

The Art of Dissident Domesticity: Julian Assange, King Prempeh, and Ethnographic Conceptualism in the Prison House

What happens to domestic life when the state turns a troublesome subject's home into a prison; when an outlaw evading custody turns an extraterritorial space, such as an embassy, into a home? How is a foreign sovereign transformed into a private citizen through exile, house arrest, and return? Exile and forced domesticity have long linked sovereignty to the power to determine intimate life as centuries-old practices of house arrest and diplomatic asylum have taken on new forms in recent decades in the wake of emerging surveillance technologies and changing relationships between information, territory, and sovereignty. This paper examines two quite distinct, high-profile, celebrity instances of what we call dissident domesticity. In the first case, Prempeh I, the last sovereign king of Asante, is exiled by the British to the Seychelles from his capital of Kumasi in what is now Ghana, and placed under house arrest there to end a war of British Imperial conquest. In the second case, WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange, the 21st century's iconic dissident, seeks asylum in the Ecuadorian embassy in London to avoid arrest and extradition. Prempeh's exile on the edge of empire and Assange's confinement at its center show how the fight over the control of information—and those who circulate it—converges with the struggle for the control of territory—and those who police it, transverse it, and are trapped by it.

We draw on ethnographic, archival, and artistic work at both these sites of incarceration to understand how information and surveillance, resistance and coercion are made in the interplay between center and periphery, inside and outside. Our examinations converge on two key spots: Prempeh's Seychelles veranda and Assange's Knightsbridge balcony, which mediate between intimate inside and public outside, an exchange that molds bodies within and against

sovereign logics. As power apprehends dissidents, these figures try to, in turn, reshape the terms of their discipline via mundane, minute and bombastic tactics.

Our investigations juxtapose subjects caught up in the seemingly disjunctive spatial-historical frames of early 20th century British and 21st century American-led imperial worlds, and their forms of mobility and control of motion. These two moments have much in common in the persistence of the conditions of incarceration and control of information, but they also show contrasting ways imperial regimes produce and maintain fictions of their contemporary global spatial orders through the ordering of the domestic. We focus on how everyday life inside various prison houses refracts the trajectories of state and corporate, military and commercial interests. These exterior forces converge on the seemingly innocuous terrain of carceral homes, and the reshaping of domestic existence. For these two dissidents, their domestication is shaped in markedly gendered terms, as they are drawn to inhabit particularly masculine public stances in ways that seemingly control their political voices.¹ For Prempeh, his responses to imperial confinement are to remake himself in terms of British masculine images of power. For Assange, his public downfall is made in terms of accusations of crimes of masculine violence. In these contexts, the inmates of the prison house deploy their dwellings as sites from which to remake their social bodies to challenge and negotiate external forces. In both cases, the terms of confinement and release hinge, in some measure, upon public and intimate performances of masculinity which define a moral being that, in turn, inflects a subject's social legitimacy and political authority.

Dissident domesticity describes how confined subjects respond to the overwhelming spatial and temporal control of confinement; political opposition conducted through domestic forms shows the tensions between creating new, multiple centers of power, and practices that

denature the structuring principles of the center itself. The home or proxy home is a site of dialectical mediation, a pivotal conduit for processes that appear to originate from a macro realm of the exterior, to shape the ‘micro’ realm of the interior. In examining these spaces, we follow radical thinkers concerned with the links between place and power—notably Marxist enclave theorists—who aimed to identify non-capitalist un-surveilled spaces of dissidence in the midst of centralized orders of power. But we find a complex blend of technologies in which the terms of freedom and control are often hard to distinguish.² The prison house is a crucial technology of power, a terrain where sovereign control manifests itself with exaggerated clarity and where this power is also responded to in a reciprocal process. We are concerned here with the intimate manifestations of the control apparatus of state and empire, and with the technological apparatus of the mass media, art, and popular culture.³ Our paper provides an anthropology of dissident domesticity focused on the prison house, a terrain of intense, embodied, and materialized centrality in which the everyday intimacies of domestic life converge with the macro-dynamics of state power and media.

Our ethnographic and archival investigations of Prempeh and Assange also work in an ethnographic conceptualist vein, in which contemporary art articulates with dissident domesticities.⁴ Developing the relationship between scholarship and art can help unravel the logic of informational discipline at the center of contemporary public life, which emerges in anxieties about the public circulation of information and bodies.⁵ We are concerned with how domesticity is shaped as a form of political control and conversely as a space for new forms of embodiment that elude or trick recognition. Dissidence is demarcated not only by struggles over the control of information but by domestic aesthetics, social habitation and sabotage of proper

forms of sociality. In the following sections, we examine how dissidence is framed in relation to domestic space and domesticated ways of being.

Ethnographic conceptualism is not only a way to use aesthetics to think through social configurations, but a way to use ethnographic and archival research to inform artistic practice. Indeed, this article comes out of our multiple channel art installation *Investigated*, first presented at Savvy Contemporary in Berlin in 2014, in which we interwove video, sound, live digital feeds, and written archives on Assange and Prempeh that we had gathered through interviews, observation, writing, and archival work in London, Accra, and the Seychelles. **(fig. 1)**. Our ethnography of dissident domesticity, and our art practice, unexpectedly juxtapose these two figures to reveal the relationship between dissidence and domestication; a comparison across time and space that reveals perhaps unexpected similarities.

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Furthermore, as we think through art practice, we show how dissidents deploy their domestic spheres in ways that bear a striking resemblance to how various avant-garde artists aim to elide generic categorizations to further their conceptual practice. As avant-garde artists gain recognition, they struggle to elude the forms of discipline and control that come with being ossified within generic representational categorizations of the art world. Similarly, dissidents inhabit and try to remake carceral domesticity for their own conceptual purposes and elude simplistic categorizations.

Prempeh's Letters: Making the Domestic Gentleman

We argue that the constellation of politics, propaganda and art – and their interaction with both covert and overt state apparatuses – constitute the contemporary notion of the dissident. For Foucault, security and legal orders are mechanisms not for the disciplining of unruly subjects but

for the control and regulation of life in its seemingly dispersed forms.⁶ As criminal codes aim to rein in extra-state power they create the very categories of dissent that they claim to control.

The contemporary social category of the writer-as-intellectual or artist-as-dissident emerged in mid 18th century Europe through state anxiety and control. Indeed, the police archives of 1740s Paris reveal a massive collection of documents on the surveillance of writers and intellectuals and, as Robert Darnton observes, the idea of a public intellectual who circulates information is constituted through the process of police surveillance in the early modern period.⁷ The birth of the contemporary order of incarceration has been built on controlling not just prisoners' bodies but also information. Since the rise of early modern European prisons they have been used to control information. Indeed, in 18th century France, dissidents, newspaper writers, pamphleteers, spies, and counterfeiters were arrested to avoid them circulating information. State officials were at times so anxious about how information circulated, that dissidents were regularly removed from Paris to other more far-flung locations to isolate them.⁸

The link between the dissident and bodily, expressive practices is further elaborated in the making of European colonial rule in the 19th century. Control over information circulation has been at the center of an emerging modern global political order and its public and private mechanisms of power. Indeed European imperial rule was made and naturalized through the public management of the intimate and reorganization of the everyday.⁹ European aesthetics, religious doctrines, and commodity logics entered into and were normalized in the lives of non-Europeans through a focus on reforming the body and its forms of dwelling.¹⁰ In the context of British conquest, local sovereignty was denied to polities around the world by demarcating sovereign political leaders as unruly subjects. A combination of military force and diplomatic manipulation masked imperial rule in an ambiguous language of extra judicial policing.

