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'Here and There, Then and Now': Envisioning a Palimpsest Methodology

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Abstract
Black feminisms challenge Western conceptions of linearity as an optic for understanding the experiences of Black folx in the United States social imaginary. As such, this article centers the understanding that for Black and minoritized folx, historical legacies carry the lingering effects of what may seem over and done with. These tensions converge on what M. Jacqui Alexander (2005) called the palimpsest, or "a parchment that has been inscribed two or three times, the previous text having been imperfectly erased" (Alexander, 2005, p. 190). A framing of time and realities as palimpsestic, or imperfect erasure, suggests that the past is visible and acting upon the present. The potential of a palimpsest methodology rests on the ethical entanglements of the body, memory, and space-time and afterlives with respect to existing tendencies and reliable possibilities. Methodologically, we propose that the palimpsest necessarily reads data and researcher positionalities as woven together, written over, and grappling with one another. In turn, this article intends to pursue embodied research by envisioning the notion of the palimpsest as a methodological tool. To accomplish this, we begin with a brief review of the literature and disciplinary grounds that root the notion of the palimpsest. From there, we discuss the guiding principles for this approach before offering methodological considerations. Against the violence of complicity, temporality, and objectivity, for researchers, a palimpsest approach argues for an assumed responsibility to the work they engage in, the lives they work with, and sites that ground their work.

Keywords
palimpsest, embodiment, temporality, positionality, Black feminism, Black studies, research methods, qualitative inquiry

Black feminisms wrestle with positionality, the struggle to name, and the need to give meaning to place, such that ontology is inextricably bound to reclamation and self-definition. Reclamation occurs as Black feminisms simultaneously illuminate how histories of terror underwrite dispossession and domination (McKittrick, 2006). For as McKittrick (2006) stated, "If past human categorization was spatialized, in ships and on plantations, in homes, communities, nations, islands, and regions, it also evidences how some of the impressions of transatlantic slavery leak into the future" (p. xvii). In essence, though social and cultural environments are prime for shift and development, one should assume that histories bind ideas to environments in "a series of remapping exercises in which various land spaces are located within an orbit of control" (McKittrick, 2006, p. xviii). Furthermore, historical legacies carry, for Black and minoritized folx, "living effects, seething and lingering, of what seems over and done with" (McKittrick, 2006, p. xviii). These tensions converge on what M. Jacqui

Alexander (2005) called the palimpsest, or "a parchment that has been inscribed two or three times, the previous text having been imperfectly erased" (Alexander, 2005, p. 190). A framing of time and realities as palimpsestic, or imperfect erasure, suggests that the past is visible and acting upon the present. It signifies the ways current, new ways of being have already been inscribed in earlier positioning.

Expanding on this idea, Alexander (2005) noted: "The idea of the 'new' structured through the 'old' scrambled, palimpsestic

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character of time, both jettisons the truncated distance of linear time and dislodges the impulse for incommensurability, which the ideology of distance creates" (p. 190). The palimpsest, thus, "rescrambles the 'here and now' and the 'then and there' to a 'here and there' and a 'then and now'" (p. 190), making visible the ways epistemologies that appear dissimilar, in fact, collide and converge. Methodologically, the palimpsest necessarily reads history, participants, and researchers as woven together, written over, and grappling with one another.

In turn, this article intends to pursue embodied research by envisioning the notion of a palimpsest as a methodological tool. Put simply, we explore what it means to take up the idea that histories appear in present day realities when researching alongside minoritized communities. As a qualitative project, this requires scholars to move beyond simply the current moment, extending their lens to include the histories of trauma and resilience that inform participants' realities. To outline what we mean by "a palimpsest methodology," we begin with a brief review of the literature and disciplinary grounds that root the palimpsest. From there, we discuss the guiding principles that undergird the palimpsest methodology before offering recommendations on how to translate this qualitative form of inquiry into one's research methods. Qualitative researchers across academic disciplines will benefit from embracing a palimpsest methodological approach, especially those who seek to recognize individuals' lives as not only encapsulating their own but the legacies of those who came before them.

Disciplinary Groundings

Etymologically, the word palimpsest stems from the Greek *palin* ("once again") and *psaein* ("scrape") (Moss & Schreiber, 2006, p. 9). According to Johannessen (2013), "the practice of palimpsesting originally referred to the technique used by artisans to re-use scarce material for, in effect, their inscriptions of new ideas and ideals of new, emerging worlds" (p. xvi). A tool of record, the palimpsest, was sturdy enough to withstand multiple uses and alterations. The parchment was typically washed, scraped, and resurfaced in an effort to blot out what was inscribed, and overwritten with new text (Johannessen, 2013; Moss & Schreiber, 2006; Spivak, 1976). The washing and scraping, however, was typically not complete in that it often left traces of the previous writings. In these cases, it became difficult to interpret what was drafted because the traces of former alterations bled into the forefront. The layers of a palimpsest, thus, could not be read in linear, sequential time as each layer was part and parcel of what came before it. Juxtaposing layers challenges notions of erasure that would otherwise believe that to move in linearity was to leave behind that which, materially, was not intended to survive.

