Ghosts [Crowds]

62 Lo sQuaderno

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Ghosts
Part I, Crowds

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EDITORIAL

Cities are not a self-evident object. Never fully transparent, or ever present, to themselves, they are complex territories haunted by what is *not there*, what is *no longer*, and what is *not yet*. Objective realism and linear historicism are dramatically unequipped to account for the fermentation produced by the multiple spatialities and temporalities through which the urban vibrates, stretched or condensed, exploded or emptied out by the uncanny forces that past and future violence and desire exert over the here and now. It is not a chance that during the century of rationalism, positivism, and capitalism, also spiritualism was born – namely in 1848 at Hydesville, as it is conventionally indicated. As the processes of industrialisation, urbanisation, colonialism and globalisation dramatically accelerated, all sorts of ghosts, spectres, phantasm, and other entities began to populate cities, attracting writers, artists, psychoanalysts, musicians, anthropologists, soothsayers, shamans, charlatans, economists, urban thinkers and other kinds of investigators who variously sought to capture the ectoplasmic quality of the urban.

Attending to ghosts, in fact, allows to disintegrate the metaphysical primacy of presence and the present, and destabilise a host of dichotomies – living and un-living, human and non-human, possible and impossible – that hinder any attempt to grasp the complexity of the contemporary. While in many non-Western cultures the spectral is a common presence in a world populated by ghosts, only more recently also in the West *hauntology* – to borrow Jacques Derrida's well-known neologism – has overflown its traditional genres to become a subject, and indeed a variegated methodology, for both academic and artistic research alike. For example, hauntology has come to indicate a music genre playing with nostalgia, temporal disjunction, decaying loops, echoes, crackles, seeking to capture the persistence of the past and the laments of unactualised futures that insist on the present –a music for uneasy listening, as Mike Fisher aptly defined it.

Willing to encourage the widest variety of approaches, for this issue we invited authors to reflect and attune to ghostly urban matter without providing specific guidelines or frames. Many of the contributions we received deal specifically with such an uneasy quality of the urban experience, seeking to historically retrace its genealogies, methodologically attune to its fleeting materiality, and politically challenge its hypnotising spell. The amount of hi-quality material collected has convinced us to split the *Ghost* issue into two, respectively subtitled *crowds* (this issue) and *phantasmagorias* (forthcoming in *lo Squaderno* 64[2023]). The present issue deals with those ghostly urban crowds that invisibly populate our cities, often expressing the repressed (dis)appearance of past violence and destruction, along with their spectral remains, that is an ever urgent task to evoke, listen to, and let speak; the second issue deals with the spectral imaginaries that encompass the urban and shape its atmospheres, at the frictional encounter between the phantasmic visions of the city of the future, the unactualised pasts that insist within, and the aesthetic phantasmagorias of the contemporary urban spectacle.

Let us then begin with *crowds*. In each of the contributions composing this issue, a very peculiar and unique form of ghost did encounter the author, producing a remarkable conceptual, geographical, and stylistic variety in the different attempts to capture and translate it in writing. It is indeed with a question of style, translation and (ghost)writing that we begin with. Cameron McEwan addresses the practice of ghostwriting by pitting it against authorship and intellectual property, in order to let the crowd of ghost-writers that unwittingly compose his own essay speak, by means of an original experiment in spectral montage. Others are the ghosts James Thurgill seeks to listen to in the Tokyo

suburbs of Musashino, which (dis)appears as a landscape populated by the ectoplasmic debris of war destruction, unsolved crimes, famous suicides, literary stories, popular legends, and an ink-black lake: a hauntological juxtaposition that his careful 'spectroscopy' manages to subtly convey. Another Japanese crowd of ghosts populate the aftermath of the triple disaster — earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear meltdown — that devastated the city of Ishinomaki on *that* 11th March 2011. Exploring its spectral traces, Annaclaudia Martini ponders on the time that is needed to mourn and process collective trauma, and the disturbing forms these traces may take if such a time is not allowed, a pause incompatible with the post-disaster hurry to forget the event and forward-think it beyond.

'Mourning, writes Derrida, consists always in attempting to ontologize remains, to make them present, in the first place by identifying the bodily remains and by localizing the dead'.[1] It is a tiresome *labour* (*elaborare il lutto*, as the Italian expression goes) that requires looking for the ghosts, attending to their signs and letting them speak, in order to put them to rest. An ethical, political, as well as aesthetic task, which implies *attuning* to the ghosts, making them *appear*, making them *perceptible* — something art could be particularly equipped to do. This is what Roni Dorot and Daniel Monterescu explore in Manshiya, a Palestinian neighbourhood located between Tel Aviv and Jaffa, that underwent highly political transformations after the massive destruction of the fateful 1948 war. In the following decade, Manshiya grew into a multi-layered geology of erasures, demolitions, and reconstructions, as a highly political process of transformation unfolded by literally building over the debris of its pasts. Here, the authors ex-

plore the potential that local artivism may play in addressing these spectral traces, challenging their long-standing denial. A similar attempt at conjuring past ghosts in order to process their repressed violence is described in the following text, set in Palermo, where, as in any other Italian city, the spectres of the oft-forgotten violence of Italian colonialism are inscribed in the street toponymy, casting a spell on the urban everyday. Here, Giulia de Spuches describes a compelling performance in 'onomastic guerrilla' waged against those plaques and the names they carry, with the purpose of letting the ghosts they harbour speak out the violence that both a neglected colonial past deployed, and that the neo-colonial present continues to deploy.

The ghosts of colonialism, together with the unnameable violence of slave trade, haunt Gabriella Palermo's exploration of the mythical, fantastic and decomposing entities that inhabit the 'turbulent materiality' of the ocean, the Black Atlantic, an abyssal space populated by metaphorical and material ghosts that she explores through history, science fiction, music experimentations, and visual art, and whose loud whispers disturbingly point to another abyssal space of our present, the Black Mediterranean. Not only bodies, but also ghosts the slave ships carried across the ocean, the *orishas* (spirits) of Yoruba religion, born in Africa and forcedly transported to Brazil, where they composed the pantheon of *Candomblé*. Some are evoked in the kitchen of a *terreiro* [a Candomblé temple] in Curitiba, where Thiago Hoshino and Mariana Bonadio take us. With them, we follow the chants and urban traces the spirits leave behind as they populate the city, drawing a compelling *hauntopology* of memory and defiance. Eventually, we land between a present coastal town of East Anglia and a past cottage in Renfrewshire, as Tim Edensor narrates the vivid memories of his haunted childhood in the British 60s, pondering on the role that his

1 Jacques Derrida. *Specters of Marx. The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International*. New York: Routledge, 2011 [1994], p. 9.

history and the national culture of the time had, both in conjuring the enchanting appearance of ghosts by then, and in slowly sanctioning their disenchanted disappearance in the following decades, perhaps only to let space for other ghosts to emerge: less obvious, harder to detect, and therefore way more powerful. AnaMary Bilbao, this issue's guest artist, reflects exactly on the paradoxical oscillation between appearance and disappearance, by attending to the spectral appearances that a process of disappearance brings about, through a series of images that uncannily surface out of the very destruction of images, releasing material forms that mysteriously appear to us, as ghosts we are unable to recognise.

AV & AP[2]

Ghostwriting an authorship without aura

Cameron McEwan

I was Manhattan's ghostwriter
Rem Koolhaas

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Introduction

In everyday use, ghostwriting is when a text is written by an unnamed author. Politicians, public figures, and celebrities come to mind as the primary users of ghostwriting. It is a writing practice generally understood as the way marketing shapes content. Ghostwritten texts aim to be persuasive, celebratory, perhaps deceptive. They are task oriented. They are clear, clean—too clean—and closed. Might there be a different way of practicing ghostwriting? Might ghostwriting be used against its corporate logic? Might there be an alternative open-ended type of ghostwriting, which is a critical and creative material practice? It would be a writing practice that intervenes in the information political economy to liberate knowledge; a type of practice that is material, speculative, and a challenge to the normative organisation of knowledge.

Ghostwriting displaces the author. It problematizes questions around individual and anonymous authorship, uniqueness and collectivity. Ghostwriting disrupts the notion of "intellectual property." It treats texts and ideas as common property, not private property. Thought is public. Ideas are open. Everything is common. Concepts are there to be appropriated, used, reworked; reconfigured for another text, context, or project. Retooling ghost-writing as a critical knowledge practice may be a strategy to resist the administrative and corporate attempts to interfere with academic intellectual property rights. It turns intellectual work a bit more subversive.

Ghostwriting could be in dialogue with what Walter Benjamin called literary-montage and what the Situationists called *détournement*. Those were approaches to writing that used pre-existing elements—texts, quotations, techniques, ideas—to produce a new work. In a montage, ideas remain unreconciled. They do not necessarily fuse into harmony. Thought is developed by the new arrangement of the pieces, their adjustments. Instead of theoretical closure, there is open-ended possibility.

Ghostwriting

Something is uncanny — that is how it begins. The strangely familiar. The anxiety of the ghostwriter confronted with the "soft" space of knowledge is then the manifestation of an uncanny based on the newly formulated conditions of interiority and exteriority of the information political economy, where the "ghosting" of the "interior" of the imaginary and the exterior mirrors not the outward appearance of the individual author; but a world interior of the "knowledge economy", the culture industry, cognitive capitalism.[1] Knowledge is commodified. There's no time here, not anymore. Energy, desire, imagination. To say that intellectual culture has been desolate is not to say that there were no traces of other possibilities such as ghostwriting a new intellectual common; the use-value of knowledge.[2]

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1 Anthony Vidler (1992) *The Architectural Uncanny: Essays in the Modern Unhomely*. Cambridge (Ma): MIT Press.
2 Mark Fisher (2014) *Ghosts of My Life: Writings on Depression, Hauntology and Lost Futures*. Winchester: Zero Books.

Someone, you or me, individual or collective, comes forward and says: I would like to learn to live otherwise. They should learn to live by learning not how to make conversation with the ghost but how to talk with him or her, how to let them speak or how to give them back speech, even if it is in oneself, in the other, in the other in oneself: they are always there, specters, ghosts, multitudes; even if they do not exist, even if they are no longer, even if they are not yet.[3] Why Postmodernism, again? Caught in these loops, we may eventually realize that if the "post" in postmodernism means anything, it means learning to live with ghosts, including the ghosts of futures past and present, the ghosts of others alive and dead, and with them, the ghosts of our former selves learning to think the thought called Utopia once again.[4] It means thinking differently to act differently. In the time of the Anthropocene, there is no thought that is not technologically mediated, worked over by information, mediation; no city that is not without its specters. They converge in the general intellect, and the idea of the "Interior of Capital," in which mediation is remaking the city, the world, into a total interior.[5] Nature, city, and culture are continuous. Natureculture.

> *What is important is that ghostwriting restores a recognisable part of the collective production of intellectual culture cutting into the present, by the recombination of fragments into a new whole*

Philosophers and philologists should be concerned in the first place with poetic metaphysics; that is, a look for proof not in the external world, but in the very modifications of the mind that meditates on it. The Globe again, technologically mediated, ghostlike, transparent, with no contents.[6] The whole life of those societies in which modern conditions of production prevail presents itself as an immense accumulation of information. It cannot be carried out, in other words, until individuals are "directly bound to universal history;" until dialogue has taken up bodies to impose its own conditions upon the world.[7]

The soul is the body. Flesh and word. Autonomy is a process without end.[8] It is a collective project, forever incomplete. In a passage from the *Grundrisse* referred to as "The fragment on machines", Marx emphasizes the ways in which abstract thought, considered in its autonomy from empirical conditioning, forges the forms of life that we find in late modernity. He calls it the general intellect. It is thought becoming social and technological; thought becomes collective. In this way, ghostwriting may be a collective material practice that raises the awareness of the infinite possibility of appropriation, reproducibility, and repeatability of texts, ideas, projects; bound to the irrefutable necessity of giving finitude and transience the form of authorship without aura in the finite time of the planet.[9]

The concept of "multitude", as opposed to the more familiar concept of "people", is a tool for every careful analysis of the contemporary public sphere, a public sphere that is the commons of thought. How to operate on the commons of thought? Theory takes form in the commons, in the bodies of the multitude. Even absent-minded curiosity and non-referential idle talk is language, imagination, and attributes of the contemporary multitude: attributes loaded with ambivalence, naturally; but unavoidable attributes.[10] Language is comparable to a symphony in that what the symphony is stands completely apart from how it is performed. Language is collective. The collectivity of the multitude does not enter any covenant, nor does it transfer its right to a sovereign, because it is composed of individual singularities: collective life is not a promise, but a premise.[11]

3 Jacques Derrida ([1993] 2006) *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International*. Trans. Peggy Kamuf. London: Routledge.

4 Reinhold Martin (2010) *Utopia's Ghost: Architecture and Postmodernism, Again*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

5 Libero Andreotti and Nadir Lahiji (2018) *The Architecture of Phantasmagoria: Specters of the City*. London; New York: Routledge.

6 Rem Koolhaas ([1978] 1994) *Delirious New York: A Retroactive Manifesto for Manhattan*. New York: The Monacelli Press.

7 Guy Debord ([1967] 1995) *The Society of the Spectacle*. Trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith. New York: Zone Books.

8 Franco Berardi (2009) *The Soul at Work: From Alienation to Autonomy*. Trans. Francesca Cadel and Giuseppina Mecchia. Los Angeles, CA: Semiotext(e); MIT Press.

9 Paolo Virno ([1986] 2021) *Convention and Materialism: Uniqueness without Aura*. Trans. Lorenzo Chiesa. Cambridge: MIT Press.

10 Paolo Virno ([2001] 2004) *A Grammar of the Multitude: For an Analysis of Contemporary Forms of Life*. Trans. Isabella Bertoletti, James Cascaito, and Andrea Casson. Los Angeles (Ca): Semiotext(e).

11 Paolo Virno ([2003] 2015) *When the Word Becomes Flesh: Language and Human Nature*. Trans. Giuseppina Mecchia.

Without thought going to the limit, no strategy, thus no tactic, no action, no real thinking or initiative, thus no writing, no music, no painting, no sculpture, no natureculture is possible. A revolutionary theory represents society in terms of its possible transformation by exposing relations of domination, whereas a theory of revolution indicates specific strategic principles: this is the task that falls to a revolutionary organization and to revolutionaries.[12] Disparate times call for disparate methods. We all know this civilization can't last; let's make another.[13]

Post-capitalists' strategy right now is to render language (all that which signifies) abstract therefore easily manipulable. Yet for the same reason, language is material; it is a terrain of political action. The means to live and endure otherwise may already have come into existence, fettered though they are by outmoded relations and forms.[14] What is the point of knowledge? Such a perspective calls for a mediating of the various kinds of knowledge of the component parts of totality to one another without the pretentions to mastery of any one field or discipline over all the others. It is a methodological and political principle.[15] It is collective and collaborative. The nature that preceded human history no longer exists anywhere. It is nature entangled with labour, culture, technique, space, cities, machines, mediation. There is only one future: the direction must be towards a more egalitarian and collective life.[16]

All states, markets, economies, welfare systems, militaries, religions, scientific breakthroughs, cultures, medical advances, wars, and the people that fought them came about during a uniquely stable period of Earth's natural history. Stability is over. Together we can escape the ruins, charting a new way forward: a different future anchored in democracy, justice, and mutual solidarity, in a world fit for life, in all its finitude and wonder.[17] We live in troubled times. We need to stay with the trouble. Ghostwriters would not cease the layered, curious practice of becoming-with others, other texts, and other modes for a habitable, flourishing world.[18] Ghostwriting may be one way to intervene. Architecture is dead; long live architecture.[19]

Architecture tends to make an absolute separation between theory and practice, between analysis and synthesis. Might there be ways that architecture can make contact with other disciplinary practices, once again. Another pursuit may be to ghostwrite the city; to ghostwrite the third nature of mediation. The real voice of the ghostwriter breaks through the space trying to make evident the work of criticism or theoretical work as part of the work of a critical practice. It is another form of creativity.[20]

Authorship without aura

I approached this essay as an experiment in the practice of ghostwriting. I wanted to explore the creative possibilities of ghostwriting as an experimental material practice that can put different fields and ideas into dialogue. It meant using intellectual culture as a common resource and to use ghostwriting as a practice to create new relations between texts and modes of communication. It meant abiding by the rules set in the journal instructions: a text of no more than 2,000 words with a limit of 20 references. I organised 20 books that I thought may be helpful. They are a mix of texts that begin with ideas about ghosts and specters; and texts that reflect on critical theory, practice, and architecture in the time of the Anthropocene. Texts are made to talk to one another and through one another. I started reading the books and quoted their first and last sentence. It created connections and disconnections, relations and gaps. I then adjusted—*détourned*—the quotes by adding or deleting words; by substituting and replacing keywords in a transformation process; then paragraphed the essay. It was enough to problematize authorship while still allowing the shadow of ideas to remain and the ghost of their author's voice.

South Pasadena (Ca): Semiotext(e).

12 Maurizio Lazzarato (2021) *Capital Hates Everyone: Fascism or Revolution*. Trans. Robert Hurley. Cambridge (Ma): Semiotext(e).

13 McKenzie Wark (2016) *Molecular Red: Theory for the Anthropocene*. London; New York: Verso.

14 McKenzie Wark (2019) *Capital Is Dead: Is This Something Worse?* London; New York: Verso.

15 McKenzie Wark (2020) *Sensoria: Thinkers for the Twenty-First Century*. New York: Verso.

16 John Bellamy Foster, Brett Clark, and Richard York (2010) *The Ecological Rift: Capitalism's War on the Earth*. New York: Monthly Review Press.

