Fissile Material:
Reimagining Archival Purposes

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Για την γιαγιά Λέλλα.
Επιθύμησα σε.

For my grandmother.
I miss you.

PLAYLIST

3081 Main – Jump

Jenevieve – Deep In The Shallow End

Big Sean – Same Time, Pt. I

Col3trane – Language

Isaiah Rashad – Headshots (4r Da Locals)

Nina Simone – I Wish I Knew How It Would Feel to Be Free

Dijon – The Dress

Khruangbin – Cómo Te Quiero

Ambré – LUCIDIA (EGODEATH)

María Isabel – Love song

Lauryn Hill – I Gotta Find Peace of Mind

Smino – Amphetamine

Delegation – Oh Honey

CHVRCHES – Leave a Trace (Four Tet Remix)

Adana Twins – How Far Can We Go

Pantha du Prince – Bohemian Forest

Burial – Gutted

Medlar – Queen of Tacos

Preface

This research work and contribution is a mediation through a series of reflections, my own political ruminations and the subsequent refinement of particular ideas. A mediation, by definition, cannot pre-suppose answers, conclusions or in fact: dictate direction. It is my hope that my thoughts on the concept of the archive are not the end, by rather the means for which an open-ended conversation continues to emerge amongst my contemporaries.

Much of my thinking is fragmented, which has proven to be an apt perspective and lens when approaching my theoretical matter at hand. I implore you to read these thoughts in whatever order you feel necessary.

Take what interests you.
Immerse yourself in what-could-be.
Learning is a conversation. Are you listening?

My writing is akin to a kind of graffiti: with no clear beginning and ending. I implore you to join in the act of imagining and creating with me.

1.   Introduction

"There are no new ideas, just new ways of giving those ideas we cherish breath and power in our own living."[1]
— Audre Lorde

Grappling with the question of the archive has been approached from a multitude of positionalities and disciplines, if not discourses.[2] As this article conceptualises, archives—(particularly) dialectically—are often understood as accumulations of historical records, stored in physical form. The question of the archive that this article (and by extension, larger project) aims to discuss at length is not a particular inquisition into the archive as a "database"[3] or space that requires "machinic reprocessing."[4] Rather, akin to Hal Foster, the archive is "recalcitrantly material, fragmentary rather fungible"[5] and inherently requires "human interpretation"[6]—and I argue: consistent, *communal* interpretation. Furthermore, I equally argue that for the archive to be sensitively approached, it can only emerge through a theory of collaboration and (radical) praxis of co-creation and love, akin to the teachings(/musings) of Black feminists.[7] Scholars such as Katherine McKittrick have noted that the archive, particularly when discussing black life, is an asterisk in the grand narratives of history that have been (statically) 'archived'.[8] As McKittrick argues: 'asterisked archives' are filled with bodies, narratives and perpetuations of violence and brutality, of racialisation, of death, of intergenerational trauma[9] (and as Bessel van der Kolk reminds us: the body keeps the score).[10] The larger questions which pushes at the seams of a (re)imagined archival purpose/practice is attempting to draw out elements of joy, of community, of hope from the ruins of desolation and deracination.

Saidiya Hartman argues that the archive has often been understood as an index,[11] stripping it of its organic matter and fluidity. As a process, archiving in a neoliberal (exhibition) space (or otherwise) can only ever be described as fixed and static. When the archive is observed (and engaged with) through a radical positionality, it inherently adopts a (political) voice of refusal.[12] Embedded in this *politique* of refusal emerges a sensitive archival purpose that looks first and foremost to involving community actors as knowledge producers. Achilles Mbembe reminds us that "for an incomplete archive to speak with the fullness of a voice, it has to be created, not out of nothing but out of the debris of information, on the very site of the ruins, the remains and traces left behind."[13] Similarly, Michel Foucault expressed that an archive cannot be described from within or in its totality, rather "it emerges in fragments, regions and levels."[14] To that end, this project adopts an acute understanding that the archive is itself "fissile material, [and that] at its source,

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[1] Audre Lorde, *Learning from the 60's* (1982)

[2] Theorists and thinkers include: Saidiya Hartman, Jacques Derrida, Hal Foster, Sven Spieker

[3] Hal Foster, *An Archival Impulse* (2004), at page 5

[4] Ibid, at page 5

[5] Ibid, at page 5

[6] Ibid, at page 5

[7] See: Audre Lorde, *Learning from the 60's* (1982), Saidiya Hartman, *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments* (2019); Scenes of Subjection: *Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth Century America* (1997), bell hooks, All About Love: *New Visions* (1999), Sylvia Wynter, Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: *Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation–An Argument* (2003), Ruth Wilson Gilmore, Abolition Geography: *Essays Towards Liberation* (2022)

[8] Katherine McKittrick, *Mathematics Black Life* (2014), at page 16-28

[9] Katherine McKittrick, *Dear Science and Other Stories* (2020)

[10] Bessel van der Kolk, The Body Keeps the Score: *Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma* (2014)

[11] Saidiya Hartman, *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments* (2019), at page 4

[12] N.B. There is a dialectic note to be made here, for sake of argumentation. There is certainly important in refusing to be co-opted into hegemonic neoliberal and colonial narrative, and it is another to say you have refused it outright. The governing logics of capital often interfere even with our ability to engage in intense cultural practices of resistance through artistic mediums, such as music and fine art.

