURE 19. Helen Hill, page from calendar.

Historian Tiya Miles, who participated in a feminist collective with Hill and was one of her roommates at Harvard, suggests that Hill's mode of being resonated with the opening line of one of Hill's poems, "It is as though . . .," for she was always experimenting with self-presentation through dressing up.<sup>9</sup> Hill was a dedicated thrifter and trash-picker, and on Mardi Gras morning of 2001, she discovered a fairy-tale-like pile of over a hundred discarded handmade dresses. She took them home to wash and repair. As a filmmaker who prized the handmade, collage, and vibrant colors, she felt a kinship with the maker and decided to make the dressmaker the subject of her most ambitious project, which would ultimately be released as *The Florestine Collection*. By talking to neighbors who lived near the trash pile, Hill learned that the dressmaker was Ms. Florestine Kinchen, also known as "Sister Kinchen," an African American deaconess who had recently passed away on February 12, 2001, at the age of ninety-five, shortly before Mardi Gras day.<sup>10</sup>

Although Hill often completed films within a year or less, *The Florestine Collection* was unusual in that she began it in 2001 and then worked on it over the next six years through a series of life-changing events, including childbirth, a year's displacement from her New Orleans home to Columbia after Hurricane Katrina, and a return to New Orleans in August 2006. In 2004, she received a Rockefeller Foundation fellowship to support the project. The grant application provides some sense of how Hill thought about the dresses: "I washed the dresses and tried them



on. They fit. They not only fit, but in a very particular way that I prefer: loose on top and cut just above the knees. And they were quirky and lovely, just my style.”<sup>11</sup> But Hill’s film was only one part of a much more elaborate community-based project that set the dresses in motion in a variety of ways: “Besides entering the film in festivals, I hope the film will begin a community project. I love the dresses and I wear them, but I do not need all 100. I plan to display all the dresses at the New Orleans premiere screening and give many of them away.” She continued,

The Dress Project would be a small grant to encourage people to create their own unique wardrobe. Four people would be chosen from anonymous applications. Each person would receive a small grant (one hundred dollars) to help cover costs. Each member of The Dress Project would design and make 4 everyday outfits and one holiday outfit. . . . This project would honor Ms. Kinchen and bring back the lost art of hand sewn dresses. People would be chosen based on a unique vision and a desire to design their own everyday clothes, regardless of sewing ability. The group would be encouraged to help each other out, in a sewing bee atmosphere.<sup>12</sup>

Handmade zines would also tell the story of the dresses to “inspire dress clubs in other cities.”<sup>13</sup>

This project had always set out to explore interracial dynamics between women across generations, media, and class lines through attention to objects both discarded and found. But the film and its paracinematic offshoots acquired new dimensions after the breaking of the levees on August 29, 2005, caused approximately 1,500 deaths and rendered millions of people homeless, with the city’s Black population disproportionately affected as a result of environmental racism.<sup>14</sup> Watching these events on television in Columbia catalyzed in Hill a deepening commitment to include the interracial and spatial dynamics of New Orleans in the “Florestine Project,” a term I use to differentiate Hill’s expansive work in progress from the film that was ultimately released under the title *The Florestine Collection*. The film Gailiunas completed is moving and beautiful in its own right, but this chapter considers how it might be possible to distinguish the film by Gailiunas from the open-ended possibilities suggested by Hill’s work in progress. Nevertheless, even as I mark a distinction between the works in question, the two undoubtedly overlap, and *The Florestine Collection* offers a helpful glimpse of some of the material with which Hill was working. The posthumous film opens silently with a sequence of Hill’s film footage damaged by flooding caused by Hurricane Katrina. These images, which materially embody the devastation Hill and her family went through, soon give way to colorful scenes of Hill’s signature silhouette animation as Hill’s lilting voice describes her discovery of a pile of handmade dresses and her desire to make a short film about them. Gailiunas’s voice soon takes over. Interspersing a musical soundtrack that includes songs by both Hill and Gailiunas, he narrates Hill’s murder before returning to other topics, including the discovery and restoration of the dresses, Hill’s search for the dressmaker and her family, her plan for the



film, her relationship with New Orleans, her life with Paul and their son, and their experience of Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath. Visually, the film combines silhouette animation, frame-by-frame abstract experiments using the dresses' fabric, and home movie footage and family photographs, often flood-damaged.

The Rockefeller grant Hill received for the project had emphasized project completion. Archival notes show this emphasis spurring Hill on in the midst of crisis, in spite of the flood having destroyed and damaged both much of her work and Florestine's dresses, which she recovered, cleaned, and repaired a second time. One of several "postKatrina *Florestine Collection* scripts" begins: "But I still had a grant and with it, an obligation to make my finish an animated film."<sup>15</sup> Over the objections of her family, Hill insisted upon returning to New Orleans on the one-year anniversary of Katrina, wanting to participate in the city's rebuilding and develop the community-based work that the Florestine Project was becoming. Hill, often in collaboration with Gailiunas, found a variety of ways to do this. Every year, for example, Hill and Gailiunas made a flash animation online calendar for "Gothtoberfest." In October 2006, their calendar, entitled *A Monster in New Orleans*, features a green monster in striped shorts wandering through the black-and-white photographs that Hill had shot more than a year after the hurricane.<sup>16</sup> One of those images (figure 20) features a tree surrounded by a circle of wooden crosses, some of them hung with beads, and in the tree hangs a hand-painted sign featuring a quotation from Ivor Van Heerden, a South African-born professor at Louisiana State University and a hurricane specialist whose university contract was terminated after he identified the Army Corps of Engineers' failure to act on structural flaws in the Hurricane Protection System that had been identified as far back as 1976. Van Heerden had argued for a variety of responses to Katrina's devastation, including a coastal protection and restoration plan, and a "truth and reconciliation" commission. He suggested that such a commission "could operate not by branding scapegoats but by encouraging those who have special knowledge of what happened to explain what they know without fear of retribution so that the same mistakes are not made again"; but this reference also establishes a direct comparison between the South African system of apartheid and everyday life in the United States of America.<sup>17</sup> The painted quotation contrasts the military's neglect of the people of New Orleans with its enthusiasm for war, declaring simply, "If we had the will & one month's money from Iraq, we could do all the levees and restore the coast."<sup>18</sup> In his book-length reflections on what went wrong during Hurricane Katrina, van Heerden repeatedly returns to comparisons between the abandonment of New Orleans citizens and the organizational infrastructure and funding to support the war in Iraq. He cites the Reverend Isaac Clark's statement in the Convention Center: "We are out here like pure animals. We have nothing. . . . Billions for Iraq, zilch for New Orleans," and comments, "Look at our huge effort in staging for the invasion of Iraq. Every contingency was thought through. I'm talking about just the war here, not the ensuing occupation, many aspects of



FIGURE 20. Still from Helen Hill and Paul Gailiunas's flash animation online calendar made for Gothtoberfest, *A Monster in New Orleans*, October 2006.

which might have been prepped by FEMA itself. In fact, it would be pretty easy to draw an analogy between the government's failed preparations for the predicted disaster of Katrina and the botched occupation of Iraq. War we're good at. The best. We stand alone. But then what? Of course, questions were raised in Louisiana about the fact that roughly 40 percent of the state's seven thousand National Guards were on duty in Iraq."<sup>19</sup>

Hill's murder terminated her six-year-long attempt to find ethical ways to learn about, animate, and uplift Florestine's interior life and creative practice, and to do so in comparison with these aspects of Hill's own life and in dialogue with both Florestine's community and the interracial history of the city. Although the exceptional conditions of Hill's death have led to exceptional critical framings of her work, situating Hill and this project more firmly within film history and the history of New Orleans clarifies the evolving nature of *The Florestine Collection*. This chapter seeks to establish the multiple traditions in which Hill was working and to understand some of the ways they interacted with each other.

Daphne Brooks describes New Orleans as a place where codes of belonging, of the local and the foreign, have historically intersected with racial codes in complex and changing ways that shaped the city's creative and performative dynamics.<sup>20</sup> Brooks explores how New Orleans's risky performances that crossed lines of race and gender, at times overlapping with the "racial misogyny" of minstrelsy, nevertheless created a unique "polyvalence" of cultural categories at the very moment

when these categories were being fixed and helped to generate the city's "fleeting opportunities for self-defining agency."<sup>21</sup> Hill was fascinated by New Orleans' performance cultures, and the Florestine Project, in particular, was a site-specific endeavor. She also explicitly reflected in script drafts on her sense of being "at home in" but not from New Orleans, and of feeling "in exile" from the city after Katrina.

Here, I build on the work of Anne Major, who has astutely highlighted how Hill's murder produced a discourse of rosy, romantic, and beatific sweetness derived from the colors, heart imagery, and humor permeating Hill's films at the expense of other important critical conversations.<sup>22</sup> While acknowledging the influence of the American avant-garde, Streible argues that the qualities John Canemaker describes as "angelic sensuality, sensitivity, and fun" also set Hill apart from that movement's tendencies toward "conflict, internecine grudges, denunciation, and darkness" and put her in a category of her own.<sup>23</sup> Though offered in the spirit of eulogy, this affectionate language of exception is also gendered, and it inhibits Hill's work from taking its rightful place in film history. Sweetness, color, love, and craft are undeniably strong elements of her films, but this chapter emphasizes how these elements interact with Hill's other filmmaking influences, including Lotte Reiniger, New American Cinema, Third Cinema, and experimental feminist filmmaking. Immersion in Hill's archive and attention to her unfinished—and potentially unfinishable—film project reveals a community-based feminist filmmaker grappling with a series of complicated issues, including the histories carried by material objects; her own emplacement as a white woman in histories of racial injustice; and the role of animation in engaging these issues.

#### THE FLORESTINE COLLECTION: FINISHED OR UNFINISHED?

*The Florestine Collection* both is and is not a finished film. By one account, it was finished posthumously by Gailiunas using the materials that were in process at the time of Hill's death, combining Hill's plans for the film with Gailiunas's elegiac explanation of why he, and not Hill, completed the work. Gailiunas was meticulous in his efforts to keep Florestine in view and to give proper credit to those members of her community who had assisted Hill in her research efforts. But the film inevitably, given the circumstances, becomes primarily a work of mourning for Hill, even as Gailiunas sustains a sense of another incomplete film haunting the one he completed. As I discussed the film's completion with Hill's wide circle of family and friends, it emerged that the film component of the Florestine Project was incomplete at the time of Hill's murder in part because Hill had been experiencing a "block" on the film and had rethought it more than once.<sup>24</sup> Over several months, as Gailiunas and Lewis made different parts of Hill's paper and

audio archive gradually available to me, my sense of “the film” has kept evolving throughout the writing process.

According to IMDb, the film was completed in 2011, but already in 2008, an announcement for an exhibition of Florestine’s dresses at the McKissick Museum in Columbia, South Carolina, had promised “a premiere viewing of the finished film in conjunction with the exhibition.”<sup>25</sup> The finish line for this film is, then, a moving target, and for complex and generative reasons. An opening title describes the work as “a film by Helen Hill completed by Paul Gailiunas.” Yet in the final minutes, Gailiunas states, “And that is how the story must end: an incomplete film and an incomplete life.” Gailiunas’s production notes confirm both his and others’ ambivalence about how to deal with the entwined issues of authorship and endings. A working draft of the script from September 14, 2007, ponders the issue of authorship and toys with the possibility of “a film by Helen and Paul.”<sup>26</sup> Elsewhere, after a screening for friends, Gailiunas notes, “Randall: Maybe contextualize earlier (at the beginning) so that people understand that film is finishing Helen’s film (maybe in titles),” and later adds, “(A film started by Helen Hill Completed by Paul Gailiunas?).”<sup>27</sup> Gailiunas wonders in the same notebook on June 18, 2009, “Do I need to say it is ‘incomplete’ as I wrote? Film feels complete.”

Hill’s post-Katrina scribbles confirm that she was fully reimagining her film: “Get going.” “Rewrite script and storyboard/index cards.” “Draw draw draw ink paint.” For me, studying *The Florestine Collection*, neither as the finished film that it ended up being nor as a projection of the work it would have been, but instead as the overlapping, messy fragments of an interrupted work in progress that increasingly deemphasized the final work in favor of building relationships with the people involved, has meant disrupting scholarly business as usual. It has involved moving my attention from a finished film to an uncatalogued archive and still-developing conversations; finding a method for writing about a film that hovers in a confusing grammatical space; and holding on to what that grammar might reveal while attempting to get a sense of the order of things as Hill’s work changed and developed over time. It has meant writing in relation to an evolving object of study (the films, the dresses, the Dress Project, and the posthumous exhibition) and to an evolving cast of both “filmmakers” (Helen, Paul, friends and family, and Florestine’s community) and “missing” people (Florestine, the filmmakers who shot the film’s found footage and the people in it, the family members who didn’t respond to Hill’s invitations, and Hill herself). The shifts and conversations that have defined this project have left me with questions I am still pondering: Who has the right to throw things away or take up discarded objects? What is the difference between a person’s refusal to participate in historical research and the resistance given to knowledge by a material object discarded for unknown reasons? What kinds of making and thinking do missing people and found objects provoke? For whom is this work when it is written or

made?<sup>28</sup> Gailiunas's ending directly addresses these issues when he knots together the technical skills of the animator, the needlewoman, and the doctor through the language of stitching, leaving love for the broad community created by the film in the place of the irreparable: "Now I want to resurrect her, to mend her wounds, to take care of her, but I can't. So instead I have taken the frayed and flooded pieces that remain of the Florestine Collection and I have stitched them together with love, for you, for her."

The temporal location of my object of study is close to, but not, what linguists describe as the *past irrealis*, associated with counterfactual historiographic modes, where temporal pastness and speculative realities encounter each other and can be confused.<sup>29</sup> Janine Marchessault rightly suggests that *The Florestine Collection* resists the concept of "Katrina time," which binds New Orleans inescapably to social collapse, through its emphasis on Hill and Gailiunas's persistent investment in collective being. I agree with this assessment, not least because the very idea of "collection" is etymologically rooted in the act of bringing together.<sup>30</sup> But Marchessault also sees *The Florestine Collection* as "profoundly place bound" in contrast to the "anywhere" and "fantasmatic escape and reverie" of Hill's earlier film *Mouseholes* (1999), in which animation seems to resurrect Hill's deceased grandfather, Poppy, as an animated mouse. Here I would depart from Marchessault's reading. Hill had included *Mouseholes* as a work sample with her Rockefeller grant application, noting, "The tone and mood of *Mouseholes* is most similar (of my films) to the mood I imagine for *The Florestine Collection*. Both tell a personal story."<sup>31</sup> Activating a variety of media formats, Hill was beginning to explore across multiple times and spaces the relations among lived personal experience, local and transnational histories, the continuously provisional project of living in community, and experimental film.

The unfinished film's archive raises the question of how fairly to account for work that a filmmaker has not released into the world and that is spread across a variety of provisional and nondefinitive plans in the form of scripts, notes, letters, shot material, storyboards, sketches, unedited audio recordings, plans for collaboration, and so on.<sup>32</sup> This issue becomes particularly charged in the neoliberal academic landscape described by Imani Perry where a scholar's professional success can be linked to taking strictly positive or negative positions on complicated objects or issues, leading to oversimplification of complicated questions.<sup>33</sup> The dresses that Hill found, took home, cleaned, twice repaired, and animated are what Perry calls "vexy things," hovering between recovered histories and appropriated objects and therefore demanding "nuanced deliberation."<sup>34</sup>

Unfinished works are useful because the uncertainty surrounding them suspends hasty critical judgments and creates more patient spaces for sifting through nonlinear material and engaging in thought and dialogue. Hill's archive suggests a filmmaking philosophy, expressed more in practice than in words, that rejects the territorialization of film and challenges scholars to reflect on how film history

is shaped by the prioritization of completed objects and by who or what gets lost in the process.

### UNFINISHING AS FEMINIST, DECOLONIZING METHOD

Unfinishing is an essential quality of Hill's late work, drawing critical attention to the imagined duration of a filmmaker's relationship with the subjects she films. It had also always been part of her ongoing film activism. Hill's day-to-day anti-capitalist work involved enabling the community-rooted cultivation of individual creativity, often through an informal collective process of viewing and discussing unfinished films. She clearly understood film finishing in a deliberately provocative way, closely bound up with the feminist art and practice of making clothes, sharing food, and chatting.<sup>35</sup> In a hand-drawn flyer from 1999, made shortly before she moved from Nova Scotia to New Orleans and republished in her collectively authored handbook for DIY filmmakers, *Recipes for Disaster* (2005), Hill announces, "All ladies film bee! For chemically driven handicrafters (includes free tea) . . . like a sewing bee, you see."<sup>36</sup>

A description of the first session, held in Halifax, Canada, in March 2000, explains, "You buy and shoot one cartridge of black and white film TRI-X super-8 film. . . . A subject of clothes (fashion, sewing, knitting, fabric, accessories) would help us with the program description, but your own inspired themes are more important so feel free to film anything." A more general description follows:

Each person will shoot one roll of film, then bring it to my house where we will hand-process it in the bathtub. Then, on a Sunday afternoon, we will all be together for the film bee, for tea, cookies, biscuits, cucumber sandwiches, chit chat and to finish our films, by painting colours onto them, scratching away on them, and bleaching out the parts we don't want. We'll keep screening them to check our progress. For example, you could bleach away a shot and then draw little yellow stars on the clear leader. The idea is to finish the film by manipulating it rather than by editing it.<sup>37</sup>

This event demonstrates Hill's long-standing interest in the relation between sewing and filmmaking, and her sense that sewing provided a preexisting model for her project of building creative feminist communities.<sup>38</sup> Though *The Florestine Collection* foregrounds particular parallels between a seamstress and a filmmaker, including her own practice of making movable puppet joints with a needle and thread, this flyer situates those parallels within a larger feminist experimental tradition that is simultaneously creative and destructive, and includes recursive filmmakers like Peggy Ahwesh and Leslie Thornton, and films such as Annabel Nicolson's *Reel Time* (1973), in which Nicolson runs a filmstrip loop through her sewing machine and projector until it breaks.<sup>39</sup> *Reel Time* claims filmmaking as belonging to the sphere of women's work while also highlighting the potential



violence of feminized labor. Prefiguring Hill, Nicolson refuses the often-unrecognized, feminized, and skill-intensive labor of stitching images into commodified completion, ending her work instead by shredding it.<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, as Miles makes clear, sewing not only unites women but also divides them along lines of race and class through infrastructures of servitude and enslavement within racial capitalism. Hill participates in this feminist tradition of radically questioning without wholly discarding the shared, complicated feminized experiences out of which collective futures might be built. As Hill wrestled with the value of film finishing and commodifiable products through a language of crafting, she simultaneously reflected on the differing reasons why people handmake clothes.<sup>41</sup>

The film bee's description juxtaposes Hill's colorful animation and the stark black-and-white palette of hand-processed live-action film. Filmmaker and former student Heather Harkins explains that Hill was attracted to black-and-white Super 8 both because she could easily hand-process it at home and because it allowed her to experiment with extreme contrasts through variable exposures.<sup>42</sup> Hill's black cutout silhouettes function, among other things, as an aesthetic bridge between animated and live-action worlds. Working across a variety of forms, Hill prioritizes being together in real time for continuous screenings of incomplete work, as well as bleaching, scratching, and painting, actions likely to reopen, remake, or undo images that may have seemed "done," both chemically and conceptually.

Elsewhere in Hill's archive, these same "finishing" techniques are advertised as part of the interminable and unforeseeable afterlife possessed by all films, establishing a deliberately open timeline for film objects that makes room for at-times violent transformations and renders all films potentially unfinished. A "Welcome Back to School" flyer made by Hill advertising an "experimental animation show" at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design (NSCAD) features a fragment of a found filmstrip.<sup>43</sup> Its first frame announces, "LET THIS HAPPEN TO YOUR FILM!" Film finishing appears as a potentially passive and continuous affair involving submission to the actions of others, including the act of spectatorship. Subsequent frames feature a boy's face overlaid with words such as "SCRATCHES," "WEAR," "DIGS," "RUBS," and "FINGER MARKS," and with the interventions these words describe.

Though clearly traumatized by the damage the flood inflicted on her work, Hill recognized that her family had survived when many others had not. She also possessed perspectives on the unforeseen life of images that allowed her to make something of the flood's chemical and indexical inscription of itself on her films.<sup>44</sup> This shaped the Florestine Project's trajectory, which registered not only Hill's own point of view as she filmed her community but also, however abstractly, the water itself that, through structures of environmental racism, had killed, displaced, dispossessed, and traumatized massive numbers of people of color.

Post-Katrina, Hill's notes use arrows to highlight the words *community* and *unfinished projects*. One scrap includes a "What I miss" list: "the kids coming by," "home movies," and "undone projects."<sup>45</sup> These connections resonate strongly with



Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino's embrace of "unfinished" and "unordered" works and their rejection of the "fully rounded film."<sup>46</sup> Like Hill, they call people to show movies in homes to small groups, to de-specialize film knowledge through demystified "basic instruction," and to reject films that are "born and die on the screen."<sup>47</sup> They too imagine films as "unfolding" acts, a "detonator or pretext" for activity beyond the film, performing both "destruction and construction."<sup>48</sup> There is, of course, a limit to this comparison. Hill was a committed pacifist, and, although Lewis describes her daughter as having been "fierce," Hill's playful animated films are far from "violent works made with the camera in one hand and a rock in the other."<sup>49</sup> Yet in both cases, experimental filmmaking is unafraid of and indeed "implies failure," a practice where "the possibility of introducing variations, additions, and changes is unlimited."<sup>50</sup>

Hill had studied Third Cinema in Spring 1994 as a CalArts MFA student, when she took animator and queer activist Margery Brown's "Politics of Culture: Feminist and Third World Animation Theory."<sup>51</sup> Particularly important to Hill was Brown's statement: "People often approach animation with fewer prejudices and with an expectation of being entertained, so it can be an effective medium for social statements."<sup>52</sup> Hill filed the syllabus and notes from this class, often recirculating the course's ideas in conjunction with production practice. Hill's teaching notes state, "Everyone got in a circle and we passed around a needle, spool of thread, watercolor paper, loose limbs and clear tape. . . . Everybody sewed together a loose limbs hinge to take home. . . . I went through the handout, explained about storyboards and explained Marge Brown's idea that animation is good for making political statements."<sup>53</sup>

In her Rockefeller grant application in 2004, Hill displays clarity about her timeline and confidence about finishing films in general and the filmic component of the Florestine Project in particular: "This project is certainly feasible as I have made over a dozen films and understand the process of filmmaking from start to finish. With the financial help and encouragement of a Film and Video Fellowship, I believe I could finish the film within a year."<sup>54</sup> While this emphasis on finishing may have been strategic at the time of writing, the grant's expectation of completion motivated Hill in the wake of Katrina. Yet new script fragments register the extraordinarily traumatic impact of the hurricane on Hill's family, community, and work in progress, which combined with the ordinary challenges of being a new mother. These experiences shifted her priorities toward aspects of the film that had always been more relational and unfolding than teleological.

#### REFRAMING THE FLORESTINE PROJECT

Hill's peace activism had focused on alleviating hunger; building interracial community in her home; supporting media access and DIY culture, particularly through affordable celluloid filmmaking; and championing the universal right to creative education and self-expression in life. These themes informed Hill's initial

plan for the Florestine Project, which included a more explicit engagement with issues of racial inequity than her earlier work. After Katrina, this element becomes ever more pronounced, inflecting Hill's use of "found" objects and silhouettes and inviting dialogue across animation, experimental film, community media, and critical race studies.

As Hill's Rockefeller grant application explained, "Through personal storytelling, I will explore the themes of race in New Orleans, coming home to the South, and the dwindling of handcrafted work." She continues, "[Gailiunas and I] are both community activists and eager to learn the politics of this eccentric, southern city. We are surprised to see how seldom African Americans and white people mix socially, even within the activist and artistic communities. As a white person and a community activist in a predominantly African American city, I feel it is important for me to take part in breaking down racial barriers. This film will be one way for me to address these issues. I hope it will inspire dialogue during the process as well as at screenings of the finished film."<sup>55</sup> Hill had planned to compare Florestine's habit of piecing together "parts of skirts or shirts to make the dresses" to another "find" that occurred during that same Mardi Gras: "a grocery cart full of found films. . . . Many were beautiful home movies, forever lost to families."<sup>56</sup> An elaborate storyboard that Hill gifted her mother shows Hill moving from segment 12, "Found film of small acrobatic girl. Found home movie clips," to segment 13, "Silhouette animation of dresses hanging on line" (figure 21).

