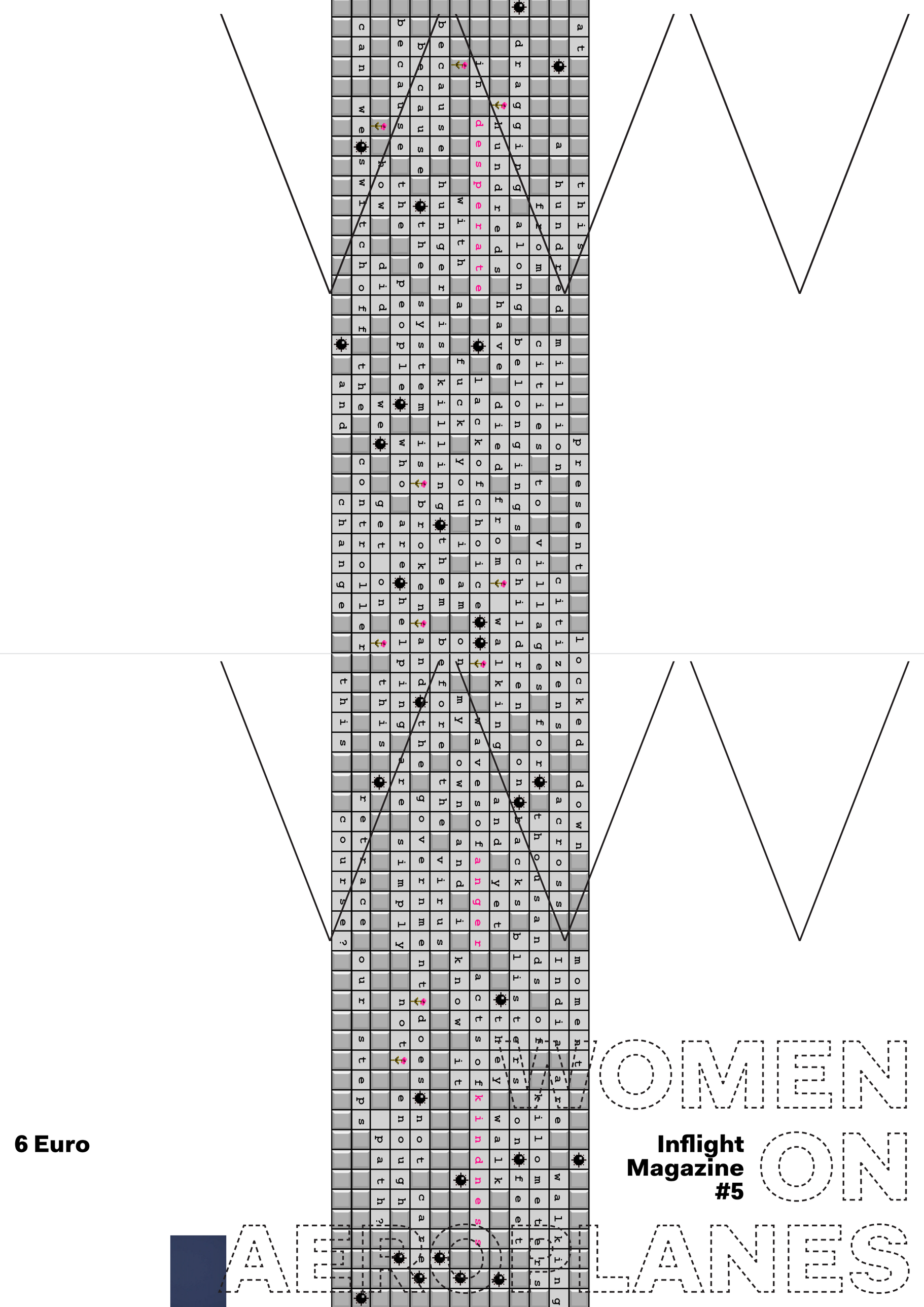

6 Euro
Inflight
Magazine
#5
WOMEN
ON
AEROLANES

I became fascinated by laundry and, in particular, with the clothesline. In our society, where privacy, honor (and shame) are so intensely guarded, a household gives us a peek into its life through the clothes hung out to dry. I began trying to guess who lived in the houses (young, old, men, women, children, etc.) by studying/spying on drying laundry.

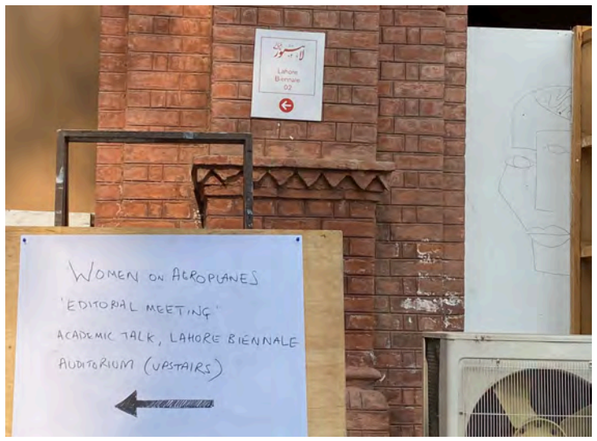
This led to a parallel examination of public places and public monuments, through which a nation gives a peek into its psyche. Instead of great heroes, patriots or great thinkers, we have erected missiles and fighter planes at our roadway intersections. One such tribute to violence is a fighter jet, used in prior wars, mounted at China Chowk. This, for me, became not a source of pride but, in a sense, 'the nation's dirty laundry'.

I took both these investigations and decided to hang garments, dyed red, on the fighter jet at noon (rush hour in effect), to contrast this small private act of love (washing someone's clothes) with the public barbarism of war and killing. Macbethian, in that the blood of those killed should still be in our collective consciousness. An intelligence officer was there within the twenty minutes of this hit-and-run piece and tried to interrogate me about the meaning of my trying to desecrate this public monument, but I swiftly escaped.

Ayesha Jatoi, *Clothesline*, 2006

Pokuaa came in cool: ‘What problems are we going to solve before we travel? Nana is here, Kofi Senya is here . . . and the lawyer is here. Are we going . . .’ ‘. . . to reveal the secrets of what everybody was doing before being pulled into the strange time of this village? Are we going to praise this town-village for being free and new when we all know there are big gaps in our hearts and minds . . .’ [...] ‘O stop that talk now!’ now

(Kojo Laing, *Woman of the Aeroplanes*, 1988)



It has been exactly a year since we published the last *Inflight Magazine*, since we met for a stopover in Frankfurt/Main for several intense days in the same space—a former gas station turned into a temporary art space now turned into a showroom for luxury cars, awaiting demolition. We had conversations around various tables—some with food, some with turntables, books, and data machines. Lines of crepe paper tape had been glued on the red concrete floor by Temitayo Ogunbiyi to define a miniature playground made with materials she had brought from Lagos, along with other rather invisible lines. With the potentiality that an unprescribed play could unleash by imagining lines of continuity within dispersed realities and connecting dots that would otherwise go unnoticed.

How long is a one-year interval? Kojo Laing lets the exclamation look like doing fractions. “... stop that now!” A *now* divided by another *now* doesn’t result in any equation, it only adds emphasis to the exclamation mark. The line that designates the fraction could be also seen as a timeline squeezed between different moments of now. Imagine, divide the now of last year by the current now, and you get a new *Inflight Magazine* that contains all the parts. What we discussed last year still matters, in different ways, and will lead to new considerations, new places; while most aeroplanes stand still, we will meet only virtually for the online festival *Public Hearings*, just now. From research strands from a visit to Cape Town and Johannesburg, questioning how to address themes around law, legality, rights, to the uprisings in Algeria and Paris: all this held our attention and led us to more images, from now and then, relating to the same line: What happens after the time of struggle? “Do we use this time of the uprising, to change our situation?” Katia Kameli asks in her letter to the *women on aeroplanes*. We accepted, with great pleasure, an invitation by the curator Hoor Al Qasimi, via Anjalika Sagar, to the beautiful Lahore Biennale #2, where all *Inflight Magazines* were reprinted and displayed. It was exciting to see how they were adopted by this very different context, that generated many new conversations beyond the public “Editorial Meeting”; we also found installed, literally next door, “Sultana’s Reality”, narrated, designed and programmed by Afrah Shafiq, which, in the end, has led to another boarding passenger and to a series of new drawings, in the coming pages.

..... a moving layover becomes a line of dots, not only line-shaped clouds, it could even transform into a score, with a set of different notations, for women-informed afterlives of the revolutions to come.