[13] Achilles Mbembe, *Necropolitics* (2019), at page 160

[14] Michel Foucault, The Archaeology of Knowledge: *And the Discourse on Language* (trans. A. Sheridan-Smith) (1976), at page 130

it is made of cuts."[15] In turns, this requires one to critically examine an archival purpose/process as one that takes the act of sensitively 'filling in the void'—left by imperialism, colonialism, historical omission, necropolitics and neoliberalism—seriously. It is only through a critical examination, if not *politique* of refusal, that we can hope to inform our present-future relationships—interpersonal, familial, relational, communal and political and their relation in turn, to archival methods.

Similarly, (and drawing on the work of Lola Olufemi)[16] I argue that the archive is (almost always) understood through a concept of linearity. If one is asked to connect one point to another, (inevitably) one would draw a straight line, connecting these points together. A series of these lines would constitute the depiction of a diagram. A diagram, in relation to semantics, may conceptually be understood as an effective way of departing information—often about abstract elements; thoughts and histories relegated to orality; machinations and flirtations (political, or otherwise) that are fragmented. As Jakub Zdebik outlines, a diagram can simultaneously be a "sketch, a drawing or a plan that explains a thing by outlining its parts and their relationships."[17] Zdebik outlines three 'forms' a diagram can adopt: "a plan, a map, and a graph."[18] To that end, much of the political, if not actualised work that I have enacted throughout this project is inextricably linked to the sensitive merging of all three 'forms'. This personal/political research/archival work is a topology, as it represents and aims to map terrains and spaces "we have not yet travelled (to),"[19] with ample space to (trans)form. The diagram is not simply representational—directionally, ontologically or artistically—but rather "maps out possibilities prior to their appearance […]."[20] Through illuminating that which is not yet understood and the darkness, one cannot refute that the "diagram is a map."[21] Taking Deleuze's initial conceptualisation one step further, Zdebik argues:

> "The diagram is that stage between the idea of the building and the actual building. It displays the amorphous passage from one structure to the next: from the virtual to the actual, the abstract to the specific."[22]

Simply then, the function of the diagram is rooted in the idea of connectivity: sketching "an image of something to come rather than something that is already there."[23]

Drawing on Deleuze and Zdebik, I aim to transpose these ideas, deracinating their particular abstraction (to an extent) to discuss a reimagined archival purpose. How, if not linearly and concretely, do we conceptualise the archive itself in the first instance? Doreen Massey argues that space is not finished,[24] and in considering it as such: we are provided with a succinct opportunity to pose questions, flirt with political thought and radically disrupt the concept of the archive as a static and fixed phenomenon. To that end, the theoretical framework this project has adopted situates itself neatly through an appreciation for what the archive *could be* rather than what we have been told it *is*. Or, as Aimé Césaire reminds us in his influential work *Discourse on Colonialism*, "extraordinary possibilities [were] wiped out,"[25] due to colonialism, situated alongside imperialism, capitalism (and neoliberalism). These possibilities may never see the light of day, but it through an acute and sensitive archival purpose and (theoretical) practice that we give breath and life to

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[15] Achilles Mbembe, *Necropolitics* (2019), at page 172
[16] See: Lola Olufemi, *Experiments in Imagining Otherwise* (2021)
[17] Jakub Zdebik, Deleuze and the Diagram: *Aesthetic Threads in Visual Organization* (2012), at page 1
[18] Ibid, at page 1
[19] Ibid, at page 1
[20] Ibid, at page 1
[21] Ibid, at page 1
[22] Ibid, at page 8
[23] Ibid, at page 16
[24] Doreen Massey, *For Space* (2005)
[25] Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism* (trans. Joan Pinkham) (1950), at page 43

the lives lost to conflict; to territorial expansion; gross accumulation of capital; imperialist aims; deracination of ordinary communities, and the coloniality of our being.[26]

To that end, the research work I have undertaken (both theoretically and practically) has adopted a positionality of formulating its own diagram: a cartographical depiction in order to understand the archive both as a temporal and physical space, as well as a living organism that cannot be geographically bound by the space-time nexus. Nevertheless, this is not the end, but rather the means from which I have approached this work and larger project. My methodological (/artistic) approach to this topological work weaves the interpersonal with the political, acutely attempting to tackle how a reformulated and reimagined archival purpose may (and *can*; and *will*) appear. Make no mistake: this contribution unequivocally situates itself within the realm of abolitionist theory and subsequent praxis.[27] It is through wrestling with abolitionism's rhetoric, and what it (could/)can be that we rupture and reimagine decoloniality in temporal spaces such as museums and galleries; the ways in which we approach archival work, and the conceptualisation of artist-as-archivist.

As Paulo Gerbaudo notes, it is (perhaps only) through a "choreography of assembly"[28] through which we can hope to make the abstraction and fragmentation of the archive—readable, tangible, meaningful and accessible. This project initially began from sporadic political thoughts; conversations with friends, colleagues and academics around the nature of the 'archive' in post-conflict spaces and through a lens of decolonising Knowledge and our Being, paying tribute to the work of Sylvia Wynter and Maria Lugones; abstracted and fragmented thinking that continues to be nurtured through engaging with a theory and praxis of abolition. Furthermore, it became apparent during my initial thinking for the project that there was much to be learned, and subsequently cultivated,[29] from post-conflict spaces. As such, it was only natural that the research project was split into two 'instalments'. Firstly, I enacted short interviews with my local Cypriot community in order to discover and interrogate their relationship with the nomenclature of 'community' prior and following the events of the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974. Following this, I was able to extract various sounds and conversational moments in order to produce acute soundscapes that pay tribute to my conceptualisation of a topology and archive being built out of a communal effort, rather than a personal one. The soundscapes tell a story of how community itself, is not a fixed phenomenon. It shifts, it changes, it alters—all dependent on context, trauma and tampering. Secondly, much of this work has been immortalised, paying tribute to my thinking (through) and work(ing) with the concept of the archive: whether through this written academic contribution; the physical exhibition with the [Endrosia Collective](#) in Nicosia, Cyprus (which, at the time I write this report, is currently being fleshed out and curated); my personal and reflective hard-copy journal that has been with me since the inception of the project work and my own poetic and prose reflections.