Yet this storyboard—presumably pre-Katrina because it makes no reference to the hurricane, but post-February 2005 because it incorporates material that postdates Hill's meeting with Florestine's church community—contains elements that become increasingly important to Hill's post-Katrina plans and complicate the relation between Hill's two discoveries. New Orleans' culture of cross-racial performance appears in segments 3 and 4 through "Silhouette animation of Skull Gangs and other older Mardi Gras traditions" and "Silhouette animation of hands catching Mardi Gras parade throws," including a thrown Zulu coconut. The city's racial segregation and colonial history is visually registered in segment 10, "Maps of New Orleans (returning home to the South)," which features a black-and-white animated globe pasted over a map of the city; and an early script fragment reinforces Hill's awareness of these issues as she narrates a Canadian visitor's surprise at the "kitschy remnants" of slavery to be found in the city's tourist zones.<sup>57</sup> With the exception of segment 22, Hill planned to dedicate the remainder of the film (segments 14 through 30) to a multidimensional celebration of Florestine's creative life, imagination, and spirit. She was working with no fewer than five aesthetic forms, each form functioning both independently and in relation to the other dimensions of the planned film.

Though the second half of the storyboard does not use found footage, it includes Super 8 documentary footage that Hill had shot and developed. In addition to her early use of footage of Florestine's house in segment 5, footage that also includes



FIGURE 21. Helen Hill, *The Florestine Collection* storyboard.

images of Florestine's nephew, Dwight Carter, at her house, Hill planned to include footage of Florestine's grave in segments 25 and 26. Bridging documentary and animated components, Hill planned to add a "scratched-on-film glimpse of a spirit" and a "scratched-on-film flower" to the hand-processed graveyard shots. Thus she invited viewers to travel between the indexical and drawn traces of Florestine's world, and between the distinct technical skills of Florestine and Hill, both by dissolving the scratched flowers into live-action collage shots of the actual dress fabric and through the analogy she establishes between "found" dresses and films.

In sequences 17 and 18, Hill employed abstract drawn animation to represent Florestine's interior dream space: "Florestine Kinchen falls into a dream of falling flowers" and "Falling flowers form into dress patterns." Even before Katrina, and in tension with her own analogical paradigm, Hill was working to distinguish Florestine's motivations for fabric reuse from those of Hill's DIY community, as shown in a flood-damaged page where she notes: "reason for DIY → Ms. F.K's reason."<sup>58</sup> Katrina forcefully underscored the political importance of this differentiation. One post-Katrina *Florestine* script fragment begins with reflections on the freedom to

move with one's possessions as a racial privilege, giving the emerging film a quite different tone: "For two long weeks, we watched New Orleans on television. . . . As we watched the people of new orleans [*sic*] chanting for help and being called refugees, Paul realized that the evacuation was the ultimate white flight. Many people with the ability left with all their resources, leaving New Orleans to fend for itself. A few days after the hurricane, many of the people left behind tried to walk out of New Orleans, into Jefferson or across the river to Algiers. They were blocked by police, who explained that they didn't want another Superdome/ a Superdome problem in Algiers."<sup>59</sup> This new version of the script also contains Hill's notes on a January 11, 2006, episode of NPR's *All Things Considered* in which John Burnett discusses the uneven impact of Katrina on historically Black universities and the displacement of long-standing Black communities by white people after the storm: "deeply African-American city, Xavier Dillard, oldest Black neighborhood, highest proportion of native born Blacks in any Southern city . . . after Katrina, not welcome back, 2/3 Black before the storm, now mostly white." On the other side of this paper, Hill scribbled: "New Orleans was drowning before Katrina . . . corrupt police department, public housing system, public school system." She was determined to go back to the city, and her notes suggest a film becoming much more explicitly engaged with racism and the infrastructure of inequality.

Though this evolution could easily have moved the film in the direction of documentary realism, these issues instead seem to have moved Hill more deeply into the abstraction that marks segments 19, 20, 27, 28, and 29, which feature collage shots of the pattern combinations in Florestine's found dresses, as well as close-up montages of her designs' distinctive features, such as loops of thread instead of buttonholes and decorative sleeve and hem edges. After Katrina, Hill developed this element during a California-based residency, suggesting that it continued to matter within the more explicitly political framework of the evolving script. She produced images that Gailiunas describes as "very nice moving dress collage—faster and faster with chaos."<sup>60</sup> Though this footage documents the beauty and color of Florestine's dresses, it simultaneously disrupts viewers' access to them as consumable, sentimental objects, holding at a distance what Miles calls "the contemporary market in Black heritage items."<sup>61</sup>

Hill did not readily identify with the documentary film community, although she engaged with it in March 2006 when she and her damaged films participated in the Orphan Film Symposium in Columbia. Within that community, there is a well-developed dialogue about the history and ethics of incorporating found films, including home movies, into new works.<sup>62</sup> While amateur material can, as Jacqueline Stewart has shown, supplement absences in film archives that reflect racial biases in archiving decisions, it also raises complex issues about authorship, privacy, and the relationship between public and private histories, especially when the provenance of the objects is unclear.<sup>63</sup> Hill's film in progress put these questions about film into dialogue with the dresses that she had come upon and

taken. Though found movies may seem clearly to differ from Florestine's dresses because of film's indexical qualities, the clarity of this difference is complicated by what Jaimie Baron describes as the "noise" that unprovenanced found movies convey. The distinction is then further blurred by Miles's discussion of clothes making as a form of self-expression and assertion in situations where other forms of communication and being are blocked, and by her claim that another person's things have the potential—albeit not guaranteed—to generate empathy and "social glue" and to operate "in the service of compassion and communal life."<sup>64</sup>

Hill's comparison of found films and dresses activates questions of how items of clothing communicate across time and who does or does not have the right to throw things away privately. Since 1988, unless a state and city pass local ordinances to the contrary, the curb has been legally designated as a space where the right to privacy disappears and trash left there has been declared to be "public domain." As the Supreme Court put it when defending "warrantless trash searches," "It is common knowledge that plastic garbage bags left along a public street are readily accessible to animals, children, scavengers, snoops, and other members of the public."<sup>65</sup> Historically, Miles reminds us, trash is an equity issue: "Compared to other groups with a stability afforded by earnings, wealth, or racial privilege, Black people's possessions were more likely to wind up in dump pits and rag bins as families lost elder members, moved on, or were pushed out during the height of Jim Crow segregation and racially motivated violence"—something that is equally relevant today.<sup>66</sup>

When considering the status of objects within the context of animation, it is important to note Miles's observation that discarded "moveables," including possessions like dresses, can contain traces of the personhood of people who have lived in the shadow of an institution—slavery—that treated people like objects.<sup>67</sup> "In the U.S. South," Miles suggests, "dress 'became a language' in which enslavers and enslaved were fluent"; and such objects have the potential to "speak" in a way that allows historians to "backstitch a path" to the owners.<sup>68</sup> Writing about a sack decorated with embroidered text written/sewn by an enslaved woman but found by a white woman at a flea market, Miles states, "Saving this sack so that it could arrive at a point where we can together reflect on its meanings has required an all-hands-on-deck ethos despite the complications of racial politics. The sack still carries a burden of layered power relations, but it also contains within its preservation history a model for repurposing that past and for regenerating relationships as we engage in work of shared purpose across racial and regional lines."<sup>69</sup> Florestine's dresses "speak" of a life lived at a later moment in history than that of the sack, one that began in 1906 and ended in 2001. Although the racialized histories of trash as well as of appropriation provide important backdrops for grappling with the complexity of "found" materials, especially across racial lines, Miles pointed out to me in conversation that many things have yet to be determined about Florestine's dresses: not simply why they were thrown away but even *if* they were thrown away.

For it remains an open possibility, especially given that Hill found them on Mardi Gras morning, that the dresses were set out not as trash but as a gift to the people of the city on a day of dressing up, a fitting way to honor the life of a recently deceased dressmaker who had partly defined herself, like Hill, through her clothes, most notably on religious feast days.<sup>70</sup> There is an incomplete, dispersed, and ongoing story of the dresses Hill found—some were distributed to friends after Hill's death, a couple are in the McKissick Museum, some Hill lost in the flood, and some are carefully folded in the home of Hill's mother, awaiting archival decisions—as well as uncertainty about whether the dresses Hill found represented the totality of Florestine's collection. Perhaps people had already helped themselves to some of Florestine's dresses before she arrived; perhaps some still remain in the possession of Florestine's family. These gaps in knowledge are part of the unfinished legacy of Florestine's sewing, Hill's film about it, and indeed this essay about the film.

In the wake of Katrina, Hill planned for Gailiunas to map the narrative's key locations to give increased attention to the spatial politics of the city and her film. She had also begun to explore the temporal complexities of her animated objects, including Florestine's dresses, twice salvaged by Hill, and the flood-drenched remnants of Hill's own creative life. In a page of notes on the topic of "What Was Learned," Hill muses: "how strange houses are → time capsules, frozen time / After the flood, nature healed while the insides festered away." Her notes return to this theme of preserved time—"How strange and fragile houses are / There was shelter and now these time capsules"—and then a document entitled "New Script," full of crossed-out and reworked sentences, contemplates how such a concept might open the film:

~~I lived in New Orleans before the hurricane.~~

It seems a long time ago, before the hurricane, when I used to say to Paul,

~~Imagine if everyone left New Orle~~

I think if all the people left New Orleans for a week, nature would take over.

No problem. It'd be easy. It's already trying, it's already half done.

Silhouette in a car.

Time lapse . . . too tall sunflowers and paper houses.<sup>71</sup>

Such speculative, temporally unconventional thinking, where past, present, and future exist in imaginative connection with each other, aligns with Hill's animation pedagogy. For example, in the "Absolutely Required Animation Survey" that she always assigned at the end of her courses, she asks students, "If you had to change places with one of the animators whose work we saw, which one would you choose and why?"<sup>72</sup>

Hill's answer would almost certainly have been Lotte Reiniger (1899–1981), who inspired her use of cutout silhouette animation, including in this film, where she planned to use silhouettes to depict Mardi Gras, her own discovery of the dresses, Florestine sewing and cooking in her home, and Hill's interviews with Florestine's



congregation. Reiniger's role in avant-garde film history has been underestimated because of critical biases against narrative animation, work for children, and women's filmmaking, and because of an oversimplified view of her use of what Katherine Rochester describes as "oriental ornament."<sup>73</sup>

This is how Hill explains her decision to use silhouettes in her Rockefeller application for the Florestine Project: "Pioneered by the German animator Lotte Reiniger, this style of animation involves the movement of hinged paper cutouts, cut from black paper and lit from behind. I feel this delicate, old-fashioned style would be appropriate. Also the absence of details seems appropriate since I never met Ms. Kinchen."<sup>74</sup> Though Hill invokes Reiniger, the filmmakers' approaches are distinct. While Reiniger saw silhouettes as "a true and unquestionable likeness of the sitter" representing with "complete accuracy" the portrait's subject, Hill emphasizes her silhouettes' absence of detail to underscore that she did not know Florestine, thereby distancing herself from the history of racializing and stereotyping operations enacted through drawn outlines that Kara Walker has so rigorously and persistently engaged.<sup>75</sup>

Hill's use of abstraction in her puppets interacts with the way the labor and art of the puppet animator position her in relation to those she animates. Reiniger describes the puppeteers of Chinese shadow theater as "players" because they do so much more than manipulate their puppets, and regarding the animation of animals, she advises, "You must not copy a naturalistic movement, but must feel the movement within yourself, for when you will have to animate an animal, you will have to be that animal, moving as it does."<sup>76</sup> This idea of the animator becoming or enacting (two different things) the animated subject anticipates how Hill's most influential animation teacher at Harvard, Suzan Pitt, understood the relationship between animator and subject: "One thing that many people don't understand about animation is the way the animators . . . the artists who create the motion for a given character are really the actors."<sup>77</sup> Hill's Florestine Project raises the question of how this paradigm works when the character is a Black woman, the animator a white woman, and the context New Orleans, with its long history of cross-racial performance.

Hill described herself as "a romance activist," and while the proliferation of hearts in her animated work is partly responsible for the rosy version of Hill that I hope to revise, her work undoubtedly invites viewers to move between hearts and history, love and sentiment.<sup>78</sup> Writing about the transmission of love across generations of enslaved African American women through material objects, Miles states boldly: "We forget that love is revolutionary. The word, cute and over-used in American culture, can feel at times like a stuffed animal devoid of spirit. . . . But love does carry profound meanings."<sup>79</sup> Lauren Berlant suggests that the word *love* "is the enemy of memory," a feeling that can, when channeled through what they call "institutions of intimacy," organize "life and the memory of life" in ways that frequently disappoint or fail. As Berlant shows in their study of American



melodrama and sentimentality, there will always be excesses and displacements within these sites of failure, landscapes of feeling inextricably bound up with issues of race, power, and history.<sup>80</sup> And yet these excesses, these “smoldering remains” of sentimentality, can also function, they suggest, as “a resource, an unfinished event,” “archives of tactics for being undefeated,” places from which to imagine how “to become not-something” and “to unlearn a way of being.”<sup>81</sup>

Hill’s unfinished project of animating the silhouette form and the handmade, multipatterned dresses of Florestine Kinchen—patterns that, depending on context, might invoke West African clothing design, jazz rhythm, an anticapitalist culture of the homemade, poverty, or the patchwork clothing that is a hallmark of the American minstrel show—emerges as a film in progress being constructed out of the “smoldering remains” of American sentiment.<sup>82</sup> Like the patterns of Kinchen’s dresses, the silhouette too is laden with cross-racial histories. This makes the silhouette a polyvocal medium with the potential, whether intentional or not, to (inter)(in)animate image histories involving the craftwork of white middle-class women from the South, physiognomy, the pioneering portraits of Moses Williams, Sojourner Truth’s insistent control over her own image, and Kara Walker’s fearless engagement of the violence of interracial “love” and stereotype.<sup>83</sup> In the absence of a finished film by Hill, it is not possible to know definitively how she would have formally engaged these polyvocalities, but her archive makes clear that she was increasingly attentive to them.

In addition to attending to the diverse meanings of the dresses and the silhouette form, Hill’s Florestine Project became increasingly engaged with the spoken words—and silences—of Florestine’s community. Dialogue with Florestine’s community had always been a part of the project, as the 2004 Rockefeller application makes clear: “I hope to include some recordings of Florestine Kinchen’s family and friends. The Reverend of her church is arranging a meeting of some of its older members to tell me about Florestine Kinchen.”<sup>84</sup> Though the film *Gailiunas* finished includes only snippets of the recordings that Hill made on February 13, 2005, at the Second Free Baptist Mission Church, the tape made that day did survive the hurricane.<sup>85</sup> The original recording reveals much about Kinchen and her circle—about the things she said and liked to do, about how she moved and related to others. It also reflects some aspects of how Kinchen’s community regarded Hill’s project, how Hill’s conversations with church members shaped Hill’s subsequent plans for the film’s development, and how openly Hill shared with the church community her concerns about the project, her questions about Florestine, and her aspirations for the film.<sup>86</sup> Though it is impossible to know how, or even whether, Hill would have finished the film had she lived, these recordings help to fill out a picture of Florestine Kinchen while also giving some sense of the direction in which Hill’s project was moving and a taste of the voices she hoped to amplify more.

Miles suggests that historians need “to learn the language absences speak” in order to resist “the default in which historical gaps feed contemporary

forgetfulness.”<sup>87</sup> And for this reason, as I conclude this essay, I turn to the voices of Florestine’s community, to the memories as well as refusals that they shared. Leonie Mims notes that Florestine was usually late for church; Frank Moran describes how, when the choir sang, she did “her famous Kinchen step.” Lorraine Payton reports that Florestine loved to cook and to sew quilts as well as dresses, although her eyesight had been failing late in her life. She never accepted a ride home, sometimes saying, “I’m old but I’m not cold!” Vera M. Dyer remembers that Florestine carried a cloth pouch of chewing tobacco “like the baseball players do . . . and she would put it in her jaw”! Beverly Ray, Pastor Warren Ray’s wife, reports that “she got sick all of a sudden and then she died. Before that, she never missed a Sunday.” Mrs. Ray adds that Florestine’s death came as a real shock. With Reverend Ray’s brother and choir member Ronald Ray, Hill discusses the possibility of returning to the church for a choir rehearsal, perhaps to record either Florestine’s favorite songs or the songs sung at her funeral. Lori Adams gives her explicit approval for Hill’s project, stating, “I think it’s wonderful that you’re doing a story because she was beautiful and she had such an infectious smile. . . . I’m glad you’re doing this and I’d like to be able to see it when you’ve finished.” Florestine’s nephew, Dwight Carter, says that his aunt was known by her family as “Aunt Ticy,” that she was one of seventeen children, and that her son, Kinchen, preceded her in death. Carter offers to take Hill and Gailunas to the house that Florestine had lived in, and that visit is documented in flood-damaged footage included in the finished film. In many of the conversations, Hill expresses her concern to connect with living family members, and when she finally meets Carter, she exclaims, “I’m so glad to meet you because I wanted to make sure it was ok with the family.” A few moments later, she adds, “I’d love to meet any living relatives. I wonder if I should get your phone number. . . . That would be great if I could interview your mother or [Florestine’s] grandchildren if I could.” Carter’s silence in response to her questions about further family meetings, which contrasts with his openness to showing Hill and Gailunas Florestine’s home, suggests that not everyone was as glad to talk about Florestine or to Hill as those who appear on the tape are. I want to end by lifting up the unknown stories carried by the silences of those who chose not to stay after or attend the service, who refused Hill’s invitations to talk, whom she did not know to invite, or who had already passed away. In those silences lie other stories, perhaps some too difficult to tell, or simply not for viewers of Hill’s film, about Florestine, her dresses, and the worlds we continuously make and undo.

## (Inter)(in)animating the Museum

### *Architecture, Place, Memory*

In 2010, Yael Bartana was not the only (inter)(in)animator of art once named “degenerate” in the galleries of Berlin. In 2000, construction workers began extending Berlin’s U5 subway line, opened in 1930 and the only line to be located exclusively in the former East. Progress was slow, with the opening of the final stop, “Museuminsel” (Museum Island), occurring in December 2020.<sup>1</sup> But in 2010, it was art once designated as “degenerate” that halted construction when workers digging near the Rotes Rathaus found remains of the 1290 city hall, bringing archaeologists to the scene. In January 2010, they found first a small bronze bust and then more objects. By September 28, 2010, a collaborative research group established that these artworks had all been confiscated in 1937 through the Nazis’ degenerate art campaign.<sup>2</sup> On November 8, 2010, these unearthed objects were exhibited, quite surprisingly, in the Greek Courtyard of the Neues Museum.<sup>3</sup>

The Neues Museum specializes in ancient Egyptian, prehistoric, and classical objects. Though the catalogue and research projects contextualize these recovered works within the history of national socialism, the works’ reanimation as archaeological “finds” in some ways strips the sculptures of the very modernity for which they were condemned. The exhibition’s juxtaposition of works once labeled “degenerate” with ancient Greek statues could not help but recall Leni Riefenstahl’s celebration of Greek statuary in *Olympia* (1938).<sup>4</sup> Without suppressing Nazi history, the installation and its accompanying catalogue nevertheless emphasize the museum as a place of salvage. They laud the gallery’s ability to illuminate these works’ “timeless worth” (*zeitlose Würde*) and claim that the modern works find their proper place amid “other archaeological finds from far distant past epochs” (*anderen archäologischen Funden aus weit länger vergangenen Epochen*).<sup>5</sup> This

emphasis on timelessness risks deforming the specific history of genocidal violence to which the damage done to these recovered objects might testify by shunting that history into a more distant and/or mythologized past. The gallery environment further dissolves the specific history of these objects through the imperial museum ideology literally depicted in Hermann Schievelbein's nineteenth-century frieze on the walls of the Greek Courtyard. The frieze depicts ancient Pompeians escaping the eruption of Vesuvius. As people flee their homes, possessions in tow, they head, again surprisingly, for the Neues Museum, which originally opened its doors in 1859 as what Friedrich Wilhelm IV imagined as a "sanctuary for art and science."<sup>6</sup> Thus the very walls of the museum seem impersonally to assert the similarities between and naturalness of all damaged objects, all catastrophes, all refugees, and all bygone times. In the catalogue, Matthias Wemhoff even explicitly invokes the frieze as celebrating the museum as refuge.<sup>7</sup>

This triumphalist museum narrative emerges contemporaneously and in tension with another museum initiative in Berlin (and elsewhere) that approaches the museum quite differently. As the website for the State Museums of Berlin reports, "The Benin Dialogue Group is an initiative that was brought to life in 2010, and brings together museums from Germany, the UK, the Netherlands, Austria and Sweden with partners from Nigeria and representatives of the royal court of Benin."<sup>8</sup> In thinking across these parallel efforts to reanimate objects, museums, and the academic disciplines with which they are associated, it is helpful to turn to Dan Hicks's *The Brutish Museums: The Benin Bronzes, Colonial Violence and Cultural Restitution*. In a chapter entitled "White Projection," Hicks, a member of the Benin Dialogue Group, introduces the museum less as a refuge from the logic of degeneracy than as the producer of it when he writes, "To this day, my academic disciplines—anthropology and archaeology—and my institutional workplace—the anthropology museum—are implicated in this history of racism, the degenerate display of supposedly 'savage' culture reduced to material form. Brute force, brutish displays."<sup>9</sup> For Hicks, the understanding of how academic fields of study and museums have repressed knowledge of the brutality of colonial violence "shatters our image of the museum, forces us to question ourselves."<sup>10</sup> Responding to attempts to redeem museums implicated in histories of violence through narratives of refuge, Hicks suggests, "Let us instead acknowledge the ongoing status of the museum as a weapon."<sup>11</sup>

As museums and universities grapple with their (ongoing) implicatedness in life- and world-destroying ideologies and actions, often conducted in the name of education, research, and preservation, they frequently commission contemporary artists to participate in this process of institutional acknowledgment and self-reflection. (Inter)(in)animation plays an interesting role in museum efforts to reimagine themselves as more ethical, accountable spaces, to block some trajectories and open others. This chapter examines three contemporary art commissions

made by three distinct types of museums in three different countries. Each uses (inter)(in)animating tactics to engage violent histories that are embedded within the commissioning museums' walls, at times by imagining the world otherwise. First, I examine Canadian, New York-based artist Nancy Davenport's permanent installation in the Military Museum of the Bundeswehr in Dresden, *Der Koyote* (*Coyote*) (2011, 3:33, loop), a short looping digital photo animation that explicitly puts cartoon animation and militarism into conversation. The work's looping structure conceptually and temporally foregrounds Wile E. Coyote's symbolic associations with deathlessness, and through a series of tragicomic scenarios Davenport explores wartime phenomena such as pain, invulnerability, memory, victimhood, and guilt.<sup>12</sup> I then consider the anticolonial, community-building use of frame-by-frame animated tattoos in Trinidad and Tobago artist Gesiye's installation *The Wound Is a Portal*, commissioned by the Amgueddfa Cymru/National Museum of Wales in Cardiff between August 2022 and January 2024 as part of the museum's "Reframing Picton Project."<sup>13</sup> This youth-led project involving the Sub Sahara Advisory Panel (SSAP), led by Fadhili Maghiya, and Amgueddfa Cymru/National Museum of Wales, responded to the Black Lives Matter movement by investigating the museum's relation to the brutal legacy of Lieutenant-General Sir Thomas Picton (1758–1815), governor of Trinidad between 1797 and 1803. Wall labels also position the exhibition as a response to a 2020 Welsh government audit that found "over 200 Welsh statues, streets, and buildings connected to the slave trade, with [Thomas] Picton being the most commemorated figure."<sup>14</sup> Finally, I turn my attention to Canadian, Philadelphia-based artist David Hartt's engagement of the hyperreal possibilities of CGI world making in *Et in Arcadia Ego* (2022, 15:13), a looping digital video made in conjunction with a separate site-specific work by Hartt, *A Colored Garden* (2021). Both works were commissioned by, and collaborations with, the Glass House, a National Trust Historic Site in New Canaan, Connecticut, and the earlier work plays a role in the later piece. The Glass House was built by the pioneering curator and architect Philip Johnson, and the historic site includes forty-nine acres of land, thirteen other structures, and a permanent art collection. These components all have roles to play in *Et in Arcadia Ego*. The Glass House's mission statement includes a rejection of racism and fascism; a commitment to Black lives, Black history, and the advancement of "justice and equity for all people"; and a pledge to engage in "frank dialogue and open exchange about all aspects of its history, including Philip Johnson's own history."<sup>15</sup> This last phrase hotlinks to Johnson's biography, which notes how he contributed to architecture, design, and curation; that he lived "relatively openly as a gay man"; and that, while a journalist, "he made statements that included not only pro-fascist attitudes but also anti-Semitic commentary."<sup>16</sup> Although this text provides useful context for the Glass House, in *Et in Arcadia Ego* Hartt refuses modes of institutional self-reflection that would recirculate or invest in Johnson's violence. Instead, Hartt activates the (inter)(in)animating capacities of sound, music, architecture, performance,

painting, and animation to explore relationally determined perceptions of scale and to catalyze “terraforming” interventions into place-based histories.