Sovereign powers were absorbed not by direct conquest alone but through a logic of their legal disciplining that posited non-Western peoples – as well as Western women, children and members of peasantries and proletariats – as in need of social and moral reformation.¹¹

Incarceration played a key role in making colonial rule.¹² The story of the capture, exile, and long term house arrest of the Prempeh, the last king of Asante, is a case in point. In the late 19th century, the British centralized their control of economic trade routes, formalizing colonial rule across empire by taking over sovereign territories with which they had maintained trade agreements. Along West Africa's Gold Coast, various European powers had traded with the Asante Empire for centuries but as the British monopolized the coastal trading centers formerly divided among European powers, they sought to regularize inland trade. The British and Asante fought a series of wars throughout the century. In 1896, the British invaded the Asante capital of Kumasi under the pretext that Asante had violated a treaty and that they were seeking payment from the Asantehene (King of Asante) for an overdue indemnity. They looted the palace and took the young Asantehene Agyeman Prempeh and his court captive. The British military leaders wanted to use Asante custom to show their strength so insisted that Prempeh and other chiefs disgrace themselves by placing their heads between the knees of British officials seated on chiefly stools. Prempeh was first marched to the coast imprisoned in Cape Coast Castle, a former slave trading center and then exiled to their nearby colony of Sierra Leone. In 1900, while no male military leaders dared resist British annexation, the Queen Mother Nana Yaa Asantewaa led a final armed resistance to British rule. To curtail future resistance, the British Governor exiled King Prempeh, Yaa Asantewaa and a number of other chiefs to the far away Seychelles Islands. Yaa Asantewaa represented outright rebellion to British rule while Prempeh was the embodiment of legitimate sovereignty. The logic of exile posited that executing a sovereign would incite

outright war with Asante and allow them to enstool a new king. By keeping him under house arrest, far removed from his territory, the British maintained pre-existing Asante social and political orders while taking control of financial and legal orders. This was in line with developing doctrines of indirect rule that shaped the administrative logic of the British colonies. In 1901 the Gold Coast Colony formally incorporated the Asante Empire into the British administration.¹³

The Seychelles, 1000 miles east of Nairobi in the midst of the Indian Ocean, had long been used for political imprisonment. In 1810, the French sent 77 ‘terrorists’ there. After the British took over in 1810 they sent royal and religious opposition leaders from around the world whom they could neither assassinate nor leave in place. The legal ambiguity of exile was tempered by the facts of isolation and burdens of maintaining enemy elites. Administratively, the colonial office in Britain, the Gold Coast Governor’s office, and Seychelles administration had ongoing internal discussions about practical aspects and the political expediency of Prempeh’s exile.¹⁴

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Arriving in Seychelles in 1900, Prempeh was given a large house leased from a ‘Grand Blanc’ plantation-owning family. **(fig. 2)**. He came with a large group of other political dissident chiefs family, and attendants. Huts were built around the perimeter of the garden for sub-chiefs, slaves, and children.¹⁵ A school was set up and a police substation built at the bottom of the hill—not initially to restrict the political prisoner’s movements, but because as his complaints to officials show, Prempeh was concerned about his own security. The gardens and gracious house with its wide porch were more than comfortable. Indeed, officials complained that the ex-king was living in too much comfort for an exile. The Gold Coast Governor wrote on 21 November

1901 to the Seychelles Administrator explaining the logic of exile “...this government in no way desires to inflict a vindictive or cruel punishment on the leaders of the rising in Ashanti last year.” In sending them to Seychelles the British hoped to destabilize political opposition without destroying Asante social order. They sought “to deter others following their example in the belief that a rebellion if unsuccessful carries with it no serious punishment.”¹⁶ The length and distance of exile provided its own disciplinary logic. Prempeh had the freedom of his new home but could not leave. It became a staging ground for planning his return to rule. The golden cage of his exile gave him the space to reshape his public political self to be legible to British civility. His colonial veranda and living quarters provided the terrain on which he remade himself in the style of an English gentleman legible to the British public and to Imperial forms of control. For Prempeh, adopting the language and modes of communication of British rule was a form of mimesis, incorporating the codes of power of his enemy. Prempeh learned stances of power embedded in the moral rhetoric and bodily affects of an English gentleman. However, this mimesis was also a technique for eluding the Imperial gaze, creating a banal image to attract a normative public eye while maintaining private political aspirations.

Read as a body of work, Edward Prempeh’s letters from the Seychelles, archived in the Mahe Public Records Office, rewrite the history of Anglo-Asante relations as one of Asante past moral failings. In writing letters to Colonial officials in Gold Coast and London and to the Queen herself, Prempeh develops a writerly voice that aims to redeem his political position by creating a narrative of his own self-fashioning as a modern British masculine subject. His writing is a narrative strategy for returning home.¹⁷ British observers in the Seychelles noted that Prempeh was a sharp dresser, ‘abandoning his leopard skins’ for proper attire and formal suits. In converting to Christianity, he purportedly had trouble deciding between Catholicism and the

Church of England, choosing the latter because it was the church of King Edward VII and British royalty. He officially married only one wife. Stories in the Seychelles persist that he chose Edward as his Christian name also because this was the name of the English king. Prempeh mirrored his royal enemy's figuration of power.

The archive reflects Prempeh's increasingly sophisticated attempts to win influence over his captors by showing the process of his learning to write in English. Prempeh recognized that the technology of letter writing was crucial to learning the language of his captors and entering into political dialogue with them. The British had refused his initial request to write and correspond in his native Twi language out of fear of his sending political messages. His early letters, scrawled in an uncertain hand, are brief, demonstrating a tentative command of English. Over the course of several decades he developed a sure script and an eloquent, sometimes flowery, sense of rhetoric and argumentation.

Prempeh sent numerous letters asking British administrators to return him home. He requested transfer to another colony on the African continent to be closer to Kumasi. Prempeh requested to visit Britain, appeasing his captors in writing and face-to-face meetings by showing his loyalty to the British crown. On 8 November 1903, Seychelles Governor C. Bruce reports to the Secretary of State for the Colonies that 'King Prempeh and the African Political Prisoners...assured me of their desire to be considered as loyal and faithful subjects of His Majesty King Edward the seventh.'¹⁸ On 16 October 1913 Prempeh wrote perhaps his most eloquent petition on behalf of the queen mothers and chiefs 'of the Ashanti Political Prisoners.' In a ten-page letter to the Governor of Seychelles he states he is 'submitting this petition to confess our sin and fault which had led us to this fate; and to humble ourselves lowly and reverently for your Excellency's kind consideration.' It is signed, as with all his correspondence,

‘Edward Prempeh, Ex-King of Ashanti.’ His plea is in the guise of a confession. It is an account of 19th century Anglo-Asante relations, admitting that Asante leaders acted irrationally and violently and did not heed British wisdom. He concludes ‘that our faults which we have confessed in this letter might not be taken into consideration but that we ask for forgiveness and to be allowed to return to our country where we promise that no similar error will be ever heard of us anymore.’ Formally, the petition links the language of personal confession to political diplomacy. In Prempeh’s confessional, the Asante were the aggressors attacking ‘without any cause or reason’ while the British acted with civility and patience.¹⁹

Over several decades, Prempeh’s domestic space in exile was the setting of this intimate form of moral discipline in which the battle for Asante sovereignty was contested in terms of taking on a masculine public persona in line with British notions of a oral masculinity. It was manifest in mundane practices of proper letter-writing etiquette, tea drinking, and dress. Physical escape from the comforts of his Mahe veranda was not possible, but Prempeh’s return was debated in how well his gentlemanly exterior reflected an inner moral transformation. The house in the Seychelles was a space of exile, of disempowerment of a sovereign. Prempeh sat on the veranda writing letters, trying to convince the British to return him home based on how well he had learned lessons about his own domestication. He was isolated from his networks and subject positions that had given his words and actions power in relation to his people. The British denied him the right to make legal decisions over his people in Asante and even in his own compound in the Seychelles. Now the veranda—a place of viewing and of being seen that mediates between the intimate and the public—became a space for him to remake himself into a man whose style is so impeccable that it convinces his captors of an inner transformation.