1.1   Contextualising the Cypriot Issue (το Κυπριακό)[30]

Perhaps it is at this point that an element of contextualisation surrounding the Cypriot Issue and Invasion is useful. Cyprus has known relative 'peace' on the island following the invasion of 1974,[31] but despite there

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[26] See: Sylvia Wynter, Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: *Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation–An Argument* (2003), Achilles Mbembe, *Necropolitics* (2019)

[27] N.B. I am eternally indebted to thinkers such as Ruth Wilson Gilmore that have made the abstract–tangible and the obscure–attractive and accessible.

[28] Paulo Gerbaudo, Tweets and the Streets: *Social Media and Contemporary Activism* (2012), at page 40

[29] N.B. I am cautious in my use of the word 'cultivated', more so the use of language such as 'extracted' due to the connotation this carries with regards to ethnographic field work.

[30] N.B. Phonetic translation: *toh-Kee-pree-ah-koh*.

[31] N.B. Important to note is the binary understanding of the events of 1974. While Turkey maintains that it was necessary intervention as per the Treaty of Guarantee (1960), the Greek-Cypriot majority of the island, if not the

being no glaring and apparent armed violence between the predominant ethno-groups[32] of Cyprus, "no Cypriot would say the island is at peace."[33] As in many cases, conflicts are protracted[34] and subsequent generations deal with issue of (re)configurating ideals, values and community—making sense of the fragmentation that has inundated daily life. I argue that the nomenclature of 'conflict' is restrictive in the case of the Cypriot Issue and Invasion. While a linguistic understanding of 'conflict' would denote violence in a physical form, violence continues to be perpetuated on the island by other means which remain clandestine. The absence of *physical* violence is not an accurate depiction of the way in which conflict continues to fester and prosper. Pradeep Jeganathan labels elusive violence as a constant and organic "shadow of violence".[35] In this context then, the Cyprus conflict threatens to erupt again at any given moment: dependant on the actions (which are equally tied to a reoccurring necessity for longevity and sustainability) of the Nation State itself. Mehmet Ratip notes that "history encompasses the whole field of temporality",[36] and I argue that it is precisely in the context of Cyprus that this must be subverted. Linear historiography, while assistive, often relegates memory, stories and communal experiences to the periphery. Similarly, Yiannis Papadakis outlines how history is often "resistant to questioning and change",[37] with "Cyprus [being] a particularly powerful example."[38] To that end, much of this the first 'instalment' of this research work is (academically) countercultural. By working against traditional methodologies of historiography and archiving, this contribution aims to come one step closer to repurposing our conceptualisation of archiving, while equally recognising the difficulty in repairing and reimagining community.

Truth can be described as a deeply personal recollection and reflection of reality, but nonetheless, it is socially contingent and constructed unbeknownst to oneself. Yet, as Linda Williams makes note, "truth is equally not guaranteed; it cannot be transparently reflected by a mirror with a memory." Nonetheless, in the aftermath of conflict,[39] 'truth' is often misconstrued, and the question of blame, suffering and pain is reproduced in various forms of culture: education, political landscapes, and popular culture amongst youth. In the context of Cyprus, political actors consciously employ their own subjective (re)formulations of historiographies and (state) archives in order to propagate a narrative both domestically and internationally about how one conflict party has suffered in relation to the (imagined) Other. There is an underlying asymmetry and difficulty in dealing with the ways history and an archival practice is formulated, and subsequently influences political discourse, if not communal understanding and connection. The State turns to truth-seeking or truth-telling[40] as a form of promulgating their own inherent ideas around these thematises. This contribution would argue that this is done arbitrarily, with little consideration of the run-off effects and the ways the youth[41] have subjective truths embedded into their livelihood—voiding the collective group of their agency and autonomy. Furthermore, I argue that truth-seeking is devoid of a

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Republic of Cyprus in its modern conception, considers the events of 1974 as an invasion and continuous illegal occupation of the Northern part of Cyprus.

[32] N.B. 'Predominant ethno-groups' in Cyprus alludes to the Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot communities – by no means is there exclusion of other ethno-groups such as the diasporic communities of Armenians, Maronites, amongst others.

[33] Matthew Carr, Fortress Europe: *Dispatches from a Gated Continent* (2016), at page 2

[34] Edward E. Azar, Paul Jureidini, Ronald McLaurin, *Protracted Social Conflict; Theory and Practice in the Middle East* (1978)

[35] Pradeep Jeganathan, On the anticipation of violence: *Modernity and identity in Southern Sri Lanka* (2000), at page 111

[36] Mehmet Ratip, *On the Need to Belong to a Non-Cypriot History* (Bryant, Papadakis: *Cyprus and the Politics of Memory*) (2012), at page 227

[37] Rebecca Bryant, Yiannis Papadakis, Cyprus and the Politics of Memory: *Modalities of Time, History and Memory in Ethnonational Conflicts* (2012), at introduction

[38] Ibid, at introduction

[39] N.B. This contribution considers conflict to be ethnic, ethno-religious and national identity based.