Recetas Urbanas, Tretzevents School, San Cugat, Barcelona (Summer 2013). Photo by Belén González.

Recetas Urbanas

Throughout 2020

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GOETHE INSTITUT

Additional funding has been provided by advertisement and with the help of a few generous donators. Many thanks!

Women on Aeroplanes pursues its flight as an independent agency for flying ideas in further collaboration with the Centre for Contemporary Art, Lagos, ifa-Galerie Berlin, The Showroom and The Otolith Collective, London, Kinothek Asta Nielsen, Frankfurt/Main.

Images

Cover, pages 19-27: Afrah Shafiq, *Walking is more*, 2020. Courtesy and copyright the artist.

Pages 2 and 3: Ayesha Jatoi, *Clothesline*, 2006. Courtesy of the artist.

Pages 4 and 18: Theresa Kampmeier, works by Temitayo Ogunbiyi and herself at Tor Art Space. Exhibition views, Stopover, June 2019. Courtesy and copyright the artists.

Pages 11 and 12: Temitayo Ogunbiyi, *Who can play in solitude*, 2020; Courtesy and copyright Temitayo Ogunbiyi.

Pages 14 and 17: Lala Rukh, *River in an ocean: 2*, 1992, mixed media on photographic paper, 25.4 x 30.48 cm. *Hieroglyphics III* (Roshnion ka Shehr - 3), 2005, paint and graphite on carbon paper, 20.32 x 50.8 cm. Courtesy of the Estate of Lala Rukh and Grey Noise, Dubai.

Page 18, Marwa Arsanios. *Have you ever killed a bear — or Becoming Jamila*, video 25min, (2013), film still. Courtesy and copyright the artist.

Page 19: The Otolith Group, *I See Infinite Distance Between Any Point and Another* (2012), film still. Courtesy and copyright the artists.

Pages 21 and 27, Katia Kameli, *Amitiés d'Algérie*, 100x70 cm, 2018. *Zeralda*, 100x70 cm, 2018. Courtesy and copyright the artists.

Pages 28 and 29: Stills from the film *Sambizanga* (Sarah Maldoror, 1972).

Page 31: Sehr Jalil, *Time walk*, 2013, digital collage and mixed media on paper, 183 x 92 cm. Courtesy and copyright the artist.

Page 32, 33: The Otolith Group, *Otolith I* (2003), film still. Courtesy and copyright the artists.

Flipping book: 20 stills from the film *I Love You Jet Li* (Stacy Hardy and Jaco Bouwer, 2005).

Additional image footage used in the collages has been found here and there during years of research; film stills, details of photographs, bits and pieces to form a pattern of new meanings. All images rights reserved to the holder of the photographies' copyright.

Speakers

Marwa Arsanios is an artist, filmmaker and researcher who reconsiders politics of the mid-twentieth century from a contemporary perspective, with a particular focus on gender relations, urbanism and industrialisation. She approaches research collaboratively and seeks to work across disciplines.

Jihan El-Tahri, a true woman on many aeroplanes, is an investigating, tireless, questioning propelled force. She makes documentaries and writes books. And she is searching until she finds the right person to talk to, the document to read, the turning point, the lost image.

Kodwo Eshun is an artist and theorist, a dedicated and committed listener and respondent, who might sharpen an utterance towards a continuative elaboration. Together with Anjalika Sagar is a co-funder of the Otolith Collective.

Natasha Ginwala is a curator and writer working between Berlin and Colombo committed to curatorial strategies of endurance, collectivity and continuum, resonating with Audre Lorde's provocation, "Revolution is not a one-time event." She is associate curator at Gropius Bau, co-artistic director of the 13th Gwangju Biennale, *Minds Rising, Spirits Tuning* and artistic director of the interdisciplinary arts festival Colomboscope, exploring the Indian Ocean as a space of affinity and an artistic meeting point. Ginwala writes on contemporary art and visual culture in various periodicals and has contributed to numerous publications.

Stacy Hardy is a writer and an editor and a teacher. Her writing has appeared in a wide range of publications, including *Chimurenga, CTheory, Bengal Lights, Evergreen Review, Drunken Boat, Joyland, Black Sun Lit, and New Orleans Review* and a collection of her short fiction, *Because the Night*, was published in 2015. She regularly collaborates with Angolan composer Victor Gama on multimedia works. Currently she is working on a research-and-performance-based collaborative endeavour with anthropologist Kaushik Sunder Rajan and musician Neo Muyanga exploring biographies and geographies of breath, through a focus on the colonial histories and postcolonial politics.

Sehr Jalil is a visual artist, researcher and writer. An urge to find mid points between material and surreal, practical and theoretical connects her with diverse media and archive. Doing public art in Lahore as a member of the Awami Art Collective since 2015 further supported this subversion. Most recent curiosities are Indian soldiers in World War II through personal archives, probing stardust scientifically to discover cosmic unity. She is a lecturer in the department of Cultural Studies at the National College of Arts, Lahore.

Ayesha Jatoi trained as a miniature painter. While being immersed in questions concerning the aesthetics of iconography, she questions the relevance of traditional modes of constructing images today, resulting in a practice that takes on hybrid forms. She is a founding editor of the *Journal of Contemporary Art & Culture* published from Lahore, and her works have been shown in exhibitions in Madrid, Dubai, Hong Kong, and Lahore, among others. Born in 1979, she lives in Lahore.

Katia Kameli is a French-Algerian artist living in Paris. Kameli's work is closely linked to her personal experience of dual identities, exploring multiplicity and the 'in-between'. Through video, photography, installation, she investigates intercultural spaces, intersecting identities and their construction.
Based on a research-oriented approach, she delves into historical events, political conflicts, complicated pasts and an often equally difficult present. Dialogues cover personal space both emotionally and culturally. She emphasises the need for belonging and having a common narrative—something to lean against, pictures and music for shared memories.

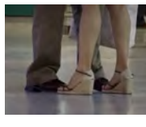
Antonia Majaca is a dialogical thinker, curator, researcher and generalist based in Berlin. She currently leads the artistic research project *The Incomputable* at the Institute for Contemporary Art at Graz University of Technology. She recently co-curated *Parapolitics–Cultural Freedom and the Cold War* at Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin. Antonia also teaches (and studies) theory at the Dutch Art Institute. Her *Feminist Takes: Early Works* (co-edited by Rachel O'Reilly and Jelena Vesic) is forthcoming on Sternberg Press.

Temitayo Ogunbiyi's art explores the relationship between the environment, line, and representation. Moving between drawing, painting, sculpture and installation, her work responds to and forges dialogues between global current events, anthropological histories, and botanical cultures. Systems that capture, mediate, and direct the movement of people and matter are a recurring subject of investigation in her practice. She built her first public playground in 2018 and continues to develop this direction in her practice.

Afrah Shafiq is a multi/new media artist based out of Goa. Using the process of research as an artistic playground, Afrah intertwines archival findings, history, memory, folklore and fantasy to create a speculative world born of remix culture. Her work moves across platforms and media, seeking a way to retain the tactile within the digital and the poetic within technology. When she is not glued to her computer she also makes glass mosaic.

Postscript

If you visited *Expeditions 1: Signs of Empire* at Study Gallery 1.357 at Goethe University Frankfurt / Main, you might have seen *Signs of Empire* and *Images of Nationality*, the two parts of Expeditions, the slide tape work composed by Black Audio Film Collective between 1982 and 1984. What you hear is an overpowering industrial sound design; from within this ominous, oppressive, mournful electronic dirge, you come face to face with enlarged photographic details of London's imperial statuary, the magnified close ups of granite fabric, the pietistic expression of sculptured hands, photogravure illustrations from Victorian nursery books, instructions to missionaries, maps of Lake Victoria, encomiums to the "explorer" John Speke. Watching *Expeditions* prompted you to think of the enduring yet overlooked presence of imperial iconography in the three years in which John Akomfrah, Lina Gopaul, Avril Johnson, Claire Joseph, Trevor Mathison, Reece Auguiste and Edward George of Black Audio Film Collective composed their investigation into the afterlife of British imperialism. The years of 1982 to 1984 can be situated within an ongoing crisis of deindustrialization in which racial hegemony was contested in uprisings on the streets of West London, North London, Liverpool, Bristol and Birmingham throughout 1976, 1978, 1980, 1981, 1982 and 1985. *Signs of Empire* poses the question of the continuities between the structures of British imperialism still being celebrated throughout Britain's cities and the postcolonial state's informally structured subordination of the post-war workforce. In the persistent yet unremarked presence of bronze, granite and marble statues of mounted generals stationed outside town halls, train stations, banks, public parks, bridges, roundabouts, churches, campuses and libraries, *Territories* (1984) made audible and visible the militarized monumental material culture that saturates Britain's public spaces with an ambient hostility that is nothing less than environmental.