17 Mathew Lawrence and Laurie Laybourn-Langton (2021) *Planet on Fire: A Manifesto for the Age of Environmental Breakdown*. London; New York: Verso.

18 Donna J. Haraway (2016) *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*. Durham: Duke University Press.

19 Susannah Hagan (2022) *Revolution? Architecture and the Anthropocene*. London: Lund Humphries.

20 Diana Agrest (1991) *Architecture from Without: Theoretical Framings for a Critical Practice*. Cambridge (Ma): MIT Press.

There are other ways to perform ghostwriting, which may be more or less targeted than my example here. It might be combining found fragments of texts and randomly selected lines, paragraphs, or pages around an arbitrary organisation. It might be a highly selective identification of words and texts to combine into a specific order. What is important is that ghostwriting restores a recognisable part of the collective production of intellectual culture cutting into the present, by the recombination of fragments into a new whole. It frees the creative process from the private property of the knowledge industry. Ghostwriting is collective. It treats the commons of knowledge as the collective memory of intellectual culture. Ghostwriting articulates the agency of theory in a material form and perhaps paradoxically, it suggests how knowledge can be comradely, relating to itself and to the world. Ghostwriting articulates a type of knowledge practice, which is a collective mode of authorship without aura.

Spectral geography:
ghostly narratives and the construction of place in a haunted Tokyo suburb

James Thurgill

On spectral geography

Over the last three decades human geographers have been working with themes of haunting and absence to reveal the ghostly workings of place and memory. From the social to the political, geographers have engaged with ghosts to show the affect, materiality, and phantasmagoria of place through spectral readings.[1] This spectral or "spectro" geography has provided a geographical response to the "spectral turn" observed in the wider humanities.[2] Spectrality has, however, largely been applied as metaphor, with the language of haunting invoked to give name to the ghostliness of urban memory and dream-like qualities of city spaces. Nevertheless, as geographer Julian Holloway has observed, spectral narratives describe embodied experiences of the supernatural and work to produce an affective topography of haunting.[3] Such narratives abound in the cityscape. To understand the continued significance of ghosts and their role in the urban environment, both figurative and literal hauntings must be considered as equally valid. This makes sense when considering Julian Wolfreys' assertion that "all forms of narrative are spectral to some extent".[4] In the work that follows, I set out the various hauntings found in the west Tokyo city in which I live, organising the ghosts encountered into narrative form to create a spectral geography of the haunted urban environment.

Spectral Narratives and Urban Space

Cities are storied places where the palimpsestic layering of both material and memorised traces becomes inscribed within the fabric of the urban environment. The spectral presence of the past is not only sensed but made tangible through the geography of the city, where these traces remain manifest. The city of Musashino, situated in the western half of Greater Tokyo, is no exception to this. Located twelve kilometres west of the major urban hubs of Shibuya and Shinjuku, Musashino city is regarded as a suburb, despite a further thirty-five kilometres of Greater Tokyo sprawling beyond Musashino's westernmost periphery. Historically, Musashino formed part of the ancient Musashi Province, home to one of Japan's most well-known and best loved ghost stories, Lafcadio Hearn's 1904 *Yuki-onna* (*The Snow Woman*).[5] It is an area scarred by death and war; a multitude of ghosts haunt Musashino, further inflecting the modern urban experience of the area with a spectral resonance. These urban ghosts reveal the ways in which people imagine and experience their surrounding environments, providing a link between absence, affect and encounter. Whether literary, figurative, or literal, ghosts act to unify space; enabling the imagined to become affectual in the actual world. As such, the space of the narrative and that external to it can be understood as inseparable, forming what Sheila Hones refers to as an "interspatiality".[6] Spectral narratives, regardless of form or subject, engender interspatiality; destabilising the rigidity of any pre-supposed ontological divides between imagined and actual-world space to reveal a shared geography that is at once both *present* and

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absent. Spatial and temporal divisions collapse through the manifestation of ghosts: past and present, life and death, truth and fiction; binaries rendered impotent through the presence of the spectre. Musashino is produced by its ghosts, it folds and unfolds its past through the spectral traces that remain.

Musashino-shi: a spectral construction

Ghost stories are not uncommon in Musashino. Inokashira-koen-ike, an expansive boating lake and conservation area situated on the southern border of the city, is widely reported to be a haunted place. Cursed by the jealous goddess Benten, unmarried couples who dare to share a boat on the calm waters surrounding the centuries old Ben-zaiten shrine are, it is said, doomed to a failed relationship. The origins of the curse narrative appear to have been lost to history, yet the tale remains widely known throughout Japan. The lake and surrounding parkland are popular with tourists, particularly during the spring months when the native cherry trees which line the water's edge blossom. The nutrient rich soil and leaf litter lining the lakebed colour the water an impenetrable ink black, a quality not lost on the author Shikura Chiyomaru, who depicted the location as a site of mass suicide in his light novel series, *Occultic;Nine*.[7] The ghostly reverberations of Shikura's work were more recently felt by readers familiar with the area when the body of an elderly woman was found floating in the lake on the morning of April 18th, 2019.[8]

> *Spatial and temporal divisions collapse through the manifestation of ghosts: past and present, life and death, truth and fiction; binaries rendered impotent through the presence of the spectre*

Such events further develop the spectral narratives of this area of the city and for some residents these incidents only support existing claims of a ghostly woman emerging from the waters to drown unwitting passers-by.[9] While urban legends are not uncommon in any city, those surrounding this area are perhaps bolstered by historical events that occurred there. In April 1994 a female park attendant made a grisly discovery when she found human remains in the park's refuse bins. The body had been meticulously cut into twenty-seven twenty-centimetre pieces, placed in carrier bags, and tied using fishing knots. The body had been completely drained of blood. The victim's head, chest and genitals were never discovered. The crime remains unsolved: an episode in Musashino's past which haunts the fabric of the city to this day. Just a few hundred meters from the same site, author Dazai Osamu famously drowned himself in the Tamagawa Aqueduct, a small river bisecting the park at its southern edge, in an apparent suicide pact with his partner, Yamazaki Tomie, on June 13th, 1948.[10] The bodies of Dazai and Yamazaki were pulled from the swollen river six days later. A stone monument marks the spot where Dazai drowned, a ghostly presence of his long absent body.

Inokashira-koen was the setting for yet another dark event which maintains a spectral presence in the city's memory. On November 24th, 1944, the US Air Force began a fierce bombing campaign, destroying much of the western portion of Musashino and killing hundreds of residents and workers at the nearby Nakajima Aircraft Company's Musashi Plant. The death toll reached such numbers that cedar trees from Inokashira-koen were felled and used to make emergency coffins. To improve efficiency and keep up with the rising fatalities, a workshop for the construction of coffins was built on-site; the park forming an unwitting cog in the US death machine.[11]

The ghosts of war occupy a significant place in the haunting of Musashino. Traces of the air raids and the history of armed conflict congeal to form spectral narratives at multiple sites throughout the city. Among these is Enmeiji Temple, which displays the rusty, detonated casing of a 250 kg bomb dropped by a US B-29 just 200m north of the temple complex. The shell, still clearly identifiable, is exhibited in a glass cabinet – a weathered plaque reading "250k bomb shards", handwritten in black

ink, is propped up in the open front of the casing; weeds surround the red-brown object that lies behind it. The area beyond the temple, now a labyrinth of narrow residential streets, was razed to the ground by the air raids of 1944, having been the strategic target of US forces: the site of the Nakajima aircraft factory. The manufacturing plant that once stood there produced approximately one third of all engines made for Japan's military aircraft. Eight further raids were carried out on the Nakajima factory and surrounding area. On December 3rd, 1944, US forces dropped 250kg bombs from an altitude of 10,000 feet, many of which failed to hit the operation's target and instead fell directly on Higashi Fushimi Sakaue on the northernmost border of Musashino, the location of a stadium and underground bomb shelter filled with women and middle-school children who had been employed at the plant to cover staff shortages.[12] On July 29th, 1945, a 4.5-ton pumpkin test-bomb was dropped on the nearby Yagisawa area of Musashino; a portent of the nuclear bombs to be dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki just one week later. The yellow pumpkin bomb that fell on Musashino was dropped by *Bockscar*, the same plane that released an atomic bomb on Nagasaki on August 9th, 1945. The connection of Musashino to not only the war but also to one of only two nuclear weapons ever to be used in wartime, situates the city within a wider narrative of spectrality and grief, one that will continue to haunt Japan for generations to come.

The cemetery of Genshōji Temple, a 300-year-old site of worship, is home to several graves that were severely damaged during the bombing of Musashino. One particular grave, the name it bears now almost indecipherable, had its polished granite exterior fractured to a depth of around twelve centimetres by the blasts of November 1944, exposing the coarse underlying stone so that the grave marker appears not dissimilar to a discarded, blackened apple core. In a place already filled with the dead, this gravestone speaks to a much wider sense of loss and mourning: a two-fold haunting that reiterates the spectral narratives bound to this area. Just meters away, a different gravestone displays the characters 倶會一處 ("a place to meet [in the pure land]", author's translation). Following the air raids rescue workers from the community discovered the bodies of five unknown persons among the ruins; with no known family to collect them it was decided that the bones of the unidentified victims would be interred at a specially made grave, one that would symbolise the sacrifices made by the community for its future generations. Like the damaged tombstones found elsewhere in the cemetery, this grave, too, acts as an affectual, haunting site; one which allows the past to permeate the present and spectrally inflect the surrounding space. A feeling of mourning, of loss, of frailty stains the site and shapes the spatial experience of Genshōji.

Spectral narratives and the construction of place

The seemingly divergent narratives of history (loss), folklore (superstition), and war (grief) discussed in this paper may not appear to speak to any common understanding of the city or perhaps even of ghosts, yet they come together in the production of place through a shared and fluid sense of space and a collapsing of the perceived boundaries between the actual and the imagined. Taken together, the spectral narratives discussed here describe the continual layering of experiential space, of history and contemporaneity, which form modern day Musashino. Each of the hauntings cited above forms but one layer in the time-space of the city, and while individuals will privilege some of these spectral geographic narratives over others, such a process does not diminish or exorcise the legitimacy of those stories that remain less prominent. Rather, the ghosts conjured here interconnect historical event, geographic imagination, and spatial experience to form a narrative of Musashino that is interspatial. The frequency of such temporal overlaps, of ruptures and fissures in the spatio-temporal landscape of the city, is what privileges the urban environment as a haunted space. Let us speak to its ghosts. Let us listen to what they have to say.
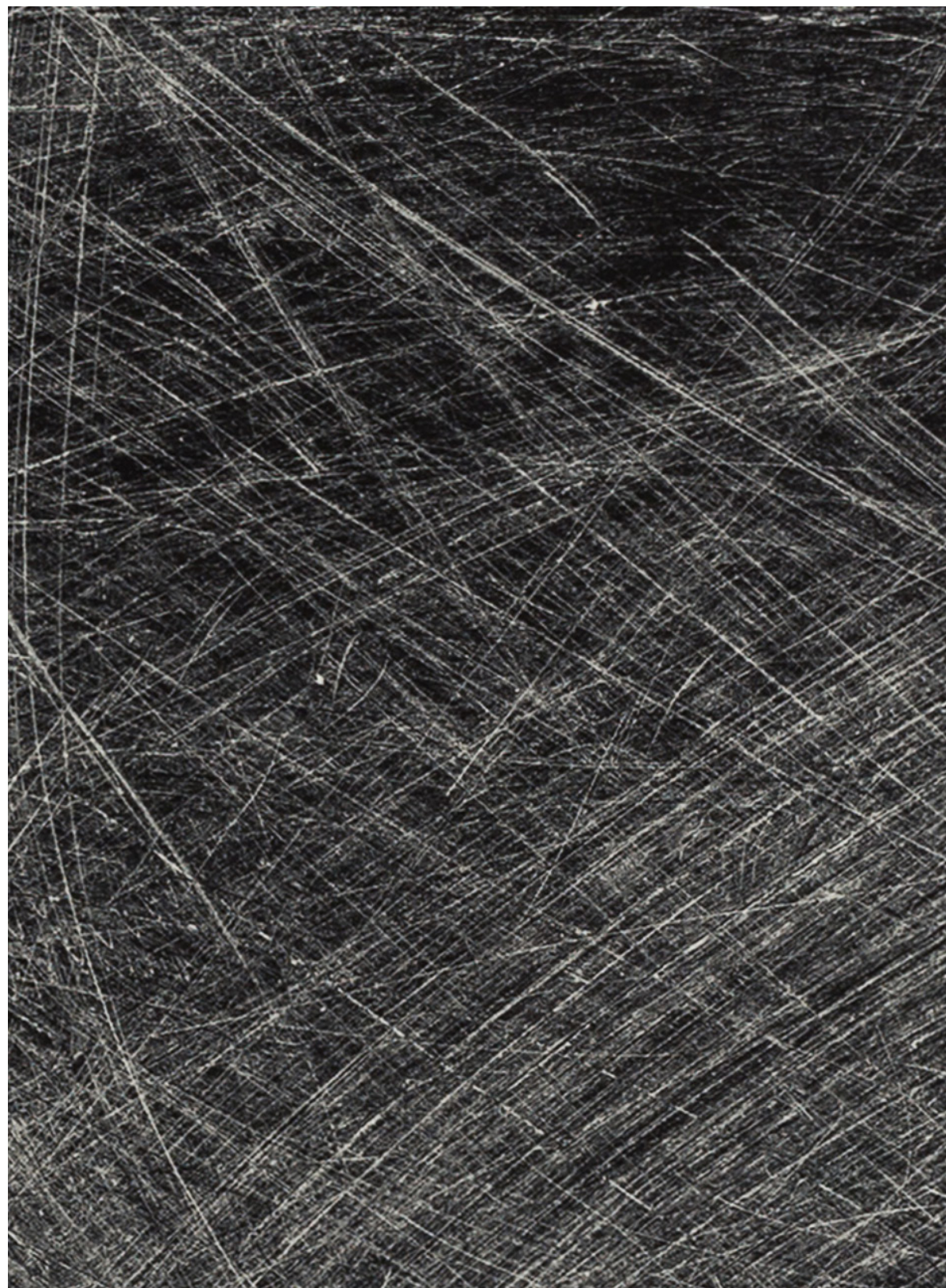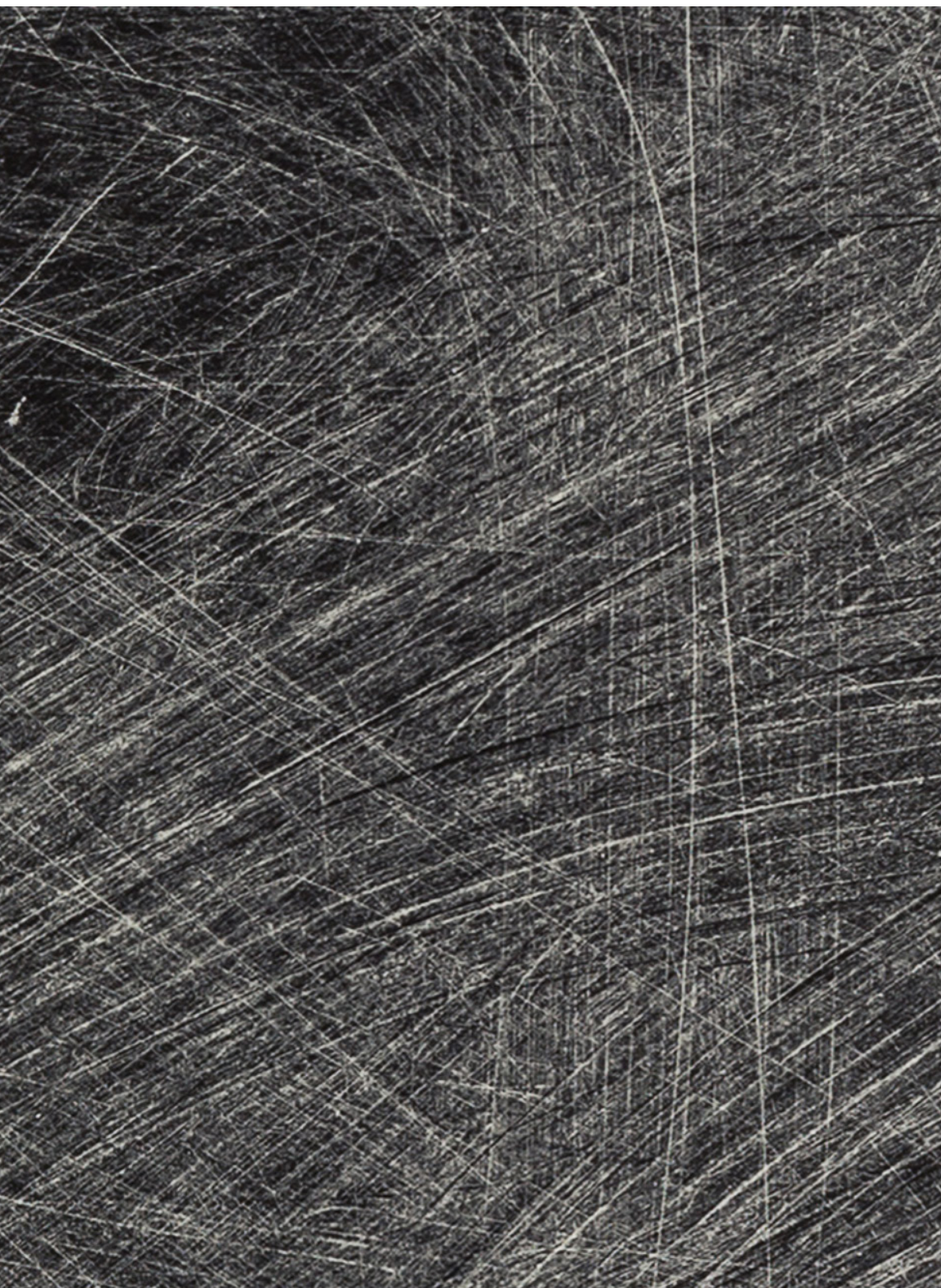
Notes

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The ghosts of Ishinomaki
space, hauntings, and the materialized absences of disaster

Annaclaudia Martini

I visited the northern prefecture of Miyagi, in the Tohoku region of Japan for the first time in 2016. On a hot summer day, I stopped for dinner in the city of Ishinomaki. I was coming from nearby Ogatsu, where, together with another researcher, I interviewed an American artist that transformed tsunami debris into art. Passing through the city centre on our way to the central station, I thought something looked eerie, out of place, but I couldn't put my fingers on it. The day after, I talked about it with a Japanese colleague, who did extensive research in Ishinomaki. She said that now the city looked much better than before, but that even after the rubble and debris were removed, many places in the centre remained vacant and abandoned, as people relocated elsewhere. It did not help, she continued, that in 2012 the municipality had to remove all streetlights for a while, because people were scared. "Scared of what?", I asked – to which she replied matter-of-factly: "Of ghosts".