[40] N.B. These terms are used interchangeably, owing to the complexity of truth as a multifaceted and ever-changing phenomenon.

[41] N.B. But by no means is this *strictly* only done in consideration of the 'youth' as a denomination of community.

characteristic *politique* of refusal, if not a decolonial lens. Much of the research work I have undertaken takes the question of decoloniality seriously. This is not merely through a stance and *politique* of refusal, but equally due to the fact that a sensitive archival practice cannot be expected to emerge from State-sanctioned institutions or through apparatus of the State itself, in the first instance.

1.2   Methodological Framework(s)

As previously noted, the first 'instalment' of this body of research work involved various interviews with members of my immediate community in Nicosia, Cyprus. I chose to interview members of my community in my local area, due to the pre-existing relationships I already have with these actors. During preparation of my sample collection, there emerged a conversation with my academic advisor(s) and colleagues about the epistemological nuances attached to the insider/outsider role[42] I would be adopting as an ethnographic researcher. As a member of my immediate community in Cyprus that I would be exploring, I came to adopt the positionality of an insider, granting me an opportunity to involve myself with my community that would otherwise be unattainable to the archetypal 'outsider' (ethnographic/anthropological) researcher. Nonetheless, due to the inherent ethnographic work I would go on to conduct, I equally came to adopt the positionality of an outsider; inherently having to be cautious of the ways I approached the traumatic events of 1974—perhaps even more so *due to* my positionality as an insider, too. Drafting of my interview questions was particularly important with these thoughts in mind. A short list of some of the questions utilised during my sample collection can be found at the end of this contribution [*Appendix A*].

I maintain that conversation and our relation to (and with) community is something that must be taken seriously. It is an important element, for our love for one and other is not a frivolous aspect—particularly on a communal level. A grounding ethos of this research work is taking love (as praxis) seriously. To simply imagine more for ourselves is not enough; we need to be willing to let our relationships with one and other be the impetus for change. Inherently, the curatorial and archival practice that has emerged from this research work is one that weaves conversation, gossip, orality, storytelling and conversation over a shared meal or afternoon coffee. In his work, *Sonic Agency: Sound and Emergent Forms of Resistance*,[43] Brandon LaBelle draws on Asef Bayat's notion of "nonmovements"[44] and the "collective actions of noncollective actors"[45] which, by their simple existence and desire for more[46] (politically, or otherwise), enact an element of generative change and coherent communal thinking. This body of work would argue alongside LaBelle that everyday conversation, speech and storytelling is given an element of 'acoustic' agency, that is carried and 'cared for' by the attentive listening, if not involvement, of other community members.[47] This care is echoed, with reference to Didier Anzieu's concept of the "sonorous envelope."[48] As Anzieu explains, "[t]he sonorous envelope, by bathing and trembling us with its oscillations, leaves a deep impression upon the psyche, placing sound within a matrix of sensuality, desire, and psychic intensity."[49] Building on Anzieu's concept, this contribution finds it important to note that it is through a caring, loving and communal exchange of knowledge and reforging (forgotten) stories that a (re)imagined archival purpose is carved out, and subsequently enacted.

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[42] See: Caroline Humphrey, Insider—Outsider: *Activating the hyphen* (2007); David Bridges, 'Nothing about us without us': *The ethics of outsider research* (2017)
[43] Brandon LaBelle, Sonic Agency: *Sound and Emergent Forms of Resistance* (2018)
[44] Asef Bayat, Street Politics: *Poor People's Movements in Iran* (1997)
[45] Asef Bayat, Life as Politics: *How Ordinary People Change the Middle East* (2010)
[46] N.B. The use of the word 'more' is directly correlated to wanting something better, that sees the betterment of all social groups in a particular space.
[47] Brandon LaBelle, Sonic Agency: *Sound and Emergent Forms of Resistance* (2018), at page 122-127
[48] Didier Anzieu, *The Skin-Ego* (trans. Naomi Segal) (2016), at page 186
[49] Ibid, at page 186

With these thoughts in mind, the interviews conducted with my local community based themselves around questions of how community existed prior to the (explicit) invasion of 1974 and how this conceptualisation of community changed post-1974. It became increasingly important to me, throughout this project, that there must be an emphasis of the importance of *orality* as a means of revolutionary/radical *politique*. It is precisely when we hone into the stories that have been left untold, due to Westernised conceptualisations of historiography, that so much is lost and relegated to the margins of history. The interviews conducted would go on to be utilised for the formulation and production of a series of soundscapes. It is the intention of this research project that these soundscapes will be make up (part of) the physical exhibition being planned and curated alongside collaborators at the Endrosia Collective. It is precisely when we tap into the importance of sound and the (subsequent) worlds that can be created when we pay attention to the presence (or absence) of sound, speech and conversation that we come one step closer to (re)imagining what the world can (and perhaps, should) look like. Or as LaBelle reminds us: "sound(s) […] deliver powerful energies to annoy and to interfere, to agitate and to violate."[50]

> **To that end, a core question consistently emerged throughout sample collection**:
>
> "How does orality and storytelling influence the ways we consider communal memory and communal (re)building?"