What I took from Garnette Cadogan's presentation was the suggestion that the animus announced by Prime Minister Teresa May's so-called "hostile environment" policy in 2014 could be extended beyond the Conservative government's antipathy towards so-called "illegal immigrants" to include the signs of empire anatomised by the Black Audio Film Collective; the moment of Windrush announced by Lord Kitchener's unaccompanied calypso "London is the Place for Me" in 1948; the London of the 1930s articulated in Una Marson's poetry. It could be extended to the non-event of the Abolition of Slavery Act in 1833 and the £20 million "compensation" paid not to the approximately 80,000 enslaved workers on the sugarcane plantations of the Caribbean but to the slaveowners. The great bailout of 1833 required the British state to take a loan that was repayed by British taxpayers—without their knowledge or consent—from 1838 until 2015. If we expand the term "hostile environment" then it becomes a useful description for the ongoing afterlife of slavery compounded in and by and through the unending continuity of British imperialism.

Cadogan brought Una Marson's poem "Nigger", which recounts a white child insulting her in London's streets in 1933, into relation with Countee Cullen's 1925 poem "Incident", in which he recalls whites shouting the same word at his eight-year-old self as he walked through the streets of Baltimore, and then set both poems alongside Frantz Fanon's account in *Peau noire, masques blancs* (1952), in which a child hurls the same insult at him in the streets of Paris. These scenes indicate a recurrent pattern in which an unnamed white child, who can be understood as a child soldier recruited by parents, family and neighbours into the project of anti-blackness. The white child soldier, understood as a figure or a structure, demonstrates its readiness to fight on behalf of white hegemony. The white child soldier does not know that Marson is a published poet and playwright on her way to the studios of BBC Radio, that Cullen epitomises the New Negro at its most avant garde, that the young Fanon is one of the foremost intellectuals of his time. The white child soldier targets Marson's pluralness; it ignores her singularity; Marson, in turn, singularises this attack on her plurality. Cadogan's sequence allows us to understand a white imperial hegemony that seeks to preemptively conscript black peoples in London, Paris and Baltimore into a war waged by the psychoaffective means of ascriptive arms and demonolatrical weapons. The figure of the white child soldier recruited to racial whiteness condenses and conducts the compounded aggregated hostility within which African, Caribbean and Asian peoples move across the twentieth century.

What we can see is a pattern that can be understood as an outline or a gradient for what Christina Sharpe calls a total climate of anti-blackness. In linking Marson, Cullen and Fanon with the virtuosity of Lord Kitchener and Linton Kwesi Johnson, we sense this outline's aural dimensions. Lord Kitchener's painstaking diction and verbal acuity harks back to Marson's hemmed-in English. His calypsonian diction and her respectable accent articulate the constraints of 1930s and 1940s within which they operated. This politesse provides a counterpoint for Linton Johnson's nation language which neither aspires to nor seeks the approval conferred by the mastery of so-called Queen's English. Confronted by Pathé News' male white reporter's request to perform, Kitchener cannot not perform "London is the Place … Me." By contrast, Linton Kwesi Johnson's "Inglan is a Bitch" evinces no desire to entertain or to concede common ground with his listeners. "Inglan is a Bitch" does not tamp down its anger; it speaks of psychic secession that exiles itself from British racial hegemony. If the imperial duress of racial hostility in its environmental duration can be heard, as Cadogan suggests, in Caribbean poetics' figuration of the white child as racial soldier and its modalities of enunciation, what remains to be articulated is the figuration of black internationalism that fashions itself within and against the total climate of anti-blackness. What Black Audio Film Collective, Marson, Cullen, Fanon, Kitchener and Johnson allude to are the audiovisual forms of Caribbean internationalism that cut across the project of Cold War containment that aims to conscript African and Asian struggles for autonomy within Washington's anti-communist rule. The British empire positioned itself as a liberal internationalist front against Germany, Italy and Japan's fascist imperialism, effectively foreclosing Caribbean, Asian and African internationalism's longstanding critiques of the continuities between colonialism and fascism. Black internationalism opens a line of autonomy that runs across and between the White House and the Kremlin; it diagonalizes the colonial-racial foreclosure theorised by Barnor Hesse. To keep open the line of autonomy requires deepening its reach and its extent; it necessitates an encounter with the movement of Black feminist internationalisms from London to Accra, Baltimore to Paris as it cuts across and within the sisterhoods and brotherhoods of communism, anti-communism, non-communism and radical internationalism.

There is a scene in *Expeditions* that juxtaposes a photograph of an imperial statue with the printed words "Where's Accra?" To locate Accra within a geography of internationalism narrated by Una Marson and Amy Ashwood Garvey is part of the project entailed by *Women on Aeroplanes*. The figure of the woman on aeroplanes summons the idea of the itinerary of stopovers—in London, Bombay, Calcutta, Accra, Colombo, Paris, Port-au-Prince and Washington DC—that not only speaks of the insufficiency of historiography but requires thinking through the relations between the international, the intranational and the transnational. *Women on Aeroplanes* confronts us with the intermittent transmission of interrupted networks that sustain the negotiation between inter, intra and trans-nationalisms. To turn towards magazines and publications is to think through the implications of world form entailed by periodicals that seek to thematize the work of collectivisation. We turn to magazines so as to think through the work of women's internationalisms as it changes shape, form and outline over time and space. In an off-space that is neither a museum, a gallery, a library or a university, the question of what constitutes attention is not provided by the building or supplied by the institutions. Rather, *Women on Aeroplanes* entails an ongoing practice of infrastructure. Part of *Women on Aeroplanes*'s role, then, is to create support structures, in Celine Condorelli's term, for sustaining certain kinds of attentiveness that constitute the relations between women, independence, liberation and the difficulties that emerge when liberation movements become ruling parties that take hold of governmental power. That momentous shift brings us to *Behind the Rainbow*, Jihan El Tahri's majestic cinematic reckoning with this very question. It is to this film, with its parallel narrations of turning points and its asymptotic attention to delayed decolonization, encumbered emancipation and incomplete independence, that we should now turn our attention.

May 2018
Pilot project for *You will find playgrounds among palm trees* is completed in Freedom Park, Lagos. Here, a playground serves as a meeting point, an avenue towards bolstering community and bringing people together.
June 2019
I remember the off-white masking tape with which I carved the red floor of TOR Art Space in Frankfurt.
... and bright green lines of neutral electric cables that chronicled the segments of my journey from Lagos to Frankfurt, and then from the hotel to the venue, and back.
April/May 2020
The purple colour and marker was the default option on my phone, and it felt good with my photographs.
Stationed at home, there are now new routes at every turn.
I wanted to respond to the routes of communication that have been closest and most magnificent in recent times: plant systems and the meanderings of my children.
They say, new roots spring from the wounds of a mint plant.
Are we ever really alone?

Lala Rukh: Possessed Time, Dispossessed Space

(If I were like you. If you were like me.
Did we not stand
Under one trade wind?
We are strangers.)

The flagstones. On them,
close to each other, the two
heart-grey puddles:
two
mouthfuls of silence.

from Paul Celan, *Language Mesh*, 1971.

1st WAF National Convention. Lahore 1982
(standing) Ferida Sher and Najma Sadeque
(Kneeling) Samina Rehman, Rukhsana Rashid, Farida Shaheed, Humaira Rahman, Fareeha Zafar, Nighat Said Khan, AbanMarker
(sitting) Ghazala Rahman, KhawarMumtaz, PoptiBukhari, Hilda Saeed, NigarAhmad
(lying) Lala Rukh

Women's Action Forum – 1st Convention

Two strangers standing under one trade wind. I wish to open with this image at a time of mass confinement—a time-image that refuses the rupture from being in relation. Plotting estrangement and interdependency as [moving] parts of the same vessel steering across unpredictable waters. It could be said, broadly speaking, that there are two registrations of embodied temporality: self-possessed time and dispossessed time. Particularly with regard to visual artist and pedagogue Lala Rukh, this bifurcation feels necessary. Self-possessed time speaks to vibrant acts of social organization, to the future-forming capacity of intuition, and alertness to rhythm in the organic materiality of worlding. The connective space between art and life corresponds to an oscillating equation—between possession and dispossession; recognition and non-recognition—as a civic, ethical conundrum. The spatio-temporal figure of self-possessed time provides a different way of imagining the fragile charge between individual agency and belonging in the traumatic interregnum we face and the world to come.[1]

Lala Rukh, *River in an ocean: 2*, 1992, mixed media on photographic paper, 25.4 x 30.48 cm.
Courtesy of the Estate of Lala Rukh and Grey Noise, Dubai.