On March 11, 2011, the coast of Tohoku was hit by a triple disaster: a 9.0 magnitude earthquake, a tsunami of unprecedented strength, and the consequent meltdown at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant. The tsunami caused almost 20.000 casualties, washing away people, trees, cars, and buildings alike. Ishinomaki, a city of 140.000 people, was the worst-hit municipality, racking up almost one quarter of the total number of casualties. A business owner who was forced to close in 2020 explained that: "Even before, it used to be quite lonely. But there were even fewer customers after the disaster and we simply could not carry on".[1] In the area around the main station, about one-third of the buildings are still empty lots, or parking lots. An American resident I met in 2016, who moved to Ishinomaki right after the disaster, told me: "When I arrived to Ishinomaki, you could definitely tell how tall the waves were, because there were lines from how tall the water came on the buildings and they went up about three meters".

Maddern and Adey claim that "the twenty-first century has so far transpired as a century of haunting; of irregular, unexpected and (un)anticipated events that appear to be 'beyond the real'".[2] But also of traces of times past, of people, politics, emotions, that are left behind and intrude on the present, confounding, aligning and colliding with it.[3] Ishinomaki was a city of ghosts even before 2011: it faced depopulation, aging residents, and a lack of prospects for the youth – as with many other areas of rural Japan. Emigration, paired with an increasing shift from labour-intensive industries to knowledge and technology-based production, brought about economic stagnation, inertia, and abandoned buildings. Even those who decided to stay after the disaster were displaced, as the massive reconstruction projects moved entire neighbourhoods towards the suburbs, far from the water – and the risk of tsunami. With new communities forming in the suburbs, the city centre remained empty, a ghost town of shuttered businesses and houses, haunted by the traces of the 2011 disaster.

In 1993, Derrida coined the neologism *hauntology*[4] as a play on the word's near homophone (in

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French) *ontology*, implying that any ontology is always already unstable, haunted, something that is no longer present, but still has an effect even after it is gone. Cities, and especially cities that bear the wound of disaster, can be haunted by the non-present presence of the spatial and temporal other, a dyschronic spectre that is neither fully present nor completely absent. Haunted places suggest space-times in which past, present and future co-exist and interact in unpredictable ways, evoking incompatible times and places. In hauntology, says Fisher, "we can hear the time-wound, the chronological fracture, the expression of the sense, crucial to hauntology, that 'time is out of joint'".[5]

> *Ishinomaki is haunted, possessed by the ghosts of the 2011 disaster, but also by a time past in which the city prospered, the social and infrastructural choices that caused such massive casualties during the disaster and the individual and collective guilt that comes with it, as well as by all the potential futures that will never be*

Ishinomaki is haunted, possessed by the ghosts of the 2011 disaster, but also by a time past in which the city prospered, the social and infrastructural choices that caused such massive casualties during the disaster and the individual and collective guilt that comes with it, as well as by all the potential futures that will never be. After the disaster, national and local institutions focused on reconstruction and recovery, with slogan such as "Smile Japan", and "Gambarou Ishinomaki".[6] This forward-thinking, positive spin on the disaster came too soon for many in the tsunami-hit communities, allowing no time for the bereaved to mourn and make sense of the trauma. When a community is not ready to move on, but pressed to do so, this stress and pain can keep returning as spectres of memory and history, forming a fracture, a coexistence of different imaginaries across time and space, leaving something once was, and still is, there. In certain places, absence is so profoundly visible, so evident and palpable that even empty spaces evoke crowded imaginaries and performances of memory.[7]

Especially for those in the community who moved to the suburbs, as well as for visitors, experiencing the tethering atmosphere of downtown Ishinomaki means to suddenly be put in the presence of ghosts. Jytte, a Danish journalist I interviewed, visited the city in 2014 and said: "I think that city has a lot of potential (. . .), but it seemed like the city was kind of a ghost city. We almost didn't meet anybody on the streets and that was strange. It was strange to be in a city like that. It was empty!"

People move to the suburbs to feel safe, but also to forget, to avoid having to look at the area destroyed by the tsunami. This however only exacerbates the ghastly feeling of abandonment and dilapidation perceivable in the city centre. Derelict places, abandoned places, places that are perceived as "nothing" or "void" can be the source of vibrant memories and intense affects and attachments. Memories and embodied and virtual engagements are acts of place-making and place-dissolution at the same time, where ghosts and materialised absences simply refuse to disappear. Ishinomaki's centre exists as a liminal place, a metaphor of not only the people who died, but also the city that died as it changed shape, expanded and contracted in unpredictable ways, losing touch with the community that was supposed to inhabit it. This suburban sprawl was already in place before the disaster, but it accelerated after 2011, compounded with the loss and trauma of the tsunami and its casualties in the city. The borders of trauma, just like haunted places, continuously move, disappearing and reappearing, appropriating space, and blurring the boundaries of presence and absence, visibility and invisibility, adhering to no definition or binary opposition.[8] The hustle and bustle of daily life has moved, leaving an empty space that is charged, intense, an interstice that makes space for ghosts to appear.

At times, the only way people can manage pervasive and persistent collective trauma is to make sense of it, and one of the ways in which communities made sense of the disaster and its traces in the

city was by making what is absent insistently present, by unfolding presence and absence out of one another, recognising, verbalizing, and ultimately narrating the experience of being haunted.[9]

Since 2011, ghost tales have spread throughout disaster-affected areas. There have been reports of ghost sightings and even of people being possessed by ghosts of the tsunami.[10] While some do believe that ghosts exist, and are an expression of the power of *kami*,[11] most people believe they are affective, materialized representations of the trauma of the people disturbed or possessed by them. These stories are hardly new: they emerge from old folktales that are recontextualized, repurposed, and brought back from mythical into present time, expressing themselves as a tension between absence and presence in the city. I have heard many versions of the same story: it is always a ghost pushing through the threshold, stuck in-between, either with unfinished business or for not having been laid to rest properly. It is the story of the streetlights: a few months after the disaster, residents started calling the police at night, claiming that they were seeing people, sullen-looking and drenched in water, under the streetlights in the city centre. The calls were so many, and so unnerving, that the municipality found no other solution but to remove the lights. But it is also the story of the ghost of an old woman, deceased in the tsunami, who kept going back to her neighbours' house and sit down for a cup of tea. The cushion that would be left out for her was soaked in seawater every time her visits were over. And in nearby Tagajō, one fire station received incessant calls until a crew of firefighters drove to the ruins of the caller's house to pray for the dead.

After the disaster, many bodies were not found, making it impossible to mourn in socio-culturally accepted ways, thus disrupting the culturally appropriate order of life: the spirits not crossing the threshold cause a profound fracture in the texture of place. According to a resident of Ishinomaki who I interviewed in 2017, "a lot of people said to have talked to ghosts. I asked them and said that some of them didn't realize that they had died. So they were still like, walking home. But the difference was that the faces were pale white and they were drenched in salt water". The loss of place – their place in the world, their body, their spot at the burial ground (if the body was not recovered) – is at once local and physical as well as linked to a distant and vast cosmic geography from which the dead is pre-cluded until action on part of the living is taken to address this concern. Without a place, these ghosts become hauntings in the liminal interstices of the urban infrastructures in Ishinomaki – a material-ization of the affective language in which trauma is embodied, transmitted and released in disaster places. Ghosts are expression of social dynamics of multivocality in places and a stand in for the materialization of trauma. Hara Takahashi, a professor at Tohoku University who interviewed health practitioners and priests regarding ghost apparition and possessions after the disaster, concluded that their experiences left the strong impression that the deceased had not fully passed to the other side; rather, they were living their afterlives in the same space as the living, blurring the boundaries of these two places.[12] Morgan Meyer argues that because the felt absence of the deceased matters, the dead themselves are turned into matter: their absence is performed, materialized and objectified in order to make them present in the city.[13]

To speak of ghosts and hauntings serves an important social function. Ghosts are "a crucible for politi-cal mediation and historical memory";[14] a social figure that can stake a claim for those who are not acknowledged. Ghosts and haunting are not coherent; on the contrary, their power comes from their deconstruction and disruption of preconceived notions of linearity – of time and space – by inter-rupting, over-determining, pointing in different directions at once.[15] Ishinomaki is filled with those invisible stories and their affective charge. Not only the dead, but mourning itself, mourning for a lost place and a lost time that can never be again, have a weight. Against our will, hauntings show what is still missing, the invisible that needs to be addressed, the "endings that are not over".[16] The secret of the ghost, writes Davis "is not a puzzle to be solved; it is the structural openness or address directed towards the living by the voices of the past or the not-yet formulated possibilities of the future".[17]

Endnotes

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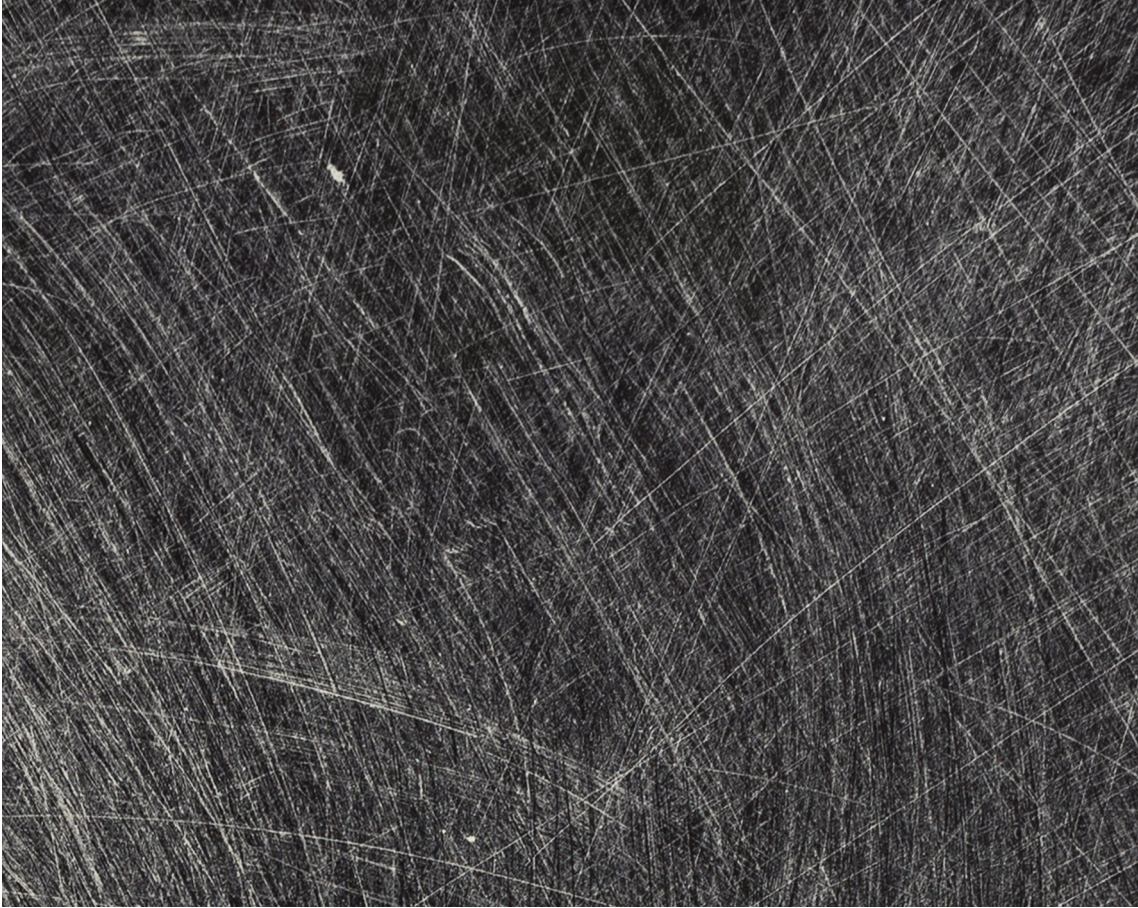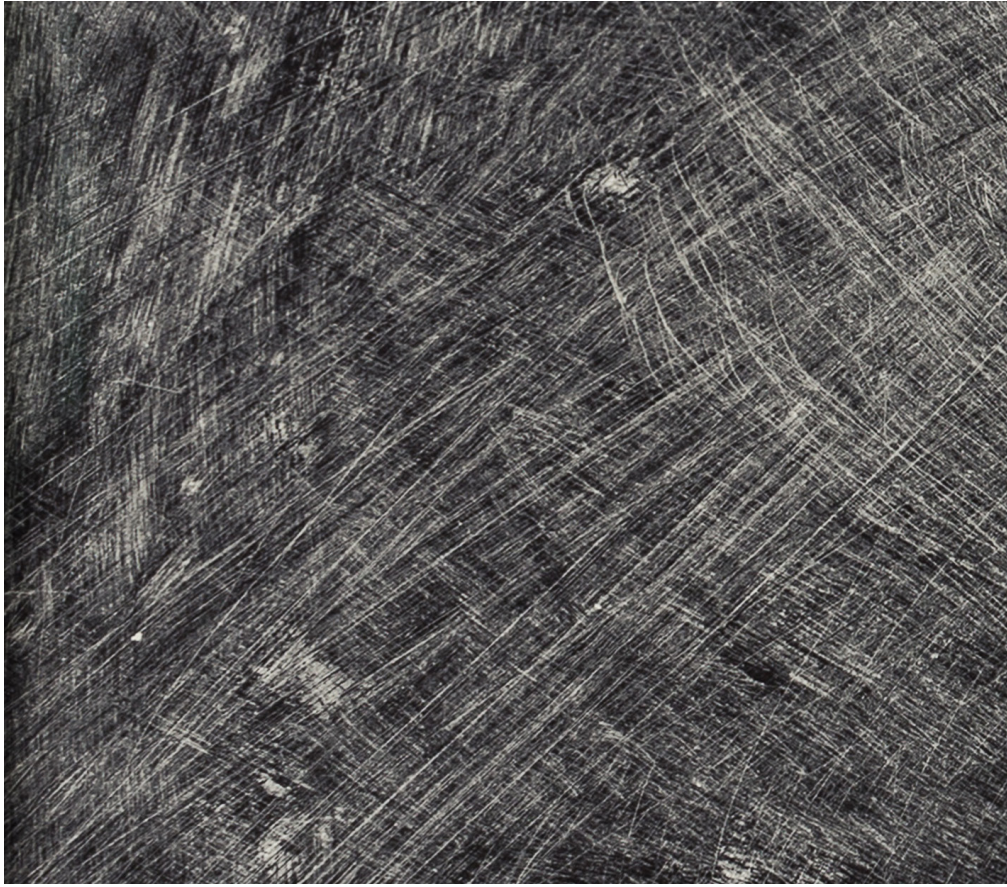
If you saw things finer, you would see everything in motion: as burning paper curls up, everything continually passes away and in that motion curls up. Nietzsche, Posthumous Fragments, *Fall 1881*