By further drawing on the work of LaBelle, it became increasingly important that 'sound', as a concept, should be taken seriously (throughout this research project, if not more widely throughout ontological discussions). Sound illuminates various possibilities. As a format, then, it consistently pays tribute to authenticity and truth telling—elements that post-conflict communities/spaces have been disallowed to engage with of their own accord. As LaBelle explains: sonic agency is "a means for enabling new conceptualisation of the public sphere and expressions of emancipatory practices."[51] Taking LaBelle's argument a step further, I argue that sonic agency consistently emerges out of the private sphere too—what stories have been buried due to the trifecta of imperialism, colonialism and capitalism and the effects it has had on knowledge production, not least communal (inter)exchange and archival practices. Equally, I am guided by Jaimie Baron's thoughts around "reformulating […] the 'archival document' as co-constituted by the experience of the viewer in relation to [the] audio-visual."[52] Baron argues how 'archivalness' is a "variable experience",[53] which "manifests itself and produces historical effects across the generic boundaries"[54] of everyday consumption of media and sound. It is precisely through the production of non-linear soundscapes that this body of research finds itself firmly rooted in a *politique* of refusal—a refusal of the Academy's approach to ethnographic audio work and a subversion of everyday media/pop-culture.

2.   Emergent Themes and Curating Community Voices

"All of us have to remember those things others forget for each other. We have to remember for each other. And we have to help each other to forget those things we wish had never happened."[55]
— Mũkoma wa Ngũgĩ

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[50] Brandon LaBelle, Sonic Agency: *Sound and Emergent Forms of Resistance* (2018), at page 127

[51] Ibid, at page 4

[52] Jaimie Baron, The Archive Effect: *Found Footage and the Audiovisual Experiences of History* (2014), at page 23

[53] Ibid, at page 23

[54] Ibid, at page 23

[55] Mũkoma wa Ngũgĩ, *Mrs Shaw* (2015), at page 184

It is at this point in this body of work that a note on the emergent themes made apparent through sample collection is of vital importance—if only due to the inherent assistance these very themes provide in continuing the development of my cartographical depiction/a topology. Or, as Josien Pieterse notes, "oral history is about offering a context and making new connections."[56] The reflections articulated below and subsequently analysed are taken directly from the journal kept throughout the entirety of this research project. These notes were made sporadically—yet intentionally—following the conclusion of my interviews with my immediate community.

I.   Through my conversation [with I], there emerged a reference to modernity and the ways it has radically changed the landscape [they] navigate—both in [their] village and in the capital city of Cyprus: Nicosia. I found it important in my reflections to note that modernity, as a concept, is inextricably linked to capitalism, if not colonialism/imperialism. The case study of Cyprus' has shown that there is a(n almost hellbent) necessity to modernise the island—strictly (with)in the confines of Westernisation and through an imperialist/capitalist lens. The conversation that emerged proved to tie in neatly with the notion that the European construct is underpinned by the colonial view of Europe as "the cradle of civilisation, modernity, culture and progress."[57] The notion of modernity—if not the civilizing mission itself in the first instance—is heavily tied to coloniality, which ought to be understood as a system/structure, rather than a fixed, temporal event. Modernisation for visibility's sake is a reification of the trauma and pain of displacement and imperialism already felt by Cypriot communities. In a similar vein, the seminal work and ruminations of Edward Said reminds us that the symbiotic relationship between the coloniality of being (if not colonialism) and the contemporary process of Othering cannot (and perhaps, *should not*) be ignored[58]—in an(y politically conscious) analysis of the Cypriot Issue and Invasion.

II.   In another interview [with II], there emerged a conversation surrounding cultural tradition(s) that continue to be enacted by various communities; we spoke of the importance and the inherent curatorial elements embedded in food. Food, as this body of work would contend, is not simply a source of sustenance and nourishment. It is a grounding principle and practice in nurturing and enacting an element of community. Food, and the act of sharing a meal, is in [their] eyes, a radical practice of enacting community on a holistic and realistic basis. This particular discussion tied in well with the political flirtations and ruminations that emerged through my engagement with indigenous scholars, such as Leanne Betasamosake. In their work, Betasamosake implores us to make the critical connection between indigenous practices and elements of symbiosis, radical love, nurturing each other and enacting community—all directly rooted to radical resistance of Westernisation, settler colonialism and imperialism. For, as they remind us, community is inherently rooted in recognition, which in turn "is about presence, about profound listening, and about recognising and affirming the light in each other as a mechanism for nurturing and strengthening internal relationships."[59] It is precisely this connection that is important; community, as this article would contend, is taking interpersonal relationships seriously, if only due to their connection to the larger whole. I argue that cooking for one and other, sharing

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[56] Annet Dekker, Josien Pieterse, Stef Scagliola, The Hidden Value of Oral History in an 'Open' Society: *A Discussion* (Annet Dekker, Lost and Living (In) Archives: *Collectively Shaping New Memories* (2017), at page 126

[57] Encarnación Gutiérrez Rodríguez, The Coloniality of Migration and the "Refugee Crisis": *On the Asylum-Migration Nexus, the Transatlantic White European Settler Colonialism-Migration and Racial Capitalism* (2018), at page 22

[58] See: Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (1978)

[59] Leanne Betasamosake, As We Have Always Done: *Indigenous Freedom through Radical Resistance* (2017), at page 182

meals/recipes and a(n inter)generational sharing of cooking methodologies is the connective tissue of community itself. Akin to the research conducted by Avtar Brah on the 'scent of memory',[60] this contribution wholeheartedly believes in food as pedagogy—the connective tissue that maintains the bloodline of community. In particular, through my conversation [with II] we concluded that nourishment is not *just* nourishment, for several reasons. Perhaps more specifically, 'when your world is crumbling around you—which undoubtedly remains the lived reality for many displaced from the northern areas of Cyprus during the invasion—the only people one can call on for help is the kindness of strangers in neighbouring villages.'[61]