#### (INTER)(IN)ANIMATING THE MILITARY MUSEUM

*Coyote* (2011) was commissioned for a permanent installation conceptualized by artist-curator Klaus vom Bruch for Daniel Libeskind’s redesigned and expanded Military Museum of the Bundeswehr (hereafter MMBD) in Dresden, an expansion that, at twenty thousand square meters, made it the single largest history museum in Germany (figure 22).<sup>17</sup> *Coyote* is one of three works commissioned for permanent, looping projection on screens that form the end wall of three gigantic rolling cases on the museum’s third floor, dedicated to the theme of “War and Memory.”<sup>18</sup> Vom Bruch wanted these works to emphasize female perspectives on war.<sup>19</sup> *Coyote* appropriates aesthetic strategies from both World War II animated propaganda films and Looney Tunes cartoons to activate the viewers’ critical reflections on the role of museum architecture in framing carefully curated histories of war. Bringing the comedic chaos of Wile E. Coyote into the museum’s building site, Davenport explodes the boundaries separating different elements of war history, including settler colonialism, medicine, and entertainment, and in doing so animates the possibilities of the museum understood as a permanent work in progress.

The MMBD has had a variety of uses since its founding in 1897 as a public military museum and arsenal. After the post–World War I demilitarization of Germany, it served both as living quarters and as the Royal Saxon Army Museum. It became first the “Army Museum of the Wehrmacht” in 1939 and then the “Armed Forced Museum” in 1940. As it withstood the 1945 bombings, survivors of the fire-bombing fled to it, giving the building an affective charge within politicized debates about postwar Dresden. In 1945, parts of the museum’s collection were given to the USSR; then they were returned in 1957 to the DDR; and in 1972, the “East German Armed Forces Museum” was opened. After reunification on October 3, 1990, the Bundeswehr acquired the museum along with the East German forces, and the space gradually became the newly conceptualized MMBD.<sup>20</sup> In 2002, after an international competition, Polish American architect Daniel Libeskind was commissioned for the project, a choice that produced strong responses, including from Libeskind himself. In one interview, Libeskind, who does not identify as a pacifist, states, “As someone who was born immediately after the war, whose parents survived the Holocaust, whose entire family disappeared in Polish concentration camps, I did not need to search the archives for history, it is part of my own life.”<sup>21</sup>

In Dresden, extreme right-wing factions united in their opposition to Libeskind’s intervention, invoking high costs and architectural tradition in support of their anti-Semitism-inflected position, describing the renovation as a “slap in the face of German architecture.”<sup>22</sup> But critique of Libeskind did not come only from extreme right-wing positions. Comparing proposals for the development of





FIGURE 22. Military Museum of the Bundeswehr, Dresden.

the Ground Zero site, Lauren Kogod and Michael Osman resisted Libeskind's collective projects, which include the Jewish Museum in Berlin, the Imperial War Museum in Manchester, and the rebuilding of the World Trade Center Site, for their effort to "represent abstractions like 'democracy' or the American Constitution in built form."<sup>23</sup> They argued, "Now that Libeskind's professional specialization has become the commemoration of historical crimes, his very presence also asks us to discern between memorialization and a maudlin spectacularization of grief that slides into jingoism."<sup>24</sup> These charged debates about memorial architecture provide an essential backdrop for the MMBD's contemporary art commissions.

Libeskind's website describes the architect's vision of inserting a 140-ton wedge of glass, concrete, and steel into the 130-year-old building through language that equates transparency and democracy: "The façade's openness and transparency is intended to contrast with the opacity and rigidity of the existing building. The latter represents the severity of the authoritarian past, while the former reflects the transparency of the military in a democratic society."<sup>25</sup> The steel-framed viewing platform at the point of the wedge is open to the elements, allowing viewers not only to look out onto Dresden but also to ponder the relationship between the museum, the city, and the body of the viewer. But why does this matter? And what is the relation between Libeskind's expansion, the museum's collection, and Davenport's *Coyote*?



Dresden plays a thorny role in historiographic debates about national socialism and Holocaust remembrance, and how those histories relate to other acts of violence in World War II. On February 13, 1945, British and American bombers firebombed Dresden, killing around twenty-five thousand people, an event that right-wing extremists denying or relativizing the Holocaust often take up. The bombing of Dresden is instrumentalized in other ways too. Most recently, as Raz Segal has shown, in the wake of Hamas's October 7, 2023, attacks against Israeli soldiers and civilians, Israeli television's "pro-Netanyahu Channel 14 called for Israel to 'turn Gaza to Dresden.'"<sup>26</sup> Political debates about the restoration of the city's destroyed and damaged landmarks, many of which were left standing as memorial sites until the late twentieth century, coincided with the MMBD's expansion.<sup>27</sup> While some viewed the desire for complete restoration as a sign of Germany's desire to "move on" from the Holocaust, others argued that it would remove architectural damage that served to sustain narratives of German victimhood. Theodor W. Adorno explicitly highlights this dangerous use of Dresden in "The Meaning of Working Through the Past," first delivered as a radio lecture on February 7, 1960: "The quite common move of drawing up a balance sheet of guilt is irrational, as though Dresden compensated for Auschwitz. Drawing up such calculations, the haste to produce counter-arguments in order to exempt oneself from self-reflection, already contain something inhuman, and military actions in the war . . . are scarcely comparable to the administrative murder of millions of people."<sup>28</sup> In an insight of vital importance for the contemporary moment, Adorno adds: "I consider the survival of National Socialism *within* democracy to be potentially more menacing than the survival of fascist tendencies *against* democracy."<sup>29</sup> The significance of Dresden's role in historiographic debates around World War II is further complicated by the city's having been part of the former East Germany, which, Susan Neiman argues, "did more, at every level, to denazify than its anti-Communist neighbor to the West."<sup>30</sup> Today's architectural debates about Dresden within a united Germany must navigate these ideologically distinct German responses to the country's Nazi past. This makes Dresden a useful site for thinking about how memory institutions structure the relationship between the present and the past using nationalist war histories.<sup>31</sup>

For some, the fact that animation's essence involves an ability to mobilize inanimate objects makes it ill-suited to mediating the finality of death. But perhaps this quality of American cartoon bodies that Ôtsuka Eiji describes as "deathlessness" and that Thomas Lamarre, drawing on Ôtsuka, describes as "bodies that undergo radical deformation without dying," is well-suited to visualizing the kinds of ideological revenants that Adorno describes, which are particularly hard to visualize because of their morphing entanglement with adjacent ideological formations.<sup>32</sup> This is Davenport's gambit as she puts Wile E. Coyote and Dresden's unfinished history into conversation within an endless, photo-animated loop that repeatedly references the museum's architectural expansion. In doing so, this work

(inter)(in)animates reflection on violence's repetitions and changes, and the relationship between perpetrators and victims.

There's tension between Adorno's statement on Dresden and Libeskind's architectural program. The architect claims that his intervention fosters collective thinking about violence by having the tip of the building's wedge be directly aligned with the coordinates at which the British dropped the first wave of bombs in 1945 and by designing the wedge with a 40.1 degree angle to mirror the angle of what is known as the "cone of destruction" imprinted on the cityscape by the Allied bombs in 1945.<sup>33</sup> These precise acts of design might seem to invite visitors to inhabit the museum from the perspective of German victimhood, although Libeskind emphatically denies this interpretive possibility, stating, "No, on no account. The building acquits no one of responsibility for his or her own history. On the contrary."<sup>34</sup> George Packer suggests that Libeskind's blunt design stands—in a good way—at odds with the city's recent erasure of most traces of the firebombing and the city's East German socialist history, but the signature viewing platform nevertheless still centers the sterilized and nostalgic restored cityscape.<sup>35</sup>

The museum has proactively distanced itself from local neo-Nazi activity, first in July 2010, when a staff historian, Wolfgang Fleischer, published a book, *Sachsen 1945*, with the press of the racist, anti-Semitic, and anti-Islamic National Democratic Party of Germany (NDP), and then again in February 2012, when a historian discovered three extreme right-wing magazines for sale in the museum's bookstore.<sup>36</sup> These and similar events catalyzed the opening of a 2013 exhibition on right-wing extremism, accompanied by public discussions.<sup>37</sup> Cristian Cercel describes such efforts as only "tentative steps" toward a fuller embrace of an "agonistic mode of remembering" that engages with perpetrators and victims in a non-relativizing and critical way. Cercel sees this mode of remembering as at odds with the museum's "authoritative voice," including as expressed through "Libeskind's penetrative architectural reinvention of the museum" and the museum's "relationship with the military and by its rather uncritical embrace of the current political order."<sup>38</sup> But where in this memory landscape does *Coyote* fit? Which histories, if any, are (inter)(in)animated by Davenport's Loony Tune-inspired work? And does the fact that *Coyote* is commissioned by a military-owned museum make it inescapably complicit with war making? This was certainly the position taken by Claes Danielsen, director of the Dokwoche Leipzig festival, who distanced himself from a film series curated by the MMBD's Jan Kindler and screened at the MMBD as part of the festival. "War," Danielsen explained, "is not a means of realizing peace. . . . Dok Leipzig will not let itself be politically instrumentalized."<sup>39</sup>

Danielsen's refusal to collaborate with the military on principle begs important questions, especially when considered in the light of Coco Fusco's claim that "too many activists focus their attention exclusively on the victims . . . obfuscating our fundamental bonds with the victimizers who are our compatriots and who act in our name."<sup>40</sup> Just as Libeskind notes the "changed role" of the German military

in his original plan for the renovation, so Packer in his review of the renovation describes Germany as “one of the most pacifist countries on earth,” noting that this sentiment “in some quarters extends to hostility toward anything military.”<sup>41</sup> And yet the opening of the renovated museum coincided with the year in which Germany ended conscription in January 2011 under the leadership of cool German defense minister Karl-Theodor zu Guttenberg. In 2014, he stated, “In 10 years [i.e., in 2024] we will be more professional, faster and more flexible. We will have the potential to deploy our soldiers around the world and still not neglect our own defense.”<sup>42</sup> Almost a decade later in November 2023, Chancellor Olaf Scholz announced Germany’s new defense policy, known as the *Zeitenwende*, in response to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. Defense minister Boris Pistorius described Germany’s obligation to “be the backbone of deterrence and collective defence in Europe” and to be “ready to fight a war” as becoming “a grown up country in terms of security policy,” thus aligning the pacifism and antimilitarism Packer celebrates with immaturity.<sup>43</sup>

Davenport’s animation places at the museum’s heart an interminable refusal of both the military museum and its self-reflexive expansion. *Coyote* also puts the history of German warfare in dialogue with a longer global history of imperialism and the military-industrial complex, and in doing so, the work raises awareness about what Angela Davis describes as “a spectrum of violence” that includes state violence, war, police, torture, and capital punishment, noting that “while we cannot simultaneously eliminate the entire spectrum of violence, we can always insist on an awareness of these connections.”<sup>44</sup> *Coyote*’s animated loop adds museums, the pharmaceutical industry, the military-industrial complex, settler colonialism, cartoon animation, and capitalist speculation to the spectrum Davis lays out. Early in the creative process, Davenport envisioned her project in this way: “My piece will be a series of animated photographs/episodes featuring a character obsessed with carrying out a series of escalating schemes to stop the construction of the Libeskind building. . . . Like Jones’ coyote, my character is luckless, inept and his violence always bounces back to himself, back to a self-inflicted chaos. Unlike the Jones cartoons there will be no roadrunner, my coyote subject will operate schizophrenically from both sides; stalking himself and multiplied in every role.”<sup>45</sup>

The finished version, which draws on Wile E. Coyote cartoons and animated war propaganda, opens with a jaunty soundtrack accompanying a shot of the MMBD’s construction site, followed by a sparkling cartoon title that overlays a photograph of the museum-in-process. The composited digital animation creates a jerky effect of artificial or uncanny motion as a humanoid Coyote mechanically blinks and zooms from one place to another. The work creates a sense of no real place or time as residual traces of “old media” and other temporal markers permeate the work, layering specific historical referents within photoshopped time and space. This use of animation to layer time provokes visitors to reflect on how their own sense of embodied time and place relates to these spatio-temporal coordinates collaged

into the loop. We time-travel via the expanding architecture of the 1871 Albertstadt garrison building, through the digital remediation of a grainy analog recording of crooner Al Bowlly's "I'll String Along with You" taken from the 1934 Warner Bros.'s musical *Twenty Million Sweethearts* (dir. Ray Enright), and through references to a Cold War-era Chuck Jones.<sup>46</sup> In *Coyote*, material traces of a historical past coexist alongside the unknown possibilities of a future continuously evoked through the installation's (in)animation of the museum as a permanent work in progress. Over the course of the loop's repetitions and through the familiar nonfatality of Coyote's disasters, however, the narrative uncertainties of the work diminish over time. In some ways, Coyote's looping, failing efforts to prevent the museum's expansion offer an analogue to the predicament of the contemporary artist commissioned to reanimate museums and raise the question of how to prevent Rose's critical embrace of failure as one antidote to war from slipping into despair.

Animation effects flip a sparkling title page from right to left, suggesting a tactile comic book, temporal disorder (beginning at the end?), or a perspective on the museum of war from outside left-to-right Latinized reading conventions. This reveals Coyote, a photo-animated white man holding a crash helmet under his arm. Another page turns reveals a bottle of pills, labeled Acetaminophen/Codeine, an opioid prescribed to Wile E. Coyote "FOR PAIN," foregrounding the role of the pharmaceutical industry in the imbricated worlds of museums and war, and recalling Frankfurt School debates about whether the cartoon body can prevent or simply manage suffering (figure 23).<sup>47</sup> As the lid pops off the bottle, a colorful array of Vicodin and pill-like candies inscribed with peace doves and butterflies fly into the atmosphere. The pills' movement mirrors the diagram of pills escaping a bottle that appears on an orange "Controlled Substances" sticker on the bottle, which strongly resembles an exploding cartoon stick of dynamite. Davenport (inter)(in)animates a resonance between pain-numbing, sleep-inducing pills and exploding cartoon dynamite, suggesting a confusion between problems and cures in this space of institutionalized war memory. These unleashed narcotic pain relievers seem to numb the sensitivity and consciousness of the museum depicted in the background.

While the prescription posits Coyote as a contradictory character both capable of feeling pain and numbed to it, these animated pills also recall the WT-Metall TH6/1300 dog transport trailer exhibited outside the museum, most recently used in Afghanistan and designed for "operations to locate ordnance, explosives, mines, and drugs," as well as the museum's display of a tube of the amphetamine-based drug/weapon Pervitin. The Wehrmacht consumed an estimated thirty-five million Pervitin tablets and also used this drug to test and stretch the labor-capacity threshold of concentration camp prisoners.<sup>48</sup> Though humanist film theories have often marginalized the immortal cartoon body in discussions of the moral and political capacity of different types of moving images, Davenport posits the cartoon body as well-suited to visualizing the inhumanity of human experiments at



FIGURE 23. Wile E. Coyote's pill bottle, in Nancy Davenport's *Coyote*, 2011.

and with the limit separating life from death, tolerable from intolerable. *Coyote* (inter)(in)animates the imbrication of military violence, capitalist aspirations for limitless labor and profit, and a medical-industrial complex focused on expanding what we are able to bear.<sup>49</sup>

Over the course of the short loop, Davenport's "Coyote" ends up crashing into the ground head first when the zip-wire he is traveling along breaks; shooting himself in the head while trying to set up an Acme-assisted gizmo to kill a construction worker on the museum site (figure 24); and blowing himself high into the sky above Dresden during an attempt to dynamite the museum in progress. This last example gives viewers access to Coyote's bird's-eye view of Dresden, evoking the firebomber's perspective, before he crash-lands in the grounds of the military museum (figure 25). But what are we to make of this Coyote's self-destructive tendencies, his violent resistance to the museum's expansion, and his seeming capacity to withstand any amount of force? How are we to read this displacement of the American cartoon's body-without-risk by pixilated photographs of a deathless human body in this new, German context?<sup>50</sup>

Chuck Jones began developing Wile E. Coyote for Warner Bros. in 1945, the same year as the bombings of Dresden, Nagasaki, and Hiroshima. The cartoon first appeared in 1948 amid the redistribution of global power and the emergence of the United States as the world's mightiest superpower. Jones's inspiration for Wile E.





FIGURE 24. Self-sabotage, in Nancy Davenport's *Coyote*, 2011.

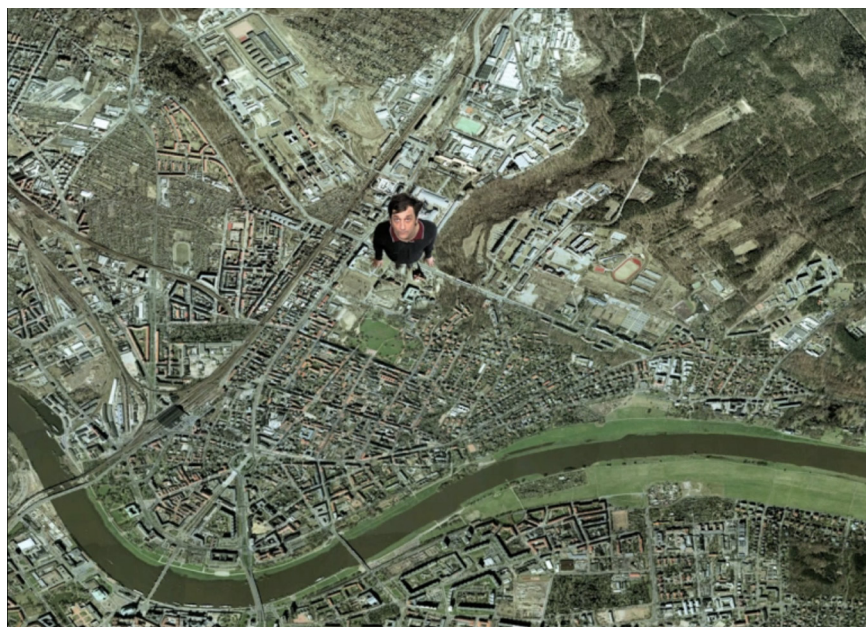


FIGURE 25. Crashing into Dresden, in Nancy Davenport's *Coyote*, 2011.

Coyote was Mark Twain's autobiographical Wild West narrative *Roughing It* (1872). In his autobiography, Jones quotes Twain's description of the coyote at length, and the title that accompanies Jones's Coyote / Roadrunner sketch reads, "The Coyote—Mark Twain discovered him first."<sup>51</sup> Thus *Coyote* (inter)(in)animates a dialogue between European and North American histories of violence. In Twain, the coyote becomes entangled with settler colonial violence against Indigenous people and narratives of speculative risk and failure too. Twain writes that the coyote will "eat anything in the world that his first-cousins, the desert-frequenting Indians will, and they will eat anything they can bite," adding that these are "the only creatures known to history who will eat nitroglycerine and ask for more if they survive."<sup>52</sup> *Roughing It* treats silver speculation and paper money at length. The front pages recall when Twain was a millionaire "for ten days," and the dreams of the silver miner are lavishly illustrated in the first American edition of the work. Dresden is one of Europe's primary centers of silver production, and the history of print reproduction, a history to which both Twain and Davenport belong, has roots in the speculative, extractive history of this place.<sup>53</sup> Twain inspires Coyote's comic self-destruction and supposedly harmless explosability, but this comedy has roots in a racist comparison of the coyote and Indigenous people with regard to supposed self-destructive tendencies. While Wile E. Coyote's literary roots evoke an entangled history of financial speculation, land exploitation, and genocide, Jones's animated shorts like *War and Pieces* (Jones, 1963; released 1964) depict a Coyote whose relation to the ACME corporation renders visible, in comic form, the effects of the intertwined military- and medical-industrial complexes on a body that is both victim of and embedded within these complexes, as well as the violence this body in turn produces. In *Coyote*, the ACME corporation logo appears throughout Libeskind's construction site, highlighting the capitalist face of both contemporary war and the contemporary museum.

*Coyote* invites viewers to ponder what becomes visible and thinkable when American cartoon violence and the international pharmaceutical industry are placed—permanently—at the heart of Germany's military museum. The work considers the histories of war, speculative finance, territorial expansion, medicine, and suicidal impulses, not as being in contrast to the animated world of comedy and the pleasures of Saturday morning cartoons, but as related to them. The critical potential of *Coyote* derives from, rather than transcends, the logic of the cartoon, and specifically the cartoon's negation of pain and death. It foregrounds the obscenity of treating people as cartoon bodies.<sup>54</sup> Coyote's targetless violence also mirrors the spatial and temporal disjunctions between perpetrators and victims in remote warfare, epitomized in the work's aerial point of view, which evokes both the Allied firebombing of Dresden and the role of vertical media in the overlapping spheres of contemporary war and media.<sup>55</sup> Coyote's self-targeting further analogizes a war in which the only clearly articulated enemy is a feeling, terror, and the museum's wall label encourages viewers to think in these terms:



"The coyote contextualizes the significance of architecture in war and terrorism using the shell of the museum and ironises it by means of the failing protagonist." This self-inflicted cartoon violence also registers the real risk of "self"-targeting within the contemporary military context, the high levels of suicide among military personnel during and after active service, and the domestic violence committed, particularly against women, by some returning veterans. These nonheroic acts of violence and deaths tend to be suppressed in official accountings of war. Davenport's satirical construction of an endless war with the self brings the boomerang effect of military violence into focus. But simultaneously, it mirrors the way the mainstream US media's statistical reports on war see only American lives and deaths. Feminist counterinformation sources such as Brown University's "Costs of War" project, codirected by Catherine Lutz, Neta Crawford, and Stephanie Savell, interrupt the self-enclosed loop that Davenport's architectural (inter)(in)animation highlights in the space of war memory and offer alternative methodologies for more justly appraising the pervasive costs of war.<sup>56</sup>

#### ANIMATING THE ART MUSEUM

The Amgueddfa Cymru / National Museum of Wales' tripartite project "Reframing Picton" included the reinstallation, in a less prominent location, of Sir Martin Archer Shee's *Portrait of Lieutenant-General Sir Thomas Picton* (1810s). The painting was given to the museum in 1907 but was put into storage in November 2021 in response to Black Lives Matter protests. The reinstallation leaves the painting in its wooden travel crate, suggesting that it is "in motion" and only temporarily located. The label accompanying the crated painting challenges "the hero narrative" and illustrates the complicity between male heroism and colonial historiography by ironically citing a 1911 textbook, Jos. A. de Suze's *Trinidad* (1911), which states, "It is usual with those who do not know the character of Picton to hold him up as a harsh and brutal man. Shame! The brave and gallant Picton a harsh and brutal man? To say so is to utter a foul falsehood and calumnize the fair name of a great hero!"

The first part of the exhibition underscores that Picton was considered brutal and cruel in his own day, including for his execution of twelve enslaved people and his torture of the fourteen-year-old Louisa Calderón. Other labels detail Picton's sensational trial of 1806 for the "illegal torture" of Calderón, his defense, his conviction, and his 1808 retrial, through which his initial conviction was subsequently overturned.<sup>57</sup> The wall labels and display cases reproduce all kinds of Picton memorabilia, both heroizing and demonizing. Thus, even as this first part of the exhibition seeks to reflect on the museum's implicatedness in the construction of Picton's heroism, it simultaneously recirculates graphic spectacles of Calderón's suffering in the manner Saidiya Hartman critiques in *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (1997). Questioning how viewers are "called upon to participate in such scenes" and how

such scenes hide from view the “habitual violence” that made the institution of slavery thinkable, Hartman asks:

Are we witnesses who confirm the truth of what happened in the face of the world-destroying capacities of pain, the distortions of torture, the sheer unrepresentability of terror, and the repression of the dominant accounts? Or are we voyeurs fascinated with and repelled by exhibitions of terror and suffering? What does the exposure of the violated body yield? Proof of black sentience or the inhumanity of the “peculiar institution”? Or does the pain of the other merely provide us with the opportunity for self-reflection? At issue here is the precariousness of empathy and the uncertain line between witness and spectator.<sup>58</sup>

While the two commissioned works that follow this early part of the exhibition explicitly avoid such remediations of torture, they take different approaches to this refusal. The Laku Neg collective’s installation, *Spirited*, begins with this text: “Thisbe, Present, and Luisa Calderon are three named victims of Picton’s brutal regime in Trinidad. What would they say if they were here? Our installation aims to transform their torture into dance, their scream into song in a yard of play and praise—to rise, despite confinement and oppression.” This work recognizes that historical violence is not past, noting, “We re-claim power from the devastation of their lives and ours.” It also recognizes those “who have so far been unnamed in the telling of colonial history.” By contrast, Gesiye’s *The Wound Is a Portal* prioritizes those living and inventing new life forms in the wake of colonialism and slavery, grappling with the perpetuation of oppressive structures and the transgenerational impact of secondary trauma. The introductory wall label for this (inter)(in)animating work states: “The trauma of slavery has deeply affected the African diaspora’s relationship to the earth. Under brutal colonists like Picton, Black people in Trinidad were tortured and forced to labour a land they were brought to against their will. This legacy of colonial violence was recorded in the body, turned into patterns of behaviour and passed down through generations.” Of their project’s relation to Picton, Gesiye acknowledges that, from the outset, they thought, “Yeah, I’m not even putting him in my film.” Instead, Gesiye describes her “offering” as “a portal through which shared joy forms a bridge to personal and collective liberation,” and it is animation, here inseparable from tattooing, that opens that portal up. Gesiye’s installation actively reclaims and reframes many of the features of what Krista A. Thompson describes as “the culture of vision” that participates in the colonial and postcolonial “tropicalization” and “whitening” of the Anglophone Caribbean.<sup>59</sup> This culture includes, Thompson suggests with reference to Jamaica, eighteenth- and nineteenth-century imperial naturalist images of nature, often magnified and presented from “a low vantage point,” endowing the plants of the islands with “an animated and larger-than-life appearance, exoticizing their presence”; and touristic, tropicalizing uses of photographic portraiture that present Caribbean residents as fantasy commodities outside of history.<sup>60</sup>

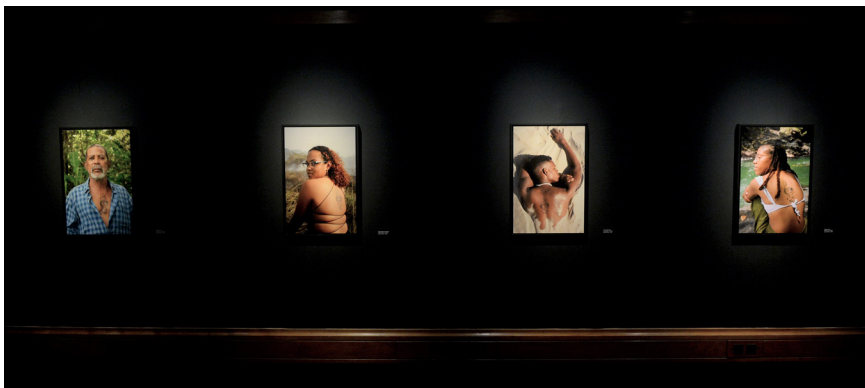


FIGURE 26. Installation shot for Gesiye's *The Wound Is a Portal*, 2022.