Renascimento por Transformação *(Reborn through transformation, 2018-2020) is the title of AnaMary Bilbao's work, a selection of which punctuates these pages. Her images are uncanny in many ways. Originally, they belonged to photo albums from evicted homes: literally* unheimlich, *they stood for what was no longer. Bilbao slowly wore them out with sandpaper, forcing their referential function to gradually disappear. Thus, the image was released from its duty to represent — it was, so to speak, laid to rest. This obliteration, however, paradoxically let the image's material speak for itself. Scratching, scraping, erasing: creating. If we were to borrow from Catherine Malabou, we would define it as an experiment in destructive plasticity, that is, the surfacing of novel form of (after-)life that bears no relation with the image*
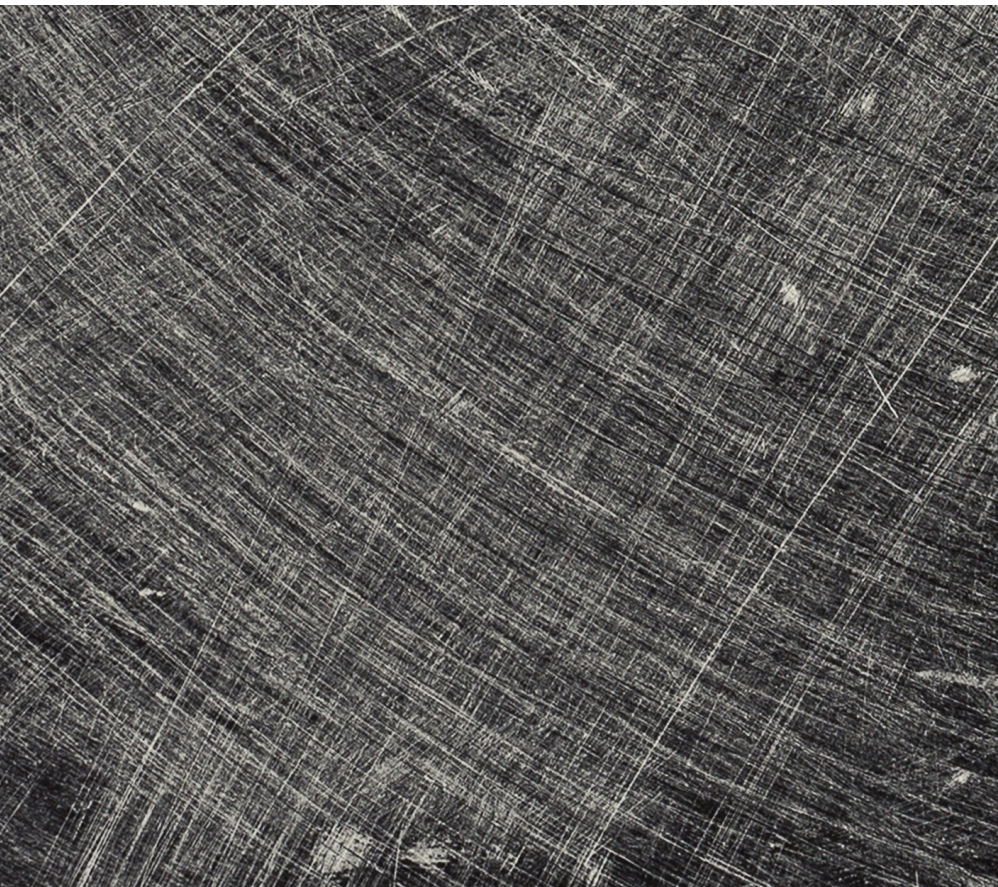
from which destruction it is nonetheless (re)born. Untied from the historical freeze-frame, memory, time, and form are let loose in a turbulence of spectral formations. Photographic images are inherently ghostlike. In them, the excess of reality is never fully tamed. Perhaps, it is exactly by means of deterioration, or destruction, that such an excess appears: by means of showing *the image as it disappears. This resonates with Georges Didi-Huberman's definition of the glimpse [*aperçu*], as that fleeting instant "when the thing that appears leaves, [just] before it disappears, something like the trail of a question, memory or desire" (2016: 109) – glimpses that in Bilbao's pictures crystallise as if captured in an indefinitely prolonged exposition. Their trails multiply, a crowd of spectral grooves that seem to dance before us in a loopy repetition, somehow evoking the eery music of William Basinsky's* the disintegration loops *(2002). The ghost ultimately tells us that nothing is ever really destroyed, that everything is continuously reborn.*
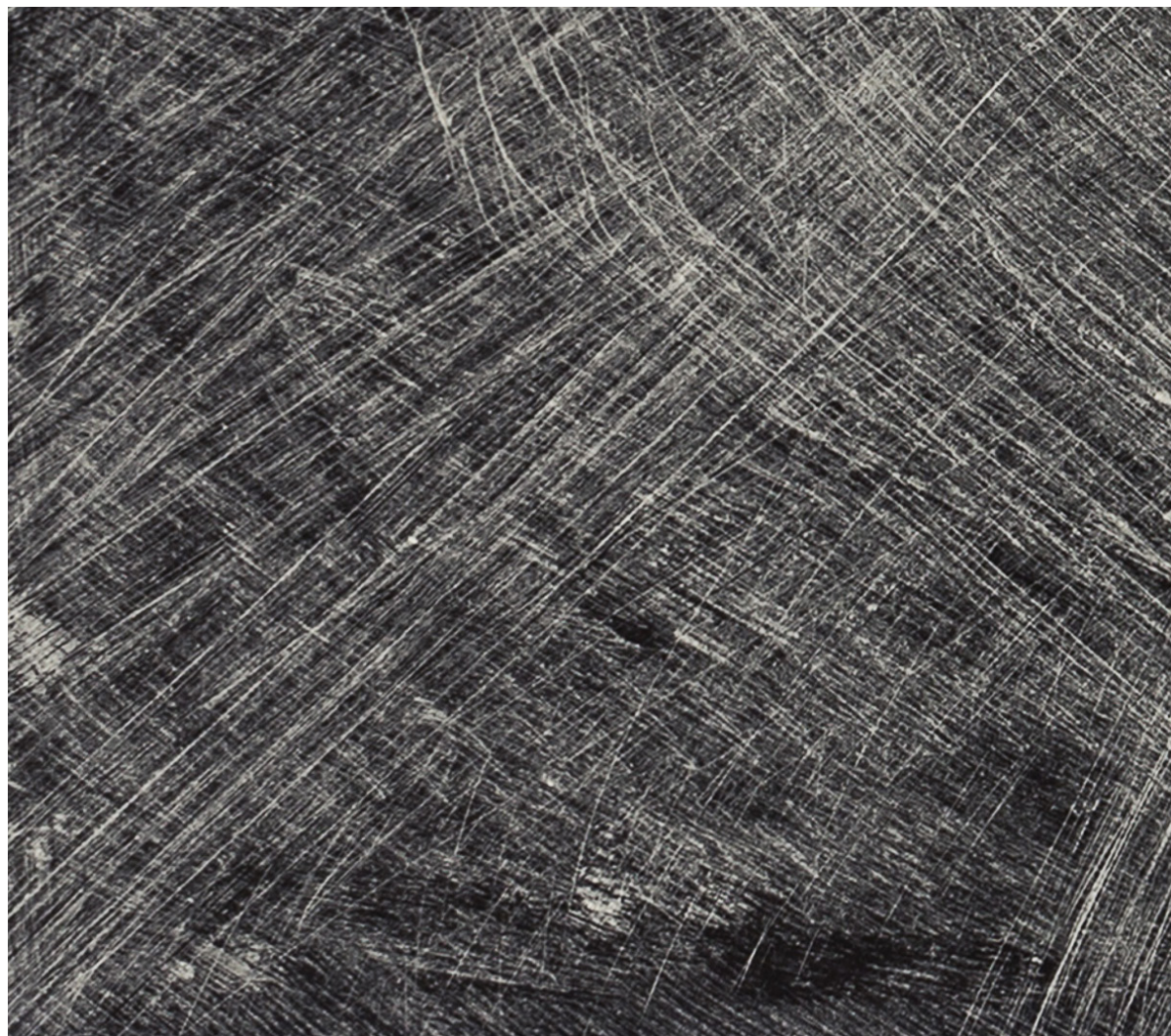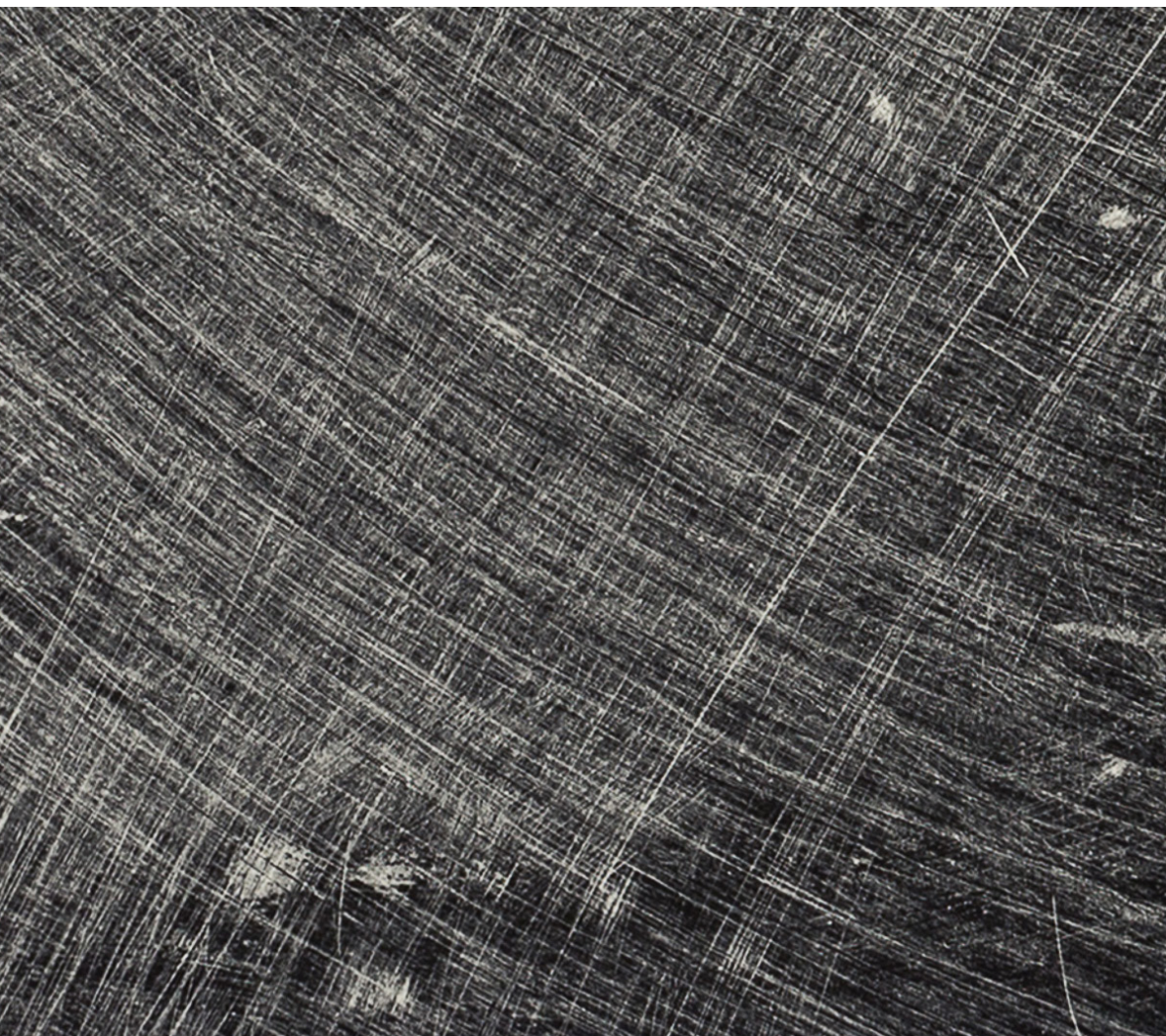
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Phantoms of a bygone neighborhood life
Spectral urbanism between Jaffa and Tel-Aviv

Roni Dorot
Daniel Monterescu

The social life of ruins

This essay stems from a long personal, intellectual, and political fascination with the time of the nation and the time of the city. Speaking of and for the city, however, is a chronicle of foretold failure. As Italo Calvino notes in his *Invisible Cities*, "The city does not tell its past, but contains it like the lines of a hand, written in the corners of the streets, the gratings of the windows, the banisters of the steps, the antennae of the lightning rods, the poles of the flags, every segment marked in turn with scratches, indentations, scrolls." We therefore have attempted to read the city and its citizens as a palimpsest of successive owners, subjects, and bystanders. The violently divergent histories of Jaffa, a binational city of contention, cannot be erased from memory and place; rather, they are impregnated in uncanny manners. The return of the repressed springs out with a vengeance from the interstices. However, the voice of the repressed is commonly silenced by hegemonic narratives of self and nation and by identity politics in public discourse and academic scholarship. When heard, this voice is often faint and feeble, cracked and incoherent. In this essay we seek to recoup the incongruities of these narratives and tell the tale of these historical scratches, indentations, and scrolls.

Jaffa, an ethnically mixed town located minutes away from Tel-Aviv's metropolitan center, yet marked as *sui generis* cultural and political alterity, is home to 20,000 Palestinian citizens of Israel.[1] Struggling since 1948 to sustain viable collective existence, the Palestinian community makes up a third of Jaffa's population and about 4% of Tel-Aviv's metropolitan population. For the city and the state, Arab Jaffa has long presented a political "problem" resulting in recurrent strategies of containment, surveillance and control. Arab community members describe themselves as a "double minority" excluded at both national and municipal levels. Bereft of their old political leadership and with no stable middle class to speak of, they struggle for political recognition and affordable housing facing Jewish gentrification and skyrocketing real estate values. The history of Palestinian Jaffa is torn between a transcendental image of past glory and the visceral violence that brought about its dissolution.

Cities in general, and specifically ethnically and religiously mixed cities, are both repositories of memory, and material networks of social action and political violence. Contentious urban spaces create cycles of ruins invoking images that range from nostalgic utopias of return and redemption, to apocalyptic dystopias of urban haunted spaces. Following William Faulkner's quote, "the past is never dead, it's not even past", we explore the story of a neighborhood on the borderline between Jaffa and Tel-Aviv as a contested space-time capsule and as site of political action and artivism. The urban specters haunting the ruins of Manshiya reveal how the allegedly over-and-done-with comes alive, and how the uncanny dwells within the daily lives of the modern city.

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In concrete urban terms, the historic bustling neighborhood of Manshiya is no more. What still remains is a metaphorical and spatial hyphen which serves as a buffer zone between Jewish Tel-Aviv and Palestinian Jaffa. On the one hand, historically, Manshiya blocked Jewish Tel-Aviv's (originally named Ahuzat Bayit) aspirations to expand west and reach the seashore, and on the other hand it restrained the spread northwards of Arab Jaffa. Since the 1948 war, and the Palestinian *Nakba*, Manshiya suffered two deaths: the first one, by military destruction, through the conquest of Jaffa in 1948, when the Jewish "Irgun" forces bombed and maneuvered through holes in the walls of the neighborhood's houses; and a second death in the 1960s, due to a destructive planning policy, when the Tel-Aviv Municipality evacuated its residents to build a modern Central Business District (aka CBD), a planning fantasy which was never materialized. In the 1970s, a spacious green park was built atop of Manshiya's landfill debris (dubbed Charles Clore Park), creating a site of urban necrophilia, adding yet another concealing layer over traces of life that was there before.[2] Alongside Tel-Aviv municipality's 2018 decision to demolish a Muslim ancient burial site opposite of the park's south-eastern corner for the purpose of building a shelter for homeless people, the story of the neighborhood brings back to life its contentious past and presence and its phantoms of history.

> *Contentious urban spaces create cycles of ruins invoking images that range from nostalgic utopias of return and redemption, to apocalyptic dystopias of urban haunted spaces*

In the annals of the city, Manshiya came to be associated with the history of violence between Jaffa and Tel-Aviv. One of its historical sites, the Hassan Beik mosque, survived the ruination of the neighborhood and stands out now as if out of place in the midst of Tel-Aviv's hotels strip. The mosque still bears a notorious reputation in Jewish collective memory for the Palestinian snipers who used its tall minaret during the hostilities of 1930s and 1940s. Years later, in June 2001, the mosque was targeted by Jewish mobs who claimed it was the shelter and the exit point of a Palestinian suicide bomber who exploded himself in what was known as the "Dolphinarium suicide attack". The explosion took place in a popular nightclub on the beach, across the street from Hassan Beik. Two decades later, the mosque endured another violent turn. During the May 2021 Israel-Gaza conflict (dubbed by the Israelis "Guardian of the Walls Operation" and by Palestinians the "Intifada of Unity") an unprecedented outbreak of violence erupted in mixed cities. The Manshiya Hassan Beik mosque, by encapsulating religious and national sentiments, offered refuge for Palestinians against the Israeli police violence and the attacking mobs.

Political Art and the Return of the Repressed

Calling back the specters of the past is a political act. Art, as a medium of invoking ghosts, brings the past back to life by forcing the contemporary dwellers of the city to face that which has been made invisible. Urban artivism in Manshiya is thus revealed as a major site of contestation and resistance. Artistic interventions echo the ghosts of the lost neighborhood and bring them to life, even if ephemerally.

After the second Intifada, the project *Autobiography of a City* offered tools for understanding the history of Jaffa and its importance as a case study of mixed cities in Israel.[3] It explored new ways of dealing with urban remembering and dismembering, and their impact on daily life and communal identity in a binational city. Its main idea was to bring about new narratives that will undermine the city's hegemonic official narrative. It operated through cooperation with artists which were invited to use the city as their canvas and working materials. The focus on the intricacies of narrative and the politics of heritage explicitly sought to give pride of place to Palestinian voices and soothe the hostile

violent narratives to which they are subject. One notable project, "The Ghost of Manshiya Awakens", by the artist Ronen Eidelman, consisted of painting the imagined layout, block, and houses in the now-demolished Palestinian neighborhood. Restoring fictive Palestinian street names was used as a means to protest its erasure and imagine its resurrection. "For a few weeks", says Eidelman, "the streets of the former neighborhood were marked on the seaside promenade and the adjacent lawns of the Charles Clore Park. One could once again stroll down Al-Yarmuk Street and Abu-Laban Street, sit down and watch the sunset on the corner of Irsheid and Hassan Beik, picnic along Al-Jauni Street or play soccer at the British police station . . . The lines we drew faded and disappeared a short time later, and the streets of Manshiye vanished once again under the Charles Clore Park" (Figure 1).

Fuck the history

Other art forms also engage the politics of ruination. *Disappearances*, previously named *Fuck the history*, is a 2017 documentary film by Anat Even which deals directly with the questions of Manshyye's haunting specters of past lives. The film tells the story of the neighborhood and its loss through the eyes of its bygone inhabitants. The director invited the latter (Jewish and Palestinian) to come with their families for a picnic on the grass which innocently covers the debris of houses in which they grew up in. They wander around, and try to locate the houses from which they were forced to flee or evacuate upon the authorities' orders. The illusive memories and narratives of both settler and indigenous inhabitants, mediated by the director's reflexive gaze on the public park, became a socio-political testimony which conjures up not only what Even calls "the ghosts of the past", but the helplessness and remorse she, as a Jewish artist, echoes in the face of the neighborhood's destruction (Figure 2).