Rather than acceding to the crystallization of time as a dominant force, Lala invented a score for everyday life, accruing reverberations of collective encounter. There were the meetings, demonstrations and recitals of the Women's Action Forum (WAF) in Lahore, which she co-founded; regular teaching and mentoring, inside and out of the subscribed curriculum, at the National College of Arts (Lahore); and her studio practice, better conceived as mark-making in quietude—space-time experiments and isolated labour. Lala created ripples in societal traditions, which became regimented under military dictatorship and hegemonic influence of the United States. Her artistic practice considered how elemental and unequal forces of reality could be documented through minimalist gestures. With each such endeavour she attempted to conceive how "the whole is brought together into a single point."[2] Ever attentive to circadian rhythms—she led a life-long inquiry into motions of water, repeated tracing of the horizon line and study of the human form as bearing codes of resistance and possibility.

For Lala, drawing is often an auditory event, structured through an investigation of rhythm counts in permutations of the ordinary; breath cycles and complex melodic structures from Hindustani classical music. Going by Sufi wisdom, the human body is made of rhythm and tone; the pulse brings vibratory intelligence to all that exists outside the corporeal vessel. Through qawwali, a devotional music and performance tradition of the Indian subcontinent—mystical poetry of lamentation and praise (in Farsi, Hindi and Urdu)[3]—the *mehfil* facilitates wisdoms to be passed on, arduous pilgrimage gives way to miraculous rapture, and the stillness of meditation blurs the motions of union and separation between lover and beloved. Such references became central to the artist's consciousness, and yet are never disclosed in direct terms.

Making a closer study of Lala's durational series *Hieroglyphics*, one must reckon with an inventory of calligraphic strokes (what I have elsewhere described) as "an alphabet of her own making."[4] The painstaking production of brushes is where the craft of a pulsating conceptualism begins, and remains threaded with the slow variation of ecology. In her case, the character of minimalist conceptualism shall be inquired into not as a given by Western art history, instead as a question of what lies beyond the world of forms. Art critic Akbar Naqvi writes, "It is an art of whispers—private, secretive, often resonantly inaudible, minimal of words and gestures and soft-spoken—and that its power comes from the artist's self-possession.[5]

While at University of Chicago in the mid-1970s Lala developed a fondness for jazz. I didn't have a chance to ask her, but wonder now what she made of the ecstatic and rebellious spaces opened up by free jazz especially. Her knowledge of rhythm structure and sonic grammar was tuned at an early age through her father Hayat Ahmad Khan's All Pakistan Music Conference, which hosted luminaries such as Roshan Ara Begum, Ustad Bade Ghulam Ali and Dagar brothers. Lala's explorative studies of musical scale, syncopation and accent in *ektaal, jhaptaal* and *keherva-jhoomar*, using her qalam to compose along the vertical and horizontal axes on carbon paper—the 'sounding' of crests, nodes and strokes as though building a graphic score, led me to think of Anthony Braxton's remark that "I think what we have to find and deal with in this time period is *fundamental information*. What do I mean by that? All I can say is that no music is separate from its spiritual dimension or the forces it sets into motion."[6]

Everybody is scared.

Everybody is scared but you and I,
together joined lights,
mirrors and water–
and feared never.

Conquest of the Garden, Forugh Farrokhzad.

Lala Rukh, *Hieroglyphics III (Roshnion ka Shehr - 3)*, 2005, paint and graphite on carbon paper, 20.32 x 50.8 cm. Courtesy of the Estate of Lala Rukh and Grey Noise, Dubai.

Lala Rukh took no form of labour for granted, she invented kitchen tools that made her daily chores more effective, and began to use her garden for printmaking workshops at a time of weaponised censorship and anti-women laws in Pakistan during the martial law regime of General Zia ul-Haq. Lala's home and back garden became the collaborative production station of posters for the women's movement and pamphlets for various demonstrations in the late 1980s.

When I met with artist Carrie Mae Weems in Berlin in 2019, she talked about the loneliness of black women. Confiding, that when she met Nina Simone many moons ago after a concert in Paris, the musician, songwriter and civil rights activist, expressed her loneliness and exhaustion. In *Beloved*, Toni Morisson writes, "Then there is the loneliness that roams. No rocking can hold it down. It is alive. On its own. A dry and spreading thing that makes the sound of one's own feet going seem to come from a far-off place." And, while loneliness is less often evoked when deliberating upon the lineage of fearless women, I also realized when getting to know Lala that for her the sense of refuge lay in friendships and solidarity practiced between women she had come to know in her home city, but also importantly, the vast network of South Asian feminist organizers, who became co-conspirators and quietly led transformations in the socio-political sphere, legal battles, and labour rights.

The organisation Lala remained most dedicated to over decades, Women's Action Forum (WAF), has undergone its own evolutionary process, grappling with conditions of military and civilian rule each imposing different shades of religious order on society. It is a secular, non-partisan and non-hierarchical entity that is till today not a registered organisation as it was composed of individuals and several organisations. Therefore it could survive a changing politico-legal environment and not be banned like political parties or other registered organisations whose registration could be cancelled by dictatorships.[7]

When discussing the early years of WAF and the anti-women laws passed under military dictatorship, feminist scholar Rubina Saigol shared, "Several early WAF members, like Lala, who were employed at that time became insecure about their jobs, so our mobilization also emerged out of economic insecurity. There was a reconstruction of the Muslim woman as mother and homemaker, as well as a disciplining and control over the female body as such. Tele-evangelization was also in play. We didn't want to maintain a superficial approach to women's rights and gender justice. It wasn't just about the middle class woman seeking to come out into the market place, but equally about the *Khet mazdoors* (rural women in chiefly agrarian economy)—middle class morality is what we reacted to while discriminatory laws were being passed."[8] These laws included the Hudood Ordinances enacted in 1979, which made it nearly impossible to prove rape, while adding new criminal offences of adultery and fornication as well as extreme punishments such as whipping, amputation and stoning to death as part of the "Islamisation process." WAF took up the historic Safia Bibi case in which a blind woman from a poor, rural background was accused of adultery in a Hudood case and given punishment for *Hadd*. Later, members carried out large demonstrations in protest of the Law of Evidence (Qanun-e-Shahadat Order–Article 17) in 1984, that declared women's testimony worth half that of men's in certain civic matters. WAF has also continuously condemned the system of honour killings *(Karo-Kari)* across different parts of Pakistan, while standing for minorities including the rights of the Ahmadis and called for the Second constitutional amendment to be revoked as the state does not have the right to decide who is or is not a Muslim.[9]

While becoming a central character in protest actions and demonstrations—chronicling the movement from within, Lala's resolve is likewise evidenced in the markings on paper and the way she approaches engulfing darkness. Blackness is explored in many dimensions—as a friend of the night, through a hideout in the 'radically unknown' and carving architecture(s) of possibility as the moonbeams radiate over a dark sea. While the world is witness to extreme injustices and the production of "no-bodies,"[10] this artist's lines illuminate, singularise and celebrate minor relationality.

Beloved artist Zarina Hashmi passed on recently, it was the first day of Ramazan. While the two never met, Lala Rukh had mentioned to students and friends[11] of her admiration toward Zarina's pared-down expressions uniting symbol and word. The two artists shared the drawn line as a place of self-defined itinerancy, a dedication toward Urdu literature and faced the afterlives of partition—still simmering within this subcontinent's fractured reality. When visiting Zarina's exhibition "Weaving Darkness and Silence" at Gallery Espace in New Delhi during winter of 2018, her contours of doors, fences, barbed wire and flight of birds in Sumi ink and handmade paper collage led my mind to wander toward Lala's *Sensations* (1,2) (1993), *River in an Ocean* (1992) and *Above the Horizon* (1996) series that were equally consumed with the grammar of darkness from midnight tones to the shimmer of twilight. Moreover, these monochromatic meditations test limits of the known, as their negative spaces carry an unscripted mnemonic record, in surplus of what meets the eye, here one might be left to imagine: built detail of a private courtyard, grief and fury amidst women, the drawn out vocal structure of an evening raga and city lights over a festive evening.

There is a phrase in Aimé Césaire's poem *The Miraculous Weapons*, which stayed with me in gauging the role of listening to one's time as cyclical function, as Lala did: "My ear against the ground, I heard tomorrow pass."[12] Her practice was pitched to lines of association, sensory velocities of earth's journey and anachronisms in the human condition, yet beating the exhaustion of definition.