*The Wound Is a Portal* has three components within a single rectangular room that has a door at either end: portrait photography, live-action video, and photo-animation (figure 26). Four portraits of Trinidadians appear on each of the long, black-painted walls. These people were all strangers to each other when the project began, and all were willing to be tattooed by Gesiye. The call expressed interest in locating people of different generations and from different parts of the island to participate in a project focused on connection, healing, and joy. At the center of each portrait sits a similar but unique tattoo, placed over the heart of each sitter, some on the back, some on the chest.<sup>61</sup> These tattoos link individuals across the photographic frames, and the tattoo's location determined the subject's pose in the image. Safiya Hoyte (Barataria, b. 1998) sits back to the camera, eyes closed behind glasses, against the backdrop of a green body of water; Kevon Samuels (Laventille, b. 1998) lies buried in the sand, back exposed, eyes closed, cheek resting on his left arm; Dawn-Marie Alexander (Point Fortin, 2002) looks askance through glasses and over her shoulder against a misty backdrop of trees and grasses; Robert Price (St. James, b. 1944) faces the camera against a backdrop of foliage, his blue check shirt open to reveal a tattooed chest; Nadine Marshall-Joseph (Piarco, b. 1976) also stares into the camera against a coastal backdrop of rocks and water, a tattoo appearing above the neckline of a black camisole alongside a second tattoo of a large, colored butterfly; Adam "Mar" Andrews (Chaguanas, b. 1980) smiles in profile against a wall of foliage, showing a tattooed back and standing in the shadow of anthurium flowers; Alicia Viarruel (St. Joseph, b. 1988) turns away from the camera, hands leaning on a giant agave plant; and Joan Ballantyne (Arima, b. 1959) faces the camera, smiling, waist deep in a river, the chest tattoo alongside others that adorn Ballantyne's left shoulder and arm.

The photographs are punctuated at each end of the gallery by a moving-image work, a live-action film, and an animated short, and the tattoos link these components as they do the participants in the project (figure 27). The live-action film



FIGURE 27. Live-action dance in Gesiye's *The Wound Is a Portal*, 2022.

opens with Gesiye dancing on the point where Columbus landed as a voice-over establishes the land, and not Columbus, as Trinidad's point of origin: "Every story starts with the land. It is the stage and the main character, without which none of us would exist. This story starts with an island, a portal in the water, a home. The land is a witness to all of our taking and having and owning." The voice-over then introduces the concept of the line, a central element of the tattoo linked to notions of property, boundaries, and containers: "We draw our line in the sand. This is mine, that is yours. Here: a fence, a wall, a border, a boundary. A container to make sense of the world." Subsequent scenes show one person making a clay vessel, another being tattooed by Gesiye, people gathering in various configurations, and interviews with participants about their lives on the island. The oldest member of the group, seventy-seven-year-old Robert Price, explains that there was much his father didn't tell him and notes that because he was born under colonial rule, "whatever we heard was what they put into our heads." Underscoring the importance of counternarratives to Gesiye's project, Price continues, "My father, he was totally against it. During the early days of Eric Williams, he taught us differently. He opened our eyes to really see the British just raped the Caribbean." Price describes his experience of studying mechanics in England in the 1960s as "very, very racial," and describes the legacy of educational violence as "something we have to live with for the rest of our lives."<sup>62</sup> Yet even as Price and other participants describe the totality of world making that colonial violence attempts to impose, the work itself refuses those attempts. A soundtrack composed by Omar Jarra accompanies intercut images of waterfalls, landscapes, community, dance, and tattooing as the voice-over celebrates "a borderless belonging" and declares, "God is a Trini; we create whole worlds here."

In conversation, Gesiye discusses the duration of colonial and purportedly *post*-colonial violence that “resonates still in our bodies, in our space,” and asks, “What happened when so many spaces that were being colonized were not described as ‘war’?” Addressing the terminology used to periodize violence, they continue, “War is such a finite category. How do we describe what we’re feeling if it’s not that, even as we’re feeling it? What happens to something that doesn’t feel like it’s past? It feels like we’re in a constant stretch of time . . . this behavior, this looped pattern. . . . It’s almost like ‘post’ has taken us outside of time again.” These issues inform the animated loop at the other end of the gallery that treats each tattoo as an individual frame within what Gesiye describes as “a shared story” that links a group of strangers together and uses animated tattoos to bridge bodies, stories, and land.

Every tattoo is arguably always-already an animated image through its placement on the living ground of skin. It is, by definition, an image that moves, changes, morphs, and grows as it inhabits the living, aging body. As a medium in which the line emerges by ink permeating skin through thousands of tiny holes that together make the image, it is animation-like in its formal engagement with parts and wholes. The critical potential of this part-whole dynamic for thinking about the unruly temporalities, geographies, and effects of colonial warfare and slavery is explicitly activated by Gesiye through their exploration of the link between tattooing and animation (video 6). Frame-by-frame photographic processes thread together the eight tattoos in a potent looping form of “double animation” in which already-animate images take on collective movements. This slowly generates a virtual movement out of the art- and land-based community projects that Gesiye creates over time. Just as animation activates a tension between the static frame and the moving image, so here there is also a conceptual tension between the mobility of people, terrain, and images, and the work’s investment in place-based communities. Through its (inter)(in)animating qualities, the work mediates evolving ways of being in the midst of the challenges posed for members of Trinidad-based and diasporic communities affected by the island’s histories of forced displacement, migration driven by educational and economic inequity, disruptions in the cross-generational transmission of knowledge, and differing experiences of place under colonial and postcolonial regimes of governance.

Like Davenport’s *Coyote*, Gesiye’s animated loop is also deeply entangled with architecture. But the architecture set in motion by the animated tattoos is not that of a European, monumental museum but rather the vernacular architecture of Trinidadian homes, recalling Trinidadian artist Irénée Shaw’s insertion of the visual repertoire of ordinary domestic life in her *Gilded Cages* series. As Thompson explains, “In one work, *Neighborhood* (1992), Shaw presents a view of the island as it appeared from her home, a snapshot of the landscape as framed by her window. Struck by a sense that this accidental vista did not resemble any of the contemporaneous commercial or touristic landscape paintings of Trinidad, Shaw decided to represent this view and to pinpoint the precise elements that marred Trinidad’s





VIDEO 6. Tattoo animation. Gesiye, *The Wound Is a Portal*, 2022.

To watch this video, scan the QR code with your mobile device or visit  
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1525/luminos.228.6>



landscape aesthetics.”<sup>63</sup> While “home” might suggest walls that shut the body in, the architectural element Gesiye references via the basic outline of all eight tattoos is the concrete louvre ventilation block. This allows light and air to flow through built spaces even as it provides both privacy and protection from the rain. As Gesiye puts it, “It’s a ventilation system that helps let in light and some signs of nature from the outside to the inside; so you can be inside but still feel connected to the outside. You can see people passing. That was the idea—letting that space or connection to the land into your heart, to create a connection through all of the participants. It’s a kind of letting out the stuffiness too.” This sense of flow through portals and connection between the inside and outside, between a person and the rest of the world, is reinforced in the interaction of the animation with the live-action film’s depiction of the dancing body in dialogue with the flow of waterfalls and rivers, the rhythm of the ocean, scenes of intimacy and joy, and relaxed bodies, simply breathing in and out.

This combination of privacy and connection to the world occurs also in the dynamic process of tattooing. First, Gesiye explains, the pain involved with the tattooing process connects the person being tattooed “intensely to the body.”

"It's hard to be somewhere else!" they exclaim, laughing. Yet the pain involved, they argue, is both something "that you've consented to" and something that "you also know is transforming you; you're not going to physically be the same after the experience." Animation theory has often highlighted the violence embedded in the drawn animated body being squashed and stretched by the animator. Gesiye, however, structures the body-transforming experience of tattooing within frameworks of consent, connection, and privacy, as a one-to-one participatory partnership with the animator-tattooer that evolves over the course of a day of story sharing and dialogue to which museum visitors are not privy. For Gesiye, the combination of tattooing, animation, and the sharing of stories over time and across generations acknowledges the pain inflicted by the multiheaded violence of colonialism that includes blocking the flow of stories across generations. Just as the tattoo becomes a living image on and in the skin of the one who wears it, so, as the single frame depicting each person's tattoo is brought into contact with the other "frames," (inter)(in)animation visualizes life lived in community, where differences give rise to shimmering vibrations and lively pulsations.<sup>64</sup> The ventilation block remains consistent across all the tattoos, but Gesiye allows "all the elements within the space to be shifting and moving." They add, "This relates to the thing about breath. I told everyone that the movement would be very subtle, and I wanted it to look like there was just air blowing through the tattoo." Against the changing hues of different people's skin, a palm frond and an anthurium plant seem to dance in the wind. A hummingbird flies up to the top of the shape, then back down to a black circle, perhaps the sun. It dips its beak to feed while a butterfly, for Gesiye a symbol of transformation, flies around the circle.<sup>65</sup> A river flows through the length of the tattoo, graphically reiterating the strong presence of water in the photographs, the live-action film, and Trinidad itself. Gesiye notes, "I don't think I meant to include water as prominently as I did, but it became essential to the flow. Think of what passes through us and what we unintentionally hold on to—'bad flow,' or what can stagnate. I was intentionally thinking of the healing power of flow and water, so the tattoo contains a river." Discussing the tattoos' resonance with healing and flow, Gesiye notes that some white Trinidadians resisted the project, labeling it as "black magic," "blood-letting," or "obeah," and she compares their attitudes to Picton's own fearful, punishing response to West African spiritual practices.<sup>66</sup>

Gesiye's (inter)(in)animation gives visual form to structural ventilation and flow as a dynamic interaction among nature, architecture, people, and history within the island. It is not just the flora and fauna that possess movement in this loop, for the outline of the shape of the tattoo also morphs subtly, as do the mountains from which the river flows. The animation of the land was a deliberate decision. Gesiye explains: "I included the mountain range on the island; it's what connects us to the Andes because we broke off and became our own island, separate." The tattoo-animation here activates a notion of the island as independent yet relational, not stranded. This puts Gesiye's work, and the frame-by-frame process



of animation itself, into dialogue with what Antonio Gómez and Francisco-J. Hernández Adrián describe as “the film archipelago.” Drawing on Édouard Glissant’s concept of “archipelagic thinking,” which breaks with fixed and “continental” ways of organizing “the History of human communities,” Gómez and Adrián seek to reclaim the possibilities for thought offered by Latin American islands.<sup>67</sup> Gesiye visualizes the mountains’ mobility by combining tattooing and animation in a collectively framed process that invites relational rather than nationalistic or fixed ways of thinking about land and body, part and whole. This in turn makes room for diasporic understandings of place and belonging. Tattooed (inter)(in)animation here generates senses of time, space, body, and community that resist Eurocentric models for representing time, place, and historical truth, fostering a dialogue, for example, between human and mountain time. Though Gesiye describes being “shocked” upon arrival at the Amgueddfa Cymru/National Museum of Wales “by the scale of [Picton’s] portrait,” their work ultimately dwarfs the painting’s scale, even on a small screen, by mediating the movement of mountains and the world-making, (inter)(in)animating capacity of community.

#### ANIMATING THE HISTORIC PRESERVATION SITE: ISLANDS, GIANTS, AND RETERRITORIALIZATION

David Hartt opens his digital video *Et in Arcadia Ego* (2022) with bold white letters on a black screen spelling out the title’s words: ET IN/ARCADIA/EGO (“Even in Arcadia there am I”). The words directly cite the title and depicted tomb inscriptions of two different paintings of Arcadian shepherds by Nicolas Poussin, one at Chatsworth House (1627), the other in the Louvre (1637–38). The indeterminacy of these paintings, as Elizabeth Cropper and Charles Dempsey argue, has given rise to art historical debates about both which subject is being referenced by the inscription—who is this “I” in Arcadia?—and in which temporal register—historical/heroic or mythological—Poussin’s depiction of Arcadia resides.<sup>68</sup> By citing Poussin’s inscription in this contemporary video work, these questions also charge the landscape that Hartt at once represents and creates with an uncertainty that becomes its animating possibility. Meanwhile, the font, word arrangement, and underlining of the title’s words reference both the posters used by Black workers in the 1968 Memphis Sanitation Workers strikes that declared “I AM A MAN” and contemporary artists’ multiple citations of this phrase.<sup>69</sup> (Inter)(in)animation is well suited to mediating the nonsequential art historical temporalities that these references set in motion.

A sequence of crisp, static shots of nature—grasses, trees, bugs—is accompanied by an uncanny sonic fabric made up of denaturalized natural sounds. The rustles and footsteps loom so large on the soundtrack that they suggest an immense presence. Fragments of cello music occasionally appear. Not quite a minute into the work, we notice a glass house—the Glass House—the midcentury modern

residence built in 1949 in New Canaan, Connecticut, by one of the “fathers” of modern architecture, Philip Johnson, whose contributions to the vocabulary of modernism are inextricably bound up with his active embrace of Italian fascism and national socialism before and during World War II.

The movement implied by the rustling soundtrack is juxtaposed with views of the house from the far side of a pond below, as well as with multiple shots of Johnson’s 1962 “pavilion in the pond,” which sits, perfectly reflecting itself, on a small island in the water. A series of closeups foreground the flattened arches through which Johnson, looking backwards and forwards in time, was exploring the Renaissance design challenge of using columns for corners for a number of cultural center commissions, including the New York State Theater at the Lincoln Center.<sup>70</sup> These architectural views are intercut with shots showing a weed sprouting out of the cracks in the paving and the teeming insect life of the pond. As the rustling sounds of an unseen entity persist, only the movement of a dragonfly makes clear that these are moving images, not still photographs, continuing Hartt’s earlier dialogue with what Soveig Nelson describes as Michael Snow’s “gravity-defying, almost post-human perspective.”<sup>71</sup> These high-definition shots of landscape with architecture are so sharp as to be uncanny, making the viewer wonder whether they are photographic images of real landscapes or digital renderings of imagined realities. This uncanniness is further activated by the fact that, though Hartt shot much of this footage at 120 frames per second (fps), he inserts it into *Et in Arcadia Ego* at 30 fps, stretching the registration of time through slow motion in both the sonic and visual dimensions, creating an uncanny sense of altered scale. The wild turkey calls registered during field recordings appear as eerie, unfamiliar sounds that are at once natural and electronic, paving a sonic path for the narrative to come, which brings the delusions of the real as well as the life-affirming possibilities of the speculative into focus.

Only after two minutes does the film offer a view of the concrete pavilion from the Glass House above it, as Johnson had designed and imagined it. Drawing on uses of “false scale” or “follies” in English gardens designed to increase the perceived size of a garden, Johnson states that he “deliberately made the scale of this little house about half of what it should be to be normal,” noting that the effect of this is “you feel very big”: “A child feels like a king because if you’re very short and very small and your scale is small too, then you feel bigger. Also, it’s an island because I love islands. If you step on an island you’re cut off from the world and you create your own world.”<sup>72</sup> Comparing the effect of these scalar illusions with the sliding scales of *Alice in Wonderland*, Johnson asks, “Well, if you get big, what’s that do? It makes you feel important. So all of a sudden, you’re king of the whole pond, see. Well, I guess I am important—which is all you really need in life.”<sup>73</sup> Hartt’s work rescales and reimagines this landscape, imprinted by the European-derived delusions of grandeur that inform the visual traditions of both realism and reality. It redirects, often with humor, the creative possibilities that the site’s flexible



FIGURE 28. The giant Orion with the Glass House, in David Hartt's *Et in Arcadia Ego*, 2022.

scales of time and space suggest, (inter)(in)animating, as Gesiye did, different trajectories, histories, and modes of world making.

Animation helps to activate the life-affirming potentialities of this site that Hartt visually, sonically, historically, mythologically, and physically unearths through a process he describes as “terraforming.”<sup>74</sup> A sudden close-up shot of the Glass House reveals the presence of a CGI-generated, barefoot, Black femme giant (figure 28). Draped in a long golden dress, she places her hands on the roof as she leans back against the house, standing almost twice as high as the building. As she turns her head from side to side, seemingly without seeing, she recasts Nicolas Poussin's *Blind Orion Searching for the Rising Sun* (1658). But this CGI giant directs her blind gaze not toward the viewer but toward another metallic figure who inhabits this remade modernist Arcadia: Olimpia.

For the fabrication of the giant, Hartt worked closely with Los Angeles-based artists and directors Claire Cochran and Rick Farin of Actual Objects, a creative studio cofounded with Nick Vernet in 2019 to explore the hyperreal and aesthetic possibilities of CGI world making, often through music and fashion videos. The company's philosophy reinforces *Et in Arcadia Ego*'s antiheroic and ensemble emphasis. They explain, “We think the concept of originality undermines the work of all of our influences, references, predecessors, colleagues, etc. In the age of the poor image, we consider the concept of originality, and the ‘hero artist’ to be irresponsible.”<sup>75</sup> Actual Objects uses the platform Unreal Engine, developed in 1998 for the design of computer games, including war games like *Call of Duty* and *Fortnite*.<sup>76</sup> Hartt was drawn to Actual Objects' “embrace of the uncanny” and how their creations disregard the rules of “scale, geometry, and the boundaries of specific objects.”<sup>77</sup> Hartt could have used other special effects to insert a giant

into the Glass House landscape more seamlessly and realistically. He turned to Cochran and Farin, however, in order to develop the giant in ways that would disrupt the coherence of the image and open up the historical narrative possibilities of the landscape beyond those made available by Johnson's fascism. Hartt explains, "I talked to Rick and Claire about trying to think about something from a video game cohabiting this fictitious space. I think in some ways it does alienate the environment from its historical specificity. By seeing the giant, and seeing the giant rendered in that way, it further pushes it away from the tyranny of the Johnson narrative."<sup>78</sup>

Both Actual Objects and Unreal Engine resonate with the terraforming intentions of Hartt's practice within the space of the image. Actual Objects' name, for example, refuses separations between digital images and the real world and derives from the group's research into "the materiality of technology" within the context of "climate collapse."<sup>79</sup> Their approach to CGI image making underscores the physicality of the digital image and reflects their core interest in locating the digital inside of the physical. As Farin states, "People traditionally understand technology as this bottomless thing, the cloud or the silver sheen of Apple products. . . . But even a Word document is something that's legitimately physical—it's an etching on a piece of metal on a hard drive, or if you upload files to Google Drive, that's not actually the air in the atmosphere, that's a data center in North Dakota, so with every file you add you're increasing waste and space."<sup>80</sup> Asked if they think CGI can alter the way we perceive reality, they reply:

The larger question here is whether (or if) CGI can be considered something real, something with a material, or emotional knowledge. CGI certainly has a shape to it, a list of aesthetic and technical attributes, and maybe even some exciting or novel traits, but is it tangible? The highest achievement for game developers is creating something immersive, and I think what's more important to us as a studio is to create things that feel like they aren't trying to mimic reality, but rather an uncanny subversion, to create an alternate perspective through which to view our non-CGI existence.<sup>81</sup>

Unreal Engine similarly decenters the human and blurs the line between subjects and objects, challenging the vocabulary and history of image analysis as well as that discourse's imbrication with the sphere of ethics and raising important questions about representational systems' complicity with humanism's exclusions. As industry professionals Gonçalo Marques, Devin Sherry, David Pereira, and Hammad Fozi explain, "In Unreal Engine, all the objects that can be placed in a level are referred to as Actors. In a movie, an actor would be a human playing a character, but in UE5, every single object you see in your level, including walls, floors, weapons, and characters, is an Actor."<sup>82</sup>

Hartt welcomed the way that the CGI aesthetic held the dominant Johnson narrative rooted in World War II at bay. But in the course of codesigning the giant

with Actual Objects, he simultaneously began to reintegrate new aspects of the Johnson story, reflected in the giant's light. Cochran came to the Glass House site to supervise all the special-effects shots to ensure, Hartt explains, that "the shots had enough headroom" (for the giant). Hartt determined the relative size of the giant by photoshopping models from Paco Rabanne runway shots and look-books at the appropriate scale into his storyboards for Actual Objects, sartorially linking the giant to *Et in Arcadia Ego*'s other major character, Olympia, who appears shortly after the giant. But the giant's golden dress also references the draping, color, and metallic qualities of the aluminum beaded chain curtains that line the Four Seasons Restaurant in Mies van der Rohe and Johnson's Seagram Building in New York City. Just as Hartt's camera-"tilling" redirects attention from Johnson's glass walls to the Annie Alpers curtain that hangs in the Glass House, centering attention on a female modernist designer, so here, Orion's shimmering dress echoes the Four Seasons work, not of Johnson, but of the weaver Marie Nichols, who designed the curtains. In doing so, Hartt (inter)(in)animates a less heroic, less singular, and more ensemblic history of modernism and design.<sup>83</sup>

The film cuts from the giant to the quiet inside/outside space of the glass living room, furnished with Mies van der Rohe furniture and recalling Johnson's close collaborations with van der Rohe and other Bauhaus designers. The room houses a different painting attributed to Poussin, *Burial of Phocion* (ca. 1648–49), which depicts the humiliating and unjust denial of burial in the city to the Athenian general known as "Phocion the Good" on charges of treason. The painting's narrative of political shame might suggest Johnson's own embrace of Italian fascism and national socialism, which included a visit to a Hitler Youth rally and admiring reviews of *Mein Kampf*. Though Johnson later publicly renounced his affiliation with fascism, Nikil Saval argues he never had to bear full responsibility for his politics because of his leading role in modernism and MoMA, his proximity to Bauhaus architects such as Walter Gropius, his proximity to wealth, and his fashioning of "an architecture of unabashed capitalism."<sup>84</sup> The Glass House website explains that Alfred H. Barr Jr., the founding director of MoMA, suggested installing *Burial of Phocion* in the space. Given the painting's depiction of a falsely accused political figure, its presence could be read as an attempt to manage and diminish the legacy of Johnson's fascism, but the website notes only the way it "serves as a mediator between the interior geometry of the Glass House and the tamed exterior landscape seen through its transparent walls."<sup>85</sup>

Hartt shows little interest in commenting on Johnson's politics. Doing so, he suggests, would only further aggrandize "the singularity and scale" of the boy-king within the history of modernism. He instead redirects our attention, in part through the invocation of the two other aforementioned Poussin paintings, housed elsewhere, toward the reimaged or "terraformed" landscape now occupied by the Black femme giant. If *Burial of Phocion*'s presence in the Glass House centers the posthumous political legacy of an individual man's unfair banishment,

reflecting what Lamster describes as Johnson's "coily self-aggrandizing reading" of the painting, *Blind Orion Searching for the Rising Sun* (1658) does not. This painting "breathes," as William Hazlitt wrote two hundred years ago, "the spirit of the morning, its moisture, its repose, its obscurity, waiting the miracle of light to kindle it into smiles," depicting nature as "full, solid, large, luxuriant, teeming with life and power."<sup>86</sup> Such a morning light infuses Hartt's work too, thanks to a shooting schedule that was narratively organized, with early morning scenes being shot as the sun rose.<sup>87</sup> For Hazlitt, writing in 1821, *Blind Orion* also exceeds the paradigm of realism and ventures out into the worlds of animation and speculation, allowing other possibilities of history, both natural and human, to come into view. The painting, Hazlitt states, gives "us nature, such as we have never seen, but have often wished to see," and in this version of nature, the landscape bears witness: "Even inanimate and dumb things speak a language of their own. . . . 'The very stones prate of their whereabouts.'"<sup>88</sup> Hazlitt's animated commentary on the giant-inhabited landscape (mis)cites the moment when Macbeth, about to murder King Duncan, dreads a future history. He appeals to the earth not to speak of his violence, fearing that the horror of his actions will fail to be contained in the present and will be unleashed into the future by what the earth itself knows and speaks of Macbeth's personal history of violence: "Thou [sure] and firm-set earth, / Hear not my steps, which [way they] walk, for fear / The very stones prate of my whereabouts, / And take the present horror from the time, / Which now suits with it."<sup>89</sup> Macbeth's fear of nature speaking infinitely of his infamy and violence reflects a view of history forged in the image of his own unbridled narcissism. Simply by replacing "my whereabouts" with "their [the stones'] whereabouts," Hazlitt discovers in Poussin a nonanthropocentric, ecological view of history. As in Gesiye's insistence that stories begin with the land, Hartt's (inter)(in)animation of Poussin's painting, like Hazlitt's, makes room for historical narratives organized around something other than the violent acts of white dwarfed men aspiring to be kings.