The serenity and urban leisure which the Charles Clore Park seem to offer completely overlooks the historical erasure of previous life, homes and childhoods. The park's green lawns were made possible by creating a landfill by covering the beach with the debris of the neighborhood houses. Today, in the same space where people gather for a Tai Chi class, to enthusiastically cheer the Israeli Air Force flight performance every Independence Day, to barbecue at the foot of the Irgun (Etzel) House Museum, to party at the Tel-Aviv Pride Parade and to be used as a sleeping area for refugees and illegal aliens — nonexistent Manshiya remains a realm of ghostly memories.

The banality of urban planning is expressed in a powerful scene of the film. Amnon Schwartz, one of the planners involved in the historic master plan of the Manshiya Park, presented his agenda to a group of students, during their academic tour to the site. As they strolled together around the park, Schwartz was asked to answer the difficult questions related to the history of the neighborhood's destruction. He patiently explained that the vision of the planners was "that of a new world — perhaps bold, but new". He went on to tell the students that Hillel Omer (also known as a famous poet and author) was the landscape architect who created these park hills. "A beautiful work," he concluded. One participant replied that it might be beautiful but ignores history, and Schwartz suddenly lost his temper and responded with typical Zionist arrogance: "What do I care about history? Who's interested in history? Fuck the history!".

Settler colonialism and its discontents

Settler colonialism is based on a wishful thinking to send history go "fuck itself", namely, to put the past to lie down quietly below the green grass. However, as we all know, ghosts hardly disappear. The green park, a public cemetery of lost ruins, turned through the artists' interventions into a metaphorical "memorial event". Not only for the Palestinian original inhabitants, who were exiled and written out of history, but rather for the Jewish "White City" that occupied their place. In the process, however, what French historian Pierre Nora called *lieu de mémoire* has transformed into a *milieu de mémoire* — a contentious space of political intervention.

The *lieux* we speak of, then, are mixed, hybrid, mutant, bound intimately with life and death, with time and eternity; enveloped in a Mobius strip of the collective and the individual, the sacred and the profane, the immutable and the mobile. For if we accept that the most fundamental purpose of the *lieu de mémoire* is to stop time, to block the work of forgetting, to establish a state of things, to immortalize death, to materialize the immaterial all of this in order to capture a maximum of meaning in the fewest of signs, it is also clear that such *lieux* only exist because of their capacity for metamorphosis, an endless recycling of their meaning and an unpredictable proliferation of their ramifications.[4]

Haunted by the ambivalent legacy of her grandfather, the artist Mai Omer created in December 2021 a documentary presenting the neighborhood moments before it was razed to the ground in the 1960s.[5] Fifty years later, she herself documented the park designed by her grandfather Hillel Omer, contrasting his idyllic and naïve photographs of the place with the neighborhood's deathly fate. Mai Omer raises questions about her grandfather's perception of the neighborhood and her positionality: was his a conscious or unaware blindness towards Manshiya's ruination? In her awareness of the open wound, the specters of the past and the neighborhood loss seem to materialize. Omer Jr. was inspired by Azoulay's critique of imperial modes of thought, which regard the past as closed, final and unchangeable.[6] In this reading, every apparatus that separates the past from the present and displays it as a sealed chapter – the museum, the archive, the camera – remains an imperialist apparatus. Therefore, she contended that looking back at her grandfather's films made her reflect on how she could treat them as ongoing continuous images, how she could "talk to the archive" and bring it back to life.

The reemergence in May 2021 of political violence around Manshiya's key symbols of the mosque and the graveyard illustrates the undying nature of urban trauma. In the artwork of the Jewish artists we surveyed, the ghosts of the past communicate remorse and guilt. The critical perspective of the reflexive settler artists thus invokes a different intentionality – nostalgia blended with recognition, and a sense of collective responsibility for the injustice done in their name, against their will, but from which they benefit.

Endnotes

1 Daniel Monterescu (2015) *Jaffa Shared and Shattered: Contrived Coexistence in Israel/Palestine*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

2 Taylor Miller (2021) Active, Still, Reclamation, *Society and Space* blog, https://www.societyandspace.org/articles/active-still-reclamation

3 *Autobiography of a City* is a project initiated by the Ayyam Association after the breakout of the second Intifada (2000). The project was led in Jaffa by artists Sami Bukhari and Eyal Danon. Operating through educational work with children, visual arts, and a website which documents the life stories of elderly Palestinians in Jaffa, the project focused on collective memory as a main site of political action. It is an attempt to examine the ways in which urban memory and consciousness are being shaped, via the use of artistic and documentary tools and through the direct and wide involvement of community members.

4 Pierre Nora (1989) Beyond Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire, *Representations*, 26, pp. 7-24.

5 https://www.lieblinghaus.org/exhibitions/Alayam

6 Ariella Aïsha Azoulay (2019) *Potential History: Unlearning Imperialism*. London: Verso.

Walking among the ghosts of colonialism
The haunting onomastic of Palermo

Giulia de Spuches

Speaking of cities is always speaking about ghosts because every current period is simultaneously linked with past and present. Ghosts, even when transformed into a conceptual metaphor, question the formation of knowledge, and invoke what has been silenced, excluded from the archive of History. They want to be a part of the political discourse to (re)imagine the present and the future. The aim of this contribution is to use some aspects of these ghosts, such as their liminal position between visibility and invisibility, between life and death, and between materiality and immateriality, to take a stand in the social, ethical, and political issues of the postcolonial today in a western city. Finally, as Vanolo[1] wrote, the metaphor of the ghost is ambiguous, located in an in-between space characterized by the oscillation between memory and fragmentation.

According to Iain Chambers "to think of the modern city (…) is to experience a perpetual translating machine (…) the archive that the city proposes represents an altogether deeper sedimentation of time and place".[2] From this point of view, the city is a translating and translated space in becoming. However, innumerable events and daily acts reify both the becoming and the continuous act of translation by creating a system of representations of selective social processes. The silence caused by these selective processes, in addition to causing a memory loss, activates spectral visions. The image of the ghost allows us to analyse the visible and the invisible elements of past and present.

Starting from this perspective, this contribution aims to bring to light the silent ghosts of a part of the city of Palermo that are evoked through the act of walking. A path of *apprehension* capable of creating, metaphorically, a feeling of fear but, at the same time, of knowledge.[3] Our methodology uses the ambiguity of *apprehension* to reveal the stories behind the names of the toponymy and the present or absent signs and symbols scattered around the city of Palermo. I would like to take the first *Grande Rituale Ambulante*[4] against Colonialism, conceived by Wu Ming[2] and the Fare Ala collective, to show how, through the political understanding of the ghost, an ethical and critical reasoning through the creativity of performances is possible. For this reason, the postcolonial walk,[5] carried out during *Manifesta 12* (2018), showed an action of re-signification of the places encountered, it produced counter-narratives that can form a counter-archive capable of bringing to the surface the hidden memories of a colonial Italy unwilling to deal with the past.

The experience proposed by the organisers seemed to me very close to what I read as a path of *apprehension* in the book *Roma negata. Percorsi postcoloniali nella città* (2014), by Igiaba Scego, with Rino Bianchi's photographs. This book's incipit is: "I walk … I have a goal today and I want to reach it as soon as possible, before my courage gives up. My foot trembles" (2014, 13-14). In my opinion, the tremor of the foot and the precarious courage narrate the path of apprehension between the fear of a past that comes back to memory as a material ghost (a statue, a cinema or a street) and the difficulty

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of making a hidden, deliberately forgotten knowledge, visible. David Le Breton (2000) taught us how walking is opening us up to the world, a practice that reinvents the coordinates of time and space, and, finally, an image of existence and resistance. From my point of view, Le Breton's walking is a form of transformation of the self, but it is also the ability to describe and modify (urban) landscapes.

The Palermo walk was stage after stage, a succession of places marked by a colonial heritage intertwined with spaces inhabited by migrants, between racist scars and hospitable communities, between imperial ghosts and imperialist presences.[6] Thus, the postcolonial walk becomes a manifesto of spectrality.[7] The tools used in the stages along the 18 km journey through the city of Palermo were the notes, glosses, (ana)baptisms, epiphanies, metamorphoses, necromancies, rebirths, emblems, testimonies, litanies, sermons and iconoclasms. In the next section, I will focus on a couple of examples to show how Palermo has appeared haunted by the ghosts of past and present.

> *By naming the ghosts of the past, the mute names on our street plaques suddenly begin to speak, revealing the spectral conditions of their emergence that still linger on the public spaces they name*

Some (post)colonial stages

I would like to begin with the stages that have involved *onomastic guerrilla*: performances that rename urban streets from below, contesting the historical traces that populate them. These actions seek to make public memory resurface. Toponymy is significant because it reconstructs the conception of the past in the public sphere. Indeed, the purpose of the spatial construction of social memory, together with cultural recognition, tells us much more about the authors than about the characters or events "hanging on our walls". When we walk in a city, toponymy is what helps us with orientation, and yet we rarely reflect on the intertwining between history and the geographic fabric of daily life. One of the actions promoted by the organisers was to reveal the characters (e.g. Vittorio Bottego, Orazio Antinori, Vincenzo Magliocco, and others) that silently populate the streets of Palermo and their brutal colonialist operations. The authors have produced QR-codes linked to the project *Le vie della memoria* run by the Municipality of Palermo.[8] If onomastics operates through a representational system, what happens when a city conceived and determined according to the axes of an ideology is remodelled and rethought? Onomastics becomes a memento capable of recalling the Italian colonial past repressed. In this way, it is possible to highlight the violated rights of a part of humankind.

In order to make the ghosts of postcolonialism emerge, in the Palermo walk, Wu Ming 2 and the Fare Ala collective use acts of *onomastic guerrilla*, an (ana)baptism, and recent postcolonial history. The case of the officer Vittorio Bottego is meaningful as it links all three of these. As a soldier he participated in the occupation of Keren and Asmara, as an explorer and geographer he described the coastal route between Massua and Assab. In particular, he carried out an expedition on behalf of the *Società Geografica Italiana* along the Omo River basin. He died, on the way back from this expedition, in a clash at Daga Roba (Ethiopia).

An inscription of onomastic guerrilla, as a performance of Palermo walk, appeared on the plaque of the square dedicated to Bottego: 'Multi-murderer Explorer'. Since the use of memorial names in the urban landscape is instrumental in transforming the city into a political context, the Fare Ala collective unveiled Bottego's colonialist spectre. Subsequently, the gardens of the square were baptised as Giardini Lorenzo Taezaz (1900-1947), a protagonist of the resistance against Italian fascism in Ethiopia.

To understand how Bottego's story became a postcolonial history, we must follow the threads that originate from the roots of liberal Italy, perpetuate during the fascist period, and come down to us. The example chosen by the Palermo walk organisers is the Nuova Pretura (or Nuovo Palazzo di Giustizia) of Palermo. This was designed by the architect Sebastiano Monaco and his design team and

built by the Italian company Salini-Impregilo (rebranded to Webuild Group in 2020). This is the company that has major interests in Ethiopia for the construction of the Gibe dams, which exploit the waters of Bottego's same Omo River basin. The operation of the Gibe III dam has been strongly contested by Survival International,[9] which has submitted a complaint to the OECD. In fact, the completion of the dam had forced many tribes off their land to make way for vast commercial plantations. What is significant here is how the Italian power acquired during the colonialist period reappeared as a ghost, which once again chased after the local population for their own interests.

These examples, in my opinion, aim at understanding how to develop a pathway of *apprehension*. As in Scego's walk, we have experienced living between a will to know and a fear of facing the unveiling ghosts of our past. Therefore, it is important to support political struggles capable of preventing the ghosts from prevailing in public space.

Conclusion

By naming the ghosts of the past, the mute names on our street plaques suddenly begin to speak, revealing the spectral conditions of their emergence that still linger on the public spaces they name. They seem to descend from the walls where they hang, evoking the old eighteenth-century practice of phantasmagoria as a frightening but, at the same time, fascinating spectacle. My interpretation of the city through walking among the spectres of the colonial past and neo-colonial present is meant to teach the necessary character of *apprehension* as an inevitable practice of critical knowledge.

In conclusion, we can only hope that the unveiling of the colonial and the neo-colonial ghosts will produce more and more acts of resistance. As we have said, the act of naming is imbued with power. Reclaiming forgotten points of view, even with a creative performance, is a pedagogy of awareness. Finally, using the words of Lefebvre, we can only hope that "a social transformation, to be truly revolutionary in character, must manifest a creative capacity in its effects on daily life, on language and on the space – though its impact need not occur at the same rate, or with equal force, in each of these areas".[10]

Endnotes

1 Alberto Vanolo (2017) Ghostly cities. Some notes on urban branding and the imagining of places, in: Ulrich Ermann and Klaus-Jürgen Hermanik (Eds.) *Branding Nation, the Place,the Product*, pp. 53-66. London: Routledge.

2 Iain Chambers (2018) *Location, Borders and Beyond. Thinking with Postcolonial Art*. Wroclaw: Worlding the Word, p. 32.

3 Francesco Careri (2006) *Walkscapes. Camminare come pratica estetica*. Torino: Einaudi. Careri uses *apprehension* with a double etymological meaning of the word.

4 This can be translated as "Great Walking Ritual".

5 Unlike the organisers, I prefer to speak of a postcolonial walk rather than a Great Walking Ritual.

6 http://m12.manifesta.org/wu-ming-2/index_lang=it.html

7 Here I use the concept of ghosts and spectres as synonym.

8 https://www.comune.palermo.it/palermo-informa-dettaglio.php?id=14202&tipo=1

9 https://www.survivalinternational.org/tribes/omovalley

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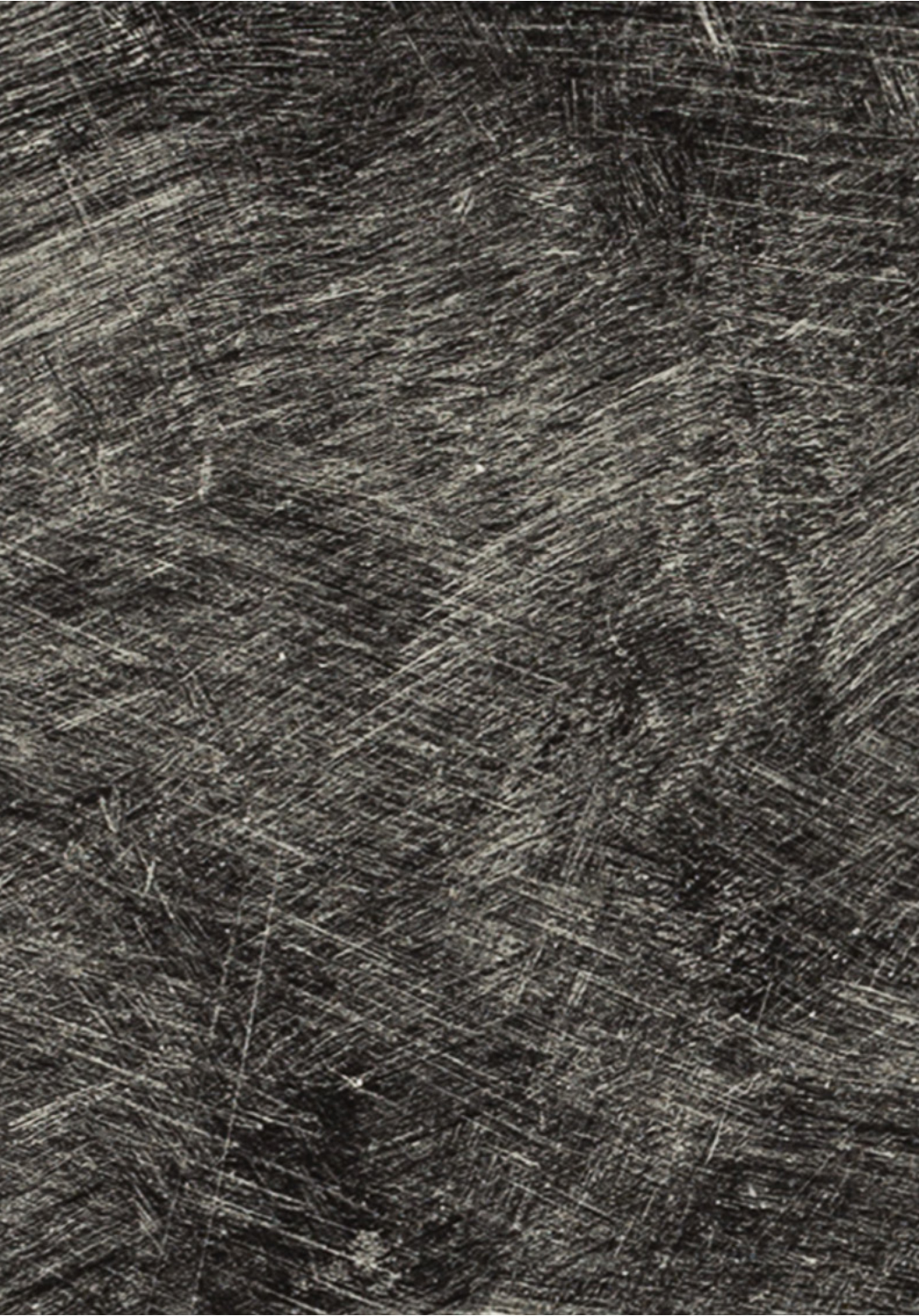
Ghosts from the Abyss
The imagination of new worlds in the sea-narratives of Afrofuturism

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> *Where are your monuments, your battles, martyrs?*
> *Where is your tribal memory? Sirs, in that grey vault.*
> *The sea has locked them up. The Sea is History.*
> *Derek Walcott*, The Sea is History

This contribution aims to investigate a different ghostscape, shaped by the turbulent materiality of the sea: the abyss. A space of trauma and simultaneously of becoming, it is populated by spectral objects, traces, fragments, and, above all, ghosts. Édouard Glissant,[1] a major thinker of the abyss, identified it with the space of loss opened by the Middle Passage in the Atlantic Ocean during the slave trade. Paul Gilroy[2] will name this space *The Black Atlantic*: a space of violence of the rising capitalistic system and its colonial routes, a space of memory of Black subjectivities. Attending the wake[3] that reproduces this trauma along the sea lines, another such abysmal space is, today, *The Black Mediterranean*: a space of violence along the migrants' routes, a space of (re)generation of sea-related Black counter-practices, counter-narratives, and counter-subjectivities.[4] With this as a background, we can see how abysses are not signified by an absence, but on the contrary by a counter-presence: since "drowning is not ashes, water is not earth, and bodies disappear differently",[5] the ghosts inhabiting the abysses are not mere abstract or metaphorical figures, but presences-absences made of a different materiality: they are an "intermediate presence between the visible and the invisible, the real and the unreal, the past and the present, the conscious and the unconscious": such "absences can have a subjectivity of their own, an agency, a regime of perception that makes them *de facto* presences".[6]

What do the specific ghosts emerging from the abyss evoke and tell us? How do they shape the future by *re-memoring* the past and questioning the present? How do they haunt the present and the presence in the sea-wake that connects the Black Atlantic to the Black Mediterranean, and vice versa? If we position ourselves at the sea level, taking the perspective *from the sea*, the *point de vue/vie*[7] changes completely. This is due to the main characteristics of the sea, particularly its turbulent materiality. If the turbulence recalls Haraway's *trouble*[8] as a method to stay in contact with a damaged planet that needs the articulation of models of response-ability and becoming-with, imagining new possible alternative worlds, materiality is connected to the livingness of the world: it is no longer conceived of as representation, but as a basis for living and liveable heterogenous worlds, in which "matter comes to matter".[9] Looking into the abyss through the turbulent materiality of the sea, we understand how it is not a blank space of metaphors and abstraction; on the contrary, it is a world inhabited by ghosts of/that matter. In this haunting and troubling, they whisper possible alternative

worlds, fluid, in motion, in a continuous regeneration and becoming-with.