In 1924 Prempeh was returned to his former capital Kumasi, and with the remnants of his court he went home. He was deemed at first to be a private citizen and then was made the chief of Kumasi but he could not publicly lay claim to his former role as head of state. He lived in his Seychelles house of exile for over two decades trying to remake his social power by remaking his public self. It was a space of mediation and experimentation. As Prempeh in the Seychelles—and his Asante peoples in Gold Coast Colony thousands of miles away—accepted colonial rule, at least on a pragmatic level if not in principle, their adopted modes of communication, clothing, and language became signs of British normalcy that mediated social power. They adopted a colonial language and bodily comportment through the coercive power of incarceration, that isolated a sovereign leader far from home for over two decades. It appears Prempeh was forced to adopt the terms of his jailers in order to secure eventual release; but adopting the terms of colonial rule rather than opposing them created a proliferation of nodes of power that over time replicated and dispersed a global network built of the mores and moralities of British domesticity that masked the circulation and containment of other types of information. In this sense, British empire provides a logic of centrality, widely dispersing control while at the same time tightening its moral and aesthetic registers. As Fanon, and other theorists of postcolonial legacies of colonial power have argued, copying the desires and manners of the colonizer is a fraught and contradictory enterprise.²⁰ Just as sovereignty and conquest were justified through racist assessment of the immorality and cultural backwardness on non-Europeans, mimetic apprehension in the context of British empire was a way to make bodily claims on prestige and power. Maybe we should see Prempeh as a proto-ethnographic conceptualist, a keen observer of the British—mastering the terms of sovereign power from within its most intimate logic, even while stranded on one of power's remotest islands?

House Arrest: Broadcast and Representation

Julian Assange has spent much of the past few years in different kinds of prison houses in the U.K. Details of each of these sojourns bring home the contradictory logics of centrality – in this case the simultaneous consolidation and dispersal of control, resistance and informational apparatuses – converging on these strange, highly exposed but totally enclosed kinds of domesticated spaces. Following the Swedish prosecutor’s leveling of allegations of rape and sexual misconduct against Assange in November 2010 – allegations which Assange and his team deny, and claim are politically motivated – the organization moved its operations to a bail surety’s home in the Norfolk countryside. In early 2012, WikiLeaks relocated to a smaller home belonging to another surety, a cottage on a landed estate on the border between Kent and East Sussex. There was an unremitting stream of visitors to both the Norfolk and Kent houses. The first thing that struck many of them was the aesthetic chasm between the Wellington boot, floral print, stone-floored, Aga-heated, shabby coziness of the domestic settings, and the apparatuses not only of cyber-dissidence but also of sovereign control and surveillance distributed throughout—mountains of USB sticks and burner mobile phones, a painfully slow, encrypted internet connection, sticker-covered IBM laptops, electronic manacles and monitoring boxes – objects, which moved the WikiLeaks operation from one location to another, and that we documented within the Ecuadorian Embassy. **(fig. 3)**. Novelist and Assange biographer Andrew O’Hagan noted in a rambling 2014 text in the *London Review of Books*, the political-aesthetic disjuncture emanating from these English country interiors: “It was exciting to think, in that very Jane Austen kind of house, that no novel had ever captured this kind of new history, where military lies on a global scale were revealed by a bunch of sleepy amateurs two foot from an Aga.”²¹

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Assange's public shaming was a process causally connected to his domestic incarceration and hinged upon accusations of masculinized sexual violence that delegitimized his political stances in the eyes of many. His confinement was also highly gendered but, in contrast, through an excessive replication of normative spatial and daily practices of moral acceptability.

Within the confines of this peculiar, gendered domestic arrangement, WikiLeaks staffers, their visitors, and hosts interacted with an array of surveillance technologies. Assange himself was electronically tagged, placed under a nighttime curfew order, and required to sign a logbook at the local police station each morning. The ankle bracelets and monitoring devices were outsourced by the Home Office to private security firm G4S, who would frequently pay unannounced, video-recorded visits to monitor goings on in the prison house.

Furthermore, it became increasingly difficult for the prison house's inhabitants (and for the ethnographer spending time in their midst) to distinguish between real and imagined manifestations of the surveillance apparatus – and this began to take its toll on domestic routines. A window left open at the Kent address prompted worries about intimidation tactics of the sort described by a former *Guardian* Moscow correspondent in his book on the Russian Federal Security Bureau.²² One visit from some unusually persistent window cleaners, who took half an hour to leave despite being denied business, having first circumambulated the house from front door to conservatory and back garden, bore hallmarks, never confirmed, of a reconnaissance operation. 'Chatter' and 'warnings' were occasionally picked up, of an imminent police or security services raid, while visitors traveling to meet Assange were frequently detained or interrogated at airports by immigration staff. The response to these threats also impacted on the configuration of space and domestic routines: furniture was constantly rearranged, sensitive

material was carefully hidden, taxi drivers and neighbors were misinformed about the real nature of goings-on inside the prison house.

The realities of WikiLeaks' everyday existence under domestic confinement have been subjected to intense outside interest, not merely from cops and spies. Media and mass culture have frequently portrayed Assange as inhabiting a pathological domestic (and moral) sphere, of the sort within which a 'creep' suspected of sexual misconduct might be expected to languish. The WikiLeaks editor, like the subject of colonial or modernist social reformers' interventions into domesticity, has been described variously as a 'bad houseguest', a 'bag-lady', a cat-abuser, a 'mansion-arrest' parasite and a slob afflicted by atrocious personal hygiene.²³ O'Hagan describes the domestic world of WikiLeaks under house-arrest in Norfolk as amoral and Assange as a domestic deviant: 'he tended to eat pretty much with his hands ... I made lunch every day and he'd eat it, often with his hands, and then lick the plate. In all that time he didn't once take his dirty plate to the sink... Julian scorns all attempts at social graces. He eats like a pig. He marches through doors and leaves women in his wake. He talks over everybody... I found his egotism at the dinner table to be a form of madness more striking than anything he said... At home to Julian means he is fully inhabiting his paranoia and fully suspicious about people and things he thinks are out to get him.'²⁴ As with Prempeh, British assessments of Assange's public respectability are tied to his moral character and political convictions. His dysfunction around minute, intimate forms of sociality are framed as signs of insanity and asociality – a politicized form of pathologization and de-humanization, not dissimilar from that deployed by colonial administrators against troublesome sovereigns-subjects, such as Prempeh.

To counter the implicit links being made between domestic failure and insanity, table manners and treason, WikiLeaks, an organization focused on exposing the inner secrets of state

power to the outside world, has been prompted to confront and stage manage its own interiority. On several occasions, in a tactic reminiscent of fellow domestic inmate Ai Weiwei's 2011 *WeiweiCam* project,²⁵ WikiLeaks staffers turned their own cameras on visiting, video-recorder brandishing G4S agents, in the presence of a team of journalists from the *Daily Telegraph*, who, for their part, filmed the whole episode too.²⁶ During the production of *The World Tomorrow*, a TV show hosted by Julian Assange in 2012, the show's set (a small room at a Kent rental house not far from the bail surety's home at which Assange resided) was transformed into a hastily-assembled material condensation of the aesthetic self-image of dissident domesticity, combining the radical ferment of the ramshackle dissident's study with the cozy asceticism of the twee English cottage. **(fig. 4)**. Meanwhile, a satirical statement containing a 'pre-emptive' collection of anticipated media smears released by WikiLeaks in anticipation of the show's debut contained a number of statements relating to Assange's own physical self-presentation, as well as the condition of his domestic environment. Statement 6.1 read, 'Assange has tawdry, twee taste. He is an interior designer's nightmare!'²⁷ **(figs. 5a-d)**.