[1] Claire Colebrook, "Stratigraphic Time, Women's Time", in: *Australian Feminist Studies*, Vol. 24, No. 59, Routledge, March 2009.
[2] Henri Bergson, "Philosophical Intuition—Lecture given at the Philosophical Congress in Bologna, 10 April, 1911", in: *The Creative Mind*, trans. Mabelle L. Andison, New York: The Philosophical Library 1946, 127.
[3] Regula Burckhardt Qureshi, *Sufi Music of India and Pakistan: Sound, Context and Meaning in Qawwali*, Vol. 1, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1986.
[4] https://www.documenta14.de/en/south/902_lala_rukh_introduction_by_natasha_ginwala (accessed: 1 May 2020)
[5] Akbar Naqvi, "Art of Whispers", *The Friday Times*, Vol. XVI, No. 9, (23-29 April 2004), Lahore.
[6] Graham Lock, *Forces in Motion*: *The Music and Thoughts of Anthony Braxton*, Cambridge: De Capo Press, March 1989. I spotted this passage of the book via Shabaka Hutchings' instagram profile.
[7] Rubina Saigol, "Women's Action Forum: Ideology and Functioning", in: *Re-Interrogating the Civil Society in Asia: Critical Perspectives from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh*. Eds. Peter B. Andersen, Amit Prakash and Rubya Mehdi, Routledge 2020 (forthcoming).
[8] Phone Interview with Rubina Saigol (22 April 2020).
[9] Saigol, (ibid).
[10] Denise Ferreira da Silva, "No-Bodies: Law, Raciality and Violence", in: *Griffith Law Review*, 2009, Vol. 18. No. 2, 212-236.
[11] As shared in conversation with Umer Butt and Mariah Lookman.
[12] Aimé Césaire, *The Collected Poetry*, University of California Press, 1983, 103.

Theresa Kampmeier, part of the installation *Carry on windows*, 2019

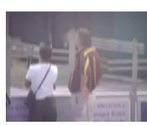
"Songs of War" set in motion several trajectories. We came across the pages with that same title while flipping through issues of *The New African*[1], not exactly knowing what we were looking for. The issue dates from May 1965, when *The New African* was already banned in South Africa and was produced in London instead of Cape Town. In their intro, the editors welcomed the US civil rights movement's freedom songs as a way to commemorate South African protest songs from the 1950s, such as those sung during the Alexandra bus strike, and printed their score. "Victories won by sound alone may be somewhat rare. But... ."

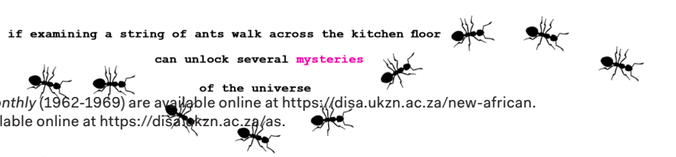
The mention of the Alexandra bus strike gave us a good reason to go back in time and take a look at the 1950s. In a

1957 issue of *Africa South*[2], we found the article "The Bus Boycott" by Ruth First—introduced as editor of *Fighting Talk*. One of the outstanding images of this boycott that was at least temporarily successful, was of a growing number of people walking, a protest story in itself, that Afrah Shafiq takes further.

A parallel strand and another starting point was a photograph by Ali la Pointe. In a moment of incautiousness, just a few months earlier, in 1956, about 10,000 km north, in Algiers, the leader of the FLN took a picture of Samia Lakhdari, Zohra Drif, Djamila Bouhired and Hassiba Ben Bouali, known as the bombers from the *Battle of Algiers*. We were drawn to the image and printed it in the first issue of *Women on Aeroplanes Inflight Magazine* without knowing its history in detail. Theresa Kampmeier transformed the magazine page into an acetone print; the

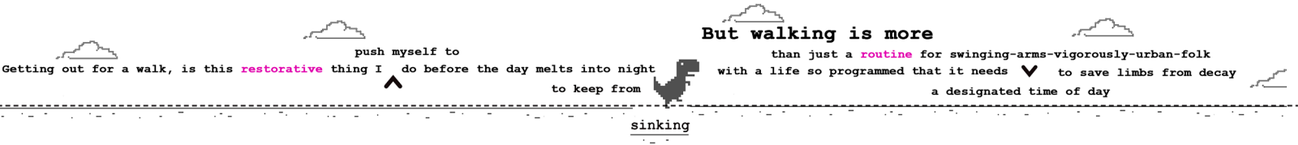
impression the picture made on her, turned onto a tissue paper and towards the outside, mounted on the window front of Tor Art Space in Frankfurt/Main. Later on, the same picture became an occasion to approach the artists Katia Kameli and Marwa Arsanios. To interlace these different strands, we began to imagine a score for a new song, tuning in to the different voices, fragments, images, stories, and time zones. "Practical protest songs for today call for new levels of metaphor. They need to mean a lot more than they say—or mean one thing while saying another.





[1] The issues of *The New African—The Radical Monthly* (1962-1969) are available online at https://disa.ukzn.ac.za/new-african.
[2] The issues of *Africa South* (1956-1961) are available online at https://disa.ukzn.ac.za/as.

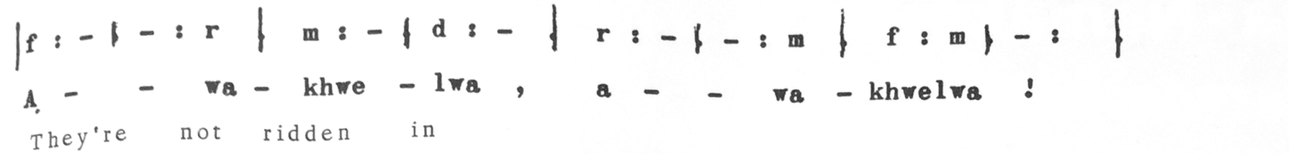
Afrah Shafiq, *Walking is more*, 2020.



Katia Kameli, *Amitiés d'Algérie*, 2018.

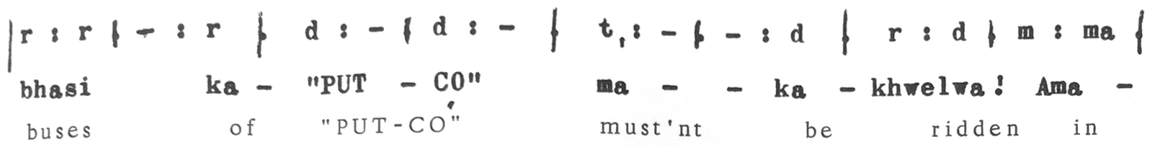
That's an interesting way of looking at history, through magazines, through ephemera. History as it's being written, by writers who wanted to craft it. *Al-Hilal* was a magazine for a mass readership, and it used a popular register to address these issues. Also, a magazine forces you to offer an instant perspective on things. It's another pace of writing.

Marwa Arsanios, *Have You Ever Killed a Bear — or Becoming Jamila*, 2012-2013, film stills.

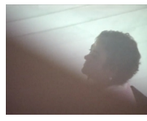


The year 1957 will be remembered as the Year of the Great Bus Boycott, and the cry "Azikhwelwa" (We Shall not Ride) has left its stamp on contemporary events. "Azikhwelwa" is one of those terse, succinct, "magic" catch-words that epitomizes a whole legion of African demands, a concept of struggle, an entire campaign. There has been, and still is, "Mayibuye" (May Africa Come Back), which dates from the thirties. Twin to "Azikhwelwa" is "Asinamali" (We Have no Money), said not self-pityingly, but defiantly, the slogan first used widely in the post-war squatters' movement that swept the Reef as a protest against the chronic housing shortage, and which is again on the lips of Africans in the cities.

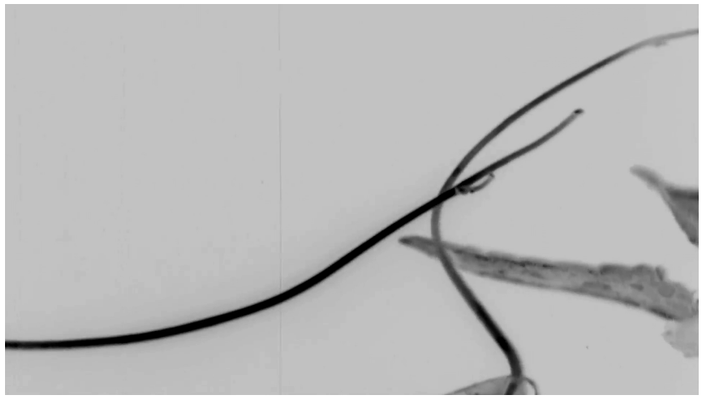
what can you understand about a nation
by examining how it walks through time?