"Can a community whose past has been deliberately erased, and whose energies have been exhausted in the search for legible traces of its history, imagine possible futures?" This was the famous question posed by Mark Dery in 1994 when he first coined the term Afrofuturism. Breaking with humanistic categories, the cultural expression of Afrodiasporic cultures is constituted – mainly through science fiction, music experimentations, visual productions – around the centrality of the removed and denied memory of slavery, turning it into a tool of re-signification, imagination, and construction of possible alternative futures. A *Leitmotiv* of Afrofuturism productions, even in their heterogenous and multiple approaches, is water. Related to trauma and the ghosts inhabiting the abysses, in Afrofuturism water symbolizes both death and life, erasure and memory, past

> *What do the specific ghosts from the abyss evoke and tell us? How do they shape the future by re-memoring the past and questioning the present? How do they haunt the present and the presence in the sea-wake connecting and reproducing the Black Atlantic with the Black Mediterranean and vice versa?*

and future. Since the 1970s, the techno-electro duo *Drexciya* – formed by James Stinson and Gerald Donald – envisioned a whole mythology of a marine world: the drexciyans[10], born from pregnant Black women thrown overboard from the slave ships crossing that space of death of the Middle Passage in the Atlantic Ocean, inhabit the abyss.[11]

The myth of the *Black Atlantis* has created a whole world of sea-related narratives, visual productions, and sonic experimentations in Afrofuturism's field. The novel *The Deep* by Rivers Solomon[12] reclaims the imaginary of a submerged world inhabited by the *wajinru* (literally, "chorus of the deep"), a water-breathing people descendants of Black women thrown overboard. In the abyss, the *wajinru* built their cities made of "mud, carnage, ship wreckage, and plants harvested from more shallow seawater".[13] First-generation *wajinru* rescued the women from the waves and raised the water-born babies. They established the new society and were also its first historians: "a historian's role was to carry the memories so other *wajinru* wouldn't have to. Then, when the time came, she'd share them freely until they got their fill of knowing".[14] *She* is here our main character, the historian Yetu. Unlike previous historians, Yetu cannot carry the weight of history any longer: memories are killing her. During the *remembrance* ceremony, when the historian must hand out memories to the *wajinru* and then take them back – as "it wasn't a story that could be told, only recalled"[15] – she decides to leave them with all the memories, and flee. On the surface, she finds herself in a tiny pool from which she cannot get out. There, she meets the two-legs people, the surface dwellers, who take care of her: among them there is Oori, somehow a historian herself. Meanwhile, in the abyss, the *wajinru* face a new threat: the two-legs are back with weapons, this time to steal the gifts of the deep: "Below us, deep beneath the sand, there is a substance they crave. It is their life force. Their food. They feast on it like blood".[16] During the fight, the ocean protects the sea-people above land. Yetu feels her kin through the ocean; she returns and saves her world from the storm caused by the battle. Then, not only does she change her society, giving her people new memories and a new history, but she herself changes into a new creature, capable of breathing in both water and air. Oori will do the same when they meet again in the sea: "This time, the two-legs venturing into the depths had not been abandoned to the sea, but invited into it".[17]

In the novel, all the main themes of the sea-narratives of Afrofuturism are developed: memory of the trauma of the Middle Passage, rejection of humanity, re-signification of the abyss as a space of alternative worlds. Here, in the deep, memory and history are kept by a community guardian who caries the weight of the trauma: memories are in motion from historian to historian as a tool of preservation from pain and survival. The *wajinru* abyss is an alternative world whose ghosts as presences-absences

are not only the mutant creatures breathing-in-the-water and inhabiting its cities, but also objects, sharks, organic and inorganic matter, memories: spectral fragments from a past that is never past, in a continuous regeneration haunting the present and shaping the future. How does this becoming-with unfold at the bottom of the sea? How composting and regenerative processes take place in the abyss?

In her book *In the Wake*, Christina Sharpe follows the wake of bodies thrown overboard from the slave ship *The Zong*, and asks herself: "What happened to the bodies? What happened to the components of their bodies in salt water?" As Anne Gardulski told her, the atoms of those people who were thrown overboard are out there in the ocean even today, because of the process of co-digestion of the ocean's organisms: the sea-matter. "The amount of time it takes for a substance to enter the ocean and then to leave it is called residence time. Human blood is salty, and sodium, Gardulski tells me, has a residence time of 260 million years. And what happens to the energy that is produced in the waters? It continues cycling like atoms in residence time. We, Black people, exist in the residence time of the wake, a time in which 'everything is now. It is all now'".[18]

Eating, partially co-digesting, partly assimilating:[19] such are the processes of becoming-with that take place in the ghostscape of the abyss, whose turbulent materiality can regenerate new alternative worlds, bodies, cities, spaces, times, narratives, history, presences-absences. Yet, the question raised by *Drexciya* in the cover *The Quest* still haunts us: "Have they been spared by God to teach or terrorize us?"

Concluding thoughts

"The sea is history", wrote the poet Derek Walcott in one of his most famous poems. And it is history because it never forgives. As an archive of memories, stories, bodies, narratives, traces, fragments, it keeps everything, and returns everything. A restitution reproduced today in the wake of violence tracked down once again by contemporary capitalism and its coloniality in the Black Mediterranean. Here, the rationality of accumulation, the hierarchization of society by class, race and gender for the sake of the capital, is constituting a ghostscape determined by ruthless necropolitics.[20]

But the sea is history and geography, too: due to its turbulent materiality, everything is re-composted, re-worked, re-generated, through a continuous process of becoming-with, among wake and waves. A multiplication of horizons in which, as Hito Steyerl argues, the helpless tumble into the abyss can turn into new representational freedom: "if the new views from above recreate societies as free-falling urban abysses and splintered terrains of occupation, surveilled aerially and policed biopolitically, they may also — as linear perspective did — carry the seeds of their own demise within them".[21] Coming from the Abyss, these ghosts re-emerge to question us about the past, the present and possible alternative sea-related futures, as a presence-absence on the threshold between the visible and the invisible, the no-longer and the not-yet: a space of possibilities.

Endnotes

1 See for example: Édouard Glissant ([1990] 1997) *Poetics of Relation*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

2 Paul Gilroy (1993) *The Black Atlantic. Modernity and Double Consciousness*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

3 Christina Sharpe (2016) *In the Wake: on Blackness and Being*. Durham: Duke University Press.

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5 John E. Drabinski (2019) *Glissant and the Middle Passage. Philosophy, Beginnings, Abyss*. Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, p. 3.

6 Alberto Vanolo (2018) Fantasmi, *Rivista Geografica Italiana*, 125, pp. 369-381: 374.

7 Frédérique Aït-Touati *et al.* (2020) *Terraforma. Manuel de Cartographies Potentielles*. Paris: Èditions B42.

8 Donna Haraway (2016) *Staying with the trouble: making Kin in the Chthulucene*. Durham: Duke University Press.

9 Karen Barad (2003) Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter, *Gender and Science: New Issues*, 28 (3), pp. 801-831.

10 The Drexciya world was visually conceived by Abdul Qadim Haqq, who drew the covers of the records; he recently published the graphic novel *The Book of Drexciya Vol. 1*.

11 See some records titled *Deep Sea Dweller*, *Bubble Metropolis*, *The Unknown Aquazone*, *The Journey Home*, *Hydro Doorways*, *Black Sea*, *Aqua Wormhole*.

12 Rivers Solomon based their novel on the same name song by the experimental hip-hop group Clipping, formed by Daveed Diggs, William Hutson and Jonathan Snipes, who figure also as co-authors of the book. At the very first page, they thank Gerald Donald and James Stinson, aka Drexciya, as a remark of the connection/filiation of both the abyss stories.

13 Rivers Solomon (2019) *The Deep*. London: Hodder & Stoughton, p. 55.

14 *Ivi* p. 8.

15 This sentence is a clear reference to Toni Morrison's book *Beloved* (1998) – "it was not a story to pass on" – in which pass on has the double meaning of 'hand out' and 'neglect'. In *The Deep*, it is the same story Yetu has to 'hand out', which cannot be told, only recalled.

16 *Ivi* p. 135.

17 *Ivi* p. 155.

18 Christina Sharpe *op. cit.*, p. 41.

19 See Donna Haraway, *op. cit*.

20 See Achille Mbembe (2003) Necropolitics, *Public Culture*, 15 (1), pp. 11-40.

21 Hito Steyerl (2011) In Free Fall: A Thought Experiment on Vertical Perspective, *e-flux Journal* (24) 04/11, https://www.e-flux.com/journal/24/67860/in-free-fall-a-thought-experiment-on-vertical-perspective/.

Cha(n/r)ting ghostly cities
an African-Brazilian hauntopology

Thiago A. P. Hoshino
Mariana G. Bonadio

Seu Zé, malandro da encruzilhada
Padilha da saia rodada
É mojubá![1]

It all started in the kitchen. In the kitchen of a *terreiro*[2] in Curitiba, a two-million-inhabitants metropolis in the south of Brazil. After a brief candomblé[3] ceremony we sat together around the table for some beers. Nothing unusual. The extension of "we", however, was about to be put in question as a few *irmãos-de-santo*[4] and Ubaldino Loango, the *pai-de-santo* of the Abassá de Xangô e Caboclo Sultão, cheerfully recalled and commented some of the *cantigas* or *pontos* (chants) that constitute the sacred musical repertoire of Afro-Atlantic *orixás* (gods) and *entidades* (entities/spirits). Learning *santo* – the ways of such tradition – has much to do with this sort of irreverent (although not properly profane) sharing, which makes kitchens gravitational centers of *axé*: the nurturing potency of knowledge, power and life.

The *santos* themselves didn't take long to arrive. Unexpectedly, Maria Padilha[5] shook the body of the priest and laughed loudly: "I say good night for those of the night. May I smoke in this house, *moço* (boy)?". Cigarettes lightened, glasses quickly refilled, and chatting was soon intercalated with chanting. The very cha(n/r)ting that follows is part of a hauntopology – a wavering cartography of the postcolonial city with and by blackened and gendered specters – for which we began to attune to among songs, sips and gossips:

Arreda "homi"	*Back off man*
que aí vem mulher	*it's the woman that comes*
Ela é a pombagira	*She's pombagira*
rainha do candomblé	*queen of candomblé*

To say "we" is already a dubious departure. The authorship too must back off. Who is it? Who are those one may call "we"? "We" the authors, perhaps, but mainly "we" the communion of ghosts humming over and around, the spirits chatting, chanting and charting through "us", that is to say, weaving our unpredictable *enredos* (entanglements)[6]*:* the intertwined fabric of our ghostly lives, our very existential hauntologies. "We" in turn evoke hauntopology as an improper composition of Derridean *hantologie* and urban topology, an unstable crossing of theoretical *caminhos* (roads) signaling to the indomitable terrains of a life made of haunting each other and being haunted (not only spectered, but also spectated, expected and speculated) by those (the living or else, the human or else) we've

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come to connect to, we've come to be (dis)possessed by as inhabitants of "our" bodies and the body politic of a *família-de-santo*. As Pai Ubaldino claims, "we praise *santos* by making friends with them (*nos amigando com eles*), by relating and becoming relatives with them".[7] Never has the expression "kindred spirits" been so fit.

From the kitchen and its soundscapes – in itself that particular space-time dense in social, gender and racial demarcations – "we" may derive to (or, better, channel) – unequal, gendered and racialized urbanities in the (a)tonic of African-Brazilian sensibilities: timbers, rhythms and tempers of (in)subordination and dissonance. From where else, in fact? If scales are artifacts of music and geography as much as of justice, it seems just fair to do so, maybe nowhere else could ghosts more righteously initiate us in their exiled hospitality, in the queer interludes of a diasporic poetics of relations.[8] Maria Padilha,

> *Nothing is lifeless and there is simply no "beyond". Ghosts are active and very much here and now*

"Seu" Zé do Ouro and the other Exus, Malandros and Pombagiras[9] who visited us then and many other nights, who have visited us throughout the centuries, who make room for hospitality in the middle of hostility, who are hosted in the very flesh, are *assentados* ("settled") among and *incorporados* ("embodied") by the *povo-de-santo*, may "come down" (*baixar*) in the kitchen, but do not reside (solely) there. They live inside and outside "our" bodies (the multiplied, cohabitated bodies of their "children"), in and outdoors, *no tempo* (under the "weather") and circulate as *ventos* ("winds").

Streets, crossroads, backyards, graveyards, squares, marketplaces and cabarets amount to some of the troubling dwellings of traveling entities: all settings of passage, passion and trespass, articulators of encounters, paths with-in the nonlinearity of spatial choreographies which (un)ravel, spin and contaminate temporalities, mainly those of remembrance and ancestry. Ultimately, places of the spacetime wandering and rendering of ghosts, just like ritornellos and codas leaping and lapsing the song, queer blackened portals in the notation of colonial landscapes. That is why gates and gateways, devices of flow and deviation from the modern-western "public/private" refrain are the domain of Exu:

Exu da meia noite	*Midnight's Exu*
Tu és da encruzilhada	*You are/come from the crossroad*
Aê aê Exu	*Aê aê Exu*
Bate a cancela e abre estrada	*Slam the gate and open the road*
Tiriri Tiriri	*Tiriri Tiriri*
Tiriri tá no portão	*Tiriri is at the gate*
Tiriri só manda fogo	*When Tiriri sends fire*
Para ver cair no chão	*It's for tearing down*

From *candomblé*'s perspective, familiar with paradoxes, the rule of law is routinely associated with the *res publica*, the token of the ambiguities of a long-term complex relationship between *terreiros* and the state, not marked by harmonic percussion, but by tyrannical persecution. The *santos'* wisdom reminds that a world populated by countless, untamable forces (from unfriendly bureaucrats and violent police officers to enraged *egun*[10] or displaced *entidades*) is a dangerous one, a world in which caring (both as in "caring for" and as in "taking care with") entangles risk and zeal. If the racial contract[11] haunts the foundation of the white city, it is no wonder that the favors of Exu Tranca-Ruas, patron of all *onan*, of all the ways, are required when going out:

Seu Tranca-Rua	*"Sir" Tranca-Rua*
tranca aqui, tranca acolá	*lock it here, lock it there*
Só não tranca os meus caminhos	*Just don't block my ways*
na hora de eu passar	*the moment I pass*
Odara lo soro	*Exu Odara closes*
Odara lo soro Ionan	*Exu Odara close the way*

Open the ways for us. Block the roads of the enemies. We are now outside. And accompanied. It has been said that the structural dichotomy public/private well synthetizes Brazilian hierarchical sociability, oscillating between "home" and "the street".[12] The opposition emphasizes the house as the domain of patriarchal sovereignty (thus immunizing private violence from the alleged rule of law) whilst exposing the dubiety of public powers immersed in a profoundly racist and sexist political history. The modern-colonial city (including its institutions) is invasive of women and complicit of sexist violence and harassment.[13] These contested territories of gendered urbanity are thus the realm of Pombagiras. Candomblé devotees frequently resource to them as *guias* (guides) and *protetoras* (guardians) of their daughters in the spiritual warfare against the many perils and traps of (male dominated) "public" spaces. To survive to quotidian misogyny and feminicide, *filhas-de-santo* draw inspiration and strength (sometimes, literally through trance or sorcery) from those who led lives of dissent to gender norms and roles, from those who composed scores out of the beaten stave, far from the tablatures of conventional intelligibility. Pombagiras are certainly not housemaids or housewives. They chant street dominance, fearlessness but not ingenuity, liberty and often quarrel mingled with cunning and nomadism:

Juraram de me matar	*They swore to kill me*
na porta do cabaré	*at the entrance of the cabaret*
eu ando de dia, eu ando de noite	*I walk day and night*
não me mata porque não quer	*They don't kill me 'cause they don't want*
Sou eu sou eu	*It's me it's me*
sou eu Maria Padilha sou eu	*It's me, Maria Padilha*
Eu ando no mundo	*I wander the world*
ninguém não me pega	*no one can catch me*
Em cada fumaça	*In each smoke*
é um tombo, é uma queda	*there is tumbling and falling*

Whereas commenting and dismantling gendered codes is one of the favorite choruses of Pombagiras, asymmetrical social and racial frontiers are thematized in a wide set of Exus and Malandros pieces. Crossing or dribbling the shifting urban trenches of genocide, humiliation and imprisonment of black people within modern-colonial cities demands *ginga* (swing). Not surprisingly, Malandros (rascals and vagabonds) are errant trickster spirits, engaged in the celebration of joy and freedom, in the subversion and discreditation of established rules (from dressing and partying codes to the protocols of making love or making a living) and in the confrontation of their enforcers (from moralist neighbors to police officers):

Estava sentado na praça	*I was sitting in the square*
quando a polícia chegou	*when the police came*
Eu tive um desgosto profundo	*I felt a deep sorrow*
Carteira assinada: profissão de vagabundo	*I am officially a vagabond*
Na Baixa do Sapateiro	*At the Baixa do Sapateiro*[14]
formou-se uma confusão	*there was a great fuss*
Era o malandro Zé Pilintra	*It was the malandro Zé Pilintra*
sambando de pé no chão	*dancing samba barefoot*

Fuss, camouflage and debauchery are ways to open up escape routes within the labyrinths of control. Confusing and confounding found a cosmopoetics of refuge which confesses nothing, it rather digs an outside within the slaver society, fueled by the deserter the undercover, the migrant and the *cavallo-de-santo* ("god's horse") rather than the settler, the worker or the soldier, by furtive rather than frontal resistances, by the subtraction of power rather than its conquest, by dissolution rather than resolution or revolution: by corrosive tactics (and aesthetics) of de-capture.[15]

Exus, Malandros and Pombagiras pop up at every corner, at every site instituted to separate those that considered worthy of protection from those that are deemed disposable bodies, where the separation between "life" and "death" is normalized, to distinguish humanity from its others.[16] Where *santos* insist to dance barefoot, they fracture, distort and suspend the imposed homogeneity of space and the calculated linearity of time. Trance loses track and magic (un)masks the modern-colonial logic, as *santos* co-lapse both past-present-future and here-there injunctions. In the performances of Exus, Malandros and Pombagiras – conspicuously destabilizing normative whiteness and cis-heteronormativity – the city is counter-produced by *Padilian* zones of "smoke", a shivering, "tumbling and falling" of the violent foundations of *urbs* and of urbanity.

African-Brazilian entities, while chanting, make a case for genealogies of restless struggling *catiços* against the weight of lineages of self-indulgent colonial ghosts.[17] This is probably the reason why Exus and Pombagiras are especially fond of cemeteries and graveyards. The most inhospitable of "large houses" (*casas-grandes*, as the headquarters of plantation farms used to be called) welcomes all liminal existences.

Cemitério é casa grande	*The graveyard is a large house*
mas ninguém quer morar lá	*where nobody wishes to live*
Lá tem uma catacumba	*there is a catacomb there*
Maria Padilha mora lá	*it is where Maria Padilha lives*
Portão de ferro	*Iron gate*
cadeado de madeira	*wooden padlock*
Na porta do cemitério	*At the cemetery's gate*
quem mora é o Exu Caveira	*Exu Caveira lives*

The cha(n/r)ting of cemeteries is not equivalent to mapping a war field in the battle against death. After all Iku or Vumbi ("death") is a god in the first place, having its own endowment. Candomblé's war is fought against *zombification*, the subjugation, objectification and stealing of agency (the "soul") from those the modern-colonial logic made to be less-than-human. Ikupolitics,[18] another name for the politics of *santos*, contrasts necropolitics insofar as it aims at an overall redistribution, restitution and fortification of life im/possibilities. Nothing is lifeless and there is simply no "beyond". Ghosts are active and very much here and now. They are inhabitants of Glissant's opacity, divert-ing every effort of transparency (i.e. capture), every attempt to ultimately stabilize being in a given grammar or in a decal. They encode the world and its language: they speak through parable, charade or poetry. Through music. They do not do discourses; they whisper and conjure. We better keep open ears and minds. Because singing and fabulating with specters require that we face justice, perhaps

the ghostliest of matters.

For justice is a matter of passing (*dar passagem*, to give way, to the spirits of victims and avengers, to tormented souls and playful ghosts) and (Middle) passage,[19] as well as a matter of the inventive and inspiring nightly travel of gods and ancestors: Beatriz Nascimento's transmigrational modes of (r) existence.[20] There is loss and exile but there is also generation and the enrooted vitality of such trans- and counter-modernities in the heart of violent and unequal forms of cont(r)act. As long as we sing their names and nations,[21] spirits of all names, origins and characters will continue to be *voyageurs* of transnational *caminhos* which don't cease to sprout.[22] None of these names and nations can be really ours, dispossession in its aporia is the only possible register of a hauntopology: something necessarily other than property. Not even the chants handed down to us are granted to us, all that is received from/through the ghosts is beyond ownership, authorship (not even the text) or authority. Since a gift is never earned, in the transitory tents of the gods the self-possessive individual has nowhere to inhabit. What is ours is theirs, but what is theirs isn't ours.

Ganhei uma barraca velha	*I was given and old tent*
foi a cigana quem me deu	*the gipsy gave me it*
O que é meu é da cigana	*What is mine is hers*
O que é dela não é meu	*What's hers isn't mine*

Blurring the diagrams of identification and intelligibility, queered blackened spirits exceed colonial melodies and breach their cadence with caesuras, those intriguing pauses in which time is uncount-able. The sharp, dystonic but euphoric encounters with them syncopate political and ontological regimes. Hauntopology is irreducible to any particular scale and embarrasses tonic harmonies (saturated as they are by frames of dominance). Hauntopology plays the ghost note, a riddle of rhythmic value without discernible pitch so close to the thrilling interrogation that vibrates in Exus and Pombagiras laughter: Who is it?

Lebara, ô minha Lebara	*Lebara, ô my Lebara*
mulher da rua	*street woman*
mulher das almas	*souls' woman*
Quem é?	*Who is it?*

The ghost note

Endnotes

1 "Fala, Majeté! Sete chaves de Exu". Acadêmicos do Grande Rio's samba-enredo for the 2022 carnival

2 Terreiro (and in some places, Terreira) is a general term for Afro-Brazilian temples of various traditions and with diverse physical conformations.

3 One of the many African-Brazilian traditions which first consolidated in the State of Bahia and began to spread nationwide in the late 19th century.

4 Literally brothers/sisters-in-saint, it is the way Candomblé devotees refer to one another in the context of a *família-de-santo* (family-in-saint), which is led by a priest or a priestess generally known as *pai-de-santo* or *mãe-de-santo* (father and mother-in-saint, also *babalorixá* and *yalorixá*). Santo means both the gods (*orixás*, *voduns* and *nkisses*) and the spirits (*guias* or *entidades*).

5 Maria Padilha das Almas (Maria Padilha "of the Souls") is a Pombagira, an entity that, in this context, is part of the spiritual heritage of Tata Loango. Padilha is the manifestation of a white or a mestiza "Spanish" woman who lived in the late 14th century Sevilla. As she herself tells the story, during the trances of Pai Ubaldino, she latter sworn by choice to "work for" the Yoruba *orixá* Oyá and through such an alliance determined to protect all the victims of sexist violences.

6 A common expression in candomblé's literally "tangle", or "plot". Mythological affinities, social and cosmic relationships and life stories are usually determined and described (and, thereby, crucial decision made) through the unveiling and the cultivation of *enredos*. Conceptual unfoldings of the *enredos* are found in Thiago Hoshino's ethnography (2020) *O direito virado no santo: enredos de nomos e axé* (PhD Thesis). Curitiba: Universidade Federal do Paraná. See also Clara Flaksman (2017) Enredo de santo e sincretismos no candomblé de Salvador, *R@U*, 9 (2), pp.153-169.

7 Ubaldino Teixeira Bomfim, interview with Babalorixá, 2020, unpublished.

8 We hint at the work of Edóuard Glissant (1997) *Poetics of Relation*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

9 Exus, Malandros and Pombagiras are notorious *entidades* in Afro-Brazilian cosmologies. Sometimes classified as spirits (although in different rank compared to common *egun*), sometimes as messengers of the *orixás*, they are seen as the forces closest to human matters, desires and behaviours, therefore actionable for a range of needs. The cases of Exu (associated by the Europeans with the catholic devil during colonization) and Pombagiras (pictured as *succubi*, lascivious women with extreme sexual appeal) is specially revealing of ambiguous social imaginaries that surround candomblé.

10 *Egun* or *egungun* refer to the ancestors who may show themselves in many forms, from dreams and sensations to materialization during specific ceremonies where they dance among their descendants (Baba Egun). The term has been generalized to encompass all kinds of spirits recently or long deceased.

11 The racial contract is simultaneously political, moral, and epistemological: see C.W. Mills (1997) *The Racial Contract*.

12 The structural, hierarchical dichotomy between "home" (private) and "street" (public) composes one of the mainstream sociological interpretations of Brazilian sociability and power relations, especially in Roberto DaMatta's version: see DaMatta (1985) *A casa e a rua: espaço, cidadania, mulher e morte no Brasil*. Rio de Janeiro: Rocco.

13 Modern colonial cities are contaminated by pacts of virility which inscribe womanly bodies into male territorial sovereignty. For the Mexican case, see: Rita Laura Segato (2005) Territory, sovereignty and second state crimes: the writing on the bodies of the assassinated women of Ciudad Juarez, Estudos Feministas, 13(2), pp. 265-285.

14 Baixa do Sapateiro is a site of popular gathering and commerce in the ancient central area of Salvador, Bahia. Recent urban reforms have erased layers of time and local spectres.

15 Dénètem Touam Bona (2020) *Cosmopoéticas do refúgio*. Florianópolis: Cultura e Barbárie.

16 What Saidiya Hartman describes as the ranking of life and worth enacted by transatlantic kidnapping, European conquest and colonization. In different ways, the precarization and de-humanization of life can be read for example in: Saidiya Hartman (2008) *Lose Your Mother: A Journey along the Atlantic Slave Route*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux; Judith Butler (2004) *Precarious life: the powers of mourning and violence*. London and New York: Verso.

17 See for example: Rafael Haddock-Lobo (2020) *Os fantasmas da colônia: Notas de Desconstrução e Filosofia Popular Brasileira*. Rio de Janeiro: Ape'Ku.

18 Wanderson Flor do Nascimento (2020) Da necropolítica à ikupolítica, CULT, 254, pp. 29-32.

19 The traumatic resonances of the Middle Passage that produced the colonial materiality trough the enslavement of black people are some of the Gilroy's subjects: Paul Gilroy (1993) *The Black Atlantic*. Cambridge (Ma): Harvard University Press.

20 We allude to the narrative of Beatriz Nascimento in the movie *Orí* (by Raquel Gerber; Brasil, 1989), that gives an image/sound experience of her critical-spiritual thinking of transatlantic relations. For a deep dive into the many contributions of Beatriz to diasporic thinking see Alex Ratts (2007) *Eu sou atlântica: sobre a trajetória de vida de Beatriz Nascimento*. São Paulo: Imprensa Oficial/Instituto Kuanza.

21 Butler and Spivak remind us that percussion and persecution are strongly bound in the musical praise of national anthems. See Judith Butler and Gayatri C. Spivak (2007) *Who Sings the Nation-State?* Oxford, New York: Seagull Books.

22 As Beliso-de-Jesus asserts for the case of Cuban-American routes of transnational *santería*, state borders, religious tourism and procedures of migration are all encompassed in a cosmology of *caminos* (roads), an important category for Afro-Atlantic politics of spacetime. See Aisha M. Beliso-de-Jesus (2015) *Electric Santería. Racial and Sexual Assemblages of Transnational Religion*. New York: Columbia University Press.

A haunted childhood

Tim Edensor

During a recent weekend stay in a coastal town in East Anglia, I visited the austere Holy Trinity church in the small settlement of Blythburgh, the site of an extraordinary supernatural incident. In the 16th century, this venerable ecclesiastical building was terrorised by Black Shuck, a fiendish dog who occasionally ravaged the surrounding villages. One afternoon, as the townsfolk shivered in the church, sheltering from a ferocious storm that raged outside, a deafening clap of thunder was the signal for the gigantic hellhound to burst through the church doors and hasten down the aisle. Terrorising the congregation, he leapt upon a man and a boy bent in prayer, wringing their necks before bounding away. The deep, dark scratches on the door, it is said, are lasting traces of this macabre episode: scorch marks he made upon his exit from the church.

Earlier that day, while we were walking through the strange, watery, often misty countryside, I was reminded that like much of his fiction, M. R. James evocative ghost story, *A Warning to the Curious*, took place within this Suffolk landscape. In the tale, an antiquarian unearths an ancient crown as part of an archaeological investigation. But he has made a severe mistake. For he has conjured up unutterable primordial forces, long concealed, that catastrophically lead to his untimely demise.

As I lay in my hotel bed that night, thinking about these two supernatural accounts, I could not shrug off the feeling that the chill they provoked felt intimately recognisable. With a jolt, I realised that my early 1960s childhood had been inundated with ghostly and supernatural intimations. Between the ages of seven to ten, ghosts haunted my bedtime. Each night, I lay awake, awaiting the arrival of the spectral presence of the numerous spirit-beings that possessed my mind. This acute sense of an imminent apparition colonised my childish imagination. As well as belonging to a very particular time – the distinctive cultural atmosphere of the early 1960s – these ghosts were intimately connected to specific places. Archetypal haunted settings include fog wreathed graveyards, archaic mansions and castles, bleak moors and dense forests. But ghosts might also lurk in the home. In my home.

*

Most of my school holidays were spent in my grandparents' rural Renfrewshire cottage. They were people of the left, atheists and intellectuals, and while my grandfather grew up in a poor, working-class family, my grandmother was born into substantial wealth, had moved between large houses in the south of England and had travelled extensively. Worldly and confident, and with a delicious lust for life, her accent bore traces of this semi-aristocratic heritage.

Holidays at the cottage were packed with diverse pleasures, many driven by my Nan's curiosity and multifarious passions. We would drive to local sites of natural, historical or cultural interest, engage in long discussions about ideas and politics. In the evenings, she would pluck out one of the books that

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lined the many shelves of the cottage's interior and read aloud: poetry, history, fiction. A favourite volume was *Lord Halifax's Ghost Book*, a tale from which was always likely to provide a shivery frisson before bedtime. The book is a compendium of short, melodramatic accounts that tell of inexplicable happenings across the haunted places of Edwardian Britain, most revolving around an overnight stay at a castle or mansion. Tales typically commence with matter-of-fact details about the visit, dressing for dinner, writing letters, and restoring relationships with the owners of the property. More lengthy descriptions of long corridors, stairways, turrets and attics, unopened doorways, grand dining halls and lounges set the scene for the uncanny events that follow. These myths conjure a world of creaking floorboards, floating apparitions, baleful sighs, overwhelming chills, dismal groans and other emanations that paralyse visitors with fear.

Our favourite story was titled "Here I am again!", the "unvarnished tale" of a gentleman who made two trips to a Georgian house in Kent, overnight visits undertaken twenty years apart. During the first visit, the protagonist spends the day yachting with his host. That night, he is awoken by a ghastly phantom bending over his bed and he is rendered utterly immobile. On the second visit, after an evening playing billiards and retiring to bed late, he is unable to sleep. Suddenly the room grows icy and a dreadful voice intones, "Here I am again! Here I am again, after twenty years". Turning around, he sees slowly spinning towards him a white column of light. As the entity draws near to his bedside, continuing to utter the same mantra, it assumes the form he witnessed two decades before.

"Here I am again, after 20 years!", I and my nan would jubilantly chant in unison.

Though the ghost stories from Lord Halifax take place in the rarefied spaces of the landowning class, as James's stories reveal, any enquiry into the history of a particular landscape will reveal that it is saturated with myths of the uncanny. Across Britain, local sites are bedevilled with bogles, fairies, wraiths, black dogs, headless horsemen and white ladies. Assorted spooks make untimely appearances, while ancient springs, stone circles and burial cairns accommodate more archaic shades from the netherworld. We did not have to look very far for our spooky realm; it resonated with the country estates inhabited by Halifax's ghosts. For at the top of the steep lane that led to the cottage was a large, gaunt ruin. Fittingly, this was known locally as "the haunted house". Built in the Scottish Baronial style, its conical turrets, imposing doorways and crow stepping harked back to a medieval world. The crumbling gatehouse was supposed to harbour the phantom of a World War Two airman, though details were sketchy. Amidst the rubble, jackdaws cackled from the roof, metal pipes clanked in the breeze and rodents rustled through the undergrowth.