Hartt approaches mythologies not as fixed tales but as casts of characters that can be repurposed at different moments in time and space. In *Et in Arcadia Ego*, the cast includes Orion, the CGI giant, and Olympia, the mechanical, musical automaton from E.T.A. Hoffmann's story "The Sandman" (1817). In Hoffmann, Olympia is both an object of desire and a female character regarded as stupid. Hartt reimagines her as an experimental black, female composer and cellist who hangs out with giants. As with Marie Nichols and Annie Alpers, Hartt indirectly finds Olympia via Johnson's close association with the Bauhaus school and, more specifically, through Johnson's entanglement with the figure of Oskar Schlemmer (1888–1943), whose work the Nazis also exhibited as "degenerate art." In 1933, in part through the mediations of Barr, Johnson purchased Schlemmer's 1932 painting *Bauhaus Staircase*, made to honor the Bauhaus School at Dessau just before the Nazis closed it. Johnson lent it to MoMA, donating it permanently under controversial circumstances in 1943.<sup>90</sup>



Hartt describes the ways in which Johnson's fascism is narrated as "patriarchal," suggesting that antiheroic models of postwar critique can sustain rather than dismantle belligerent historiographic frameworks. Commenting on the relationship of his speculative, (inter)(in)animating project to Johnson's fascism, Hartt states,

I'm very aware of, and understand the possibilities of, context informing the work because the work is research-based and not a blank slate; but I'm very careful in terms of where the work goes *not* to enact a kind of reification. A direct critique of Johnson simply reifies his position; reifies the authority; and so I always stop short of that. I address some of that, but I'm not going to stop there, which is why some of the catalysts for the areas I explore are ones I *found* there . . . you know, Poussin, and Schlemmer. They exist on their own and they have their own legacies that I'm just as interested in, but the catalyzing event or aspect of why they are present has to do with things that are present at the site. Rather than talking about Johnson, I wanted to talk about the narrative potential of these other things.<sup>91</sup>

Hartt engages Schlemmer not through Johnson's ownership of Schlemmer's work but rather by bringing to life a version of the automaton Olympia inspired by Schlemmer's 1922 geometric *Triadic Ballet*, which was loosely based on "The Sandman."<sup>92</sup>

Made in the wake of World War I, *Triadic Ballet*, like Hoffmann's tale, raises questions central to animation scholarship about the differences and uncanny similarities between humans and machines, and the violence and desires to which these relationships give rise. Freud's 1919 essay "The Uncanny," one of the most well-known reflections on Hoffmann's story, remains largely uninterested in the figure of Olympia and, by extension, in the question of the liveliness of "object[s]." More interesting for Freud is the question of male castration. He writes, "Uncertainty whether an object is living or inanimate, which we must admit in regard to the doll Olympia, is quite irrelevant in connection with this other, more striking instance of uncanniness."<sup>93</sup> By contrast, Hartt's camera centers the viewer's attention on Olympia's everyday being and liveliness—sleeping, working, drinking tea, reflecting, walking in the garden—as well as her musicality. Her musicality intertwines creativity and technology—here, unlike in "The Sandman," they are not opposed—in ways that seem to restore Orion's sight. In Hoffmann's version, the main character, Nathaniel, perceives Olympia, in spite of her "angelic countenance," to have "something the matter with her" and to be "half-witted, perhaps, or something of the kind."<sup>94</sup> He is plagued by both his desire for Olympia and a "gloomy foreboding," which in his poems takes the form of fantasies of a dismembered animated blackness that robs the white heterosexual couple of its joy: "He represented himself and Clara as united by a true love, but occasionally threatened by a black hand, which appeared to dart into their lives, to snatch away some new joy just as it was born."<sup>95</sup> Nathaniel's Manichaean fears also take the form of racialized, personified flames that threaten to eat him up, roaring like "the hurricane, when it fiercely



lashes the foaming waves, which rise up, like black giants with white heads, for the furious combat.”<sup>96</sup> Hartt abandons Nathaniel as the consciousness through which to view Olimpia, giants, and the relationship between female creativity and technology, perhaps in sympathy with Clara, Nathaniel’s fiancée, who finds his poems to induce “mental drowsiness” and to be “very tedious.”<sup>97</sup> Hartt (inter)(in)animates Olimpia in a new story alongside the giant Orion, transforming the narrative possibilities of both characters, who seem magnetically attracted toward each other, and perhaps of art and design too.

Olimpia appears three minutes into *Et in Arcadia Ego*, played by the MacArthur-winning Tomeka Reid. Reid is a composer and cellist whose improvisational genius is rooted in ensemble, community, and collaboration, including through her work with the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians.<sup>98</sup> By casting Reid in this role, Hartt emphasizes Olimpia’s embodied creativity and intelligence but without recourse to the language of singular greatness.<sup>99</sup> This Olimpia lies asleep in bed inside the Glass House, and from the outset her image is mirrored in the side table, nodding to the uncanny’s association with the doppelgänger and visually linking Olimpia to the mirrored island pavilion below. She gets up and dons jeans to accompany the reflective chain-mail top that she is already wearing. Hartt commissioned this item, like the giant’s dress, along with a chain-mail headdress and dress that appear later in the work, from Paco Rabanne. These gladiator-style protective clothes led Coco Chanel to call Rabanne, an architect by training, “the metal worker.” They link Olimpia to the giant and associate them both with high fashion and architectural design, power, and a future-oriented temporality. We hear voices singing in the soundscape of Olimpia’s mind as she begins to compose music with paper and pencil.<sup>100</sup>

The film then cuts to Olimpia, now wearing a long Paco Rabanne silver chain-mail dress, sitting near the Poussin painting, and playing Reid’s custom-made black carbon-fiber cello (figure 29). The instrument’s materiality, like the chain-mail dress, seems futuristic, speculative, and resilient, perhaps another unreal object. A Nagra 4.2 recorder sits on the table, visualizing the music’s unknown possible futures as a reproducible element in this time-bending work. But the fullness of the composition is withheld at this point as the sounds and images of music making are not synchronized with each other. We hear fragments of cello music, but when Olimpia plays the cello alone we hear vocalizations that imply her musical imagination is at work on composing a more communal sound. Yet even as audience members hear snatches of Olimpia’s subjective soundscape, Hartt’s framing decisions create abstract images that simultaneously withhold full access to this scene of Black femme creativity. We see the textures and light-plays of black carbon fiber against chain mail until the chain mail gradually fills the screen, serving, like the rapid cuts, as a curtain protecting this figure’s creative process from visual possession. A moment later, Olimpia enters the garden with the Nagra and



FIGURE 29. Olympia with cello, in David Hartt's *Et in Arcadia Ego*, 2022.

comes upon a vibrant circle of colorful flowers in the minimalist landscape that dance to the touch of the breeze and bees.

Hartt began thinking about *Et in Arcadia Ego* while working on his first collaboration with the Glass House, entitled *A Colored Garden* (2021), which might also be considered an (inter)(in)animated project in its transformation (or return) of painted images into living, moving things. This project was inspired by the still-life paintings of the African American artist Charles Ethan Porter (1847–1923), who spent most of his life in Connecticut, as well as by the queer “exuberant” gardens designed by Johnson’s longtime partner David Whitney, which Johnson ultimately removed in favor of a more stoic ideal. Hartt installed a circular, forty-foot-wide flower garden made up of the specific, now animated, flowers depicted, or inanimated, in Porter’s still-life paintings (figure 30).<sup>101</sup> As Olympia stands within this animated still life, the giant Orion approaches, kneels down, and begins to look around. As composer and giant encounter each other, we hear singing, sometimes in harmony, as well as the sound of pizzicato cello, also playing two notes at once, musically echoing the double visual presence in this space. The scene cuts to the pavilion in the pond, accompanied by the sound of birds and insects. Olympia, now dressed in golden chain-mail dress and mask, stands on the island, her head nearly touching the roof of Johnson’s pavilion, with its built-in scalar distortions. It is occupied by new inhabitants who, in claiming the space’s magnifying scale and power for themselves, alter the world (figure 31). But the building, Olympia, and the Nagra are all dwarfed by another new presence, a sound system that brings international dub culture into this landscape, opening a sonic and material portal between this Connecticut island and Jamaica.<sup>102</sup> Olympia



FIGURE 30. Olimpia and Orion in flower garden, in David Hartt's *Et in Arcadia Ego*, 2022.



FIGURE 31. Olimpia with dub speakers, in David Hartt's *Et in Arcadia Ego*, 2022.

switches on the Nagra, and the ethereal elements of her composition here unite as they appear to play back through the SoundSystem (in actuality, they don't). "It is a music of the masses," Hartt says of dub culture. "It is hyperdemocratic. It is of the street. So I loved the idea of taking the 'art music' that Tomeka was crafting and having it broadcast through this other system."<sup>103</sup> Gently haunting voices sing wordless, rising lines in ensemble, accompanied by pizzicato cello chords. As the giant makes her way through the landscape toward the sound, Olimpia sets off a road flare, and this combination of music, light, and companionship seems to restore Orion's





VIDEO 7. Orion and Olimpia with a road flare. David Hartt, *Et in Arcadia Ego*, 2022.

To watch this video, scan the QR code with your mobile device or visit DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1525/luminos.228.7>



sight. Olimpia holds the flare out powerfully in front of her: a protest, a call, a guide (video 7). The CGI giant enters the pond and reaches her left arm upward, palm open and outstretched before her. The two golden Black femmes stand side by side, as if to say, in defiance of white heroic singularity, “We too are in Arcadia.”

. . .

I am finalizing the manuscript of this book in the fifteenth month of Israel’s expanding military operations in first Gaza, then the West Bank and Lebanon, in response to the October 7, 2023, Hamas attacks on Israel. As of October 1, 2024, the U.N. estimates 1,579 Israeli fatalities as well as 101 remaining Israeli hostages; 42,308 Palestinian fatalities in Gaza and the West Bank; 10,000 Palestinians suspected dead under the rubble, and an additional 62,413 Palestinian deaths from starvation. Worldwide, the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED) calculates that “1 in 6 people are estimated to have been exposed to conflict so far in 2024.”<sup>104</sup> Of the countries listed in the “extreme” category of conflict, three—Palestine, Haiti, and Sudan—are described as having “worsening” conditions, which is hard to imagine.<sup>105</sup> These horrors have energized antiwar, anticapitalist, antiracist, anticolonial, and feminist movements around the world, and hegemonic governments and institutions have responded with fierce repression. My home university has indefinitely imposed “Temporary Standards and Procedures for Campus Events and Demonstrations,” undermining the open-expression policies it once specifically created in response to those protesting the Vietnam War.<sup>106</sup>

The cacophony makes Olimpia's resilient music hard to hear, but this does not mean that there is no music. Orion's unreal hand seems hard to reach, and it is tempting to doubt the value of experimental, creative work. And it is precisely in such landscapes of death that (inter)(in)animation repeatedly appears, insisting on the right to claim life lived in community.

On March 1, 2024, the renowned Palestinian poet, novelist, and artist Ibrahim Nasrallah published an (inter)(in)animated "video poem" entitled "Mary of Gaza," translated into English by Huda Fakhreddine.<sup>107</sup> It appeared in *Mizna*, a "woman-led contemporary arts organization" that promotes "experimental approaches to art, literature, and film" and "work that questions and expands the forms and conceptual frameworks of Arab and SWANA culture."<sup>108</sup> As Nasrallah reads the words of the poem, the video moves across a series of photographs. These news images, all taken by Palestinian photographers in Gaza, depict leveled infrastructures, tent cities, and mounds of plastic-wrapped corpses, big and small, surrounded by mourning crowds. Nasrallah intervenes into these images using crayon drawing and animation effects, and these graphic-photos persist until the poem's final minute, when, in conjunction with the words "Peace is ours. Peace is ours," these trembling, photo-drawn, and colored-in images give way to live-action sepia footage of young Gazans making soundless music together. But what interests me at the conclusion of this book is how "Mary of Gaza" both invites and resists a simple alignment of the still photograph with death and of moving, cinematic images with life. With Fakhreddine's help, I invite Nasrallah to a dialogue about his use of what I have been calling (inter)(in)animation in the midst of this ongoing war on Gaza.

The early stanzas of the poem seem despairing, soaked in blood, mired in death, certain that "Peace on earth is not for us. / It is for tyrants, cock-headed leaders, / and all the armies of dust." Death suffuses the lives depicted here. As Nasrallah explains, "There is an occupation that insists on making death a part of our lives. Not a day passes without it throwing the corpse of one or more of our children on our doorsteps. Today, it is no longer content with just one or two; on some days, it kills and wounds a thousand of us, as has been happening for the past eight months. Therefore, none of us can deny the presence of death in our lives."<sup>109</sup> Yet the video poem also shimmers with (inter)(in)animating—inter-medial, communal, transnational, and transtemporal—effects that mediate what Nasrallah describes using a language of "resurrection" that acknowledges death but also challenges it through the invocation of political resistance and hope. He writes, "We Palestinians have always insisted on not allowing anyone to prevent our resurrection in its human meaning: the return of life, freedom, and hope. We as Palestinians insist on defending our human right to resurrection because the absence of this idea means our end. . . . We find that every time one revolution is crushed, another much stronger revolution rises. This is resurrection. It is many resurrections. We are incapable of dying. We refuse to die, especially in the face

of all this complicity against us.” I ask Nasrallah how he thinks about the task and possibilities of poems and images at this genocidal moment. He responds, “I use every creative means possible from poetry to images to articles, novels, painting, and music. When all this death is rushing toward you in a homeland where everything is being destroyed and you have no place to hide, you resort to everything you have. And if you have nothing material that can repel bullets or bombs, you take refuge in the immaterial—language, images, your anger, your memory, your love for life, and your belief that it is your right and the right of every person who rejects dying unjustly.”

Within the video poem, (inter)(in)animation operates as refusal of death, even as death barrels on, and this refusal takes several aesthetic forms. Verbally, it appears in Nasrallah’s invocation of, and response to, Refaat Alareer’s poem “If I Must Die.” Alareer was a forty-four-year-old poet and professor of comparative literature at the Islamic University of Gaza, killed in an airstrike in Shajaiya on December 6, 2023, along with six members of his family, shortly after writing this poem.<sup>110</sup> Through the act of citation, the two poems and poets (inter)(in)animate each other across the line dividing life and death: “no place for the poem exulting its poet who writes, / ‘If I must die, you must live to tell my story.’”

Nasrallah also refuses the inevitability of Palestinian death in the way the video poem recirculates and transforms the news photographs that George Abraham describes as “necrotic images.”<sup>111</sup> In response to my question about his turn to an (inter)(in)animating aesthetic in the context of Gaza, Nasrallah explains,

I used very simple programs such as Movie Maker and Adobe Photoshop. The progression of the image from partial erasure to slightly clearer photographic images, then to the clearest images perhaps reflects my vision of what is happening. It is a coming out from darkness into light, the light we will reach despite everything. It is an insistence on the idea that we are unerasable. Every time an erasure attempt is made against us, we become clearer. Look at the world that was blind to us before, and how it sees us now. The revolution of the students and their professor alone is a great thing, as great as a miracle. As for the ending, the video did not need anything as much as it needed an ending where the breathtaking beauty of the Edward Said Conservatory Orchestra playing on a rooftop in Gaza is revealed. This is our true beauty that we defend to the world.

The (inter)(in)animating spirit of this video poem is contagious, expansive, morphing, finding its life in dynamic ways. In July 2024, the Aman Choir and Palestinian Youth Orchestra (PYO) performed what Nasrallah describes as “a long musical and vocal performance” based on “Mary of Gaza.”<sup>112</sup> “I did not expect this to happen,” Nasrallah comments, “but perhaps it expresses what I said in a previous answer: we are gathering, assembling. At first it was only the images and the poem, and then the video was a third presence or dimension. Now the music and the singing will be a fourth and a fifth dimension.”





## NOTES

### INTRODUCTION

1. *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. “war” (n.1a and n.1b), accessed July 2023, <https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/1011940408>.
2. Rose, *Why War?*, 15–40.
3. Shohat and Stam, “Introduction,” 1.
4. Shohat, “Taboo Memories,” 207.
5. *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, s.v. “inter,” [www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/inter-](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/inter-). For a brilliant discussion of the neglected phenomenon of “the in-between” and its relevance for thinking about race, embodiment, and animation, see Wu, “Animating Inbetween.”
6. Wills, *Inanimation*, ix.
7. Fenemore, “Pleasure of Objectification,” 4. See Ursell, “Interinanimation,” 75.
8. Ursell, “Interinanimation,” 72.
9. Ursell, “Interinanimation,” 72.
10. Ursell, “Interinanimation,” 73.
11. P. Wells, “Battlefields for the Undead.”
12. See Cholodenko, “‘First Principles’ of Animation,” 104. Tom Gunning also seeks to “probe” animation’s “relation to immobility” to examine the wonder animation generates. See Gunning, “Animating the Instant,” 42.
13. Du, “Theory of Suspended Animation,” 44.
14. Lamarre, *Anime Machine*, 164.
15. Deutsche, “Un-war,” 7–8. See also Deutsche, *Not-Forgetting*.
16. Deutsche, “Un-war,” 8.
17. Abu-Lughod, Hammami, and Shalhoub-Kevorkian, “Introduction,” 35.
18. Abu-Lughod, Hammami, and Shalhoub-Kevorkian, “Introduction,” 36.
19. Davis, “Vocabulary for Feminist Praxis,” 20.

20. Rose, *Why War?*, 36.
21. Lowe, *Intimacies of Four Continents*, 1.
22. Chow, *Age of the World Target*, 14.
23. Chow, *Age of the World Target*, 36.
24. Chow, *Age of the World Target*, 38.
25. Skoller, *Shadows, Specters, Shards*, xv.
26. Skoller, *Shadows, Specters, Shards*, xv.
27. See, for example, Cavell, *World Viewed*, 167–81.
28. On death and the indexical image, see the chapter “Inscribing Ethical Space: Ten Propositions on Death, Representation, and Documentary,” in Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts*, especially 233–36, and Zelizer, *About to Die*, especially 2 and 311.
29. Bazin, “Death Every Afternoon,” 29 and 30.
30. Daney, “Screen of Fantasy,” 33.
31. Daney, “Screen of Fantasy,” 34.
32. Bazin, “Death Every Afternoon,” 30.
33. Bazin, “Death Every Afternoon,” 30–31.
34. Bazin, “Death Every Afternoon,” 31.
35. Bazin, “Death Every Afternoon,” 30.
36. Rodowick, *Virtual Life of Film*, 31–32.
37. Reinke, “World Is a Cartoon,” 18.
38. See, for example, Honess Roe, *Animated Documentary*, Murray and Ehrlich, *Drawn from Life*, and Ehrlich, *Animating Truth*.
39. Maryam Mohajer, Zoom conversation with author’s and Meta Mazaj’s Global Film Theory class, University of Pennsylvania, March 20, 2023.
40. Buchan, “Introduction,” 3.
41. See, for example, Laliv Melamed’s discussion in an Israeli context of how memory can be transported “from its individual agents into national myth.” Melamed, *Sovereign Intimacy*, 112.
42. Bradley, *Anteaesthetics*, 87.
43. Bradley, *Anteaesthetics*, 15.
44. Bazin, “Death Every Afternoon,” 30.
45. Gates and Gillespie, “Reclaiming Black Film”; Takahashi, “Disarticulating Authorship.”
46. Takahashi, “Disarticulating Authorship.”
47. R. Thompson, “Meep-Meep!,” 225. On animation as a zombie form, see also Cholodenko, “Crypt, the Haunted House.”
48. Cholodenko, “‘First Principles’ of Animation,” 107.
49. Crafton, *Shadow of a Mouse*, 2.
50. Crafton, *Shadow of a Mouse*, 21. For George Griffin, even the presence of lines and paper makes the animated image “material” and related to the “stuff” of the world. See Griffin, “Take the B Train.”
51. Quoted in Crafton, *Shadow of a Mouse*, 73.
52. Crafton, *Shadow of a Mouse*, 72.
53. T. Doherty, *Projections of War*, 68. For examples of scholarly work on animation and war, see also Dorfman and Mattelart, *How to Read Donald Duck*; Giesen and Storm,

*Animation under the Swastika*; Lamarre, *Anime Machine*; Leslie, *Hollywood Flatlands*; Smoodin, *Animating Culture*; and Daisy Yan Du's work in progress, tentatively titled *Plasmatic Empire: Animated Filmmaking in the Manchukuo Film Association (1937–1945)*.

54. Lehman, *American Animated Cartoons*, 5.

55. Ghosh, "Animating Uncommon Life," 266–67.

56. Kornhaber, *Nightmares*, xvii–xviii.

57. See, for example, Lamarre, *Anime Machine*; Lunning, *Mechademia 4*; Honess Roe, *Animated Documentary*; Murray and Ehrlich, *Drawn from Life*; Ehrlich, *Animating Truth*; and Du, *Animated Encounters*.

58. Greenberg discusses animation's utility for exploring "alternative bodily spectatorship experiences" and evoking "sensory incoherence, disorientation, and reflexivity." This offers a useful theoretical framework for engaging animated work about the war wounded. See Greenberg, *Animated Film and Disability*, 23 and 19.

59. Kornhaber, *Nightmares*, 59.

60. I first saw this film in a screening I co-organized with Joshua Mosely and Robert Cargni Mitchell for Martin Luther King Jr. Day (January 16 and 17, 2012). A restored, reduced 16mm version of the compilation film that includes forty-nine of the sixty-plus original filmmakers is available for rent from Filmmakers Co-op at <https://film-makercoop.com/catalogue/week-of-the-angry-arts-for-life-against-the-war-the-complete-ver>. A version of *Mickey Mouse in Vietnam* with an added soundtrack has since become widely available online and is listed with a variety of dates, including 1968, 1968/69, and 1969. We screened the original compilation alongside a sequel, *For Life against the War, Again* (2007), instigated by the New York Film-Makers' Cooperative in opposition to the war in Iraq and American foreign policy: <https://film-makerscoop.com/catalogue/for-life-against-the-war-for-life-against-the-war-again>.

61. Robert Cargni Mitchell, "For Life against the War/For Life against the War . . . Again," program text (flyer) for Martin Luther King Jr. Day screening, International House, Philadelphia, January 16 and 17, 2012, in author's files.

62. C. Kaplan, "Mobility and War," 406.

63. Thanks to Joshua Mosley for suggesting the importance of movement to cartoon death.

64. Dorfman and Mattelart, *How to Read Donald Duck*, 34.

65. Dorfman and Mattelart, *How to Read Donald Duck*, 34.

66. Ōtsuka, "Disarming Atom," 118.

67. Ōtsuka, "Disarming Atom," 117–18; A. Kaplan, *Our American Israel*, 8.

68. Jones, "Chuck Jones Interviewed," 133.

69. The first full-disc photograph of Earth had been transmitted from ATS 3 on November 10, 1967, and was published in *National Geographic* that month, so at the moment this cartoon was made, meditations on the negative and positive possibilities of a photographically enabled "one world" were in full swing. H. Wells, Whiteley, and Karegeannes, *Origins of NASA Names*, chap. 2. See also Kurgan, *Close Up*, 9–10.

70. Nguyen, *Nothing Ever Dies*, 5. I am grateful to Jean Ma for directing me to this passage.

71. Nguyen, *Nothing Ever Dies*, 7.

72. Nguyen, *Nothing Ever Dies*, 7.

73. Sammond writes, “Commercial animation in the United States didn’t borrow from blackface minstrelsy, nor was it simply influenced by it. Rather, American animation is actually in many of its most enduring incarnations an integral part of the ongoing iconographic and performative traditions of blackface. Mickey Mouse isn’t *like* a minstrel; he *is* a minstrel.” *Birth of an Industry*, 5.