Instead of erasure, conceptually, the palimpsest fluidly conserves and extends the previous iterations as necessary for comprehending the entirety of a structure, system, or phenomena (Moss & Schreiber, 2006). Said differently, "texts and erasures are superimposed to bring about other texts or erasures.

A new erasure creates text; a new text creates erasure. The composite meaning of a palimpsest is radically different than the meaning of any individual layer" (Moss & Schreiber, 2006, p. 9), engendering a critical reading of any finalized product. Building on this absence of origin and the possibility of infinite finalities, Spivak (1976) noted, "the relationship between the reinscribed text and the so-called original text is not that of patency and latency, but rather the relationship between two palimpsests" (p. lxxv). Making a similar point, Bakhtin (1986) wrote,

> There is neither a first nor a last work, and there are no limits to the dialogic context (it extends into the boundless past and the boundless future). Even past meanings, that is, those born in the dialogue of past centuries, can never be stable (finalized, ended once and for all) (p. 170).

Relatedly, Derrida (1978) reflecting on the "stratification of surfaces" suggested, "It joins the two empirical certainties by which we are constituted: infinite depth in the implication of meaning, in the unlimited envelopment of the present, and, simultaneously, the pellicular essence of being, the absolute absence of any foundation" (p. 224).

For scholars and educators, the notion of the palimpsest names the "discursive, material, and psychical linkages of history and the present, since despite the effacements, the sedimentation of previous text remains" (Coloma et al., 2009, p. 5). In a postcolonial sense, the palimpsest is "a useful way of understanding the developing complexity of culture, as previous 'inscriptions' are erased and overwritten, yet remain as traces within present consciousness" (Ashcroft et al., 2000, p. 160). Furthermore,

> While the "layering" effect of history has been mediated by each successive period, "erasing" what has gone before, all present experience contains ineradicable traces of the past that remain part of the constitution of the present. Teasing out such vestigial features leftover from the past is an important part of understanding the nature of the present (Ashcroft et al., 2000, p. 158, p. 158).

Culture, in this way, becomes an accretion of many layers of text; pre-colonial societies and colonizing events are always at play in postcolonial cultures and how societies cultivate their sense of self.

Building upon the work of Sigmund Freud, Johannessen (2013) metaphorically described the palimpsest as the "receptive surface […] legible in suitable lights" (p. xvi), denoting its capacity to be imposed upon and transformed. Moreover, the palimpsest as a metaphor thinks "expansively beyond the boundaries of what is known about the relations between the social and the symbolic" (Byrd, 2005, p. 2). Connecting the palimpsest with the concept of the social imagination-the way people imagine their surroundings and social existence-the relationship between the social and symbolic, suggests "that

any layer, literally or figuratively understood, is necessarily, in the final analysis, borne forth of the priorities and primacies of the pervasive imaginary" (Johannessen, 2013, p. xvii). Illustrating the "ghostly traces" (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 170) of this pervasive social imaginary, materialist Black feminisms discuss the ways Blackness functions as a site of the palimpsest.

Black Feminism

In her formative piece, *Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book,* Hortense Spillers (1987) made a distinction between the *body* and the *flesh*. The body could be said to re-present the fullness of humanity entitled to those understood as human (Spillers, 1987; Weheliye, 2014). The flesh denotes the "zero degree of social conceptualization that does not escape concealment under the brush of discourse, or the reflexes of iconography" (Spillers, 1987, p. 67). Accordingly, this "social irreparability" constitutes what Spillers called "high crimes against the flesh" (p. 67). Precipitously, the flesh, in place of the body, is taken to mean "its seared, divided, ripped-apartness, riveted to the ship's hole, fallen, or 'escape' overboard" (p. 67). Tucked beyond the visual sphere, the wounded flesh is stamped to the body, infused in the skin, and layered by histories, giving way to what Spillers put forth as a hieroglyphics of the flesh:

> These undecipherable markings on the captive render a kind of hieroglyphics of the flesh whose sever disjunctures come to be hidden to the cultural seeing by skin color. We might well ask if this phenomenon of marking and branding actually 'transfers' from one generation to another. Finding its various symbolic substitutions in an efficacy of meanings that repeat the initiating moments (p. 67).