Subsequently, there emerged a conversation around the topic of fear—due to [III's] uncertainty if the communal bond vis-à-vis cooking and sharing a meal together would be lost and a forgotten practice (if not already). It is at this juncture that I find it imperative to note the ways that capitalism, as one of its core functions, inherently individualises communities. Furthermore, drawing from Sara Ahmed's work is worthwhile here. Ahmed notes that "fear involves relationships of proximity, which are crucial to establishing [an element of] 'apartness'."[62] Due to the clandestine effects of capitalism, fear finds itself brewing and festering in the body. It deracinates our communal logics and instead, we operate through a transactional lens. Furthermore, Ahmed argues that "fear projects […] from the present into [the] future."[63] Ahmed's teachings are particularly helpful in this regard, as the fear precipitated by modernity and capitalism is one to be felt by generations to come.

III. It became apparent that the process of archiving that this project sought out to explore was not only an important practice in directly archiving our elders, and those who will no longer be with us. Simultaneously, the research work is a note on ensuring the continuity of community through an abolitionist lens. As Ruth Wilson Gilmore reminds us, abolition is a theory of (social) change. It is inherently about making *things*—a sensitive practice of curation. These *things* can, and perhaps should be: new worlds, new modalities, new considerations of how we approach creating, loving, *existing*. Yet, as Gilmore reminds us, sometimes political involvement cannot only be enacted through the electoral sphere. Abolition instead encourages direct interrogation of our relationships on a communal and interpersonal level. Or perhaps:

what do I owe to myself, and **then**, what do I owe my community?

IV. An important reflection that emerged through the conduction of my interviews was a note on language. In a particular interview [with III], a discussion around how the words and phrases 'coup d'état' and 'refugee' were not widely familiar to Cypriot communities until they themselves, were displaced due to imperialist and colonial involvement. This is largely a note on how language *itself* is not a fixed phenomenon—it grows and morphs with society and community, and *depends* on communal experiences.

Similarly, language became an increasingly interesting aspect to consider throughout the analysis of my interviews and the production of the various soundscapes. As has been noted before, this body of research works adopts a radical positionality, if not a *politique* of refusal. To that end, it is worth noting that traditional historiographies would not consider storytelling and gossip as a form

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[60] Avtar Brah, The Scent of Memory: *Strangers, Our Own, and Others* (1999)
[61] N.B. This is roughly translated from Greek to English, in order to maintain the truthfulness and honesty that emerged from this conversation.
[62] Sarah Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (2014), at page 63
[63] Ibid, at page 65

of archival and historiographical work. Nonetheless, I found it vital to experiment with the possibilities that stories, communal memory, orality and gossip precipitates for a far more nuanced, yet holistic, understanding of the Cyprus Issue and Invasion. Yet, perhaps more pertinently: these elements allow us to experience an entirely new depth of what, if not *who*, has been forgotten and relegated to the side-lines of history. Or as Deleuze reminds us: just because things are not actual(/concrete) and rooted in abstraction, does not make them any less real and important.[64] History, as I contend, has to be (re)constructed out of the stories and flirtations communities have had with each other, throughout generations, yet not squarely within the confines of trauma, displacement and pain experienced. Instead, as Hartman reminds us, we have to be willing to extract elements of joy from relegated histories in order to enact sensitive and reimagined modalities of life.

V.   Drawing from Leanne Betasamosake and Robyn Maynard's book *Rehearsals for Living*,[65] it was inherently important for me to remember that the archive is a living, breathing organism. Simultaneously, it is also a rehearsal and reminder of living—enacting a practice of community and breathing life into our (shared) modes of existence. The collective archive is a refusal of individuality, but a practice of relationality in the most heartfelt and authentic way. Betasamosake and Maynard's work was incredibly helpful in flirting with my thoughts around community. Community is thought to be fixed ground(ing). This ground(ing) is not inherently fruitful because some communities are structured unluckily. This meandering is assistive: community requires some physics of agreement, resources and human involvement. Community is a container: of movements, beliefs, positionalities—-tightly woven into cues of presentation and actualisation. At this juncture in my research project, I recognised there is particular emphasis to be awarded in establishing a core difference between 'being' in community with one and other and 'identifying' with a particular community. Being and Identity are not two sides of the same coin. Rather, the verb of 'being' permits a fluency that can freely reproduce itself in a special temporality, or otherwise. There is an…ease. In comparison, identity can be a symbolic of a prior fluency, but in itself cannot be fluent in the ways Being permeates for. Identity is the thing *seen* because it represents and can *only* represent. To Be and to exist in a state of Being with one's community is an entirely different (if not, radical) positionality.