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Ecuadorian Asylum: Uganda in Knightsbridge

Assange and WikiLeaks continued in their tensely quaint, cyber-pastoral existence until July 2012, when Assange skipped bail immediately following an unsuccessful appeal against extradition to Sweden at the UK's Supreme Court, the country's highest court of appeal. Since then he has resided within the confines of London's Ecuadorian Embassy, a modest ground-floor flat inside a redbrick Edwardian mansion block in London's Knightsbridge district. After Assange's relocation to the Ecuadorian Embassy, the living conditions within – and their impact

on his physical and mental health – became a new topic for ever-more intense media speculation, as well as for stage management to the outside world.²⁸

Not only media interest, but also the presence and threat of surveillance – as well as potential coercion or apprehension – is aggravated in the context of the Ecuadorian Embassy, in comparison to the more remote surrounds of rural Norfolk and Kent. For a time, visitors would receive ‘Welcome to Uganda’ text messages on their mobile phones upon entering the Embassy. The speculation was that MI5 or GCHQ had simply neglected to reconfigure a listening device retrieved from a completed operation in East Africa. Mysterious roadworks would quite frequently take place directly outside the Embassy window, and listening devices were occasionally discovered inside electricity sockets. The police, meanwhile, were permanently stationed in large numbers around the Embassy, lying in wait to arrest a fleeing fugitive; and poised to storm the premises, if given the order from above. **(fig. 6)**. Their presence was impossible to ignore, and became a source of substantial media controversy when the multi-million pound cost of the operation was revealed. Policemen’s voices, boorish conversations and radio communications are constantly audible and visible within each of the Embassy’s rooms. Windows are almost always closed and curtains near-permanently drawn in Assange’s living and working quarters, to prevent snooping not only by police and spies, but also by journalists and curious passers-by. **(Fig. 7)**. Music and white-noise recordings are played in an attempt to enable private conversation. The psychological and physiological impact of all the above – highlighted by visiting doctors – is enormous. Assange himself complains of feelings of claustrophobia, vitamin deficiencies, and serious impairment of spatial awareness and sense of balance. In his words, “the brain does not see change, and as the brain is calibrated by moving through space, being in confinement detrains these spatial muscles.”²⁹

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In a report evaluating the extent to which Assange's experience of confinement and police siege induces an effect comparable to torture, his psychiatrist Mike Korzinski outlined how the intellectual under house arrest will abandon the body. The relationship between the internet and interiority is an experience those confined to their computers voluntarily know well enough. Korzinski presented this psychological retreat from the physical world as a result of incarceration at Assange's Supreme Court hearing. Assange says he sees his 'sense of relation' affected, saying 'I used to be a good visual writer,' able to find visual analogies in writing.³⁰

Despite all of this, in the early years, Assange had conceived of this enforced confinement as possessing an emancipatory as well as a repressive quality, stating that, on one hand, "my spatial conception of the outside world shuts down... On the other hand, it's a sort of autonomous zone, a sort of *Room of One's Own*. There are no police here – not inside at least. There are no subpoenas. And the spying that they're doing on me here, it can't be used in court. All the spying that's done here is illegal, and that provides a little solace."³¹

Prison Writing and Prison Performance

From Paul the Apostle to the Marquis de Sade, Madame Roland to Rosa Luxemburg, Antonio Gramsci to Nelson Mandela, across historical contexts and political-economic regimes, the prison has been not only a site of confinement and control, but also one for forging political subjectivity through writing.³² Assange's invocation of Virginia Woolf connects him to the work of women writers, anti-imperial dissidents, and political activists, who turned the spaces of domestic confinement they inhabited into terrains of rebellion. From pamphlet writers and organizers in the Spanish American war of independence,³³ via 17th century Puritan English feminists³⁴ to Woolf's declaration in *A Room of One's Own*: 'Lock up your libraries if you like;

but there is no gate, no lock, no bolt that you can set upon the freedom of my mind.³⁵ The literature on women's dissident domesticity might be seen as part of a sub-genre of prison writing.

Another category of prison writing refers to work produced specifically under conditions of domestic incarceration: Prempeh's letters and writings belong here, as do the works of figures like Aung San Suu Kyi, imprisoned in her home by the Burmese junta over the course of several decades between 1990 and 2011; and the Hungarian Cardinal Mindszenty, who lived under diplomatic asylum in the American Embassy in Budapest for fifteen years between 1956 and 1971.³⁶ In the words of Ines and Eyal Weizman, 'spatial confinement and isolation may induce a process of creative, imaginative, sometimes spiritual, cultural production'; while prison cells themselves, through writing 'acquire a potential subversive content, becoming critical spatial apparatuses'.³⁷

The output produced by Assange and associates from within the confines of the Embassy is voluminous. Most conventionally, it can be measured in commercially-published books, key among which are three collections of essays: on the cypherpunk movement, on Google and on the US diplomatic cables.³⁸ Aside from referring to his own space within the Embassy in Woolfian terms, Assange has also sometimes expressed the hope that the written output produced by him – often together with staff and associates – might be comparable to 'something like Gramsci's *Prison Diaries*, something written from under closed conditions, which can have a seditious effect.'³⁹

WikiLeaks exercises its sedition through more than writing, but also in the possibilities and constraints of textual circulation. If in the early 20th century imperial power relied upon attempts to order and contain public modalities of communication, a century later the struggle is

over sifting and controlling almost endless data. Dissident subjects form oppositional subject positions in relation to these evolving information regimes.⁴⁰

Rather like Prempeh's mimetic performance, which embraced bodily decorum and sartorial choice as much as it did the style and content of the letters he wrote, WikiLeaks' dissident domesticity is not only written down; it is quite self-consciously planned, choreographed, broadcast and performed. This performance takes place through a variety of media, encompassing installation art, photography, documentary film and *agitprop*: all of the above broadcast through a mixture of traditional print- and film-based channels as well as online social media.

Investigated: The Art of Dissident Domesticity

Working in an ethnographic conceptualist vein, we created *Investigated*, a multimedia installation that includes a juxtaposition of Assange and Prempeh's domestic dissident comportment, and the constraints and possibilities of their textual and bodily circulations. A central element of *Investigated* is a video loop of a digitally-rendered architectural flythrough Assange's room in the Ecuadorian Embassy.⁴¹ (**Fig. 8**). The camera's point of view paces in circles around the room in slow motion, as if at Assange's eye level. Stripped of color, the furniture rendered in all-white, the model embassy makes Assange's space appear miniature. The projection is thrown onto a wall in a confined room, accentuating the caged perspective from inside. This image is contrasted with a voiceover by Ghanaian rapper M3nsa reading a text from the sections of this essay describing Prempeh's plight in the Seychelles, as well as excerpts from his letters. In an adjacent room, the significance of WikiLeaks' Twitter feed as a device for the online broadcasting of radicalism and irreverence to the organization's multi-million audience of followers – displayed on an old laptop that viewers can bend down and scroll through – is

contrasted with the intimate and private nature of Prempeh's letters. (Fig. 9). Hanging above the computer is a giant, blown-up copy of a typed letter from Prempeh in formal, polite language to a colonial official recounting the reasons he should be released. Juxtaposing Assange's angry Twitter persona with the gentlemanly mimesis of Prempeh's letters to British colonial authorities within the space of an art gallery is amplified by displaying the different modes of writing. Scale is contrasted by the elegantly crafted, oversized letter that is only ever seen and read by perhaps a few people, and a voluminous digital stream of information potentially accessible to anyone with an internet connection. (Fig. 10). *Investigated* highlights the uncanny parallels of the two cases: through different technologies, utterly distant from each other across time and space, dissident subjects respond to empire and in the process try to reshape their own possibilities and audiences. While Assange relishes his position as outsider even as he remains stranded within the power-center of London, Prempeh – stranded at power's periphery – aims to return to the centers of London to meet directly with the Queen to discuss his case, and to Kumasi to return as sovereign to his subjects. In differing ways, they both remain stuck inside and outside of power.

<<insert figures 8-10 here>>

Ethnographically informed conceptual art practices raise questions about intimacy and communicative circulation and control, both by bringing technologies of information into the gallery-museum, and conversely by transforming spaces of confinement into artworks. Art and dissidence instrumentalize each other in mutually beneficial ways within the prison house, especially when the manipulation of media in dissident domestic situations leverages intimate space into political theatre. Through contrasting the public and private spheres, there emerges a particular kind of representation that mediates what we define here as dissident domesticity. Political activism seems increasingly to take refuge in art.