Similarly, Weheliye (2014) discussed the flesh as the crux of vulnerability, as it brutalizes its bearers repeatedly. The flesh, thus, is inextricably bound to oppressive histories both in the present and into the future. Weheliye, expounding on the flesh, wrote that these hieroglyphics

> "[are] transmitted to the succeeding generation of black subjects who have been 'liberated' and granted body in the aftermath of dejure enslavement. The hieroglyphics of the flesh do not vanish once affixed to proper personhood (the body); instead, they endure as a pesky potential vital to the maneuverings of cultural seeing by skin color" (p. 39).

Some scholars suggest that the notion of "proper personhood" is a paradigmatic impossibility for seared flesh (Sexton, 2008; Spillers, 1987; Wilderson, 2010), but Weheliye's contention that the hieroglyphics do not vanish across time situates the flesh both as a palimpsest site and subject to western, United States, palimpsest memory.

Sharpe (2016) averred that Black and minoritized folx exist in the wake as "the past that is not past reappears, always, to rupture the present" (p. 9). She continued, writing, "The Past—or, more accurately, pastness—is a position. Thus, in no way can we identify the past as past" (p. 15). Living in the wake, for Sharpe (2016), means "living the history and present of terror, from slavery to the present, as the ground of our everyday Black existence; living the historically and geographically dis/continuous but always present and endlessly reinvigorated brutality in, and on, our bodies" (p. 15). It is to un/survive in the afterlife of slavery (Brand, 2001; Hartman, 2008; Wilderson, 2010). Therefore, to think, theorize, and exist in the wake is to do so from the hold of the ship (Wilderson, 2010), which is to confront the impossibilities that one's existence might entail ethically. Brand (2001), conceptually evoking the door of no return, might think about this hold as "sitting in the room with history" (p. 24), whereas "one enters a room and history follows; one enters a room and history precedes. History is already seated in the chair in the empty room when one arrives. Where one stands in society seems always related to this historical experience" (p. 24). Relevant to a palimpsest, histories are intimately connected to futurity and outlining who has access to which futures.

Literary Methods

Tracing the palimpsest in Black feminist and Black women's works cast light on the palimpsest as a literary device as well. Bailey and Jamieson (2017), remembering the writings of Octavia Butler, discussed the palimpsest as an analytic for memory work. Specifically, they conceptualized palimpsestic memorialization "as a process of reconstituting personal history into a fantastic multivalent narrative that can be abstracted and safely shared" (p. vi). Thinking with Alexander (2005) who understood "western conceptions of time as linear and fixed, which position progress and modernity as the opposite of traditional cultural practices" (Bailey & Jamieson, 2017, p. vii), Bailey and Jamieson (2017) recognized time as messy and absent of discrete boundaries. Palimpsest memorization engenders a process of curating and embodying memories of the past for a contemporary moment. Furthermore, it intends to place memories in "a new contextual here and now to further explore the significance of that there and then" (p. vii). Octavia Butler took up this project masterfully by placing her relationships and the experiences of others in complex, precarious tensions with space and time. In the work of *Kindred* (1979), for example, Butler sought to bring readers into the thoughts and feelings she was wrestling with during a particular season in her life, submitting,

> one of the reasons I wrote Kindred was to resolve my feelings because after all, I ate because of what she did...Kindred was a kind of reaction to some of the things going on during the sixties when people were feeling ashamed of, or more strongly, angry with their parents for not having improved things faster, and I wanted to take a person from today and send that person back to slavery (p. 496).

Butler continued, writing, "I was really dealing with some 1960s feelings when I wrote this book. So I'm not surprised that it strikes you that way, as a matter of fact, I'm glad. I meant it to be complicated" (p. 497). Here, palimpsestic memorialization becomes "a way to address the unresolved, ever-present past in ways that might be more generative than tragic" (Bailey & Jamieson, 2017, p. vii). Additionally, in Butler's (1979) remembrance, readers are extended an opportunity to enter and engage with the experiences of others.

Palimpsest, according to Ashcroft et al. (2000), can be used as an analytic to mark a place. The authors noted that "mapping, naming, fictional and non-fictional narratives create multiple and sometimes conflicting accretions which become the dense text that constitutes place. In short, space becomes place through language, in the process of being written and named" (Ashcroft et al., 2000, p. 158). Moreover, palimpsests draw some comparison to the notion of citationality (Butler, 2011; Derrida, 1978; Silverstein, 2005). By definition, citationality "bespeaks the property of iterability, the reproducibility of a form, and the norm that governs its intelligibility and producibility, over distinct discursive time-spaces" (Nakassis, 2012, p. 626). Citationality is an interdiscursive, reanimating act that bridges events and ideas and re-presents the citational point. Theorizing citationality intervenes on the notion of ritual and performativity, suggesting that an act is not simply repetition, but that some type of alteration has occurred which can give way to multiplicitous meanings (Butler, 2011).