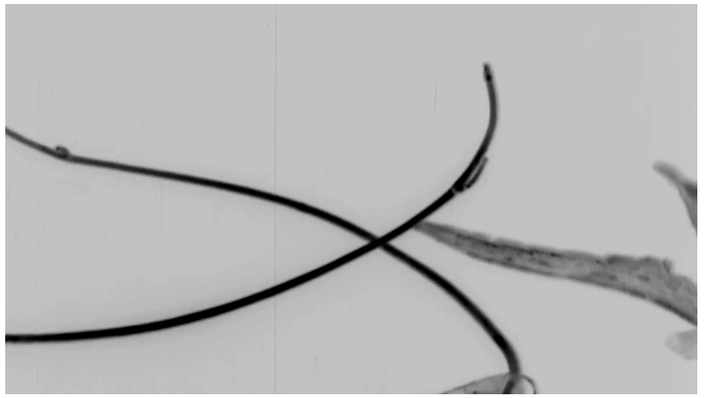


First beginnings of the boycott were in Alexandra Township, nine miles out of Johannesburg on the Pretoria road, where three previous boycotts have been conducted in the last 3 years. Simultaneously, Sophiatown and Western Native Township joined the boycott, and Lady Selborne in Pretoria. Eastwood joined in, and Germiston and Edenvale. Some twelve days later a sympathy boycott was declared in Moroko and Jabavu, and though the fares on these routes were not affected, these townships marched in solidarity to the end. One thousand miles away, in Port Elizabeth, a sympathy boycott was also declared. Soon 60,000 people were walking anything up to 20 miles a day to work and home again.



Ruth First, „Bus Boycott", in *Africa South*, July 1957, 55-64.

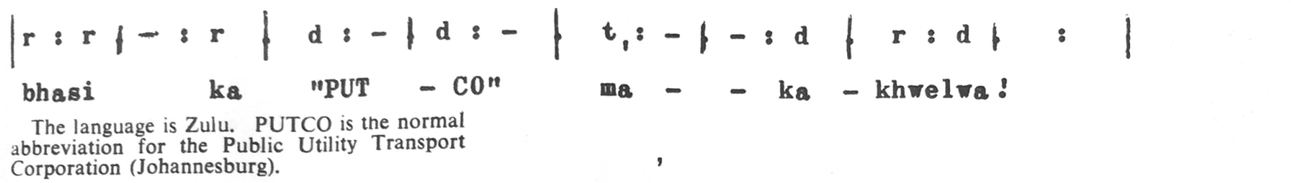




The Otolith Group. *I See Infinite Distance Between Any Point and Another*, 2012, film stills.

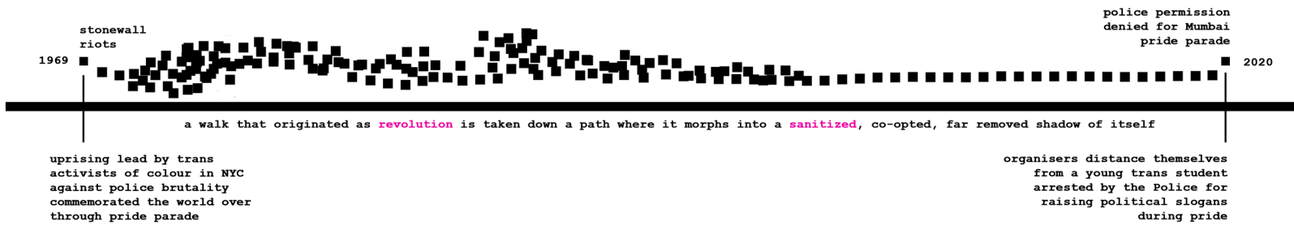
As for the images, a lot of the covers that I use in *Becoming Jamila* were produced by famous illustrators, painters and artists. They were artworks. Photography didn't appear in the magazine until 1962, and I like that earlier period, which expresses a utopian image of the nation. I'm fascinated by how grand national projects were represented before photography, how painting and illustration could serve as a space to imagine another world, although in a very naïve way.
After 1962 photography came in, and with photography came another kind of imagery, especially of women's bodies. Actually, many of the images that were used inside the magazine were appropriated from other magazines, often western magazines like *Reader's Digest*. They just cut and pasted them. The whole construction of *Al-Hilal* was quite precarious.

I kept reading about Jamila, and I couldn't figure out who Jamila was. Of course, I knew the film, but I hadn't connected it directly to her. I started going into the different representations of Jamila, and how she was represented in cinema, because there were many other films made about her. Also how she was represented in *Al-Hilal*—Nasser really used her as part of his propaganda project. She appeared on the cover several times, holding a gun, representing the courage of Algerian women. I thought that the idea of acting and of political representation were intimately related. What does it mean for one woman to represent a nation's women? There's a metaphor there of acting, of playing a role. That's where cinema came in. So I was trying to look at the relationship between this woman and her heroic image. Jamila is still alive, but she's no longer a public figure. She didn't go into politics, whereas all her ex-comrades in the FLN, men and also women, all went into governmental positions in Algeria.

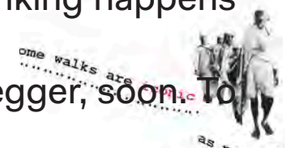


It needs to be. The negotiated settlement by which bus users would buy 5d coupons for 4d and which finally drew the people of Alexandra Township back into the buses is only to last three months. In the absence of a more permanent solution, new struggles clearly loom ahead. There is also the cry from all sides for increases in African wages. The boycott must be seen as a prelude to many related campaigns. Above all, the bus boycott highlights other lessons for South Africans. It often takes such dramatic episodes to convince complacent White South Africa that Africans feel their denial of rights so keenly. And it showed Africans what they had suspected and now know for certain: that in active campaigning for basic human and economic demands, their unity holds the key to success.

Ruth First, „Bus Boycott", in *Africa South*, July 1957, 55-64, 64.

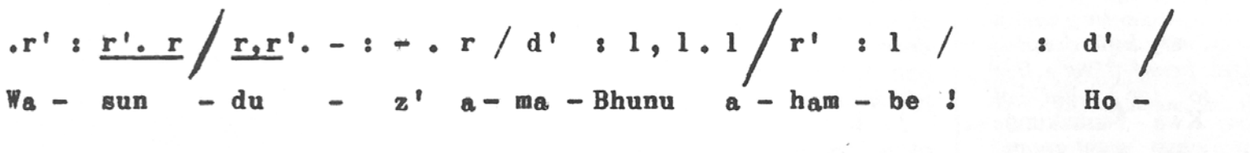


To fly heavily like a crow. To hear the wind. To ply with branches. To blow one's tree into the wild olive tree. To read Heraclitus. To call him "the obscure", because his thinking happens within the questioning of clarity. To read Heidegger, soon. To be informed, by a phone call, that Turkey is stirring over Iraq.



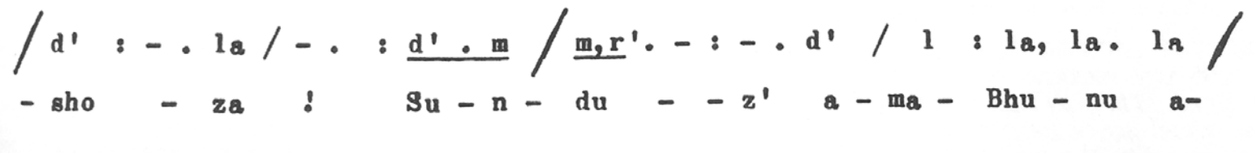
I made a film about a film about Jamila. *The Battle of Algiers* was a contemporary film, whereas if I were going to really make the film now, it would be a film d'époque, a period piece. That is not the place I want to go. I want to rethink the politics of the 50s and 60s in a very contemporary way. I could have made a film about Kurdish rebels, the women in Kobane, let's say. I could directly tackle these issues. But I think that in talking about Jamila, I'm also talking about them. And yet at the same time, by reusing and re-abusing Jamila's image, I'm also possibly reproducing the image of the heroic fighter. Or I'm totally seduced by her, so I'm not actually producing a new politics. I'm always failing to find this new politics, but I still have to try.