3.   (Re)imagining Archival Purposes; Flirting with Curiosity

"[…] All archiving is part of some sort of collective project. Rather than being the tomb of the trace, the archive is more frequently the product of the anticipation of collective memory."[66]
— Arjun Appadurai

Saidiya Hartman's methodological framework which she utilises and works with in her texts *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments*[67] and *Venus in Two Acts*[68] have been particularly influential throughout this research project. Hartman suggests that political and historical speculation, embedded with a flair of imagination: "critical fabulation"[69] (as she calls it) is the radical rupture required in order to reimagine archival purposes and practices. It is through an act of speculating the inaccessible and silenced voices of the past/present that one might be able to sensitively "tell an impossible story"[70] while equally, amplifying the "impossibility

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[64] Jakub Zdebik, Deleuze and the Diagram: *Aesthetic Threads in Visual Organization* (2012)
[65] Leanne Betasamosake, Robyn Maynard, *Rehearsals for Living* (2022)
[66] Arjun Appadurai, *Archive and Aspiration in Information is Alive* (2003), at page 15
[67] Saidiya Hartman, *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments* (2019)
[68] Saidiya Hartman, *Venus in Two Acts* (2008)
[69] Ibid, at page 11
[70] Ibid, at page 11

of its telling."[71] The histories and bodies that predate our modern moments, let alone our ancestors inability, inaccessibility and push towards silence—are opened, retold, reimagined, rewritten, and resurrected with(in) Hartman's methodology of 'critical fabulation'. The potential for change, as Hartman conceptualises, is possible, yet not squarely through speculative engagement with the past. "Counter-histories"[72] and "history of the present"[73] are "inseparable"[74] as they both touch on an "incomplete project of freedom".[75] As this project has uncovered, the present is consistently "interrupted"[76] by the past: it is precisely this interruption that permits us to imagine more for the future on a holistic basis. The dramatization of *nothing*, precisely out of the ruins and memories of those who are no longer with us, are the elements that define us. Equally, the absence defines us—it is precisely through an engagement with the past/present that we are able to enact an acute element of change—propelling us into the future.

I.   **flirting with waywardness**

Through my critical engagement with Hartman's wider academic work, it became apparent to me that *waywardness* (as Hartman conceptualises) is an experiment in possibility. Flirting with waywardness allows us to envision a collective future, filled with a multitude of these possibilities. As bell hooks notes, "to be truly visionary we have to root our imagination in our concrete reality while simultaneously imagining possibilities beyond that reality."[77] As such, our diagrams and cartographies for the future are not simply relational. Instead, they are strategies for the future: observed as a practice of what might be—an improvisation with the charms and trinkets of social existence—precisely when they have already been dictated and enforced upon us. In the context of a reimagined (and sensitive) archival purpose/practice, we have to be willing to experiment. Or, as Hartman reminds us, approaching the entanglement and fragmentation embedded within the archive must be done sensibly—an intentional act which consequently honours those who are no longer with us.

Equally, we must note that the neoliberal/geopolitical landscape we consistently navigate is miserable, if not increasingly dire, precarious and violent. To that end, we have to be radically imaginative. It is within our (collective) power to imagine and concretely work towards more for each other. To that end, archiving must be considered for what it truly is: a revolutionary art form. It cannot be squarely understood through the context of an index/a static space. It must be considered as a living organism, through which each of us engages with on a daily basis in our respective way(s). To that end, this project has consistently wrestled with questions of how art, if not curatorial practices and archival engagement, might (if not must) be enacted through a lens of gentility and sensitivity.

II.   **flirting with space**

Echoing the sentiments of Bertolt Brecht, art is not a mirror held up to reality, but a hammer with which to shape it. In this particular vein, one of the key outputs envisioned by this research

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[71] Saidiya Hartman, *Venus in Two Acts* (2008), at page 11
[72] Ibid, at page 4
[73] Ibid, at page 4
[74] Ibid, at page 4
[75] Ibid, at page 4
[76] Ibid, at page 4
[77] bell hooks, Feminism is for Everybody: *Passionate Politics* (2014), at page 110

project has been the critical and collaborative curation of an exhibition in the space hosted by the Endrosia Collective in Nicosia, Cyprus. At the time of compiling this report of political thoughts and meanderings, the creative and theoretical planning for the exhibition is ongoing.

In my time musing, scribbling mindmaps, immersing myself in conversation, and flirting with my own curiosity, I am reminded of Tina M. Campt. For, as she notes, archival materials such as photographs, art and manuscripts extracted[78] from our communities are "deeply affective objects that implicate and leave impressions upon us through multiple forms of contact […]."[79] By evoking the past in our everyday lives—particularly through the curation of exhibition spaces— we are able to reflect on how we can shape our present and future as agents of change, rather than simple observers. Perhaps more aptly, the "desire to meet the past is an embodied instinct and an innate condition."[80] The question remains: how do we approach this *desire* sensitively? In this context, Ruth Wilson Gilmore's notes: "space always matters, and what we make of it in thought and practice determines, as is determined by, how we mix our creativity with the external world to change it and ourselves in the process."[81] It is precisely when I have thought about space that I have found myself at a dead-end. It is difficult to conceptualise space, and what occurs in a particular space—precisely when dealing with archival materials. Yet, I am grateful to be guided by creatives in my own 'external world' who take on the task of guide and teacher.

Nonetheless, space like maps "are not neutral. Maps are not, inherently, "true". Maps have points of view. Maps carry cultural bias. Maps tell stories."[82] To that end, I find myself flirting with a central question these past few months: what story is to be told through this particular iteration of an exhibition? Or as Gilmore notes: "how do we find the place of freedom? More precisely, how do we make such a place over and over again?"[83] This exhibition will not reveal answers to every question, but it is my hope that it allows us to wrestle with conceptualising a sensitive archival practice.

4.   by way of conclusion / speaking nearby / after the archive

It is at this stage in this contribution that I take on the egregious task of concluding my mediations. I am thankful to this research project for reminding me consistently that thought, creativity, theory and emotion naturally emerge in spurs and fragments, rather than linearly.