This brief review of the various uses of the palimpsest across disciplines provides some understanding of the discursive potential of the palimpsest as a methodological tool. In particular, the review clarifies that attention to the body-flesh relationship, history, and memory are critical guiding principles for educators and scholars to consider if they are to make full use of the palimpsest. The next section explicates the ethical import of these guiding principles.

Guiding Principles of Palimpsest Methodology

Building on the ways the scholars take up the notion of a palimpsest in literature, we situate a palimpsest methodological approach as an explicitly critical qualitative project, one that encourages researchers to embrace "emancipatory visions" (Denzin, 2016, p. 8). Critical scholars mobilizing palimpsest methodology are committed to using qualitative means to bring to light the injustices present in society, working toward the eradication of structural inequity (Denzin, 2016; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005). A palimpsest methodological approach moves in and with a tradition of analytic tools that involve erasure and writing over past representations. One approach in this tradition lifts defamiliarizing tools in order to peel back and explicate long-standing traditions and otherwise normal events (Kaomea, 2003). These interpretative techniques look beyond what has become automatized to make the familiar strange. Pursuit of a comprehensive interpretative analysis that a palimpsest approach gestures toward "should progress beyond the study of surface appearances and should include the persistent excavation of perspectives and circumstances that have been buried, written over, or erased" (Kaomea, 2003, p. 16). Defamiliarizing, in this way, calls for an examination of subtext and nuance beyond the dominant narrative and toward that which is under constant threat of erasure (Derrida, 1976).

As a way to think with and through contact and frictions, a palimpsest methodological approach is in conversation with what King (2019) called the Black shoal, whereas, analytically, a shoaling effect signals disruption in movement and flow of normative time and space, routes, and knowledge systems. A shoal is indeterminate, unstable, and difficult to chart, as it forces a normative routine to shift, change direction, adjust, and pause. This process of movement and encounter transforms the qualities, and more specifically, the methodological questions involved, in ways that halt normative sensibilities and logics. As such, a palimpsest methodology works with Black feminisms (Dillard, 2012; James, 1999; Spillers, 1987), attending to the following guiding principles: retinal attachments, sites of memory, as well as space and time and afterlives. We begin this explication by centering the body.

Retinal Attachments

As noted above, entering the palimpsest requires that researchers understand the self as a palimpsestic starting place. As such, taking up the palimpsest demands that one *sight* (McKittrick, 2006) the self. Sighting, as a reflexive tool, requires that one choose to see, give sight to, the complexity of one's body-mind (Schalk, 2018) as it comes to the research process. In turn, the palimpsest follows Collins' (1990) words when she noted, "in a social context which denies and deforms a person's capacity to realize [one' self], the problem of self-consciousness is not simply a problem of thought, but also a problem of practice" (p. 28). Herein, body-mind references the holistic body as a mental, emotional, spiritual, spatial entity that is always already bound up with history. Sighting refuses a viewing of the self as disparate components, calling instead for a reflexive orientation that grapples with how systems of oppression structures one's life, and what worlds are possible in one's body-mind. Sighting may suppose that one has the capacity to understand the self as fully human, and thus, capable of objective reflexivity. In response, history earnestly verifies that reflexive exploration is distinctly different depending upon one's multiple and intersecting identities within larger structures of power and oppression (Collins, 1990; Crenshaw, 1989).

Researchers have varying entry points in the research process. Thus, they do not, and cannot follow the same routes, as some genealogical lines have been destroyed; some have been barred from recognizable citizenship in and beyond a western, United States context; some were and continue to be denied property and personhood; and some were never understood as human (Spillers, 1987). Thinking with Brand

(2001) who centered slavery and anti-Blackness when she said, "the door of no return is on her retina" (Brand, 2001, p. 89), we glance upon the body as an optic (see Browne, 2015) for seeing and understanding body-minds in the world. This framing, which generates and attaches minoritized bodies to various histories, should also ground how one positions the self-concerning other body-minds in the research process. In line with the palimpsest, sighting (seeing) body-minds is a project of confrontation, intentionally working to bring what has or is being erased, to the fore. Purposeful in its efforts to name who and what-minoritized body-minds-are forgettable, a palimpsest approach functions to keep the site of memory alive.