An interview with Marwa Arsanios, http://evenmagazine.com/marwa-arsanios/

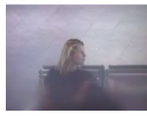


To witness the execution of Iraq. To force the Arabs to move backward. To be moved by the beauty of Rhea Galanake's poem. Not to feel in good shape. To be getting old, to fight anxiety. To think about the trip. To visualize oneself at the airport. To start counting the days. To yawn. To look through the window. To measure the extent of one's sadness, while denying its power. To look for the latter with no avail.

To anticipate trouble. To go down Second Avenue, exit on 10th Street, enter the "Barracuda" and sit in front of fish-and-chips. To eat in a hurry. To enter St Mark's Church, buy a ticket. To listen to a clarinet player. To recognize Douglas Dunn against the screen on which his dancers become shadows. To applaud Steve Lacey. To be worried about the bandage around his head, his swollen cheek. To realize that his tempo has slightly slowed down and that his music is somehow crying. To take off one's heavy jacket in the over-heated room. To let Steve's music invade the place. To use the



program sheet as a fan. To hear the pounding of Baghdad in the music's tissue. To wonder if Nouri will stay alive through this war. To come back totally to the music. To find it barbaric, ecstatic. To mix the soprano-sax with the dancers. To mix the dance with the deep-seated knowledge that things have gone wrong.

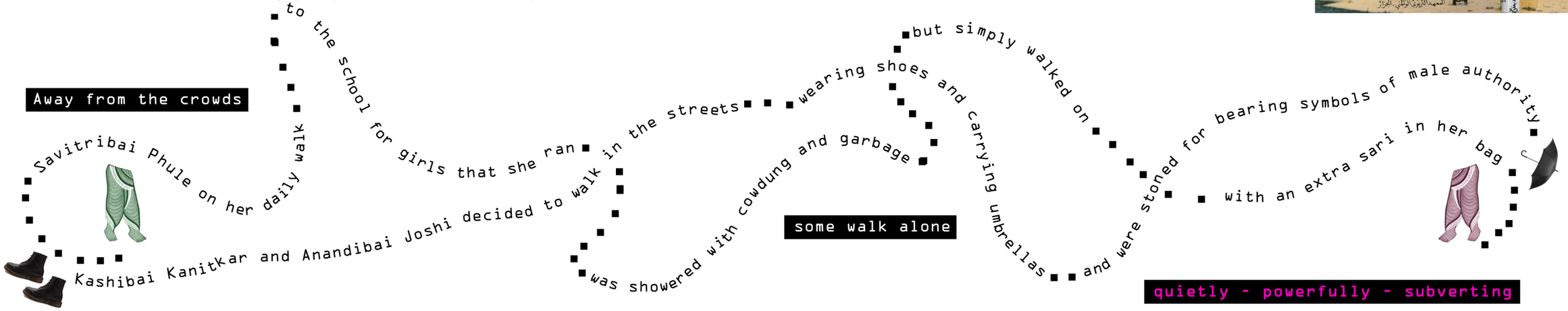


From: Etel Adnan, *To Be In A Time Of War.* In Etel Adnan, *In the Heart of the Hearth of Another country,* San Francisco: City Lights Books 2005, 6-7, 8.

Speaking of images necessarily implies to take, in one way or another, the place of a spectator who is in charge of a montage, of creating coherence that is subjectively and provisionally perceived as a trajectory not yet in place.

Marie-José Mondzain, *Images (à suivre) : de la poursuite au cinéma et ailleurs*, Bayard, Paris, 2011, 17. Trans. WoA.

Katia Kameli, *Zeralda*, 2018.



Dear women on airplanes,

I should say that I have always felt confident in airports and planes and I'm happy to find myself boarding with you today. We've met through my film trilogy, *The Algerian Novel*, conceived as an immersion into Algeria's history and collective memory. The first chapter takes place on Larbi Ben M'Hidi street, in Algiers. Farouk Azzoug and his son run a nomadic kiosk and sell old postcards and reproductions of archival photographs, an eclectic collection that draws us into a colonial and postcolonial iconography. These assembled postcards allow many associations, as a kind of Algerian "Atlas Mnemosyne", while we hear the voices of inhabitants of Algiers, historians, writers and students, explaining their connections to the representations and to the history of their country.

I should maybe open the frame and tell you more about the trilogy's ambitious title. "Roman national algérien" is an expression used by the Algerian historian Mohamed Harbi, a former member of the FLN (Front de libération nationale), during the Algerian War of Independence. He was the adviser to the first president, Ahmed Ben Bella, but when Houari Boumédienne took power he got into trouble. The FLN manipulated Algerian history and their "official" version was disseminated by young teachers and state schoolbooks with only a few images, mostly unreferenced. Those books, based on nebulous fiction and dissimulations for the sake of the nation and patriotic spirit, legitimated a governing power. With the photographic series, *Soyez les bienvenues*, I re-covered Algerian schoolbooks with images I purchased at the kiosk. The gesture, the process of (re)covering, allows for the questioning of the image factory and the complex interrelations between them. You asked me why I picked up one particular image from a layered landscape of images. That particular image, known as "Les poseuses de bombes", shows four young women looking at us, holding guns and Kalashnikovs. They are wearing 'sarouels m'ndor' (literally: turn pants) and long skirts; they look very familiar to me, like cousins. In Algeria, this image is part of the "Algerian novel" as inscribed in the popular myth that women had a strong and recognised role in the struggle for independence. And yes, they embraced the struggle, but what has the struggle done for them?

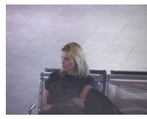
In 1980, in *Femmes d'Alger dans leur appartement*, Assia Djebar calls them "les porteuses de feu" (bearers of fire): "Where are you, fire-bearers, my sisters who have liberated the city... the barbed wire no longer blocks the alleys, but decorates the windows, the balconies, all the exits to public space."

Years later, the patriarchy played out its role and the Algerian Family Code was enacted in 1984. The law marginalised women and defined them only as daughters, mothers or wives. Imagine, after playing primary roles you have to become invisible and silent!

I never got to know the story behind that image, be it real or fictional, so thank you for providing this quote by Zohra Drif:

"Ali [la Pointe] wanted to take a photo of all four of us there on the Belhaffaf's rooftop. Samia and I expressed our strong refusal, obsessed with the security rules and all that we had learned about clandestine living. But Ali insisted, declaring that he was the happiest of brothers and the proudest of men since God could not have sent him more wonderful sisters than the four of us. Eventually we gave in. Like a child enthralled by his toy, Ali officiated. He distributed a weapon to each of us, instructing us how best to hold and aim them. He took the photo, happy as a kid. Facing the camera, Samia who hid her face behind the extended gun, couldn't stop ruminating throughout the following days about our incredible carelessness—especially that of our leaders. Alas, fate would prove her right, because this picture would fall into the hands of the security services and help them to identify us. Before the photo betrayed us, nobody knew who we were, despite the arrests of brothers with whom we had worked. I tell the story of this photo because it expresses just how human, brotherly, and affectionate Ali la Pointe was."[1]

The image still resonates. And the Hirak moved the whole landscape again. So many women took their fears and went down to the streets. Their position was argued again, they were not always welcomed in the masculine crowd, they had to create a feminist square to feel free. Meanwhile, feminist meetings emerged and turned to the question: Do we use this time of the uprising to change our situation? Satisfying everyone is always difficult. For most of the younger generation, the Hirak came first and feminist demands came later... that was quite scary for me to think that history seems to be in a loop and that we forget too fast about the past. In chapter 3 of *The Algerian Novel*, women recount Algerian history from their perspective. Independence did not equate to their freedom. A lot more needs to be done and we have to start writing our own history. Assia Djebar, writer, translator and the first woman director in Algeria, made the anti-colonial and anti-patriarchy movie, *La Nouba des femmes du Mont-Chenoua* in 1977. She left us this sentence on her gravestone: "I write, as many other Algerian women, with a sentiment of urgency against repression and misogyny." At the end of my trilogy, we listen to the slammer, Ibtissem Hattali, singing these lines from Djebar, on a Chenoua beach, at dusk:



She rekindled the vividness of the past /
An old fire has come back /
In this time of slavery /
Today the day has come /
When women will grab their freedom.

Katia Kameli

[1] Zohra Drif, from the chapter "In the Casbah", in: *Zohra Drif, Inside the Battle of Algiers: Memoir of a Woman Freedom Fighter*, Translated from the French by Andrew Farrand. Washington: Just World Books 2017. The picture was taken 1956.