74. See Sammond, *Birth of an Industry*, 7–8.

75. Gates, “Baby Mine,” 38.

76. Gates, “Baby Mine,” 40.

77. Gates, “Baby Mine,” 38.

78. See Morrison, *Blacksound*, 14.

79. See Benjamin, “Mickey Mouse.”

80. Hansen, “Of Mice and Ducks,” 32, 53.

81. See Adorno, “On Jazz.” See also Hansen, “Of Mice and Ducks,” and “Micky-Maus,” especially 164.

82. Adorno, “On Jazz,” 45–46.

83. Adorno, “On Jazz,” 46.

84. Adorno, “On Jazz,” 45.

85. Adorno, “On Jazz,” 50.

86. Adorno, “On Jazz,” 52–53. For discussions of dismissals of ornament within modernism and film theory as overly hasty and racist, see King, *Lost in Translation*; Galt, *Pretty*; A. Cheng, *Ornamentalism*; and Rochester, “Visual Music.” Bradley argues, *pace* Cheng, that the black woman’s body “mediates the distinction between the bare and the ornamental” while being excluded from aesthetic value. See *Anteaeesthetics*, 147–220.

87. See, for example, the website of the Center for Visual Music: [www.centerforvisualmusic.org](http://www.centerforvisualmusic.org).

88. Moten, *In the Break*, 179.

89. Moten’s description of Adorno’s aural racism here as “deafness” briefly activates a problematic alignment of hearing impairment with culturally learned, life-negating forms of listening. *In the Break*, 179.

90. Moten, *In the Break*, 8 and 179.

91. Okiji, *Jazz as Critique*, 12.

92. Okiji, *Jazz as Critique*, 26.

93. Okiji, *Jazz as Critique*, 27.

94. One might think, for example, of the almost-total dominance of white, male filmmakers in Anthology Film Archive’s “Essential Cinema Repertory Collection,” which includes many experimental animators: <http://anthologyfilmarchives.org/about/essential-cinema>. In March 2022, perhaps under the mantle of “Women’s History Month,” Julia Curl programmed “Projecting the Everyday: Works by the Women of the Film-makers’ Co-operative,” emphasizing the filmmakers’ “vibrant personal visions” over the experience of filmmaking within a collective context.

95. Moten, *In the Break*, 153.

96. Moten, *In the Break*, 2.

97. Moten, *In the Break*, 7–8 and 12.

98. Moten, *In the Break*, 67.

99. Moten, *In the Break*, 99 and 108.

100. Moten, *In the Break*, 121–22.
101. Moten, *In the Break*, 121.
102. The Orkadian animator Margaret Tait used frame-by-frame processes in the war context, not to “animate” with “progressive movement from frame to frame,” but rather “to give a sort of shiver to the image on screen which was meant to be live, the shivering of the image I was trying to catch in my own memory—at the back of my mind.” See Neely, *Margaret Tait*, 164, and Redrobe, “Documentary, Animation, Poetry,” 46–67.
103. Moten, *In the Break*, 108, emphasis added. For a discussion of frame-by-frame practices by largely white, male, European and North American avant-garde filmmakers working within traditions going back to Sergei Eisenstein, Dziga Vertov, and Dada, where blackness emerges symptomatically as a condition of opticality, see Johnston, *Pulses of Abstraction*, 99–139, especially 104, 109–16, and 129. For a critique of racialized abstraction in avant-garde frame-by-frame processes, see Russell, “Dystopian Ethnography.” Torkwase Dyson takes up and refuses the avant-garde’s attempt to abstract blackness from history; see Dyson’s exhibition page, accessed August 28, 2024, at [www.torkwasedyson.com/exhibition-page](http://www.torkwasedyson.com/exhibition-page).
104. Ngai, *Ugly Feelings*, 125.
105. Ngai, *Ugly Feelings*, 100. For an equally important critique of the limitations of plastic politics, see Furuhashi, “Rethinking Plasticity.”
106. Johnson, “Apostrophe, Animation, and Abortion”; Rey Chow, “Postmodern Automaton,” quoted in Ngai, *Ugly Feelings*, 99.
107. Ngai, *Ugly Feelings*, 99–100.
108. Ngai, *Ugly Feelings*, 99–100.
109. Ngai, *Ugly Feelings*, 119.
110. Ngai, *Ugly Feelings*, 125 and 124.
111. Gillespie, *Film Blackness*, 13.
112. Gillespie, *Film Blackness*, 23.
113. Gillespie, *Film Blackness*, 49 and 33.
114. Rony, *How Do We Look?*, 97.
115. Deutsche, “Un-war.”

## 1. (INTER)(IN)ANIMATING THE ARCHIVE

1. Rony, *How Do We Look?*, 7. Rony responds by making an animated film imagining the life of the thirteen-year-old Javanese girl who was sold to Gauguin by her family. See Women Make Movies, “Annah La Javanaise, directed by Fatimah Tobing Rony, Indonesia, 2020, 6 minutes,” catalogue entry, accessed August 31, 2024, [www.wmm.com/catalog/film/annah-la-javanaise/](http://www.wmm.com/catalog/film/annah-la-javanaise/). Rony is now developing the short into a feature film.
2. Rony, *How Do We Look?*, 84 and 73.
3. The installation was on view from March 16 to August 21, 2023, and is the artist’s first solo museum show. See Museum of Modern Art, “Onyeka Igwe: *A Repertoire of Protest (No Dance, No Palaver)*, Mar 16–Aug 21, 2023,” accessed August 31, 2024, [www.moma.org/calendar/exhibitions/5686](http://www.moma.org/calendar/exhibitions/5686).
4. Du, “Suspended Animation,” 142.
5. See Museum of Modern Art, “Valie Export: *Tap and Touch Cinema, 1968/1989*,” accessed August 31, 2024, [www.moma.org/collection/works/159727](http://www.moma.org/collection/works/159727); *The Watermelon Woman*

(Cheryl Dunye, 1996); Women Make Movies, “*On Cannibalism*, a film by Fatimah Tobing Rony, US/Indonesia, 1994,” catalogue entry, accessed August 31, 2024, [www.wmm.com/catalog/film/on-cannibalism/](http://www.wmm.com/catalog/film/on-cannibalism/).

6. Cohen, *Infinite Repertoire*, 156n29.
7. Igwe, “Unbossed and Unbound,” 171.
8. I thank Igwe for her generosity with her time and thoughts.
9. Igwe uses film material from the Colonial Film Unit, the Mill Hill Missionaries archives, the British Film Institute’s National Archive, British Pathé, and the Bristol Empire and Commonwealth Museum Collection.
10. Igwe, Zoom interview by Redrobe, May 11, 2023.
11. Rony, *Third Eye*, 71.
12. Allen draws on Okonjo, “Political Systems.”
13. Van Allen, “Aba Riots,” 22–23.
14. Van Allen, “Aba Riots,” 22.
15. Van Allen, “Aba Riots,” 30.
16. For Lynda R. Day’s discussion of the role of Van Allen’s “Sitting on a Man” essay in African feminist studies, see Day, “Judith Van Allen.”
17. Van Allen, “Politics and the Writing,” 196.
18. Igwe, interview by Redrobe; *Her Name in My Mouth*, video, <https://vimeo.com/showcase/5312988/video/218467092>.
19. *Collins English Dictionary*, s.v. “palaver,” [www.collinsdictionary.com/us/dictionary/english/palaver](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/us/dictionary/english/palaver). I requested that Collins revise its definition on June 6, 2023. On June 14, 2023, Collins Dictionaries replied, “We agree that the wording of the definition should be revised, and we will update the page within the next few days.” The new definition defines *palaver* as “unnecessary fuss and bother about the way something is done,” erasing the word’s colonial roots altogether.
20. Oborji, “African Palaver Reconciliation Model.”
21. Okonjo, “Political Systems,” 519.
22. Van Allen, “Aba Riots,” 24.
23. Igwe, interview by Redrobe. See Bradley, “Black Cinematic Gesture.”
24. Igwe, interview by Redrobe.
25. Igwe, interview by Redrobe.
26. Igwe, interview by Redrobe.
27. Igwe, interview by Redrobe.
28. Igwe, “Being Close to,” 48.
29. Hochberg, *Becoming Palestine*, 12.
30. Igwe, interview by Redrobe. Igwe’s dissertation describes her work as exploring Bruno Latour’s term *critical proximity*. See Latour, “Critical Distance.” I also make use of this term in chapter 4.
31. Bradley, “Black Cinematic Gesture,” 22.
32. The term *borrow* is taken from the flyer accompanying the PS1 exhibition, “MoMA PS1 Presents First Solo Museum Exhibition by Artist and Filmmaker Onyeka Igwe Opening March 16,” Spring 2023, 1–2; Igwe, “Unbossed and Unbound,” 171.
33. Igwe, “Unbossed and Unbound,” 172.
34. Igwe, interview by Redrobe.



35. Igwe, interview by Redrobe.
36. Igwe, interview by Redrobe.
37. See Uchenna's home page at <https://uchennadance.com> and Mobius Dance's home page at <https://mobiusdance.org/staff/2019/1/5/amarnah-ufuoma-amuludun>.
38. Igwe, "Being Close to," 48.
39. Igwe identifies these sources in the comments section of the film's Vimeo site: *Sitting on a Man*, video, <https://vimeo.com/showcase/5312988/video/242965624>.
40. See Igwe's description of *No Dance, No Palaver* on her website, accessed August 31, 2024, <https://onyekaigwe.com/No-Dance-No-Palaver>.
41. Igwe, interview by Redrobe.
42. Igwe, interview by Redrobe.
43. *Specialised Technique*, video, <https://vimeo.com/showcase/5312988/video/266180586>.
44. On ethnographers' fascination with Indigenous dance, see Rony, *Third Eye*, 65.
45. Gay, *Be Holding*, 96.
46. Igwe, "Unbossed and Unbound," 198.
47. Igwe, "Unbossed and Unbound," 184. Igwe references Bellour, "Pensive Spectator."
48. Igwe, "Unbossed and Unbound," 193.
49. For Igwe's description of the source of this footage and her experience of it in the context of the #RhodesMustFall campaign in South Africa and other antiracist movements, see Igwe, "Unbossed and Unbound," 9–11. Igwe deliberately withholds the identity of the dancing woman in this work. The archival footage in this third film draws on three sources: the BFI National Archive, British Pathé, and the Bristol Empire and Commonwealth Museum Collection.
50. Igwe, interview by Redrobe.
51. For a discussion of the relationship between live-action images and drawn animation in the context of early American animation, see Crafton, *Before Mickey*, 11, and Sammond, *Birth of an Industry*, 97–99.
52. Cited in Rony, *How Do We Look?*, 104.
53. See Akinsipe, "Development of 'Stick Figure' Notation." Akinsipe's system "revisits" the stick figure system developed in by Arthur Saint-Leon in *La Sténochoréographie, ou Art d'écrire promptement la danse* (1852).
54. Igwe, interview by Redrobe.
55. For Krauss's discussion of whether to describe Kentridge's work as animation, see "The Rock."
56. Christov-Bakargiev, "On Defectibility."
57. Sammond discusses why the character of Felix disappears from Kentridge's work and explores the operations of the role of white guilt in Kentridge's filmed charcoal drawings, in "World Moves."
58. Rose, *Why War?*, 16.
59. See Igwe, "Unbossed and Unbound," 198–99. Igwe adds, "I took that *we* as an accusation and she meant it so. The *we* she was referring to was those who had been wronged by the colonial archive I was examining—black people" (199).
60. The Nest Collective, "This One Went to Market," Episode 5 of *We Need Prayers* (2017–18), [www.thisisthenest.com/we-need-prayers](http://www.thisisthenest.com/we-need-prayers). See Gates, *Double Negative*, 18–19.

61. Helen Hill (chapter 5) was keenly aware of filmmaking's implicatedness in the extractive use of animal life. Her publication *Recipes for Disaster* quotes from the title character of her film *Madame Winger Makes a Film (A Survival Guide for the 21st Century)*: "The bad news is this. Film for photographs and movies still contains gelatin, which is made from animal bones. I hope that one day, a vegetarian film will be used." *Recipes for Disaster*, 30.

62. Igwe, "Being Close to," 45.

## 2. RUBBING MEMORY THE RIGHT WAY:

### WHITENESS, (INTER)(IN)ANIMATION, AND MONUMENTAL FROTTAGE

1. Rose, *Why War?*, 37.
2. Mary Reid Kelley, conversation via Skype with the author's "The Art of Animation" graduate seminar, University of Pennsylvania, September 15, 2011.
3. Das, *Race, Empire*, exemplifies this expansion.
4. Reid Kelley, email to author, January 31, 2022.
5. Reid Kelley, conversation.
6. Reid Kelley, conversation.
7. Reid Kelley, conversation. See Fussell, *Great War*.
8. Mary Reid Kelley and Patrick Kelley, Zoom interview by author, November 4, 2021.
9. Reid Kelley, conversation, September 15, 2011.
10. See Das, *Race, Empire*; Atia, *World War I*; Maguire, *Contact Zones*; and community-based "hidden history" projects such as "Hidden Histories of World War One: Ramgarhia Sikh Tapestry Project," a collaboration between the Center for Hidden Histories and the Ramgarhia Social Sisters in Leicester that was published in 2018 (an introduction and links to the project are at Common Cause, "Hidden Histories of World War One: Ramgarhia Sikh Tapestry Project," September 2018, <https://cpb-eu-w2.wpmucdn.com/blogs.bristol.ac.uk/dist/a/358/files/2018/09/Sikh-Tapestry-2c3u6o8.pdf>).
11. Atia, *World War I*, 2. In *Day the Great War Ended*, Winter usefully reperiodizes World War I, showing that historians can alter war's endings and beginnings long after the fact.
12. Shohat and Stam, "Introduction," 3–4.
13. Nixon, "What's Love Got to Do," 341.
14. Nixon, "What's Love Got to Do," 342–43.
15. James, "Camouflageuse."
16. Sammond, *Birth of an Industry*, especially 24–25. Numerous scholars, including Racquel J. Gates, Eric Lott, Miriam J. Petty, Michael Rogin, and Danielle Fuentes Morgan, have argued for the multivalent possibilities of reception experiences among diverse audiences of cross-racial performance, blackface minstrelsy, and the cultures rooted in it, including animation, without either excusing or overlooking the racism of this form. See Gates, *Double Negative*, 18–19 and 35–39, and Petty, *Stealing the Show*, 213–14. On Heriman's use of blackface, see McDonnell, O'Connell, and Riley de Havernon, *Krazy Kat*, 30–36.
17. Gates, *Double Negative*, 37.
18. Reid Kelley and Kelley, interview.

19. Carden-Coyne, *Reconstructing the Body*, 113.
20. Carden-Coyne, *Reconstructing the Body*, 115 and 313.
21. For examples of white female avant-garde artists' proximity to blackface minstrelsy, see Fore, *Realism after Modernism*, 152–53; Halleck, "Remembering Shirley," 28; Garcia-Vasquez, "#CindyGate"; Jefferson, "Playing on Black and White." These last two are cited in Dreskin, "Left of Center," 6–7.
22. *Sadie, the Saddest Sadist* uses the letters from a Mitten's Home Titles set.
23. See "Archive 1925: More Than 100,000 Horses Killed or Wounded in the First World War," *The Guardian*, October 2, 2020, [www.theguardian.com/world/2020/oct/02/more-than-100000-horses-killed-or-wounded-in-first-world-war-1925](http://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/oct/02/more-than-100000-horses-killed-or-wounded-in-first-world-war-1925), and "War Horse Facts," Brooke Institute, accessed May 9, 2022, [www.thebrooke.org/get-involved/every-horse-remembered/war-horse-facts](http://www.thebrooke.org/get-involved/every-horse-remembered/war-horse-facts).
24. "Pershing Statue, Plaster," 21.
25. Hodge, *Sensations of History*, 37.
26. Hodge, *Sensations of History*, 34–35.
27. Quoted in Hodge, *Sensations of History*, 21.
28. Hodge, *Sensations of History*, 21.
29. "History," season 6, episode 3 of *Art 21: Art in the Twenty-First Century*, directed by Charles Atlas, April 27, 2012.
30. Reid Kelley and Kelley, interview.
31. Reid Kelley and Kelley, interview.
32. Reid Kelley and Kelley, interview.
33. On play's "perpetual testing of the possibilities of action" and its creation of a space for assessing how processes and forms take hold, see Susanna Paasonen et al., "Sexuality and Play in Media Culture."
34. Reid Kelley and Kelley, interview.
35. Winter, *Sites of Memory*, 115.
36. Winter, *Sites of Memory*, 5 and 94.
37. Davis, "Vocabulary for Feminist Praxis," 22.
38. Davis, "Vocabulary for Feminist Praxis," 22.
39. Barnes, "History in Drag," 102–4. The cento is a "patchwork" or "collage" poem that is composed from lines from other poets.
40. Kinney, "Roman Architectural *Spolia*," 138.
41. Kinney, "Roman Architectural *Spolia*," 140.
42. Kinney, "Roman Architectural *Spolia*," 140.
43. Jasbir K. Puar illustrates the importance of critiques of phallic masculinity being considered intersectionally and in context in *Terrorist Assemblages*.
44. See Buchloh, "Figures of Authority," 127, 117, and 134. On Buchloh's "exclusion of feminism," see Deutsche, *Not-Forgetting*, 28–29.
45. See Kuspit, "Flak from the 'Radicals,'" 137–38 and 142.
46. Buchloh, "Figures of Authority," 118 and 120.
47. Deutsche, "Questionnaire," 38 and 39.
48. See Historical Marker Database, "In Memory of the Men of Yale Marker," accessed October 9, 2024, [www.hmdb.org/m.asp?m=34884](http://www.hmdb.org/m.asp?m=34884).
49. Krzysztof Wodiczko, quoted in Deutsche, *Not-Forgetting*, 163–64.

50. Krzysztof Wodiczko, quoted in *Deutsche, Not-Forgetting*, 163–64.
51. See Krzysztof Wodiczko, “Memorial Hall” description on his website, accessed August 31, 2024, [www.krzysztofwodiczko.com/public-projections#/memorial-hall/](http://www.krzysztofwodiczko.com/public-projections#/memorial-hall/), and Powell, “Memorial Hall.”
52. Wodiczko, “Memorial Hall” description.
53. See Provincial Government of Negros Occidental, Republic of the Philippines, “History and Geography,” accessed August 31, 2024, [www.negros-occ.gov.ph/the-history-geography/](http://www.negros-occ.gov.ph/the-history-geography/).
54. Gross, *Dream of the Moving Statue*, 7.
55. Gross, *Dream of the Moving Statue*, 7.
56. Gross, *Dream of the Moving Statue*, 10.
57. Gross, *Dream of the Moving Statue*, 10.
58. Carden-Coyne, *Reconstructing the Body*, 317; *Deutsche, Not-Forgetting*, 185.
59. *Deutsche, Not-Forgetting*, 185.
60. Gross, *Dream of the Moving Statue*, 70.
61. Reid Kelley, conversation.
62. Reid Kelley, email to author, January 31, 2022.
63. See American Battle Monuments Commission, “Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery and Memorial,” March 2020, [www.abmc.gov/sites/default/files/2020-03/Section%2011—Meuse-Argonne%20Booklet.pdf](http://www.abmc.gov/sites/default/files/2020-03/Section%2011—Meuse-Argonne%20Booklet.pdf), 19.
64. American Battle Monuments Commission, “Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery,” 22. To hear Pershing’s dedication of the American monument at Montfaucon on August 1, 1937, see American Battle Monuments Commission, “Montfaucon American Monument Dedication in 1937,” [www.abmc.gov/multimedia/videos/montfaucon-american-monument-dedication-1937](http://www.abmc.gov/multimedia/videos/montfaucon-american-monument-dedication-1937). The footage makes clear the extent to which, in spite of the wide diversity of combatants in World War I, those present at the dedication were white.
65. Barnes, “History in Drag,” 105.
66. “Pershing Won Fame,” 2. See also Tate, “Pershing’s Pets.” The contested but still utilized term *Moro* is related to the English term *moor* and was imposed by Spanish colonizers on Muslim-majority communities in the Philippines, among other places.
67. Stead, “Greenham Common Peace Camp.”
68. “List of Things Named after John J. Pershing,” Wikipedia, accessed August 31, 2024, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_things\\_named\\_after\\_John\\_J.\\_Pershing](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_things_named_after_John_J._Pershing).
69. Montgomery, “Wave of War Memorials,” and Paterson, “Washington’s Battle.”
70. Cauvin, “D.C. Settles Suit.”
71. Cultural Landscape Foundation, “Freedom Plaza,” accessed August 31, 2024, [www.tclf.org/landscapes/freedom-plaza](http://www.tclf.org/landscapes/freedom-plaza). The original plan for Freedom Plaza included miniature marble models of the White House and the US Capitol, which would have allowed visitors to feel their agency in relation to these two branches of the government. The D.C. government officially objected to this element of the design, with the district’s director of planning, Ben Gilbert, describing the miniature buildings as “not appropriate for this location.” See Goldchain, “Why.”
72. Paterson, “Washington’s Battle.”
73. Pfaff, “Behind the Epic WWI Memorial.”
74. Pfaff, “Behind the Epic WWI Memorial.”

75. Doughboy Foundation, “A Soldier’s Journey,” accessed August 31, 2023, <https://doughboy.org/memorial/a-soldiers-journey/>.

76. “Pershing Won Fame” and National Park Service, “A Soldier’s Journey,” accessed August 31, 2023, [www.nps.gov/wwim/learn/historyculture/journey.htm](http://www.nps.gov/wwim/learn/historyculture/journey.htm).

77. Roldan, “How to Do a Grave Rubbing.” Keguro Macharia activates this term in the context of the entangled histories of slavery, the Black Diaspora, and queer life, offering seven “movements” of frottage, including bodies moving against each other, fingers on pages of paper or screen, erotic touch, the rubs of untimely time, the rubs that seek to relieve irritation, the irritations of skin that remind us of its presence, and the pressure of Macharia’s own words that build “into rubbing, perhaps pleasurable, perhaps not.” See Macharia, *Frottage*, 165–67.

78. Mary Reid Kelley, email to author, January 31, 2022.

79. Davis, “Vocabulary for Feminist Praxis,” 21. See also Fusco, *Field Guide*, and Fusco’s lecture-performance, “A Room of One’s Own: Women and Power in the New America” (2006–8), description on Fusco’s website, accessed August 31, 2024, [www.cocofusco.com/a-room-of-one-own](http://www.cocofusco.com/a-room-of-one-own).

80. Monument Lab, “*Beyond Granite: Pulling Together*,” Washington, DC, August 18–September 18, 2023,” <https://monumentlab.com/projects/national-mall-project>; the home page for Monument Lab at <https://monumentlab.com>; and Mellon Foundation, “The Monuments Project,” [www.mellon.org/article/the-monuments-project-initiative](http://www.mellon.org/article/the-monuments-project-initiative).

81. Mzezewa, “Public Art.”

82. Mzezewa, “Public Art.”

### 3. (INTER)(IN)ANIMATED LOOPS AND THE FEMINIST POLITICS OF RETURN

1. Benjamin, “Mickey Mouse,” 338.

2. Eisenstein, *On Disney*.

3. Gunning, “Transforming Image,” 55–56.

4. See C. Kaplan, “Domesticity at War.”

5. Yael Bartana, *Entartete Kunst Lebt*, 2010, animation, 16mm film and sound installation, 10:27, info and video, <https://yaelbartana.com/work/enartete-kunst-lebt-2010#info>; Yael Bartana, “Biography,” accessed September 1, 2024, [www.yaelbartana.com/biography](http://www.yaelbartana.com/biography).

6. See Apel, “‘Heroes’ and ‘Whores,’” especially 375n39.

7. Hirsch and Miller, “Introduction,” 2, 3, and 110. Hirsch and Miller’s edited collection *Rites of Return* grew out of the “Rites of Return: Poetics and Politics” conference (April 10–11, 2008), organized by Hirsch and Miller. As the editors explain in their introduction, the book explores the relationship between rites and rights, diasporas and returns, and history and memories, including inherited memories.

8. Hirsch and Miller, “Introduction,” 3. On the range of Palestinian positions regarding the right of return, its psychic impact and its relation to the possible, see Al-Qattan, “Secret Visitations of Memory,” especially 200–204.