Site of Memory

Re-presentation is made possible through memory (Dillard, 2012), where "memories are an invitation to recollect (re-embody or remember) past events at the present moment, which requires a reinterpretation of those memories in light of subsequent and current information" (Bailey & Jamieson, 2017, p. vii). McKittrick (2006), invoking Morrison (1987), wrote that the site of memory, a partnership between actual and the possible "chart a way into the imagination, the past, and a different sense of place. The site of memory begins to re-imagine a different worldview, wherein black lives are validated through black intellectual histories and the physical landscape" (p. 32). A palimpsest approach must carefully work with what remains in the form of narratives, sounds, images, spaces and behaviors. Revisiting these sites of memory also promises to be painful work as it reckons with historical and personal silences (Morrison, 1987). With retinal attachment to the wake of brutalities, Frederick Douglas (1845) called on the memory of Aunt Hestor's beating. He did this in order to "position his white readers to see that they have maintained innocence of such brutality despite being, like him, though in ways different than him, witness to and participant in brutal scenes of production, conception, and transformation" (Sharpe, 2014, p. 192). This tragic site of memory demands questions of Douglass' silence, while also grappling with the weight of oppression that sought to break both him and Aunt Hester. When forgetting constraint memory, minoritized body-minds and histories are absented (McKittrick, 2006). Acting on this absented space, memory, in and through a palimpsest approach, pushes against discursive attempts at erasure to legitimize minoritized existence as real and experiential.

Space and Time and Afterlives

McKittrick (2006) posited that reconstructing interior lives by way of "sighting" and "siting" minoritized lives and experiences, can facilitate nuanced understandings of place in the present. A palimpsest approach, organized on the premise that afterlives survive across space and time, does not depend on disciplinary solutions to the abjection of minoritized existence

(Hartman, 2007; Sharpe, 2016). Nuanced understanding, instead, suggests that one ought to "theorize the multiple meanings of that abjection through inhabitation, that is, through living them in and as consciousness" (Sharpe, 2016, p. 33). Inhabitation might read the self through the lens of what Hartman and Wilderson (2003) termed, the position of the unthought. The palimpsest opens the space "to think from and into that position" (Sharpe, 2016, p. 30). Turning back to *Kindred* (Butler, 1979), the protagonist Dana lost her arm in a space-time conundrum: "Dana's arm, Dana's body, and Dana's memory are past-elsewhere and present-incomplete" (McKittrick, 2006, p. 35). In her present body, without her left arm, Dana must engage the place differently. Reading the scenario through a palimpsest approach, with attention to space, time, and afterlives, implies that history is fleshed through and always shifting the present. A complicated relationship with space, time, and histories afterlives instructs researchers in their "listening for the unsaid, translating misconstrued words, and refashioning disfigured lives" (Hartman, 2008, p. 2–3) into a legible, though imperfect and unfinished, existence. In the presence of repeating histories, the palimpsest considers what it means to "attend to, care for, and comfort" those consigned to the "imminence and immanence" (Sharpe, 2016, p. 38) of the wake.

These guiding principles are indicative of a project that is neither pessimistic nor overly optimistic; instead, a palimpsest approach rests in the in-between, resistant to binary oppositions. Furthermore, a palimpsest approach may "gesture toward somewhere that is not this place, this present where despair reigns, towards somewhere that, does not yet exist" (Guha-Majumdar, 2017, p. 131). As such, the next sections expound on possible palimpsest methodological techniques as interruptions of universal dispositions of time and space, positions of the body, and memory.

Translating the Methodology into Methods

With the above guiding principles in mind, we see it imperative to name how it is that qualitative researchers interested in following the palimpsest as a methodology can translate it into their methods. Although we do not profess that the following recommendations are exhaustive in the ways that scholars can mobilize the notion of the palimpsest, we do underscore that the act of engaging in this methodology must be consistent with the principles named above. Specifically, we discuss the importance of practicing critical self-reflexivity influenced by retinal attachments, as well as attending to these attachments, memory, and space/time in data collection and analysis.

Following a Practice of Embodied Critical Self-Reflexivity

As mentioned above, engaging the palimpsest in qualitative inquiry necessitates a process of *sighting* (McKittrick, 2006) the self. In qualitative work, scholars often point to the fact that

the researcher functions as the instrument (Given, 2008), which signifies that objectivity is neither possible nor desirable. Following Berger (1972), methodologically, sighting represents an understanding of the self as composed of experiences:

> The present tense of the verb refers *to be* only to the present: nevertheless with the first person singular in front of it, it absorbs the past which is inseparable from it. 'I am' includes all that has made me. It is more than a statement of immediate fact: it is already biographical (p. 320).