To that end, a few thoughts by way of conclusion:
The personal is inherently political: how one chooses to deal with the (inter)personal is altogether a political question and conversation—one that should consistently be enabled, cultivated and given room to breathe. Humour my ontological musing(s) for a moment: my ideology for much of this project has been 'starting from the source' (and I hope you will excuse the necessary contradiction). Instead, take the premise into consideration—since the speaking to and of subjects is never apolitical. This work has honoured the importance of "speaking nearby" rather than "speaking about". As Trinh T. Minh-Ha notes,

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[78] N.B. For lack of better wording; by no means is this meant to reflect the original connotations of the wording.
[79] Tina M. Campt, *Listening to Images* (2017), at page 72
[80] Geli Mademli, *Footage Lost, Desire Found* (in 24th Thessaloniki Documentary Non/Catalogue (2022), at page 93
[81] Ruth Wilson Gilmore, Abolition Geography: *Essays Towards Liberation* (2022), at page 92
[82] Elizabeth Alexander, Twitter (2022) https://twitter.com/trf123rd/status/1559178986093256704 last accessed: Sep. 2022
[83] Ruth Wilson Gilmore, Abolition Geography: *Essays Towards Liberation* (2022), at page 93

> "[speaking nearby is a] speaking that does not objectify, does not point to an object as if it is distant from the speaking subject or absent from the speaking place. A speaking that reflects on itself can come very close to a subject without, however, seizing or claiming it. A speaking in brief, whose closures are only moments of transition opening up to other moments of transition […]."[84]

Admittedly, to say "one prefers not to speak about but rather to speak nearby, is a great challenge."[85] Reminiscent of abolition rhetoric, the decision and praxis to uphold our political beliefs is not easy thing, it is "an attitude in life, a way of positioning oneself in relation to the world."[86] Speech, interviews, sound, art, or conversation cannot be simply used as "instruments of thought."[87] To that end, context is key here. I maintain that there is little emphasis given to recognising the importance of consistently being in contact with "what's in the mix"[88]—within ourselves, not least understanding a structure from within ourselves out. Instead, deference is given to the conceptualisation and propagation of the nuclear family (which is altogether a capitalist and Westernised aberration). Capitalist logic instead, forces our hand: to relate to a situation or to an object as if it is only outside oneself—to be commodified and deracinated consistently. Elsewhere, in other cultures (Asian and African, for example) one often learns to 'know the world inwardly', so that the deeper one goes into oneself, the wider they go in (and interact with) society. This (artistic/academic) contribution notes that not often does pop-culture give us the option of understanding the effect of the 'social' or the 'interpersonal' of our daily lives(/the lives of those before us). And so, this work is an attempt(/a mediation): to inscribe and commemorate the constant flow from the inside out and outside in, as those who came before us did.

Carolyn Steedman equally reminds us, "the past is a double absence. The past is gone, and it was never there in the first place, because whatever we find, and whatever and however we write, it cannot be the thing that happened, once upon a time—perhaps—in the lost realm of the past."[89] As artists-as-archivists, we have to be conscious that we tread a particular inarticulateness. Our constant "sense of archival aporia […] [the] unpresentable search for an impossible object"[90] dictates our search for the impossibility in the dark. It is my hope that through this contribution, the depiction of a diagram makes it self-apparent. Or, at the very least, it has aided in further cultivating an abolitionist(/sensitive) cartographic practice when approaching archival matters—one already being undertaken by (those critical) artists, curators, ethnographers and thinkers.[91] Furthermore, much of this project has been (loosely) poetic, but not from the perspective of an estheticized practice of language. Rather, poetic language is fundamentally reflexive and only through poetry can one deal with meaning in any tangible and revolutionary way. Or, as Césaire reminds us, "a revolution, fundamentally, is collective poetry. It is the highest point of incandescence of the collective personality."[92]

In conclusion, a sensitively informed reimagination of archival practices will not inherently (re)define the praxis itself as the root and essence of truth. Instead, we are provided with a set strategies designed towards involving an element of grace and communality that has altogether been removed. Only then might we seek out 'truth'.

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[84] Nancy N. Chen, "Speaking Nearby": *A Conversation with Trinh T. Minh-Ha* (1992), at page 87
[85] Ibid, at page 87
[86] Ibid, at page 87
[87] Ibid, at page 87
[88] Ibid, at page 93
[89] Carolyn Steedman, *After the Archive* (2011), at page 333
[90] Anjali Arondekar, For the Record: *On Sexuality and the Colonial Archive in India* (2009), at page ix
[91] See, for example: Hal Foster, Rem Koolhas, Sylvia Wynter, Achilles Mbembe, Edmund de Waal, Isabelle Cornaro, Maria Lugones, Lola Olufemi, Gail Lewis, Ruth Wilson Gilmore
[92] Jackqueline Frost, Jorge E. Lefevre Tavárez, Tragedy of the Possible: *Aimé Césaire in Cuba, 1968* (2020), at page 66

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Appendices

Appendix A

Below, please find a short list of indicative questions directed to my interviewees:

- What does community mean to you? Do you feel connected to your community?
- Did your relationship and feelings towards Cyprus change following the invasion?
- How might your relationship(s) with those around you have changed following the invasion?
- What is your relationship with Cypriot culture and cuisine?
- Do you make attempts to continue cultural traditions from when you were growing up?
- Would you like to share any fond memories you have of your community prior to the invasion?
- Would you like to share any memories you have of your community following the invasion?
- What does the concept of 'archiving ourselves' mean to you?
- Do you think the invasion change our relationship with one and other/our communities?