Since 2012, numerous artists have taken up Wikileaks and information dissidents such as Assange, Edward Snowden, and Chelsea Manning as subjects of their work and inspirational for their practice. For example, *Autonomy Cube*—referencing Hans Haake’s sculpture *Condensation Cube* (1965)—is an encrypted server that is a casing both artistic and political. Trevor Paglin’s collaboration with Wikileaks’ on *Autonomy Cube* is a merger of minimal sculpture and hacktivism.⁴² (**Fig. 11**) Designed to be housed in art museums, galleries, and civic spaces, the sculpture houses an open Wi-Fi hotspot, routed over the Tor network that anonymizes the data of every user. When *Autonomy Cube* is installed, the sculpture, host institution, and users all become part of a privacy-oriented public, built through a volunteer-run internet infrastructure.⁴³

<<insert figure 11>>

Art, Power and Co-Optation in The Royal Borough

The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea—the location of London’s Ecuadorian Embassy, Assange’s own ‘autonomy cube’—is a fraught staging ground for power, as well as dissidence, conceptual art, and ethnographic research. Amid the labyrinth of townhouses clogged by conspicuous consumers and rallied by Saudi supercars, the sudden punctuation of protesters on a corner just behind Harrods is the first sign of contestation amongst the ostentation. There are layers of security. A pair of Metropolitan police officers stand as sentinels on either side of the outer door and a security firm ninja guards the reception with the Embassy itself. This lycra-clad security goon does a frisk for all recording devices and then leads visitors down the corridor of the pokey first floor apartment to one of three rooms. It is locked from the inside.

Also in the Royal Borough, just half a mile from the Ecuadorian mission, is London’s Victoria and Albert Museum. At the V&A’s *All of this Belongs to You* exhibit, a glass vitrine

houses a smashed-up Macbook, a computer-cum-*objet trouvé*, reconstituted from a machine containing Snowden's NSA files, which the GCHQ iconoclastically destroyed in the Guardian offices in 2013. Like Assange's Embassy quarters, these cyber-remains form an airless non-place where the working of dissidence is strangled in an asthmatic container. The aestheticized museum display plays up the demonstrative victimhood on the part of the press.

The destruction of the Guardian laptop is even described by the newspaper's editor Alan Rusbridger as 'a peculiarly pointless piece of symbolism'.⁴⁴ It does not function like the data held in multiple copies overseas, on slow release. A performance of iconoclasm against Apple makes myth of the blundering campaign.⁴⁵ The curators call on the art history of 'pure matter' and 'power of the invisible', but what is the significance of objects of dissident domesticity?⁴⁶ Violence on display in the context of beautiful artifacts is what the V&A registers as radical.⁴⁷ Why not classify this story of spectacular performance as a conceptual artefact rather than celebrate it as an index for liberal awareness? Can Assange's Ecuadorian Embassy room be declared a conceptual work with potential criticality, or is it just another little British house museum in waiting?

Julian Assange thrives on but also disdains commentary on himself. The Ecuadorian embassy as a set for dissident domesticity is a living room salon for hack writers, with Assange as *saloniere*. This is not a self-definition but an analysis of art that thrives on the limits of Wikileaks' self-portrayal. As site of experiment and proposition, the Embassy room is more complex than a singular ideology or practice. Artist friends such as the rapper MIA, film director Laura Poitras, and theatre director Angela Richter visit the embassy. Angela Richter's theatre piece *Assassinate Assange* (2014) uses sound recordings made from the windowsill, under the curtain, to the immediate outer world. What can be made out in the messy sound recordings are

loud bangs and footsteps coming from Harrods loading bay, just beyond the window; the banter of boorish male police officers talking to each other and passers-by; loud recorded noises of rainfall, played to cover conversation from surveillance.⁴⁸

Sarah Lucas and other celebrity, blue-chip artists make multiple mysterious visits to the Ecuadorian embassy between 2013 and 2017. Fashion designer Vivienne Westwood offers her help, and so do conceptual artists.⁴⁹ The Swiss duo Bitnik, for instance, make an unsolicited representation of the space. Evading the ban on photographs with photographic memory, they recreated Assange's Embassy space. Following a mailart piece that records postal violations and bugging, they make a series of works that turn the embassy into an exhibition in a Zurich gallery. But does this replica off-site embassy represent the institutional critique it identifies both within its own conceptual art methods and in the site of activism it appropriates?

The strategic domestication of dissidence in other artworks associates it with femininity, an attribute absent in much of the highly mediated dissidence. The objects inside the embassy that we documented for our research on dissident domesticity and our *Investigated* exhibition included Assange's trainers, used to run on the treadmill given to him by director Ken Loach.⁵⁰ We photographed the badboy leather jacket used in the press photos that German newspaper *Die Zeit* cruelly contrasted to a portrait taken of Assange three years later, looking housebroken by the Embassy, wearing a crumpled suit and exuding an unhealthy pallor. O'Hagan, furthermore, also wrote in detail about the dishevelment of expensive suits that Assange received from wealthy supporters.⁵¹ Exposing and articulating the currency of fashioning the political self, the artist Elizabeth Newman recently made a *WikiLeaks Dress*. Printed with repeated text that reads 'Enemy of the State' it plays on the ambiguity between being an enemy and 'a dupe of the state in which everyone is a potential enemy.'⁵²

Inserted into the terms of the other items of clothing around the embassy, *WikiLeaks Dress* is an affirmation of art under the conditions of developed capitalism. As in the avant-garde tension between two opposed movements – the rejection of capitalism and accommodation of it – these works find a social location where this tension is visible and can be acted upon.⁵³ The WikiLeaks dresses materializes a moment of contradiction that best expresses and articulates the conditions of dissident objects within capitalism. Newman says ‘the dress is an ironic comment upon fashion that tries to be critical, knowing that it can only be a knot or a contradiction, and never free’.⁵⁴ They inhabit the structural conditions we live in without seeking to escape them. Made in the context of the Australian press’ attacks on the Wikileaks party during their election campaign, calling this the *Wikileaks Dress* shifts the kind of mainstream attention afforded to WikiLeaks.

Photo opportunities with visiting celebrities, supporters and radicals – such as a 2013 Lady Gaga housecall, or a 2015 encounter with former prison house comrade and artist Ai Weiwei – are carefully choreographed, tweeted, press-released or Instagrammed. Journalists are occasionally invited in for *Hello* magazinesque photoshoots, and the line between artistic explorations – whether orchestrated by artists working in collaboration with or independently of WikiLeaks itself – and other aspects of media or propaganda spectacle, is not always easy to discern. Artist activists like Weiwei can speak to the fictions of security, can highlight the fictional nature of political rhetoric and can retreat back into the gallery to appear harmless to the world of politics. An especially unique status, meanwhile, is reserved for rare outings, carefully planned, consulted with PR representatives and lawyers, on the Ecuadorian Embassy’s ceremonial, flag-bearing street-corner balcony (**fig. 12**).