Thus, researchers must attend to the ways in which their identities, backgrounds, and assumptions play a role throughout their study. The act of reflexivity means that scholars are thinking about these ideas in the course of the research project. Yet, distinct from simple reflection, the palimpsest requires individuals to engage in a practice of critical self-reflexivity, which means one is "not just thinking deeply about assumptions; rather, it has a specific political purpose" (Brookfield, 2008, p. 96). In this vein, a researcher should attend to the positions of power that they inhabit, but also how their own legacies of oppression play a role in their approach to the study.

Specifically, we contend that palimpsest researchers should follow a practice of embodied critical self-reflexivity. The act of naming it as an embodied practice is a way of signaling that it not only functions as a cognitive process of reflecting on one's positionality throughout the study, but rather, to recognize the vulnerability that is attached to the flesh (Weheliye, 2014). Notably, other scholars have argued for the importance of recognizing how attention to affect should be integral to practicing reflexivity (Burman, 2006; Whitson, 2017). Gemignani (2011), for example, argued for a reflective analysis that contends with researchers' tensions, fantasies, and indecisions in the process of rapport building and data analysis on the premise that as contexts and experiences within a study become more meaningful for the researcher, they simultaneously influence how one interprets and makes sense of the subject self. Here, Gemignani (2011) motioned for countertransference as a way for the researcher to embrace vulnerability and recognize their emotional reactions as sites of knowledge about the self and the research participant(s) that may facilitate a more transparent and communicable inquiry process.

And yet, the palimpsest research is attentive to how one's emotions and affect are situated within historical memories of trauma and resilience. A researcher employing the palimpsest asks: Which histories are attached to me? How do these pasts influence the ways that I am present in this project? How does it impact how I view others and their histories? These questions are imperative to answer throughout the research project. One must not only approach this from a strictly cognitive approach, representing a disembodied position, but instead researchers should take pulse of how they are feeling, moving, and internalizing the study. Following Gemignani (2011), this reflexive and vulnerable approach compiles and

sits with "participants, the data, the process of research, and [the self] through constructions (e.g., the "dis-" and "mis-" of being "placed") of [one's] experiences, emotions, and memories that were in the past as much as in the present and future" (p. 705). Situating the self in this way shrinks the objective stance that defines the boundaries of scientism-the researcher and researched-and instead, makes room for new possibilities of insight in the liminal, in-between. As scholars are making decisions relative to critical self-reflexivity, they must also make choices specific to data collection that honor the palimpsest.

Attending to the Historical in Data Collection

Continuously coming to understand how one is situated in a project is key to then making a plan on how they should collect data from participants. The process of engaging the palimpsest in qualitative research needs a strong attention to qualitative methods in order to bring to light historical memory, affect, and visions of the flesh. This may require scholars to revisit their assumptions about what qualitative data collection methods are intended to *do*. Similarly, researchers must also revisit notions of the archive when engaging the palimpsest. Specifically, Black historical literary scholars remind us that the reading of archival documents has always been political and incomplete, leading to the re-reading of documents to reveal the "alternate narratives of agency, humanity, and empowerment" (Walters, 2013, p. 1). In doing so, one proposes not only "what happened" or "what was said to have happened," but also, "what may have happened" (Walters, 2013, p.1). We as authors then extend this to say that *what may have happened* manifests in how individuals make meaning of the world today. In rescrambling such that the "then" and "now" becomes the "then and now" (Alexander, 2005, p. 190), so must researchers extend the potential of methods to bring to light historical realities. Specifically, we offer reflections on the practice of interviewing, the use of archival research, and leveraging arts-based methods within palimpsest scholarship.

What of the interview? Often regarded as a hallmark of qualitative scholarship, interviewing allows researchers to gain insight into how participants make meaning of their experiences, surroundings, and lives (Warren, 2001). And yet, the task of a researcher hoping to mobilize a palimpsest methodology is to not only understand how participants' realities are situated within the present, but also how they are connected to an ancestral dimension. Of note, using interviews in the context of a palimpsest methodology inherently pushes qualitative researchers to rethink what counts as an archive. From the perspective of the palimpsest, drawing upon Black feminist theorists (Hartman, 2008; Sharpe, 2016), Black and minoritized folx are themselves archives of legacies of trauma and resilience. To recognize the difference between the body and flesh, for example, means to illustrate how histories have been engrained on the vulnerable flesh (Spillers, 1987; Weheliye, 2014).