9. Hirsch and Miller, “Introduction,” 4.

10. See Abourahme, “Boycott, Decolonization, Return,” 114–15.

11. See Weizman and Estefan, “Extending Co-resistance,” 112.

12. See Hartman, Hoffman, and Mendelsohn, “Memoirs of Return,” 111.
13. For feminist discussions of the Palestinian right to return, see Sa’di and Abu-Lughod, *Nakba* (2007), and Abu-Lughod, “Return to Half Ruins” (2011).
14. See Sudhalter, “Otto Dix,” 99–100 and 101n4.
15. On sound in this work, see also Alter, “Keynotes.”
16. Crafton, *Shadow of a Mouse*, 2.
17. Elsaesser, “Early Film History,” 16–17.
18. See Kaes’s discussion of “back-shadowing” in relation to the two World Wars in *Shell Shock Cinema*, 5.
19. See Berlin Biennale, Events, “And Europe Will Be Stunned: First International Congress of the Jewish Renaissance Movement in Poland (JRMIP), May 11–13, 2012,” <https://bb7.berlinbiennale.de/en/events/and-europe-will-be-stunned-a-congress-by-jrmip-and-yael-bartana.html>; Yael Bartana, “JRMIP Congress, 2012, 106 min.,” info and video, <https://yaelbartana.com/work/jrmip-congress-2012#info>. In 2011, *Entartete Kunst Lebt* was installed at Salon Populaire (Kunstsaele Berlin); see Arsenal: Institut für Film und Videokunst, “Yael Bartana: *Entartete Kunst Lebt*, Israel 2010,” exhibition program note, [www.arsenal-berlin.de/en/forum-forum-expanded/archive/program-archive/2011/artists-expanded/yael-bartana/](http://www.arsenal-berlin.de/en/forum-forum-expanded/archive/program-archive/2011/artists-expanded/yael-bartana/).
20. For descriptions of the trilogy, see Yael Bartana, “*And Europe Will Be Stunned: The Polish Trilogy*, 2012,” accessed September 1, 2024, <https://yaelbartana.com/publication/and-europe-will-be-stunned-the-polish-trilogy>. See also Bartana, *And Europe Will Be Stunned* (exh. cat.); Alter, “Keynotes”; Marno, “Disabled Veteran”; and Söll, *Der Neue Mann*?
21. See Stone, *Holocaust*, and Gessen, “Historians under Attack.”
22. Azoulay and Ophir, “This Is Not a Call,” 146.
23. Azoulay and Ophir, “This Is Not a Call,” 148–49.
24. Azoulay and Ophir, “This Is Not a Call,” 151.
25. *Entartete Kunst Lebt* has appeared independently, including at Dresden’s Militärhistorisches Museum der Bundeswehr as part of the exhibition *Vot ken you mach?* (2013–14): Kunsthau Dresden, “*Entartete Kunst Lebt*, von Yael Bartana (2010),” program notes for exhibition *Vot ken you mach?*, <https://kunsthauddresden.de/veranstaltungen/vot-ken-you-mach/?lang=en>.
26. See *Führer durch die Ausstellung Entartete Kunst*, “Gruppe 6,” 16–18. Dix’s painting is reproduced on page 15. See also Peters, *Degenerate Art*.
27. Thanks to Emily Hage. See also B. Doherty, “Figures of the Pseudorevolution,” especially 75–89, 77. See also Sudhalter, “Otto Dix,” 100.
28. Sudhalter describes Dix’s drypoints as “materially distinct translations of his oil paintings into another expressive form.” This contrasts with Grosz’s prints made from his paintings, which Sudhalter describes as “almost indistinguishable from their source images in both line quality and scale.” Sudhalter, “Otto Dix,” 100.
29. Sudhalter, “Otto Dix,” 100.
30. See Marno, “Disabled Veteran,” 120–21.
31. On Dix’s full use of the effects available in drypoint to create a violent image, see Gerson, “Conservation Notes,” 97. Thanks to Sheldon Gooch for assistance with my study of this print at MoMA.
32. Jaikumar, *Cinema at the End of Empire*, 166.
33. Winter, *Day the Great War Ended*, 123.

34. Winter, *Day the Great War Ended*, 123 and 126.
35. Khalidi, *Hundred Years' War on Palestine*, 17–54, especially 20–23.
36. C. Kaplan, *Aerial Aftermaths*, 139.
37. See Museum of Modern Art, *Dada*, exhibit, June 18–September 11, 2006, audio commentary to *Prussian Archangel* (1920), by John Heartfield and Rudolf Schlichter, [www.moma.org/audio/playlist/198/2631](http://www.moma.org/audio/playlist/198/2631).
38. Kevin Brownlow details Gance's report on the making of *J'accuse* in *The Parade's Gone By*, 532–37. Richard Abel notes that Gance and his cameraman, L.H. Burel, used lighting in a way “that turned figures into silhouettes.” See Richard Abel, “*J'accuse*,” catalogue entry in “The Canon Revisited,” in *Le Giornate del Cinema Muto: Catalogo, 2009* ([Italy]: n.p., 2009), 102.
39. Zola, “*J'accuse . . . !*” For an English translation of this letter by Shelley Temchin and Jan-Max Guieu (2001), see Zola, “*I accuse . . . !*” John Horne suggests, “Jean's denunciation of war is entirely non-political. No generals, arms manufacturers or politicians are blamed.” Horne, “Film and Cultural Demobilization,” 136. See also Kaes, *Shell Shock Cinema*, 118; Rollet, “Des ‘Gueules Cassées.’”
40. See Horne, “Film and Cultural Demobilization,” 134.
41. Gance states, “Obeying a whistle, the men all knelt down, still in the form of the word, and then stood up again.” Quoted in Brownlow, *Parade's Gone By*, 533. See also Horne “Film and Cultural Demobilization,” especially 134 and 136.
42. Horne, “Film and Cultural Demobilization,” 134 and 136.
43. “*J'accuse*,” *Kinematograph Weekly*, no. 679 (April 29, 1920): 94.
44. “The Screen,” *New York Times*, October 10, 1921, 19. Contemporary opinion of Gance's politics resonate with these early views. See, for example, Liebman, “*J'accuse* and *La Roue*.”
45. See Bryant-Bertail, “Theater for the Age,” and Pavel, *Hašeks “Schwejk” in Deutschland*.
46. See Sudhalter, “Otto Dix,” 101n4.
47. Becker, *George Grosz*, 251n8 and n21. The Bertolt Brecht Archive in Berlin contains a proposed treatment for a film adaptation of the play, sent to Brecht on May 21, 1936, by Piscator's secretary. It included a memo noting the impossibility of a Czech/Austrian film location, the censor-driven need to make the film not “too political,” and the 1936 prohibition against depicting the military as comical. See “Piscator Schwejk-Film,” manuscript of film script with memo, Brecht-Bertolt 0309/002-050, Akademie der Künste, Berlin.
48. Piscator, *Political Theater*, 256.
49. Piscator, *Political Theater*, 255 and 257.
50. Childs, *Peripheral Weapon?*, 4. The first tanks went into trials in 1916, three years after Ford introduced factory conveyor belts.
51. Piscator, *Political Theater*, 259–61.
52. Piscator, *Political Theater*, 264.
53. Piscator, *Political Theater*, 257.
54. Piscator, *Political Theater*, 262.
55. Piscator, *Political Theater*, 262.
56. Piscator, *Political Theater*, 262.
57. Papapetros, *On the Animation*, 234–35.
58. Piscator, *Political Theater*, 267.



59. See Piscator, *Political Theater*, 267. See also Knust, “Schwejk und kein Ende,” 65. On theatrical uses of conveyor belts, see Bryant-Bertail, “Theater for the Age,” 40.

60. Grosz, “Abwicklung,” *Das Kunstblatt* (Berlin), February 1924, 2, quoted in Schneede, *George Grosz*, 38.

61. Schneede, *George Grosz*, 12.

62. Zervigón, “Political Struwwelpeter?,” 11. Heartfield also recruited Piscator’s friend, Svend Noldan, to the Ufa animation department. Noldan and Piscator were drafted to the infantry in Flanders in January 1915. From 1934, Noldan worked for the National Socialist Film Department of Reich Propaganda and pioneered the animated map. See Giesen and Storm, *Animation under the Swastika*, 144–45. See also Jan Kindler, “Naturbilder.”

63. Zervigón, “Political Struwwelpeter?,” 22.

64. Zervigón, “Political Struwwelpeter?,” 37. See Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, Barbie Zelizer, *About to Die*, Honess Roe, *Animated Documentary*, and Kornhaber, *Nightmares*.

65. Zervigón, “Political Struwwelpeter?,” 37.

66. Benjamin, “Painting and the Graphic Arts,” 219.

67. Benjamin, “Painting and the Graphic Arts,” 219.

68. Benjamin, “Painting and the Graphic Arts,” 219.

69. Benjamin is preoccupied by the question of orientation. See Benjamin, “Work of Art,” 26 and 29.

70. George Grosz, *Blätter der Piscatorbühne (Journal of the Piscator Stage)*, 1928, quoted in Schneede, *George Grosz*, 108.

71. “Mais déjà quelques Christophe Colomb de la lumière se dessinent . . . et le bon combat des noirs et des blancs va commencer sur tous les écrans du monde.” Gance, “Temps de l’image,” 85–86. Translation mine.

72. See Mihailova and Mackay, “Frame Shot,” especially 151–53.

73. Zervigón speculates, on the basis of a snippet of the film that appeared in a playbill from 1928, that Grosz’s animated film “worked along a visual conceit in which the satirical meaning of his figures unfolded over time from the symbolic to the literal.” “Political Struwwelpeter?,” 27.

74. See Puar, *Right to Maim*, 65.

75. The American Red Cross video *Red Cross Work on Mutilés at Paris* (1918) is available on Internet Archive, [https://archive.org/details/RedCrossMutilés\\_201706](https://archive.org/details/RedCrossMutilés_201706).

76. Apel, “‘Heroes’ and ‘Whores,’” 375.

77. Apel, “‘Heroes’ and ‘Whores,’” 374.

78. See Yael Bartana, *Two Minutes to Midnight*, info and video link, <https://yaelbartana.com/work/two-minutes-to-midnight-2021#info>, and Bartana and Balsom, “Embrace Weakness!,” 140.

79. Hochberg, “Hailing Power,” 11.

80. See Schweitzer, *Yael Bartana*, 82; and Bartana, *And Europe Will Be Stunned*.

81. Bartana, “Manifesto” (2011), in *And Europe Will Be Stunned*, 88–89; Bartana and Balsom, “Embrace Weakness!,” 137.

82. Lustick, *Paradigm Lost*, 12.

83. David Ben-Gurion’s 1946 testimony before the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry, quoted in Lustick, *Paradigm Lost*, 14. For a discussion of the Holocaust as “Zionist proof-text (i.e., direct evidence of the validity of Zionism),” see Lustick, *Paradigm Lost*, 27–53.

84. See United Nations, “About the Nakba,” UN Information System on Palestine, accessed September 2, 2024, [www.un.org/unispal/about-the-nakba/](http://www.un.org/unispal/about-the-nakba/), and Palestine Question—UN Mediator Report, Conciliation Commission to Be Established, Jerusalem Status, Refugees—GA Resolution 194 (III). Palestine—Progress Report of the United Nations Mediator,” November 12, 1948, UN Information System on Palestine, accessed September 2, 2024, [www.un.org/unispal/document/auto-insert-177019/](http://www.un.org/unispal/document/auto-insert-177019/). See also Abu-Sitta, *Return Journey*, E13–E19.

85. See United Nations, “1948 and Today Are Not Separate Events, but Ongoing Process of Palestinian Displacement, Replacement, Speakers Tell Panel, Urging Immediate Ceasefire in Gaza,” press release, May 17, 2024, <https://press.un.org/en/2024/gapal1467.doc.htm>.

86. Gutman and Tirosh, “Balancing Atrocities.” On the contestations around the term *Nakba*, see Azoulay, *From Palestine to Israel*, 7–16.

87. Azoulay and Ophir, “This Is Not a Call,” 150.

88. Burke, “History as Allegory,” 341.

89. Burke, “History as Allegory,” 340.

90. Burke, “History as Allegory,” 344.

91. Burke, “History as Allegory,” 341.

92. Rose, “History Is a Nightmare.”

93. Bartana and Balsom, “Embrace Weakness!,” 138.

94. Rose, “History Is a Nightmare.”

95. See Just Vision glossary, s.v., “right of return,” <https://justvision.org/glossary/right-return>. For examples of Bartana work in which Palestinian experiences are centered, see *A Declaration* (2006) and *Summer Camp/Awodah* (2007).

96. Hoberman, “Jewish Pioneers Return.” See also Nadia Latif, “But I Think.”

97. Bartana, “Reversing Power, Allowing Possibilities.”

98. Bartana, “54th Venice Biennale.”

99. Khalidi, *Hundred Years’ War on Palestine*, 4.

100. Khalidi, *Hundred Years’ War on Palestine*, 9. See also A. Kaplan, *Our American Israel*.

101. Khalidi, *Hundred Years’ War on Palestine*, 246.

102. In 2015, as part of her engagement with Zionist utopias, Bartana produced a transgender photo series entitled *Herzl* in which she “became” Herzl; Yael Bartana, “Herzl, 2015,” info and photos link, <https://yaelbartana.com/work/herzl#info>.

103. Bartana and Balsom, “Embrace Weakness!,” 141.

104. Bartana, “Conversation with Yael Bartana,” 36–37.

105. Spivak, “Rethinking Comparativism,” 470.

106. Spivak, “Rethinking Comparativism,” 468 and 476.

107. Hochberg, *Becoming Palestine*, 24. Hochberg here writes in the context of a discussion of Sami Michael’s novel *Doves in Trafalgar* (2005), which is inspired by Kanafani’s novella.

108. Hochberg, *Becoming Palestine*, 24.

109. Kanafani, “Return to Haifa,” 99–138. See also Harlow, “Return to Haifa,” and Harlow, *Resistance Literature*, 174–76.

110. Kanafani, “Return to Haifa,” 113.

111. Kanafani, “Return to Haifa,” 111 and 121.

112. Hirsch, “Objects of Return,” 121.

113. Hirsch, "Objects of Return," 121.
114. Kanafani, "Return to Haifa," 135–36.

#### 4. (INTER)(IN)ANIMATION IN EXILE

1. See Gregory, "Dirty Dancing," especially 30–32 and 41–46.
2. Kramer, "Camera and the Burqa," 69.
3. Sharma and Osman, "Global Sisterhood."
4. Sharma and Osman, "Global Sisterhood."
5. *Postcards from Tora Bora* is available at Documentary Educational Resources, [www.der.org/films/postcards-from-tora-bora.html](http://www.der.org/films/postcards-from-tora-bora.html).
6. *Purse* can be viewed at Liss Platt's website: <http://lissplatt.ca/artwork/film-video/purse/>.
7. My research for this chapter has involved interviews with Osman and Elissa Federoff. Dolak did not accept my invitation to discuss the film.
8. Sharma and Osman, "Global Sisterhood."
9. See "Wazmah Osman," a bio of the filmmaker at Documentary Educational Resources, [www.der.org/resources/filmmaker-bios/wazmah-osman/](http://www.der.org/resources/filmmaker-bios/wazmah-osman/).
10. Stephen Jablonsky, "Storytelling," Jablonsky's website, accessed September 10, 2024, [www.stephenjablonsky.com/story.html](http://www.stephenjablonsky.com/story.html).
11. See also Sienkiewicz, *Other Air Force*. On the film's use of effects, see "Technical Notes" on p. 10 of the press kit pdf, *Tora Bora Pictures Presents "Postcards from Tora Bora,"* accessed July 28, 2020, [www.yumpu.com/en/document/read/4624258/download-the-press-notes-in-pdf-format-postcards-from-tora-bora](http://www.yumpu.com/en/document/read/4624258/download-the-press-notes-in-pdf-format-postcards-from-tora-bora).
12. Hanieh, "Oil, Palestine, and Climate Crises." Thanks to Ania Loomba for this reference.
13. For an Iranian counterpart to this history, see *Scenes of Extraction / Sahnehaye Estekhraj* (Sanaz Sohrabi, Canada, 2023, 43 minutes), [www.sanaz-sohrabi.com](http://www.sanaz-sohrabi.com).
14. Nimer, "Enduring and Racist Trope."
15. Jankovic, "Pixelated Intifada," 153–54.
16. Jankovic, "Pixelated Intifada," 152–53.
17. Jankovic, "Pixelated Intifada," 167.
18. Jankovic, "Pixelated Intifada," 159.
19. Watson Institute, *Costs of War* website, under "Afghan Civilians," updated March 2023, <https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/costs/human/civilians/afghan>.
20. The multigenerational effects of chemical and nuclear war upon communities affected by war raise similar historiographic questions.
21. On post-9/11 Afghanistan and oil, see Mamdani, *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim*, 159–60. In "Unveiling Imperialism," Stabile and Kumar cite this same passage, and, like Mandani, identify the source as Rashid, *Taliban*, 179.
22. Wazmah Osman, email to author, June 5, 2017. On the complex relationship between RAWA and FMF, see Chioyenda, "Unequal Virtual Terrains." See also Trouillot, "North Atlantic Universals," and Spivak, "Globalcities," 85–89.
23. Wazmah Osman, written exchange with author, June 25, 2024.
24. Elissa Federoff, interview by author, March 8, 2016.
25. See Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*, 113–17 and 57.

26. See Parks, “Vertical Mediation,” 160.
27. Jablonsky, “Storytelling.”
28. The woman was publicly identified by name only seventeen years later as Sharbat Gula. See Mackie, “Afghan Girls,” 120.
29. Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?,” 93.
30. Osman, *Television*, 11.
31. See *What We Left Unfinished*, by Mariam Ghani, 2021, [www.whatweleft.com](http://www.whatweleft.com); Ghani, “In Conversation”; Islam, “Index of Unfinished Histories.” The first group of digitized films is available at pad.ma, an online archive, [https://pad.ma/grid/title/source==Afghan\\_Films](https://pad.ma/grid/title/source==Afghan_Films).
32. “Artist Mariam Ghani, Daughter of Afghan President, Takes on U.S. Abuse from Guantanamo to Abu Ghraib,” *Democracy Now!*, video clip, August 12, 2015, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=SMCzobBCFeM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SMCzobBCFeM). In October 2001, Spivak similarly pushed back against uncontested and ideologically motivated histories of twentieth-century Afghanistan, noting how Afghan women are used as “an excuse for violence” and how the country’s “connection with the Soviet Union” is “always referred to as ‘the Soviet Occupation’ in the United States.” See Spivak, “Globalcities,” 87 and 90.
33. Butler, *Giving an Account*, 19.
34. Butler’s later work increasingly turns explicit attention to these questions in the context of war, conflict, and political resistance. See *Frames of War* (2009) and *The Force of Nonviolence* (2020).
35. Skoller’s *Shadows, Specters, Shards* is a particularly helpful resource on this topic.
36. Kornhaber, *Nightmares*, 179.
37. Al Jazeera Staff, “Sabra and Shatila Massacre.”
38. Raya Morag introduces the concept of “perpetrator trauma” in the context of Folman’s film, the Israeli occupation, and the second intifada. See Morag, *Waltzing with Bashir*.
39. Kornhaber, *Nightmares*, 181.
40. See Jankovic, “Pixelated Intifada,” 167.
41. Bartana, “Conversation with Yael Bartana,” 36–37.
42. Ghani, “52 Weeks,” 209.
43. Kornhaber, *Nightmares*, 184.
44. Kornhaber, *Nightmares*, 184.
45. Osman, *Television*, 1.
46. See Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts*, 3.
47. See McKerrow, *Afghanistan*. See also McKerrow, “Full Description.” McKerrow is a former Red Cross worker. Thanks to both Osman and Fatemeh Shams for their help with translating these inscriptions.
48. The Watson Institute’s *Costs of War* project website reports that as of March 2023, 243,000 people have been killed in the Afghanistan/Pakistan warzone since 2001 and that of these, 70,000 are estimated to be civilians, while mass famine, poverty, landmines, forced migration, and a destroyed infrastructure and economy inflict ongoing and indiscriminate violence on millions of people (see the headings “Afghan Civilians,” <https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/costs/human/civilians/afghan>, and “Afghanistan before and after 20 Years of War [2001–2021],” accessed September 11, 2024, <https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/Afghanistanbeforeandafter20yearsofwar>). For the impact of direct as well as indirect “U.S. post-9/11 wars” on Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, Yemen, Pakistan, Somalia, the Philippines, and

Libya, see the heading “Human Costs,” updated as of August 2023, <https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/costs/human>.

49. Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, 2.

50. Hirsch, “Objects of Return,” 121.

51. See RAWA, “Afghan Women under the Tyranny of the Fundamentalists,” an aggregation of news stories at [www.rawa.org/women.php](http://www.rawa.org/women.php), and Watson Institute, *Costs of War* project website, <https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/>.

52. Schoonover and Galt, *Queer Cinema*, 15.

53. See Pervez Hoodbhoy, “The Genesis of Global Jihad in Afghanistan,” revised version of an unpublished paper presented at Columbia University in 2002, quoted in Mamdani, *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim*, 136–37.

## 5. UNNATURAL DISASTERS: UNFINISHABLE (INTER)(IN)ANIMATION

1. Nossiter, “Just Days.”

2. See Burton and Lewie, “Palmetto Revolution.”

3. Streible, “Media Artists,” 154.

4. See “Founding Erace,” Eracism website, 2021, [www.eracismneworleans.org/about-1](http://www.eracismneworleans.org/about-1). This name troubled Gailiunas, he told me during a Zoom interview of June 13, 2021, because it suggests racism can just disappear.

5. Streible, “Media Artists,” 166.

6. Hill, *Recipes for Disaster*, 28.

7. Hill, *Recipes for Disaster*, 29.

8. Streible sees *The Florestine Collection* as the film that “best encapsulates this connection between her art and activism” (166).

9. Tiya Miles, conversation with the author, September 29, 2021. Miles’s book *All That She Carried* has been invaluable to this project. For a critical discussion of the subjunctive in the context of journalism and war, see Zelizer, *About to Die*, 267–305.

10. Hill usually refers to “Ms. Kinchen,” but as Ms. Kinchen’s son was called “Kinchen,” I will use Florestine’s first name to avoid confusion. In July 2023, Becky Lewis donated Florestine Kinchen’s dresses to the recently founded Ernest A. Finney Jr. Cultural Arts Center in Columbia, South Carolina, a self-described “home to African American culture, art, and expression,” founded by executive director and poet Nikky Finney: [www.finneyjrcac.com/our-mission](http://www.finneyjrcac.com/our-mission).

11. Helen Hill, “Artist’s Statement,” Rockefeller grant application draft, n.d., Becky Lewis Archive, Columbia, South Carolina (hereafter BLA). Hill’s archival materials are currently spread over three locations. Most of her films are held at the Harvard Film Archive (HFA), but they are also easily accessible through the Vimeo site that Gailiunas established: <https://vimeo.com/helenhill>. Most of Hill’s papers, as well as many of Florestine’s dresses and some films, are held at the Lewis family home in Columbia, South Carolina (hereafter BLA). Some of this material has been organized by Heather Harkins. Plans are under way to transfer this material to the HFA. Most of *The Florestine Collection* papers as well as some other audio-visual and paper materials are currently at Gailiunas’s home in California (hereafter PGA).

12. Hill, “Artist’s Statement,” PGA.

13. Hill, “Artist’s Statement,” PGA.

14. See “Aftermath of Katrina: A Time of Environmental Racism,” accessed September 27, 2021, [www.arcgis.com/apps/Cascade/index.html?appid=2106693b39454foeboabc5c2ddf9ce40](http://www.arcgis.com/apps/Cascade/index.html?appid=2106693b39454foeboabc5c2ddf9ce40).

15. Helen Hill, postKatrina Florestine Collection Script, n.d., 1, PGA.
16. See Hurricane Digital Memory Bank, “Collecting and Preserving the Stories of Katrina and Rita,” accessed September 14, 2024, <https://hurricanearchive.org/items/show/12304>, and Streible, “In Memoriam Helen Hill,” 441.
17. Van Heerden, “Failure.” See also John Schwartz, “Hurricane Expert Sues over Dismissal.”
18. Hurricane Digital Memory Bank, “Collecting and Preserving.”
19. Van Heerden and Bryan, *Storm*, 136 and 142.
20. Brooks, *Bodies in Dissent*, 137. For a discussion of American animation’s entwinement with blackface minstrelsy, see Sammond, *Birth of an Industry*.
21. Brooks, *Bodies in Dissent*, 203, 142.
22. Major, “Sweet Magic,” 35–36.
23. Streible, “Media Artists,” 163–64 and 167–68.
24. Gailiunas, interview.
25. See McKissick Museum, “Dresses of Florestine Kinchen,” 2. Following a conversation with Jason Shaiman and Lynn Robertson, Gailiunas writes, “I expressed my concern about sensitivity to family and race issues and allowing me to contact Rev. Ray first. Avoiding artspeak—they are in agreement” (Gailiunas, production notebook, December 20, 2007, PGA). These concerns suggest an attempt to avoid the problems that (Kiowa) artist and curator Teri Greeves, writing in an Indigenous context, suggests occur when the clothing of formerly colonized people is exhibited in the absence of community dialogue. See Greeves, “Decolonizing Art.” Chave addresses similar issues with the Gee’s Bend Quilts in “Dis/Cover/ing the Quilts,” 221–54.
26. Paul Gailiunas, script draft, September 14, 2007, 1, PGA.
27. Gailiunas, production notebook, February 29, 2009, PGA.
28. Thanks to Miles for helping me articulate and think about these questions.
29. See Larreya, “Irrealis,” 31.
30. Marchessault, “Some Recipes for Disaster.”
31. See Helen Hill, Sample Work Forms 1–3, Rockefeller grant application, 2004, PGA.
32. See Marchessault, “Some Recipes for Disaster,” 366, and Gagnon, “8 Unfinished Films.”
33. See Perry, *Vexy Things*, 98–128.
34. Perry, *Vexy Things*, 109. Perry is not alone in this call. See, for example, Miles, *All That She Carried*, 40; Lott, *Black Mirror*, 48; and Brooks, “‘Ain’t Got No, I Got Life.’”
35. Gailiunas confirms that while Hill did finish films, she considered each film as something from which to learn as part of a larger, continuous experiment.
36. On Hill’s “film bees,” see also Marchessault, “Some Recipes for Disaster,” 364 and 368n12.
37. Hill, *Recipes for Disaster*, 92.
38. For a media archaeological discussion of sewing machines and cinema, see Strauven, “Sewing Machines,” 362–77.
39. For a description of this work, see Reynolds, “1973: *Reel Time*.”
40. See Su Friedrich’s collaborative website, “Edited By,” at <http://womenfilmeditors.princeton.edu>. See also the website for the Women Film Pioneers Project, initiated by Jane Gaines, under “Editors,” <https://wfpp.columbia.edu/pioneers/?sort=occupation>. Hill regularly taught the work of experimental female filmmakers from the UK.
41. See Miles, “Rose’s Inventory,” in *All That She Carried*, 127–63.