<<insert figure 12 here>>

Performing the Political Balcony

While the circulation of information in secret, epistolary, or Twitter forms is one focus of dissident subjects, and art works on their significance, their public display on the visible edge of imperial power is another space of contestation. The balcony appearance – usually the preserve of Queens, Kings and Presidents – belongs to an established genre of grand state theatre, of ‘events-that-present’, in Handelman’s typology of political performance.⁵⁵ It grants crowds of ordinary mortals the opportunity for a face-to-face encounter with a sovereign, or an otherwise extraordinary personage; and it allows the balcony occupant to stir and channel the affects of the multitude gathered directly below, and of the whole body politic beyond (of *urbi et orbi*, ‘the city of Rome and the entire world’, in the case of the addresses delivered by Roman Catholic popes from the central loggia of St Peter’s Basilica). As such, the ‘political balcony’ is a tremendously effective locus for centrality – a site for the gathering together of different scales, social phenomena, and spheres of life. Tom Avermaete’s Elements of Architecture pavilion at the 2014 Venice Biennale of Architecture featured an installation recreating several real-life political balconies, Assange’s among them. The significance of the balcony is that it functions as an element connecting, with particular clarity and expressiveness, numerous elements of architecture and the social functions it unites; as Avermaete states, ‘it links up the public and the private, the individual and collective, the indoor and the outdoor’.⁵⁶

So far, Julian Assange has stepped out onto the stately terrain of London’s Ecuadorian Embassy balcony five times. In two speeches, made in August and December 2012, he thanked supporters, the Ecuadorian government and Embassy staff; and drew parallels between his own plight and that of other ‘political prisoners’, from Chelsea Manning and Jeremy Hammond in the United States, Nabeel Rajab in Bahrain to Pussy Riot in Russia. Over the subsequent three years,

Assange ventured onto this intermediary terrain only thrice: in November 2014 for a seemingly unplanned outing with Noam Chomsky; in August 2015, arm-in-arm with the Revered Jesse Jackson; and in February 2016, when, dressed in shirt and tie, he clutched a print-out of a United Nations report ruling that he has been, in fact, ‘arbitrarily detained’ by the Swedish and United Kingdom governments since his first arrest in December 2010. The most recent balcony appearance, planned for October 2016 – during which Assange was to announce WikiLeaks’ release of the Hilary Clinton campaign emails hacked from the Democratic National Convention – was cancelled at the last minute, the announcement made via video-stream at a Berlin technology conference instead.

Assange, in other words, has become reluctant to venture out to the balcony, onto the terrain which stands most clearly for the mediation between the ‘macro’ political, legal and surveillance whirlwind outside, and the ‘micro’ domain of private life inside the prison house within. One explanation is that Assange is simply concerned for his safety. As he told *The Times*, ‘There are security issues with being on the balcony... I’m a public figure and a very controversial one ... as a result there have been quite a number of threats from various people.’⁵⁷ WikiLeaks staff, however, dismiss the idea that security is a core concern in this regard. Indeed, Assange’s reluctance to step out onto the intermediary space of the balcony suggests that WikiLeaks’ dissident domestic existence within the prison house – all the more so given the eruption of mystery and controversy concerning WikiLeaks’ role in releasing the Clinton emails; and the on-going failure to conclusively prove Assange’s innocence of the Swedish sexual abuse allegations – is beginning to undergo something like a ‘crisis of centrality.’

Towards a Good Centrality (No Meatspace in the Enclave)

Our experiments in ethnographic conceptualism combine archival and ethnographic research with art practice, and link disparate times and places through conceptual affinity. We aim to define how domesticity can be a form of political control and conversely a space for developing new forms of embodiment that elude recognition. Dissidence is demarcated by an aesthetics and a morality of inhabiting domestic spaces and domesticated ways-of-being that are in tension with the public persona of figures of opposition. The relation between dissidence and domestication bears a striking resemblance to how various avant-garde art movements aim to elude pigeonholing. As an avant-garde gains recognition, it struggles to elude the forms of discipline and control that come with being ossified within generic categorizations. In this vein, scholars, artists and public figures fetishize a disalienated life and unmediated experience. The search to find the authentic, the real, the disalienated, takes myriad forms. Analytically it leads to a slippage between categories and objects of inquiry. Fictions of security and anxiety over miscegenation underpin orders of control that aim to make bodies, signs and genres legible and separable. These fictions are hailed and become recognizable in oppositional forms. This recognition and opposition emerges in particularly stark ways through the logic of imperial rule. But the idea of the authentic guarantees its impossibility and produces the world of the mediated. Just as Edward Prempeh, the last sovereign King of Asante, remakes himself as a covert, dissident colonial subject by taking on the practices of a complete gentleman, seeking a return to power in new clothes, Assange is remade as an immoral primitive, a caged animal who necessitates constant surveillance.

<<insert figures 13 and 14 here>>

Perhaps, contemporary invocations of the idea of an enclave or zone of autonomy can take a lesson from Prempeh's use of his island veranda and colonial interpretations of it. One

staging ground for his use of British gentlemanly styles was photography.⁵⁸ Over the years, formal portraits capture Prempeh with his family and retinue in formal poses with his house's veranda as backdrop. In the early years Prempeh and company are dressed in Kente cloth and the regalia of Asante chieftaincy. But as the years go they dress in Western attire, dapper suits and elegant dresses. These images appear as demonstrations of public civility and Asante pacification meant for colonial consumption. When this author toured Prempeh's former prison house in 2009, the current resident—an elderly descendent of the 'grand blanc' family which had leased the house for the purposes of Prempeh's confinement—made a point of stopping on the back edge of the veranda and pointing to an innocuous patch of burned wood in the floorboards. **(figs. 13 and 14)**. She explained that the Asante residents had not used the house properly cooking outside and in general acting in ways unfamiliar to European mores; most tellingly in her mind her ancestors had told her this small charred hole in the floor was where Prempeh 'burned sacrifices' to his "African gods."⁵⁹ This apocryphal story speaks to the logic of colonial racist notions of how Africans act and the relationship between performance and intimacy amongst the colonized; no matter how they appear in public—properly dressed and well-mannered—there is always a core of inner primitivism that cannot be changed with the trappings of civilization that colonial rule is imagined to bring. The veranda is a liminal space situated on the edge of the domestic body and the public eye, perfect for stories about staging and uncertainty, for interpreting performances of self and their socio-political implications.

In 1924, the British finally authorized Prempeh's return to Kumasi when they deemed that Asante sovereignty was no longer a threat to British rule in Gold Coast Colony. In the more than two decades since the King's removal, Asante had been reshaped by Western education, missionization, the establishment of cocoa as a cash crop, and developing transportation and civil

service infrastructures of a colonial proto-state. Furthermore, the British policy of indirect rule that shaped colonial administration from the late 19th century was in full effect. It had meant that over time the British had installed cooperative Asante chiefs and ruled with them as political and economic mediators. British rule of Gold Coast Colony, in effect, operated through rather than against the political legitimacy of chieftaincy with its public pageantry and nuanced structures of power.⁶⁰ In this context, Prempeh was allowed to return as a private citizen and later was allowed to become chief of the city of Kumasi, but never to regain his position as sovereign Asantehene.

The reversals of political imagery were perhaps most visible when, a few months after Edward Prempeh's return home, HRH Edward the Prince of Wales stopped in Gold Coast Colony as part of his tour of British Empire. In Kumasi, a durbar—a spectacular ritual combining Indian royal ceremony appropriated by the British with West African chiefly displays—was held in the Prince of Wales' honor. As official photographs show, at the ceremony Edward Prince of Wales, dressed in resplendent colonial regalia, a white suit with bejewelled metals and pith helmet with feathered plume, and was seated on the central dais as Asante chiefs, dressed in royal Kente clothes and gold jewelry, came up, removed their sandals—a sign of obeisance, and pledged their allegiances. Official images show Edward Prempeh standing demurely to the side dressed in a three-piece suit.⁶¹ Prempeh's fervent desire to escape his island prison dressed in the suits of British empire, and to use his newly-fashioned persona to re-enter the political center, raises questions about how oppositional subjects can hide in plain sight in the midst of spectacles of centralized power. Mutual multi-directional copying shapes the political aesthetics of Gold Coast colonial rule as the British inhabit the terms of Asante political legitimacy and Prempeh takes on the power of British gentlemanly form.