As a practice, this requires that researchers pose inquiries about how participants' process of making meaning in the present is influenced by the traces of the past. However, scholars must also embrace notions of embodiment as they seek to understand these realities in interviewing. In particular, researchers should engage with participants about not only how they are able to put their stories into words, which privileges linguistic complexity, but they must also be attentive to the role of affect and the body in their interviewing. What emotions does one emote when discussing their experiences? In what way does the body manifest the traces of history? These questions are imperative to keep in mind during interviews as a way to participate in sighting, not only of self but of others (McKittrick, 2006).

As a palimpsest methodology requires that researchers rethink what counts as an archive, so does it challenge scholars to conceptualize a new role for what is widely regarded as the archive. Importantly, we understand the archive as marked by loss, fragmentation, and violence, and, as such, scholars must reckon with the splintered pieces of a past instead of reviving complete histories. One's relationship to research, thus, must be met with critique and an awareness of the ways power has functioned over time to distort and silence the voices of minoritized people. Yet, and still, as Morgan (2015) contended, the archive is still home to "the counternarrative, or at least its possibility" (p. 154). Home to documents, photos, periodicals, and more, historical archives represent a site in which fractured memory lives. For Black feminists, historical archives become a place of remembering, as well as imagining, the pain and tales of survival that have come before them (Burin & Sowinksi, 2014). In the context of palimpsest, the documents that one retrieves from the archives are of course themselves a form of data that can provide (partial) insight into historical legacies of oppression. And still, we wonder how else researchers can leverage archival documents in their qualitative inquiry. For instance, we imagine situations in which individuals can use photographs found in the archives in the service of photo-elicitation, a research method that asks participants to wrestle with their emotions and thoughts relevant to images presented to them (Harper, 2002). In doing so, scholars can note the reactions and sensemaking of participants as they gaze upon cultural occurrences that preceded them. As in the Black historical literary tradition, this act provides individuals the agency to imagine what could have happened (Walters, 2013), together with how it impacts them today. Nevertheless, we emphasize the potentially painful experience that may result in evoking memories (Morrison, 1987), meaning that scholars must be prepared to work with participants as they feel, think, and respond when using methods such as photo-elicitation.

Connected to photo-elicitation, we also see it important to bring to light the potential of arts-based methods relative to palimpsest methodology. Photo-elicitation represents one of many that people can employ in qualitative studies guided by the palimpsest. One reason that arts-based methods are particularly well-situated to mobilize the palimpsest involves their capacity to work with/through the body to create the environment for participants to feel and emote relative to history. At its core, the palimpsest conjures up poetics and visuals (Johannessen, 2013), lending to arts-based methods' relationship to this methodology. As explained by Shklovsky (1965), the use of poetics and literary techniques perform defamiliarization in that they inhibit familiar perceptual patterns, requiring conscious engagement. Poetics necessitates that a reader pause, forcing a different reading and attention to a piece of work. Recognizing the wide array of arts-based research methods available (Knowles & Cole, 2008), we encourage researchers to be creative and intentional in their use. Creativity assists in making the familiar strange (Deleuze, 2000) by challenging the confines of traditional discourse and upsetting taken for granted assumptions. For example, what would it look like for participants to engage in iterative processes of drawing relative to their pasts and present? The technique can engender a nuanced meaning making process that allows participants to differently encounter space and the opportunity to communicate their intent (see Rose, 2001). Additional potential for this approach is evidenced by Mannay (2010) who found that the creation of self-directed visual data elicited a range of affective responses and served as a vehicle for new understandings for research participants. The approach can create space for participants' reflexivity, manifesting a richer revelation of past impressions on the present and one's future orientations. How could researchers engage participants in performance to make these connections? These examples are only a few of how researchers can re-imagine these qualitative methods to bring to life the workings of the palimpsest.

Exposing Layers of Space and Time in Data Analysis

What does it mean to unearth the interconnections between the past and present in a person's narrative? How do researchers lean into the multiple meanings that may exist in qualitative data in order to achieve the potential of the palimpsest? In fact, to see the palimpsest as a process of reusing material to reveal "inscriptions of new ideas and ideals of new, emerging worlds" (Johannessen, 2013, p. xvi) means that scholars must similarly be able to reveal the complexities of experience that exists in qualitative data. In order to go about this process, we recommend that researchers embrace an approach that recognizes the layered nature of language and that resists singularity in meaning. Consequently, we follow the example of qualitative theorists who argue for the deconstruction of ideas present in text (Jackson & Mazzei, 2013; Lather, 1991).