42. Heather Harkins, interview by author, June 18, 2021.
43. Helen Hill, "Welcome Back to School," flyer, n.d., Box 1, BLA. Although Hill's name is not on the flyer, Gailiunas confirmed that Hill made the poster via email to author, September 29, 2021.
44. Marchessault points out that the second edition of *Recipes for Disaster* "was explicitly connected to the damage wrought to films and media by the floods, putrefaction, and mould." Marchessault, "Some Recipes for Disaster," 364.
45. Helen Hill, notes, n.d., PGA.
46. Solanas and Getino, "Toward a Third Cinema," 131, 125.
47. Solanas and Getino, "Toward a Third Cinema," 122, 120.
48. Solanas and Getino, "Toward a Third Cinema," 130, 123.
49. Becky Lewis, conversation with author, June 16, 2021; Solanas and Getino, "Toward a Third Cinema," 131.
50. Solanas and Getino, "Toward a Third Cinema," 125, 128, 131.
51. See obituary for Margery Beth Brown, *The Olympian*, July 13, 2006, [www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/theolympian/name/margery-brown-obituary?pid=100123964](http://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/theolympian/name/margery-brown-obituary?pid=100123964).
52. Heather Harkins, email to author, July 11, 2021.
53. Helen Hill, handwritten notes for "Class 3," Box 2, "Helen Hill Teaching," BLA.
54. Hill, "Project Narrative," Rockefeller grant application draft, n.d., 3, BLA.
55. Hill, "Project Narrative," Rockefeller grant application, 2004, PGA (*Florestine Collection* materials).
56. Hill, "Project Narrative," Rockefeller grant application draft, n.d., BLA.
57. Helen Hill, flood-damaged *Florestine Collection* script page labeled "4," PGA.
58. Helen Hill, *Florestine Collection* script fragment, n.d. (post-Katrina), PGA.
59. Hill, script fragment, PGA.
60. See Gailiunas, production notebook, "Master from USC (Helen's CSSA Trip)," July 28, 2008, PGA.
61. Miles, *All That She Carried*, 37–40.
62. See Baron, *The Archive Effect* and *Reuse, Misuse, Abuse*.
63. South Side Home Movie Project, "SSHMP Launches Digital Archive: Decades of South Side Home Movies Released in Digital Archive," May 1, 2018, <https://sshmp.uchicago.edu/news/sshmp-launches-digital-archive>.
64. Miles, *All That She Carried*, 266.
65. See *California v. Greenwood*, 486 U.S. 35 (1988), Opinions, 486 U.S. 39–44, <https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/486/35/>.
66. Miles, *All That She Carried*, 266.
67. Miles, *All That She Carried*, 189.
68. Miles, *All That She Carried*, 132, 228.
69. Miles, *All That She Carried*, 40.
70. Church member Vera M. Dyer told Hill that Florestine would especially dress up and even make her own shoes on "Ethnic Sundays." Cassette recording of conversations with members of the Second Free Baptist Mission Church, February 13, 2005, PGA.
71. Helen Hill, "New Script," PGA. This plan also anticipates the post-Katrina images of houses frozen in time and overgrown by nature in Kimberly Rivers-Roberts's documentary film *Fear No Gumbo (stop stealing our sh\*t)* (2016).



72. Helen Hill, “Absolutely Required Animation Survey,” Box 1, n.d., BLA. Hill taught at a variety of venues, including the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design (now NSCAD University), the Atlantic Filmmakers Cooperative (AFCOOP), the New Orleans Video Access Center (NOVAC), the New Orleans Film Collective, the New Orleans Center for Creative Arts, and the California State Summer School for the Arts. Her teaching evaluations (“Helen Hill Teaching,” Box 2, BLA) show that she was beloved by her students.

73. Rochester, “Visual Music.” See also Rochester’s “Lotte Reiniger.”

74. Hill, “Project Narrative,” Rockefeller grant application, 2004, 2, PGA.

75. Reiniger, *Shadow Puppets*, 13. Kara Walker’s *Song of the South* exhibition was held at REDCAT, CalArts between September 3 and October 23, 2005. This work builds on Walker’s earlier *Fibbergibbet and Mumbo Jumbo* exhibition (2004); see notes for it at the Fabric Workshop and Museum website, accessed September 15, 2024, <https://fabricworkshopandmuseum.org/artist/kara-walker/>. *Song of the South* opened just a few days after Hurricane Katrina and became explicitly linked to it by Walker; see REDCAT, “Kara E. Walker’s *Song of the South*,” exhibition note, September 2005, <https://artmap.com/redcat/exhibition/kara-walker-2005>. Walker also claims Reiniger as a primary influence. See also Major, “Sweet Magic,” 25.

76. Reiniger, *Shadow Puppets*, 16, 101–2.

77. Suzan Pitt, in *Suzan Pitt: The Persistence of Vision*, dir. Blue Kraning and Laura Kraning (2006).

78. Becky Lewis, email to author, July 9, 2021.

79. Miles, *All That She Carried*, 3.

80. Berlant, *Female Complaint*, 169.

81. Berlant, *Female Complaint*, 273.

82. See also Moten, *In The Break*, 25–84.

83. Hill’s list of things to do post-Katrina includes the note “Silhouette book,” suggesting increased engagement with the silhouette’s history. For this, see Shaw, “Moses Williams” and *Seeing the Unspeakable*; Vergne, “Black Saint”; and Grigsby, *Enduring Truths*, 85–102.

84. Hill, “Project Narrative,” Rockefeller grant application, 2004, 2, PGA.

85. In 2008, Gailiunas reached out to the church’s pastor, Reverend Warren Ray. Katrina had displaced many church members, but with Ray’s help, Gailiunas received signed Personal Release Agreements from the majority of the people Hill interviewed for the film, and those names appear in the credits of the film he finished. The agreements are held in the PGA.

86. Hill, cassette recording of conversations with members of the Second Free Mission Baptist Church, February 13, 2005, PGA.

87. Miles, *All That She Carried*, 89.

## 6. (INTER)(IN)ANIMATING THE MUSEUM: ARCHITECTURE, PLACE, MEMORY

1. Simon, “Luxuriously Bland.”

2. See Hawley, “Nazi Degenerate Art Rediscovered.”

3. See Wemhoff, *Berliner Skulpturenfund*, and Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, “Spectacular Find in Excavations in Berlin,” news release, September 11, 2010, [www.smb.museum](http://www.smb.museum)

/en/whats-new/detail/spectacular-find-in-excavations-in-berlin-unearthing-of-works-of-degenerate-art-believed-lost-forever/. For the installation, see Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, “The Berlin Sculpture Find: ‘Degenerate Art’ in Bomb Debris,” exhibition notes, accessed September 15, 2024, [www.smb.museum/en/exhibitions/detail/the-berlin-sculpture-find/](http://www.smb.museum/en/exhibitions/detail/the-berlin-sculpture-find/).

4. See Leslie, *Hollywood Flatlands*, 137–41.
5. Wemhoff, *Berliner Skulpturenfund*, 15.
6. Neues Museum, “Masterplan Museumsinsel: A Projection into the Future,” accessed September 15, 2024, [www.museumsinsel-berlin.de/en/buildings/neues-museum/](http://www.museumsinsel-berlin.de/en/buildings/neues-museum/).
7. Wemhoff, *Berliner Skulpturenfund*, 15.
8. See Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, “In Cooperation with the Ethnologisches Museum: The Benin Dialogue Group Consolidates Plans for a Museum in Nigeria,” news release, July 25, 2019, [www.smb.museum/en/whats-new/detail/in-cooperation-with-the-ethnologisches-museum-the-benin-dialogue-group-consolidates-plans-for-a-museum-in-nigeria/](http://www.smb.museum/en/whats-new/detail/in-cooperation-with-the-ethnologisches-museum-the-benin-dialogue-group-consolidates-plans-for-a-museum-in-nigeria/).
9. Hicks, *Brutish Museum*, 46.
10. Hicks, *Brutish Museum*, 51.
11. Hicks, *Brutish Museum*, 28.
12. On Wile E. Coyote’s affinity with depictions of Adolf Hitler on screen, see Hediger, “Wile E. Coyote.”
13. The second commission, *Spirited* (2022), was made by the artist collective Laku Neg: Amgueddfa Cymru, “Spirited: Laku Neg,” accessed September 15, 2024, <https://museum.wales/blog/2457/Spirited/>.
14. See “Cardiff Museum Takes Down Slave Owner Thomas Picton’s Portrait” and “Trinidadian Artist Reframes Picton.”
15. Glass House, “About,” accessed September 15, 2024, <https://theglasshouse.org/about/>.
16. Glass House, “Philip Johnson Biography,” accessed September 15, 2024, <https://theglasshouse.org/learn/philip-johnson-biography/>.
17. See Klaus vom Bruch, *Konzeptpapier MHM, Dresden*, pamphlet, May 2, 2009, and vom Bruch, *Konzept für die künstlerischen Video Interventionen in MHM Dresden*, April 2010, two pamphlets in the collection of the Library of the Military History Museum, Dresden.
18. Martha Colburn’s *Triumph of the Wild* (2009) (<https://marthacolburn.com/films/triumph-of-the-wild/>) appears under “What?,” while Eve Sussman’s *Fergus Lifted* (2007) appears under “How?”
19. See vom Bruch, *Konzept*, 20.
20. See Pieken, *Militärhistorisches Museum Dresden*, 8–12, and Pieken and Rogg, *Militärhistorisches Museum der Bundeswehr*.
21. Pieken, *Militärhistorisches Museum Dresden*, 22; Libeskind, “Ich bin kein Pazifist,” 114.
22. Hannusch, “Rechte wollen Libeskind-Bau stoppen,” 13. See also the letters to the editor of the *Dresdner Neueste Nachrichten* on August 30/31, 2003, under the heading “Kein neuer Konzertsaal, aber teures Libeskind-Projekt,” B4.
23. Kogod and Osman, “Girding the Grid,” 113.
24. Kogod and Osman, “Girding the Grid,” 115.
25. Studio Libeskind, “Military History Museum, Dresden,” under “Projects,” accessed 10/22/24, <https://libeskind.com/work/military-history-museum/>.

26. Segal, “Textbook Case of Genocide.”
27. Pieken and Rogg, *Militärhistorisches Museum der Bundeswehr*, 54.
28. Adorno, “Meanings of Working Through the Past,” 90.
29. Adorno, “Meanings of Working Through the Past,” 90.
30. Neiman, “Historical Reckoning Gone Haywire,” 58.
31. See Rosen, the chapter “Entering History: Preservation and Restoration,” in *Change Mummified*, 43–88.
32. Ōtsuka Eiji, “Disarming Atom,” 121; Lamarre, “Speciesism,” 112.
33. Pieken and Rogg, *Militärhistorisches Museum der Bundeswehr*, 19.
34. Pieken, *Militärhistorisches Museum Dresden*, 18.
35. Packer, “Embers,” 33. A small exhibition near the platform constrains German nationalist uses of the bombing of Dresden, describing it as an act that saved Jewish people and contextualizing it within German uses of firebombing.
36. On the NDP, see Counter Extremism Project, “National Democratic Party of Germany,” accessed September 15, 2024, [www.counterextremism.com/threat/national-democratic-party-germany](http://www.counterextremism.com/threat/national-democratic-party-germany); “Militärmuseum äußert sich zu Nazi-Skandal,” 5; and Helfricht, “Militärmuseum verkauft Nazi-Magazine.”
37. Pieken and Rogg, *Rechtsextreme Gewalt in Deutschland*.
38. Cercel, “Military History Museum,” 28–29.
39. Quoted in Norbert Wehrstedt, “Ärger bei Dokwoche Leipzig,” 11.
40. Coco Fusco, “Performing the Institutionalization.” See Redrobe, “Gender, Power, and Pedagogy,” especially 127–28.
41. Packer, “Embers,” 33.
42. Demmer, von Hammerstein, and Kurbjuweit, “Army’s Composition.”
43. Siebold, “Germany Pledges.”
44. Davis, “Vocabulary for Feminist Praxis,” 25.
45. Nancy Davenport, email to author, September 25, 2010. A recording of a walk-through with Davenport and vom Bruch from October 16, 2011, is archived in the MMBD as “Künstlerwalk Davenport.mpg.”
46. Bowly was born in Mozambique to Greek and Lebanese parents; as a singer he moved to Britain and the United States, and he was killed in a German air raid on London in April 1941.
47. See Patrick Radden Keefe, “Family That Built an Empire,” and the documentary film *All the Beauty and the Bloodshed* (Laura Poitras, 2022). See Horkheimer and Adorno, “Culture Industry,” especially 110.
48. The museum label reads, “WT-Metall TH 6/1300 dog transport trailer, Germany, 2002–3.” On Pervitin, see Hubert Kemper, “Schlaflos im Krieg,” 3. Kemper reviews the documentary film *Schlaflos im Krieg: Die pharmazeutische Waffe*, cowritten by Sönke El Bitar and Gorch Pieken, lead researcher at the MMBD, and produced by Radio Bremen and Arte (2010), available at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=g4Dte1eEiLw](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g4Dte1eEiLw).
49. See Redrobe, “Risk of Tolerance.” See also the Museum of Modern Art’s exhibition notes for *Serious Games*, a set of video installations by Harun Farocki (2009–10), [www.moma.org/collection/works/143767](http://www.moma.org/collection/works/143767).
50. See Furuhashi, “Rethinking Plasticity.”
51. Jones, *Chuck Amuck*, 331.

52. Twain, *Roughing It*, 33.

53. See Klein, “Unique View.”

54. See also Stephen Andrews’s frame-by-frame crayon animations *The Quick and the Dead* (2004) and *Cartoon* (2006) on his website at <http://stephenandrewsartist.com/portfolio/animation/>.

55. See Parks, *Rethinking Media Coverage*.

56. Watson Institute, *Costs of War* website, under “Costs,” accessed September 16, 2024, <https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/costs>.

57. On the role of the law in protecting the known moral crimes of slavery and colonialism in the Caribbean context, see Hilary McD. Beckles, *Britain’s Black Debt*, especially 37–39. I thank Farrah Rahaman for directing me to this work.

58. Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*, xxx and 1–2.

59. K. Thompson, *Eye for the Tropics*, 22, 21, 23.

60. K. Thompson, *Eye for the Tropics*, 45. Thompson also mentions in passing the British government’s conflation of Wales and Jamaica and discusses contemporary Trinidad and Tobago artists addressing such issues in the 1990s. See K. Thompson, *Eye for the Tropics*, 48 and 286–96.

61. Gesiye and Maya XL, “Bald Babes Ink.”

62. On Williams, see Getachew, *Worldmaking after Empire*, 107–41.

63. K. Thompson, *Eye for the Tropics*, 289.

64. On Hortense J. Spillers’s discussion of the “undecipherable markings on the captive body” as “a kind of hieroglyphics of the flesh,” Anne Anlin Cheng writes, “For Spillers, this violent writing on the body reads like a tattoo.” Spillers, however, writes rather of “marking and branding,” and asks whether the violent inscription of the body “actually ‘transfers’ from one generation to another.” See Spillers, “Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe,” 64–81, 67–68, 78–79, and A. Cheng, “Skins, Tattoos, and Susceptibility,” 110. Gesiye resists conflating the branding of captured bodies with freely chosen tattooing processes but acknowledges that tattooing would register differently in communities where tattooing had been used to brand, as in Auschwitz. For Gesiye, tattooing, like dance, builds participants’ connections to themselves, the land on which they live, and each other, across generations, through story sharing and affiliated tattoos, thus working against the history of what Spillers describes as the “theft of the body,” the “profitable ‘atomizing’ of captive bodies,” and the cross-generational effects of that history.

65. Gesiye notes that some understand the Indigenous name for Trinidad and Tobago, Iere, to mean “Land of the Hummingbird,” and Laku Neg also use hummingbirds. These uses of the hummingbird also represent a reclamation from the realm of nineteenth-century naturalist painting. See K. Thompson, *Eye for the Tropics*, 43.

66. Gesiye, Zoom conversation with author, December 20, 2022.

67. Eduard Glissant, *Treatise on the Whole-World*, 18, quoted in Antonio Gómez and Hernández Adrián, *Film Archipelago*, 2.

68. See Cropper and Dempsey, *Nicolas Poussin*, 279–312 and especially 310–12. Poussin cites an earlier painting by Guercino that features a skull, suggesting that the “I” in *Arcadia* is Death. By removing the skull, Poussin opens other possibilities for the interpretation of the “I.”

69. See Copeland, *Touched by the Mother* and “Glenn Ligon.” Hartt’s exhibition of *Et in Arcadia Ego* at the David Nolan Gallery included a poster version of the title.

70. Glass House, “Pavilion in the Pond,” accessed September 16, 2024, <https://theglasshouse.org/explore/pavilion-in-the-pond/>.

71. Nelson, “After David Hartt’s *The Histories*,” 60–71. *The Histories* includes a timeline that begins ca. 200,000 BCE, placing human existence, community formation, and forced displacement within a time frame that exceeds humanity.

72. Glass House, “Pavilion in the Pond.”

73. Glass House, “Pavilion in the Pond.” Johnson’s description recalls Reid Kelley and Kelley’s *Private Island Experiment*.

74. On mobile objects in Hartt’s work, see Wilson, “They Once Were Somewhere Else,” 98.

75. Actual Objects, “Actual Objects.”

76. For examples of other work by Actual Objects, see their website at [www.actualobjects.net/](http://www.actualobjects.net/). On their use of Unreal Engine, see Lakin, “GET REAL!”

77. David Hartt, Zoom interview by author, January 13, 2023.

78. Hartt, Zoom interview by author, January 13, 2023.

79. Actual Objects, “Actual Objects.”

80. Quoted in Lakin, “GET REAL!”

81. Actual Objects, “Actual Objects.”

82. Gonalo Marques et al., “Manipulating Actors.”

83. David M. Breiner and Elisa Urbanelli, “Landmarks Preservation Commission,” 4. See also Pepis, “Curtains of Steel.”

84. See Saval, “Philip Johnson.” See also Weber, “Deadly Style”; Wortman, 1941, 147; and Lamster, *Man in the Glass House*, 179. On architecture history and theory’s obfuscation of “racial thinking in postwar and contemporary architecture,” see I. Cheng, Davis, and Wilson, “Introduction,” 5 and 10.

85. Glass House, “Nicolas Poussin, *Burial of Phocion*, ca. 1648–49,” accessed September 16, 2024, <https://theglasshouse.org/learn/nicholas-poussin-burial-of-phocion-ca-1648-49/>.

86. Lamster, *Man in the Glass House*, 218; Hazlitt, “On a Landscape,” 169.

87. Hartt, Zoom interview by author, January 13, 2023.

88. Hazlitt, “On a Landscape,” 171. While Macbeth asks nature to remain silent about his murderous act, in Poussin, Hazlitt suggests, nature bears witness, but to itself.

89. *Macbeth* 2.1.56–59, in *The Riverside Shakespeare*, 1319.

90. See Dobrzynski, “Modern Is Focus.”

91. Hartt, Zoom interview by author, January 13, 2023.

92. See “Oskar Schlemmer’s Ballet of Geometry—in Pictures,” *The Guardian*, November 24, 2016, [www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/gallery/2016/nov/24/oskar-schlemmers-ballet-of-geometry-in-pictures](http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/gallery/2016/nov/24/oskar-schlemmers-ballet-of-geometry-in-pictures).

93. Freud, “Uncanny,” 7.

94. Hoffmann, “Sandman,” 9.

95. Hoffmann, “Sandman,” 9.

96. Hoffmann, “Sandman,” 9.

97. Hoffmann, “Sandman,” 9.

98. Tomeka Reid, “About,” accessed September 16, 2024, <https://tomekareid.com/about>.

99. Reid’s practice resists individualistic musicology narratives. In *On Onomatopoeia*, a publication derived from a May 17, 2019, performance by Reid and conversation with Taylor

Ho Bynum, Ugochi Nwaogwugwu, and Mike Reed, Bynum states, “Think of Ken Burns’s PBS documentary *Jazz* (2001), which changed the histories of communities and collectives into a succession of great men and their achievements.” Reid, *On Onomatopoeia*, 10.

100. The film features another golden mask referencing the *Triadic Ballet*, and a photograph of Ise Gropius wearing a Schlemmer mask from the ballet, seated in a “Wassily Chair” by Marcel Breuer from 1926. Hartt restages this photograph with Reid; see “David Hartt: Et in Arcadia Ego,” exhibition note, David Nolan Gallery website, accessed September 16, 2024, [www.davidnolangallery.com/exhibitions/david-hartt-et-in-arcadia-ego](http://www.davidnolangallery.com/exhibitions/david-hartt-et-in-arcadia-ego).

101. See Glass House, “David Hartt: A Colored Garden,” exhibition note, accessed September 16, 2024, <https://theglasshouse.org/whats-on/david-hartt-a-colored-garden/>; David Hartt, “David Hartt: Digging Up Modernist Myths”; and Osman Can Yerebakan, “David Hartt’s *A Colored Garden*.” Hartt describes the title as both a “provocation” for contemporary audiences, drawing on the language of the day as it is used by Porter in an 1883 letter to Mark Twain, where he refers to himself as “the colored artist,” and as a queering of the space that borrows from Whitney’s landscaping decisions. Hartt, Zoom interview by author, January 13, 2023.

102. The SoundSystem is the House of Roots Heartical Dub Machine, a Deep Roots Reggae SoundSystem, which is housed at One Art Community Center, Philadelphia. See House of Roots SoundSystem, “About: The Heartical Dub Machine,” accessed September 16, 2024, [www.houseofrootssoundsystem.com/about](http://www.houseofrootssoundsystem.com/about), and One Art Community Center, “About,” accessed September 16, 2024, [www.oneartcommunitycenter.com/about](http://www.oneartcommunitycenter.com/about). Thanks to Eugene Lew, the film’s sound recordist, for sharing his knowledge about the film’s sonic dimensions with me.

103. Hartt, Zoom interview by author, January 13, 2023.

104. Stamatopoulou-Robbins, “The Human Toll,” 3. Accessed December 9, 2024, <https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/papers/2024/IndirectDeathsGaza>. Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED) homepage, accessed September 16, 2025, [www.acleddata.com](http://www.acleddata.com).

105. Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED) homepage.

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111. Nasrallah, “Mary of Gaza.”

112. The performance, with music by the Palestinian composer and general manager of the Edward Said National Conservatory of Music Suhail Khoury, took place on July 15 and 16, 2024, at the Amman Academy in Jordan. See “Palestine Youth Orchestra Has Performed Sold Out Concerts for Gaza in Amman,” PalMusic UK website, July 16, 2024, [www.palmusic.org.uk/palestine-youth-orchestra-has-performed-sold-out-concerts-for-gaza-in-amman/](http://www.palmusic.org.uk/palestine-youth-orchestra-has-performed-sold-out-concerts-for-gaza-in-amman/). A segment of the performance can be viewed at a July 15, 2024, Facebook post, [www.facebook.com/Bi.AlArabi/posts/pfbidoSPNMw85wrjQWVLkv5gykFjXkQWMwAJL8r87UQWKdCiUPUcmXRY9TqEDnncquZd6l/](https://www.facebook.com/Bi.AlArabi/posts/pfbidoSPNMw85wrjQWVLkv5gykFjXkQWMwAJL8r87UQWKdCiUPUcmXRY9TqEDnncquZd6l/).

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