Mimesis as political performance, then, is not a type of emulation or realism but instead a conceptual practice that raises questions about reference and intent in the making of power.⁶²

The activities of WikiLeaks arguably have constituted one of the most powerful, conscious political challenges to hegemonic forms of political centrality – especially to the centrality of information – in recent years. Nevertheless, WikiLeaks itself, concentrated around the person of Julian Assange, is far from functioning as an organisation devoid of its own forms of centrality, concentration or hierarchy. WikiLeaks makes no pretense at being organized according to a non-hierarchical, ‘horizontal’ decisionmaking structure, or of constituting a faceless, amorphous mass, like the hackers’ collective *Anonymous*.⁶³ Responding to this centrality, many otherwise sympathetic critics have expressed dismay at the extent to which WikiLeaks – WikiLeakistan, in Bodo Balazs’ phrase⁶⁴ – reproduces many features of the sovereignty regimes it claims to confront; or fails to disassemble the political ideology and habitus of liberal individualism, remaining captive to the old heroic liberal ‘fantasy of individual agency’.⁶⁵ Further, it conforms, says Russ Castronovo citing Bruno Latour, to ‘standard geographies of social space that assume stable centers of fixed points’.⁶⁶

But must we assess the work of WikiLeaks according to how well it succeeds in achieving the ‘decentralization’ or ‘decapitation’ of power, or of sovereignty? Is the work of WikiLeaks, and of counter-hegemonic, anti-imperial political projects in general, necessarily driven by a centrifugal, rather a centripetal dynamic? Is WikiLeaks’ problem really that it has too much centrality? For Henri Lefebvre, radicalism or sedition involve not merely the abolition of the existing power center, but – much more importantly – the constitution of a powerful, but substantively alternate centrality in its place: ‘as long as certain relationships of production and ownership remain unchanged, centrality will be subjected to those who use these relationships

and benefit from them.’⁶⁷ And indeed, ‘centralities have always eventually disappeared – some displaced, some exploded, some subverted. They have perished sometimes on account of their excesses – through “saturation” – and sometimes on account of their shortcomings, the chief among which, the tendency to expel dissident elements, has a backlash effect.’⁶⁸ 21st century cyber-dissidents, however, are difficult to simply expel in that they challenge the notions of center and periphery, inside and outside in how they operate and in the techniques of state discipline deployed to contain them. As Bruce Sterling observes:

You can tell that Manning, Assange and Snowden are all the same kind of irritant, because, somehow, amazingly, the planet’s response is to physically squish them. They’re all online big-time, and their digital shadow is huge, so the response is just to squeeze their mortal human bodies, literally, legally, extra-legally, by whatever means available. It’s a wrestling match of virtuality and actuality, an interruption of the physical into the digital. It’s all about Bradley shivering naked in his solitary cage, and Julian diligently typing in his book-lined closet at the embassy, and Ed bagging out behind the plastic seating of some airport... And these tiny, confined, somehow united spaces are the moral high ground. That’s where it is right now, that’s what it looks like these days.⁶⁹

It is the visual evidence of this wrestle between virtual and actual control that artists Trevor Paglin, Laura Poitras and others capture. The whole ‘solitary cage’ remains carefully obscured and mediated only in strategic measures. Exile and political asylum are claustrophobic spaces that force physical retreat. The same evidence that Snowden’s laptop is to the grand London museum, the body of the dissident becomes in its controlled mediation.

In the later decades of the twentieth century, Marxist spatial thinkers spent a lot of time poring over enclave theory. So long as the reigning global order exists, is it possible – debated

Henri Lefebvre, Manfredo Tafuri, Frederic Jameson – to create non-capitalist, seditious, unmediated terrains within its dominion?⁷⁰ All of them either answered in the negative, or failed to come up with very convincing renditions of what these enclaves might consist. Assange, meanwhile, has described his ongoing search for an ‘openness haven’ as a counterpoint to the offshore ‘secrecy havens’ like the Cayman Islands, Liechtenstein or Guantanamo Bay that underlie government and corporate structures. The Republic of Ecuador functions as a spectral haven for WikiLeaks, but currently, this function is performed by the Embassy of Ecuador: an ultra-enclosed but extra-territorial enclave of dissidence. In prescient fashion, Kumasi functioned as a desired site of return for Prempeh during his decades-long exile in the Seychelles. Prempeh’s eventual return to Kumasi, however, saw the onetime sovereign publicly sidelined, even if the public facsimile of Asante power was retained within an imperial order of British overrule.

So, in the absence of a haven, can sites of domestic incarceration – these awkward, anatopic extra-judicial sites – function as the enclaves of dissidence (or irreverence) that the Marxists sought? Julian Assange’s increasing reluctance to exit onto his balcony, might provide a clue. WikiLeaks has, for years, been practicing a conscious politics of centrality – a centrality, which relies on performance as well as writing, and physical (‘meatspace’, in geek talk) as well as digital (‘cyberspace’) interaction with the multitudes. Assange’s increasing reluctance to step out onto his balcony – the last vestige of meatspace available to him – suggests that WikiLeaks will continue to plod on as a stymied – or even compromised – political actor as long as it remains inside the prison house. The more seldom he emerges into the fresh air, the more Assange takes on the appearance of a criminal villain holed up in his lair and the less that of a just outcast, receiving sanctuary from prosecution by the powerful.

And when (not to mention *if*) Assange finally does emerge from his enclave and reaches his next destination (whether it is an Ecuadorian haven; a Swedish or American prison; or another terrain altogether), what will be his own fate, and that of the organization, which pivots around him? Will they crumple under the weight of the myriad pathologizing associations, real or imagined – from sexual misconduct to unsavory political forces – which have become fixed to them during their long period of incarceration? Or will they be able to capitalize on the rhetoric and aesthetic of irreverence sustained and broadcast to the world during his sojourn in the prison house?

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¹ See Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power*. The production of various European imperial power relied upon the remaking of intimate worlds and how they linked to public life. In doing so Imperial imaginations mapped European gender/sex identities onto non-Western spaces. For examinations of the centrality of gender and sex for the making of colonial worlds in Asante and related West Africa contexts see Allman and Tashjian, "*I Will Not Eat Stone*;" Hawkins, "'The Woman in Question;'" Miescher, *Making Men in Ghana*; Mikell, *Cocoa and Chaos in Ghana*.

² Henri Lefebvre's notion of "dialectical centrality," provides a way for thinking through how processes of exclusion and inclusion, gathering and dispersal, control and resistance converge on particular key sites or 'spatial factors'. See Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 292-352. For an elaboration on the "political aesthetics and political morphology" of centrality, see Murawski, "Radical Centres."

³ There is an increasing body of literature on how informational sovereignty regimes make their mark on the material culture and aesthetics of dwelling. See Watters, “Secure Borders, Safe Haven, Domopolitics;” Brickell, “Geopolitics of Home.”

⁴ ‘Ethnographic conceptualism’ refers to practices of conceptual art as ethnography, and ethnography as conceptual art. See Chaikov, “Introduction: Notes on Ethnographic Conceptualism;” Murawski, “Palaceology, or Palace-as-Methodology;” Carroll, “Fight the Dragon Long, The Dragon You Become.”

⁵ For example, Fang Chuan Ye paints portraits of British figures of power. Fang sent his paintings as gifts with letters of plea for release from UK Immigration Detention Centre Campsfield House in 2012. See Bosworth and Carroll, “Art and Criminology of the Border;” <http://www.oarplatform.com/issue/issue-1/>

⁶ See Foucault, “*Society Must Be Defended.*”

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⁸ See Ewing, *Rumor, diplomacy, and war in Enlightenment Paris*; Soll, *The Information Master*.

⁹ See Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire*; Comaroff and Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution, Volume 2*.

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¹¹ See Killingray, “Punishment to Fit the Crime?”

¹² See Bettie, *Punishment in Paradise*; Spieler, *Empire and Underworld*.

¹³ See Rattray, *Ashanti*.

¹⁴ Several other high profile leaders from around the British Empire had been resident in the Seychelles as punishment. Sultan Abdullah Muhammad Shah II was exiled in 1877 from

Malaysia for his alleged role in the murder of a British resident and released in 1894. Mwangi II Mukasa the Kabaka of Buganda in present day Uganda was exiled in 1899 to the Seychelles after fighting against British rule and died in exile in 1903.