In order to draw on the site of memory (McKittrick, 2006) in the analytical process, we contend that researchers must first begin by engaging in remembering, understanding the historical sites that may play a role in their research project. Therefore, scholars engaging in a palimpsest methodology must do their own work in first reading, learning, and acknowledging the legacies of oppression that might play a role

in how participants make meaning of their experiences. A project guided by the palimpsest would be incomplete without an understanding of the historical sites that have extended into the present moment. After all, in order to be "sitting in the room with history" (Brand, 2001, p. 24), one must first know the history with which they find themselves in the room. For instance, to leverage the palimpsest methodology in a study on Black folx' experiences in what is considered the United States would be incomplete without the knowledge of how chattel slavery shaped/s their realities as they continue to live in the wake (Sharpe, 2016). With this type of knowledge in mind, scholars then must peel back the temporal layers present in the data.

Once data are collected, a palimpsest methodology requires a practice in re-reading. That is, to uncover the past text that is always inscribed in the palimpsest (Ashcroft et al., 2000; Coloma et al., 2009), a researcher should come to understand the multiplicities present in participants' stories. Therefore, as is typical in traditions such as critical discourse analysis, which requires people to view what might be hidden in plain sight (see Huckin, 1997), so should palimpsest researchers orchestrate multiple readings of their data. Specifically, we recommend that readers conduct a reading of their data, keeping close to how the participants' experiences are contextualized within contemporary times. A palimpsest reading of data, in this way, engages what Sharpe (2016) called Black visual/textual annotations and redactions. This methodological practice is a commitment to reading otherwise, toward seeing in excess of what a photo/text might offer on its surface. It is a practice of seeing beyond the logic of capture and frame. Through this lens, the palimpsest approach expects and enacts movement where there is stillness.

Moreover, a belief in the life and liveliness of images/ visuality puts the palimpsest in conversation with Campt (2017) who discussed the notion of listening to images. Campt (2017) read Black diasporic archives as sites of quiet refusal as she takes up, and widens, affective registers to key into sounds and frequencies embedded within images. Her archival listening practices work to sight everyday practices of Black survival and possibility. Concomitantly, this approach is consistent with Hartman's (2019) work to chronicle the wayward, beautiful interior lives of young Black women at the turn of the 20th century. Here, Hartman (2019) confronted the mystifying power and distortion of the public archive to recreate the intimate, sensory dimensions of Black womens' lives.

Building on these practices, during the first reading of a palimpsest approach, a researcher must ask themselves the question: how does this participant discuss manifestations of oppression that they see around them? Following this first reading, we then recommend that scholars conduct another in which they view the data from a historical perspective. They should inquire: how is it that the forces of oppression encountered by participants are situated within a larger historical legacy? It is here that the background research suggested

previously will prove to be beneficial. Following this reading, we encourage researchers to pair these two readings together. This final reading incorporates the perspectives from a contemporary and a genealogical point-of-view in order for scholars to see how they work with one another. This process mirrors Moss and Schreiber's (2006) belief that the palimpsest occurs when one layer is superimposed onto one another. In this case, different readings of the data act as layers that are superimposed throughout the analytical process for palimpsest methodology.

Because of the multiple readings and the ways data spans various times and space, it is recommended that scholars lean into the messiness of what it means to view the participants' stories from a palimpsest methodology. Rather than follow coding procedures present in qualitative research, which creates a neat and coherent interpretation of an inherently complex reality, we assert that a palimpsest study would present the various meanings that exist in data collected alongside minoritized populations. Embracing Hartman's (2008) contention that this type of research involves "refashioning disfigured lives" (p. 3) suggests that the product of such analysis will be more legible and still incomplete. Therefore, scholars must look to examples in qualitative research that push back on the need to be overly packaged in analysis and the presentation of findings to actualize the power of the palimpsest (Jackson & Mazzei, 2013; Lather, 1991).

Conclusion

The potential of a palimpsest methodology rests on the ethical entanglements of the body, memory, and space-time and afterlives with respect to "existing tendencies and credible possibilities" (Weeks, 2011, p. 195). Against the violence of complicity, temporality, and objectivity, for researchers, a palimpsest approach argues for an assumed responsibility to the work they engage in, the lives they work with, and sites that ground their work. Methodologically, a palimpsest approach ruptures objective epistemological, ontological, axiological groundings (Denzin, 2016) that forfeit the inclusion of historical and imaginative processes as routes to useful exploration and rigorous conclusions. Moreover, scholars must pay the same attention to complexity in their methods, especially as it relates to how they situate themselves in the work but also how they work with the data collected. Namely, it is the task of a palimpsest researcher to expose the layers that are present in text and story in order to reveal the ways that oppression, as well as agency, has manifested across time and space. In doing so, a palimpsest approach attempts to imagine new ways of living and surviving in the afterlife of slavery and property.

Declaration of conflicting interests

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