The gatehouse belonged to a vast, unfinished country estate that had been abandoned since the early years of the 20th century when the wealthy industrialist who owned the property went bankrupt. Construction had ceased on the enormous stately home at the heart of the estate with only the outlying buildings completed. The extensive formal gardens that surrounded the empty mansion had long gone to seed, an effusion of trees and bushes. In some places, formally planted yew hedges had grown into long tunnels formed by overhanging trees. Pushing through trees and brambles, peculiar stone statues, gazebos and balustrades would emerge. And in the middle of a crumbling walled garden, a circular stone fountain surrounded by carved stone lions contained a central column on which were inscribed solemn injunctions, gravely insisting that we should be mindful of our mortality, for death might arrive unexpectedly: *Yesterday Returneth Not; Today is Thine, Misuse it Not; Tomorrow Perchance Cometh Not*. In this unfrequented secret garden, these weighty words lingered. The creatures of my imagination surged as unexpected gusts of wind suddenly blew, trees creaked, and an eerie silence followed. Ghosts seemed only too likely to materialise in such a setting. This was unnerving but it was also oddly delightful.

*

The giddy pleasures of spectral wickedness were enjoyed more fiercely by my other grandmother, a contrastingly parochial, ingenuous and somewhat embittered character. This tiny, frail woman, whom we occasionally visited in her small, terraced house, withheld any grandmotherly affection. A devout worshipper at the nearby Catholic church, she was preoccupied with lurid visions of a suffering Christ, a benign or hellish and eternal afterlife, holy spirits, malevolent creatures, saintly miracles and devilish forms.

Her appearance was somewhat scary in itself: a shock of dyed jet-black hair, dark, beady eyes, a pursed mouth anointed with bright red lipstick and a face whitened to an ethereal hue by smothering layers of foundation. Although the house was small, she reserved the front chamber as a room in which to display ornaments and religious items that included a crucifix of "Our Lord" and an abundance of ceramic models of the Virgin, or "Our Lady", as she called her. My sister and I would sit in her overheated parlour, silently bored, while she regaled us with snippets about the arrival of a handsome new monsignor or the biblical wisdom imparted by the priest. But she had a sly gift for reciting other tales that compelled us to listen, terrifying incidents that were gleefully imparted in a thick, Black Country accent. There would be a pause, a lowering of tone and volume, a glint in her eyes, and in a quavering voice, paying no heed to our tender age, she would begin.

> *Though they frightened me profoundly, I also rather miss these ghost stories and the fears they generated I miss how they seep into encounters with places and landscapes, enchanting them with insinuations of the past and the wondrous*

Living in an early Victorian house on the site of a former convent, she awoke in the middle of the night following a restless sleep. Gathering the blankets around her to combat the icy chill that permeated the room, she turned around to witness a horrifying ghoul at her bedside: a ghastly spectral hag loomed over her, a cadaverous apparition whose decomposing flesh revealed a grinning skull, her rotting mouth dispensing a foul breath that saturated the room. Petrified, she was unable to scream and seemed compelled to cower under the wizened crone's malevolent gaze before the spectre evaporated into the gloom. The unquiet soul of a former inhabitant of the convent, a nun gone astray or a wicked woman who had met an untimely end, she speculated, may have been the source of this evil phantasm.

Though this was a terrifying vision, told with lascivious glee, it was superseded by another story that had a much more dramatic impact upon my delicate young mind. Far more disturbing, inducing visions that caused me to silently howl at the prospect of a visitation after my bedtime, was the shocking story of her nephew, killed at a young age. Roughly the same age as me at his death, it suddenly seemed as if my own death was a possibility. In the fervent prose of the forbiddingly religious, she unnervingly described the appearance of the youthful cadaver in his coffin. Pure white, he was, like alabaster, peacefully sleeping. Guiltlessly pure, untainted by any sin; a bland, perfect goodness soon to be rapturously welcomed into a divine dominion by heavenly angels. Yet though he was journeying to this blissful afterlife, might it not also be possible for him to occasionally return to the earthly realm as a revenant intent solely on haunting me, impassively, silently gazing at me with an accusatory glare, knowing full well of my numerous sins? Baptised into Catholicism, I had precociously decided that the idea of God was absurd. Here was the penalty, an everlasting punishment for disavowing the Faith.

*

Lord Halifax's ghosts, the decomposing apparition, the boy's saintly corpse. They haunted my nights and refused to vanish. So, one night, my Scottish grandparents hatched a plan to rid me of these

phantoms. Rational socialists, scornful of religion and superstition when it exceeded the bounds of fiction, they sought to prove to me that all apparently supernatural experiences were conjured by suggestible optical illusions and over-active imaginations. I was summoned by my granddad to go out into the crepuscular evening for a walk along a rough track bordered by thick trees and bushes, familiar by day but rendered strange by shadowy shapes and impenetrable gloom at night. The tawny owls were hooting and if we were quiet, we might see one. It was a moonless night and care had to be taken to avoid stumbling on the uneven, squelching terrain underfoot. As we stopped in a particularly quiet spot, I was asked to look into the tree above to see if I could spot an owlish shape. Instead, gazing down upon me was a terrifying visage, a cackling ghoul, and on the other side of the lane was another face, mouth open in a soundless scream. A tremor of fear rooted me to the ground. The silence was broken by a knowing laugh from my grandfather. "You see lad, anything can be made to appear as something it is not!". I had been duped. In luminous paint, he had daubed scary faces onto the balloons and placed them in the bushes. What seemed to be a supernatural entity had been wrought by human hand.

The exercise was instructive. It reassured me. There was a rational explanation for all that appears uncanny. This was the strategy I must adopt to soothe my slumbers. A sensible, logical approach would exorcise the superstitious fears spawned by my nocturnal imaginings. It worked for a while. On most nights, I slipped into an easeful sleep. But shortly afterwards, this sweet recourse to reason was shattered.

*

After the holidays, I returned home to my Midlands town, to the lofty, semi-detached Edwardian house in which our family lived. It was a dark house and at night, in the deep murk of my bedroom, all manner of sounds seemed to intensify: the creak of the floorboards contracting as the night grew colder, the guttural surges of water through the pipes, the rattling windowpanes and creaturely scur-ries. In the gloom, the dark shapes of furniture, curtains, lamps started to resemble figures – I had to stop looking or they might spring to life, but averting my gaze was difficult. I had to recall that these shapes were connected to solid, identifiable objects. And I had to remember the lessons disclosed by the luminous balloons.

November 5th, Bonfire Night, had been enthralling. I had gathered a collection of random old clothes, arranged them in human form, tying them together and stuffing them with newspaper before affixing a mask to the head and setting up my guy at the corner of our street. Generous passers-by dropped a total of 15 shillings into my metal cup, a sum I spent on a delectable selection of fireworks for that night's spectacle: bangers, sparklers, jumping jacks, the mine of serpents, roman candles and Catherine wheels. In those days, children could purchase all kinds of pyrotechnic pleasures without restraint. There were few organised displays, and most enthusiasts would either group together with neighbours to build a bonfire on parkland or waste ground or use their back garden to ignite their fireworks. We made a small bonfire in our back garden and let off our fireworks there too. Exhausted after the excitement, I had crawled into bed much later than usual and almost immediately fell asleep.

At some time in the middle of the night I awoke with a start. All was quiet but something was not quite right. At first, I couldn't work out what was wrong. It seemed unnaturally still, too silent and an iciness infused the bedroom. I slowly raised my head from the pillow and looked towards the window on the right, gradually swivelling my head to encompass the whole room. It was not until I had turned fully to the left that I understood the source of my unease. There, standing right next to the bed was a tall figure, looming over me with his arm outstretched, seeming to touch the wall. With indescribable panic, I plunged underneath the bedclothes. Who could this be? How could he

be there? After what seemed an eternity, my rational mind surfaced, contending that I had been the victim of my own imagination, as my grandfather had convincingly demonstrated. In a carefree gesture, I flung back the covers so that the illusion – which is what it must be, a trick of the light, or a shadow – would be revealed. Appallingly, the figure remained in place, impassive and imperturbable. Overwhelmed with terror, throat clogged and pouring with sweat, I retreated beneath the blankets once more and curled into a tight ball. I have no idea how long a time passed but eventually, I decided that I needed to summon my courage to bring this horror to an end.

"DAAAAD!" I yelled. Panicked and summoned from his sleep, my father dashed into the bedroom, switching on the light to disclose that the figure had disappeared. He managed to convince me that there was no such thing as ghosts and that I must have had a bad dream or been deceived. He left the landing light on for the rest of the night.

The following day, the face of the elderly neighbour next door became drained of colour as my mother jokingly recounted my nocturnal experience. Finally, she stuttered, "but that is the room in which the house painter who lived in the house many years ago died. His outstretched arm must have been him painting".

As the stories divulged by my Catholic grandmother had underscored, the home was no refuge against the uncanny. In the dark of the night, unbidden, eerie forces clamour for attention.

Was this also an illusion? A product of an excitable young mind? I've never really been sure.

But I never saw another ghost.

<div align="center">*</div>

In my academic writing I have deployed haunting and ghosts as potent metaphors to conjure up the former workers that haunt industrial ruins and the disappearance of urban working-class cultures.[1] Yet the fears and imagined entities experienced in my childhood have entirely evaporated and no longer disturb my sleep. In the 1960s, perhaps residual cultures of narrating and feeling that emerged in Victorian times were still resonant. They imbued moods and intimations about place, while deeply religious sentiments, feelings of dread, nostalgia and melancholy permeated everyday life. These cultural textures infused the world of my childhood, but they have now largely melted away. And few people are now living who were born in the aftermath of the 19th century to convey such ideas, practices and feelings. Yet ghost stories continue to titillate readers and viewers. Across popular culture, ghostly entities, ineffable and unfathomable, are perhaps narrated in slightly different ways.

Though they frightened me profoundly, I also rather miss these ghost stories and the fears they generated. I miss how they seep into encounters with places and landscapes, enchanting them with insinuations of the past and the wondrous. I miss the quivering apprehension they solicit. I miss their inscrutability and mystery, how they transcend space and time and the boundaries of the material world, flitting through space or suddenly vanishing, slipping into and out of this world.

1 Tim Edensor (2005) The ghosts of industrial ruins: ordering and disordering memory in excessive space, *Environment and planning D: Society and Space*, 23(6), pp. 829-49; Tim Edensor (2008) Mundane hauntings: commuting through the phantasmagoric working-class spaces of Manchester, England, *cultural geographies*, 15(3), pp. 313-33.
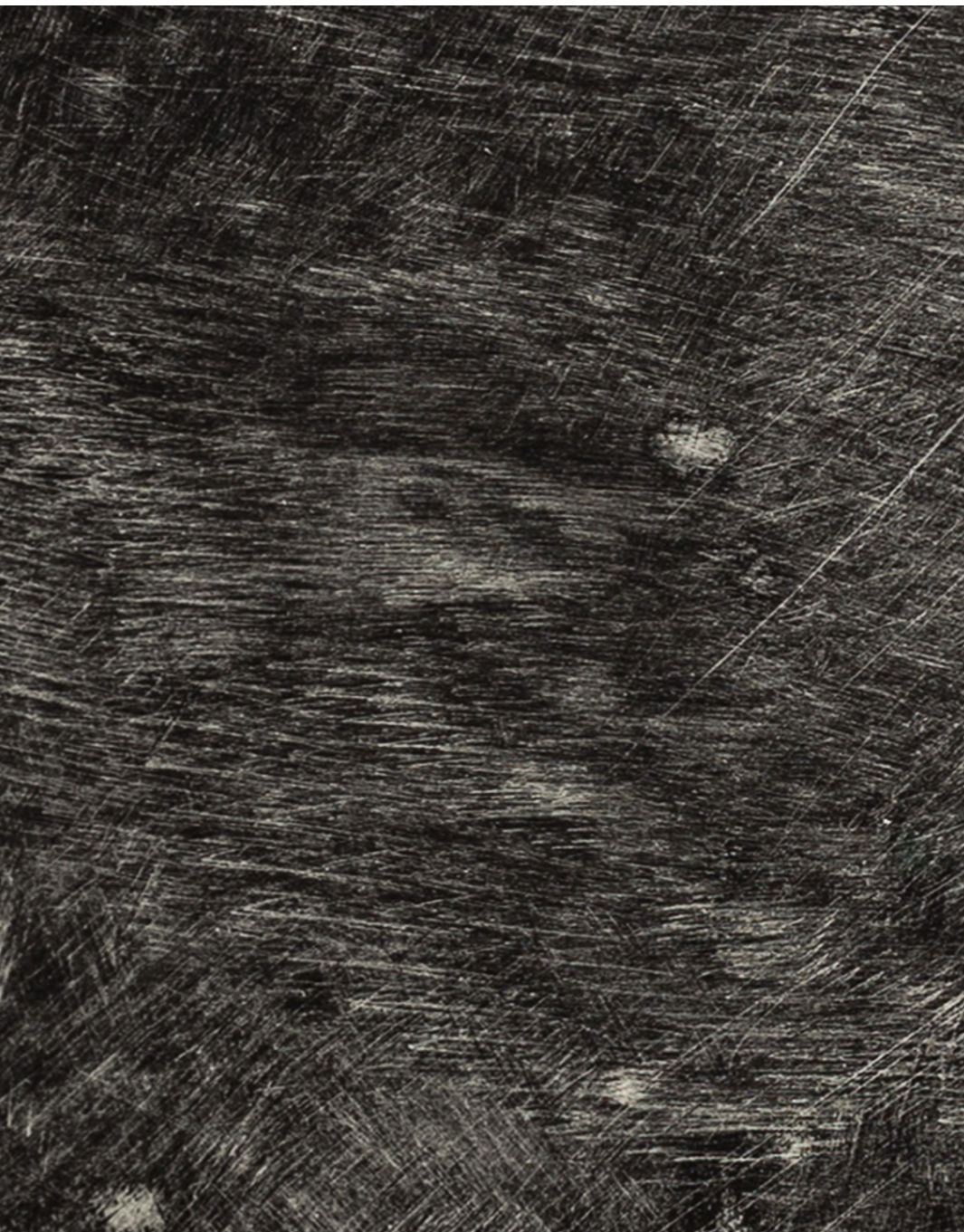
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Ghosts [Crowds]

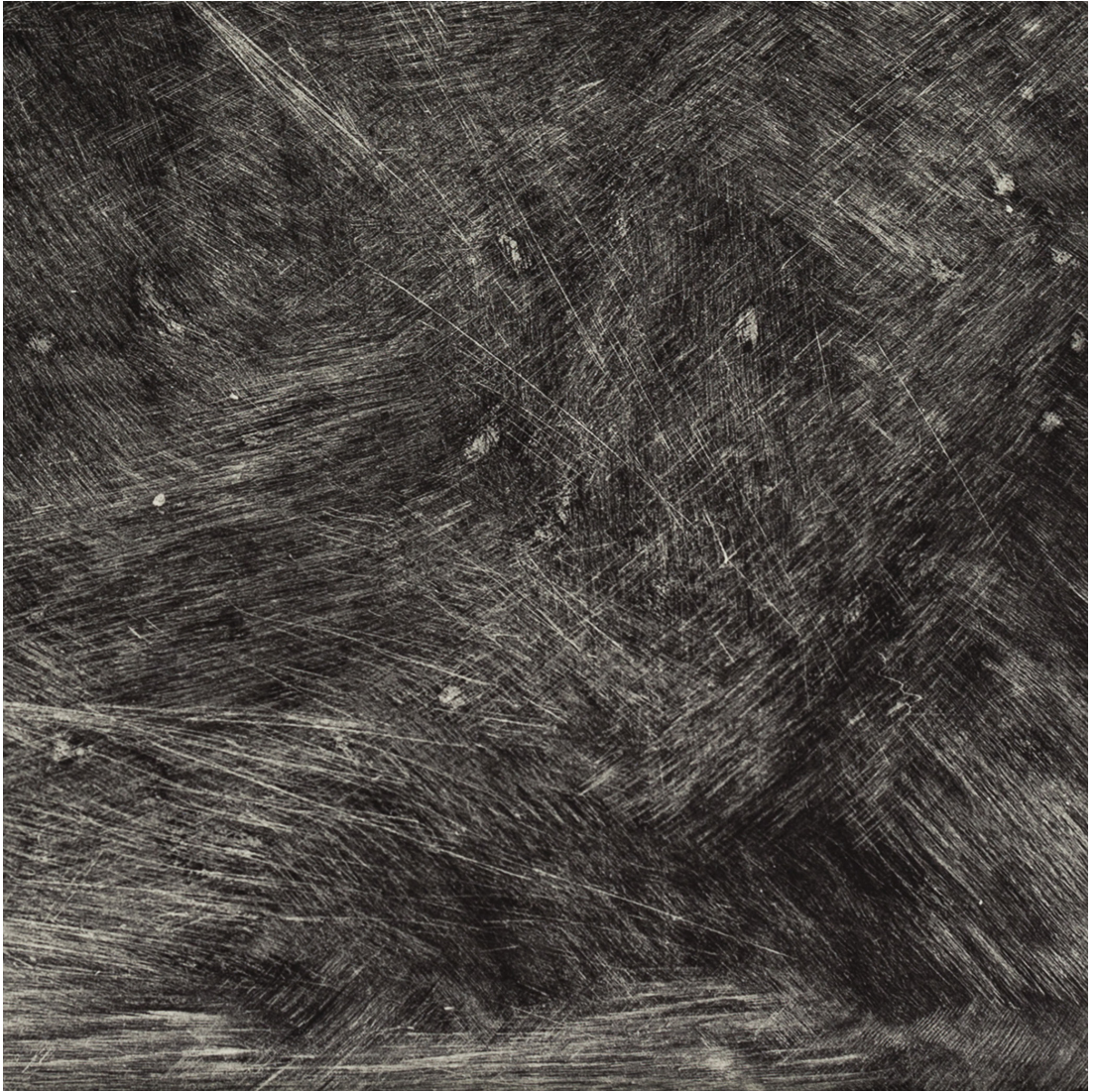**edited by // Alberto Vanolo & Andrea Pavoni**

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