¹⁵ Documents on Prempeh's stay in Seychelles are from Seychelles National Archives. C/SS/2. Vol. V. Political Exiles: Ashanti-Ex-King Prempeh and Others Additional Papers for years 1901 to 1921 Documents 40-1.

¹⁶ The governor further expresses concern that the exile has been inadequate to demonstrate British power in Gold Coast and worried that the prisoners are not given too much concession. 'The loyal Ashantis look on the punishment we have inflicted on most of those that were in arms against us as ridiculously weak and inadequate.'

¹⁷ October 1922 correspondence from Downing Street to Officer Administering the Government of Seychelles approves petition by several chiefs in exile to return to Gold Coast on the condition that they will 'not allow themselves to be drawn into political affairs.' Prempeh's petition is rejected though it is noted that if the political situation in Ashanti is calm and the returning chiefs do not cause trouble, he is invited to re-apply in two years.

¹⁸ Seychelles National Archives. No. C/SS/2 Vol. I Political Exiles. Political Exiles-Ashanti-Ex-King Prempeh and Others 1900-1906 Vol I. Doc. 66

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ See Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*; Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity*; Shipley, *Living the Hiplife*.

²¹ O'Hagan. "Ghosting."

²² See Harding, *Mafia State*.

²³ For a description of Assange as ‘bag lady’, see Keller, “WikiLeaks, a Postscript.” For a description of Assange as cat-abuser, see Domscheit-Berg, *Inside WikiLeaks*, p. 73.

²⁴ O’Hagan, “Ghosting Assange,” *Ibid*.

²⁵ <http://weiweicam.com>. Accessed 6 June, 2016.

²⁶ <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/wikileaks/8579263/WikiLeaks-Government-spying-on-Julian-Assange-during-house-arrest.html>. Accessed 6 June, 2016.

²⁷ <https://wikileaks.org/The-World-Tomorrow-with-Julian.html>. Accessed 6 June, 2016.

²⁸ Two BBC TV series have featured either single installments or multi-episode plotlines inspired by the Ecuadorian saga: 2013 teen spy show *By Any Means* and 2014’s *Asylum*. An embittered, Embassy-bound Assange, furthermore, was portrayed in the final scene of Benedict Cumberbatch-starring 2013 Hollywood box office flop, *The Fifth Estate*.

²⁹ Interview between Khadija von Zinnenburg Carroll, Michał Murawski and Julian Assange, 29 March, 2014.

³⁰ *op. cit.* See also e-flux’s Hans Ulrich Obrist interview with Julian Assange, *The Internet Does Not Exist*.

³¹ Interview between Michał Murawski and Julian Assange, 11 March, 2014.

³² See Ines and Eyal Weizman’s online collection of prison writing, which started life as an exhibit at the Fondazione Sandretto de Rebaudengo in Turin in 2008.

<http://celltexts.org/page/about>. Accessed 6 June, 2016.

³³ See Brewster, “Women and the Spanish-American Wars of Independence.”

³⁴ Gillespie, *Domesticity and Dissent in the Seventeenth Century*.

³⁵ Woolf, *A Room of One’s Own and Three Guineas*, 57; See also Garner, Boynton, and Malin, *Herspace*.

³⁶ Aung San Suu Kyi, *Letters From Burma*. London: Penguin, 2010; József Mindszenty, *Memoirs*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1974.

³⁷ Ines and Eyal Weizman, *Ibid.*.

³⁸ See Assange, Appelbaum, Müller-Maguhn, and Zimmermann, *Cypherpunks*; Assange, *When Google Met WikiLeaks*; Assange “Introduction.” In *The WikiLeaks Files*.

³⁹ Interview between Michal Murawski and Julian Assange, 11 March 2014.

⁴⁰ For work on the complex entanglement of technology and subversion see Coleman, *Hacker, Hoaxer, Whistleblower, Spy*.

⁴¹ Digital model by Architect Gustav Düsing. For more documentation of the *Investigated* exhibition at Savvy Contemporary Berlin in 2014 see:

<http://www.kdja.org/web/PartialProclamations/index.html>. Accessed, 6 June 2016.

⁴³ Cited from artist's description of the work at: <http://www.paglen.com/?l=work>. Accessed December 19, 2016.

⁴⁴ Alan Rusbridger cited in William A. Babcock, William H. Freivogel (eds.), *The SAGE Guide to Key Issues in Mass Media Ethics and Law*. P. 8.

⁴⁵ Katy Barrett cited in Higgitt, “Destroyed Snowden laptop.”

⁴⁶ Higgitt, “Destroyed Snowden laptop.”

⁴⁷ The V&A curator Kieran Long speaks of “stories they told rather than the artefact’s intrinsic beauty or interest” <http://www.theguardian.com/science/the-h-word/2015/apr/03/destroyed-snowden-laptop-the-curatorial-view>. Accessed, 6 June 2016.

⁴⁸ Sound recordings of the Ecuadorian Embassy by Angela Richter for Theater Schauspiel Köln sent to Khadija von Zinnenburg Carroll, 5 April 2014.

⁴⁹ Paglin's previous works such as *Code Names of the Surveillance State* and *The Other Night Sky* show precedent strategies. For more on Paglin's *Code Names of the Surveillance State* and *The Other Night Sky* see <http://www.paglen.com/?l=work>. Accessed December 19, 2015.

⁵⁰ *Dissident Domesticity* was developed with the support of Artangel for their 2014 Open and shown in the Urban Laboratory London.

http://173.45.234.69/about_us/open/open_longlist_2014/zinnenburg_carroll_murawski
Accessed, 6 June 2016.

⁵¹ O'Hagan, 'Ghosting Assange', Ibid.

⁵² Correspondence between Khadija von Zinnenburg Carroll and Elizabeth Newman, February 2015.

⁵³ See Crow, *Modern Art in the Common Culture*.

⁵⁴ Correspondence between Khadija von Zinnenburg Carroll and Elizabeth Newman, February 2015.

⁵⁵ See Handelman, *Models and Mirrors*.

⁵⁶ See Tom Avermaete, 'The Balcony', Central Pavilion, Venice Biennale of Architecture 2014. http://www.bk.tudelft.nl/fileadmin/Faculteit/BK/Actueel/Symposia_en_congressen/Biennale/PressAnnouncement_Balcony_exhibition.pdf. Accessed 6 June, 2016. During a right-wing coup attempt on 30 September 2010, Ecuador's President Rafael Correa proved himself to be a virtuoso of the political balcony. For a detailed account, see Kurtenbach, 'Tough Talk, Tear Gas, Tragedy.'

⁵⁷ Assange Interview, *The Times*.

⁵⁸ The Basel Mission Archives have numerous examples. See online example "Ex-King Prempeh of Asante on the Seychelles."

<http://www.bmarchives.org/items/show/56896>

⁵⁹ Private Correspondence, anonymous, January 2009.

⁶⁰ See Shipley, *Trickster Theatre*.

⁶¹ Anonymous, *Visit of His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales to the Gold Coast Colony*.

⁶² European artists have since the early 20th century drawn on African art for inspiration in ways that foreground ideas of copying; African imitations of nature and European theft of African aesthetics because Europeans attribute African artistic expression to skills of observation and culture rather than creativity or political savvy. Jean Rouch's film *Les Maitre Fous* addresses the powerful contradictions embedded in how African expressive forms remake European styles.

⁶³ On this comparison, see Coleman. "Hacker Politics and Publics."

⁶⁴ Balázs. "You Have No Sovereignty Where We Gather."

⁶⁵ Castronovo, "State Secrets."

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 440,

⁶⁷ Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p. 76.

⁶⁸ Ibid, p. 303.

⁶⁹ See Sterling. "The Ecuadorian Library."

⁷⁰ See Tafuri. *Architecture and Utopia*; Jameson, "Architecture and the Critique of Ideology,".