Sarah Maldoror
the Griot who took the time to tell it

I am one of those modern women who try to combine work and family life, and, just as it is for all the others, this is a problem for me. [...] I try to prepare and edit my films in Paris during the long summer vacation when the children are free and can come along. I make films about liberation movements. But the money for such film production is to be found not in Africa, but in Europe. [...] I have to live where the money is to be raised, and then do my work in Africa.

Sambizanga is a story taken from reality: a liberation fighter, one of the many, dies from severe torture. But my chief concern with this film was to make Europeans, who hardly know anything about Africa, conscious of the forgotten war in Angola, Mozambique and Guinea Bissau. [...] I tell the story of a woman. It could be any woman, in any country, who takes off to find her husband. The year is 1961. [...]

In the village where Maria lives, the people have no idea at all what 'independence' means. The Portuguese prevent the spread of any information and a debate on the subject is impossible. They even prevent the people from living according to their own traditional culture. If you feel that this film can be interpreted as being negative, then you're falling into the same trap as many of my Arab brothers did when they reproached me for not showing any Portuguese bombs or helicopters in the film. [...] Nationalities and borders between countries have to disappear. Besides this, the colour of a person's skin is of no interest to me. What is important is what the person is doing. I'm no adherent of the concept of the Third World. I make films so that people—no matter what race or colour they are—can understand them. To make a film means to take a position [...]. What I wanted to show in *Sambizanga* is the aloneness of a woman and the time it takes to march. I'm only interested in women who struggle. These are the women I want to have in my films, not the others. I also offer work to as many women as possible during the time I'm shooting my films. You have to support those women who want to work with film. Up until now, we are still few in number, but if you support those women in film who are around, then slowly our numbers will grow. That's the way the men do it, as we all know. Women can work in whatever field they want. That means in film, too. The main thing is that they themselves want to do it. Men aren't likely to help women do that. Both in Africa and in Europe woman remains the slave of man. That's why she has to liberate herself.

First published under the title "On Sambizanga" in Karyn Kay and Gerald Peary (eds.), *Women and the Cinema, A Critical Anthology*, New York: E.P. Dutton 1977. Edited and republished in Imruh Bakari and Mbye Cham (eds.), *African Experiences of Cinema*, London: BFI 1996, 45-47.

"To Sarah Maldo... who, with camera in hand, fights oppression, alienation, and, challenges human stupidity." (Aimé Césaire)

http://africanwomenincinema.blogspot.com/2020/04/sarah-maldoror-behind-cloud-derriere-le.html

"Sarah Maldoror was born Sarah Ducados. [...] A passion for theatre first brought her to Paris, where she joined the théâtre de l'école de la rue Blanche, and a number of African and Caribbean artists with whom she co-founded the first Black theatre troupe in France, Les Griots, in 1956. 'We were sick of playing maids. We wanted to choose our own roles. As there was four of us, we put on Jean-Paul Satre's 'Huis Clos' [...] We toured and played in universities for free. What we wanted most of all was to learn'. It was as part of this troupe that she adopted the surname Maldoror in homage to *Les Chants de Maldoror (The Songs of Maldoror)*, the long prose poem by the 19th century poet Lautréamont, much admired by the Surrealists, whose subversive artistic tactics were in turn an inspiration to the filmmaker. This name also indicates one of many points of connection with Aimé Césaire..." (Daniella Shreir and Yasmina Price)

https://www.anothergaze.com/another-gaze-presents-legacies-sarah-maldoror-1929-2020-12-may-2020/

Dr K's story and her character certificate from her time as medical practitioner lured me to the documents that she left behind. The certificate, a piece of paper, dated 3 March 1943, Mayo hospital, Lahore, mentions her intelligence, hard word and excellent moral character. It has been seven decades and more, still this paper parchment has the power to guarantee excellence in morality. 1947 partition and a medical camp for wounded refugees in Montgomery state of newly carved Pakistan, a bureaucrat, appointed deputy commissioner, went to the camps for an inspection and fell in love with Dr K, a young woman, fiercely committed. He chased her to London, where she had been sent as inspector of health to see the physical working of health centres and institutions, and pursued her to marry him. Love stories are not considered respectable in the case of Muslim Pakistani women, so I've given her an acronym to retain her respect.

I wonder what "motorcycle girl" Zenith Irfan's real first name is, I'll call her in the morning to ask. I'm sure it is not Zenith.

Dr K's photographs as the joint health secretary of Pakistan and one of the first five Muslim women doctors from colonial India King Edward Medical College, Lahore, made me look at the lines and mounds of my palms and the possibilities of this landscape—visual, memorial or moral. I dipped them in ink, over and over, and reprinted them for "time walk" (2013). I did try and learn to read palms when I was a teenager. Gems, numbers and lines of the palm as a phenomenon for fate was one of my father's interests and I tried learning a bit from him—but what use are these lines? What is the use of destiny when stories and names have to be veiled to sustain podiums and perceptions of respect?

The recent biopic, *Motorcycle Girl* (Adnan Sarwar, 2018) made me approach the real motorcycle girl. "I try to protect my character and keep it in line with the society I live in. If I become too vocal and blunt or put up something controversial—the thought of it scares me. There is a thin line. I would never judge people on their clothing, but I have to be conscious about what I wear. This conflict continues. I play video games and I am an expressive person. You have to put a filter on when it comes to character."[1]

A love for the maps of northern areas and laughing at their importance and inaccuracy and filtrations of narrative is an everyday for the motorcycle girl. After their marriage Mr T.Y took Dr K to his Lahore mansion where she was introduced to his first wife, Yasmin Begum, and seven children who were not much younger than her. She always told her family that he never informed her that he was already married. She was from a home where her father had migrated to Lahore from Mastang for the education of his three daughters in the early 1940s. In the following years, Mr T.Y became a renowned lawyer and politician.

[1] Zenith Irfan (*Motorcycle Girl*), in conversation with Sehr Jalil, 27 April 2020.

Sehr Jalil, *Time walk*, 2013, digital collage and mixed media on paper, 183 x 92 cm.

Yasmin Begum could never get an education due to the tradition of early arranged marriages. She was devoted to her seven children and husband and Dr K always said that she was a pious and loving lady. Yasmin Begum died in 1974 due to chronic cardiac illness. Around 15 years before, Dr K had decided to live independently after she gave birth to a son and a daughter, since living in the family home was a struggle. Mr T.Y passed away in 1964, his death was announced on the first page of all national dailies. I'll have to stop here. In a strange way—her honour can hurt her honour. Integrity, close relationships with her husband's first children, her brilliance and professionalism—travelling around the world, creating opportunities and training women health workers in Pakistan, building her own home for her son and daughter as a widow, are stories and struggles that are not for sharing. These things should be kept personal, her family says. Till date, a few of Mr T.Y's first family, also her family, believe that her professional success is credited to her husband.

I needed someone to walk with on those lines that transferred on to the paper from my palm and walking along them was not easy—the atmosphere, with almost an XRAY of Dr K's typewritten legacy, was weather that required an umbrella, in "time walk".

Perveen Shakir, the revolutionary Pakistani Urdu poet, in „Lines of the palm" writes:

The oil lamp or the night could not be blamed
So I conversed with an affair of the wind

When every morning is a day of judgment
Who in the world can think of permanence?

Oh nail biting twitch of repentance you did hurt
But the knots of my being were let loose

A chain, an island or a fruitless branch
Is there any line in my palm which has endured?

Poem translated from Urdu after a helpful discussion with a friend, Usman Ataullah.

My assumption about Zenith's name was wrong. Family suggested "Zeenat" but her mother chose "Zenith" instead. It's been her name since she was born. My assumption was based on the observation that it is not a regular South Asian name for a girl—culturally or religiously; it is a word from the English dictionary. And we know that it means—peak. A girl named Zenith, riding a bike in the northern areas, in the mountain ranges of Pakistan, appears strategic, but it was meant to be. For Zenith, on her journeys on the bike across Pakistan—lines are milestones. "Music and earplugs give us focus to ride for the longest hours, nature does not give a margin to drift, we have to be in sync with it, high altitude atmospheric tribulations and hailstorms have taught us to keep in line with nature and not force ourselves."[2]

On customs and law, once on a trip to Swat, Mingora, the regulations were so stringent that brother and sister were not allowed to stay in one room. Northern Pakistani regions such as Swat, which have seen a war with the Taliban (from 2007 to 2009) and catastrophic natural calamities (the 2010 floods), have laws and regulations that come from a time of fear and loss, they'll do anything to guard that.

On 15 November 1995, Zenith's father passed away; he was thirty-four and left behind a ten-month old Zenith and his wife who was expecting their son, and an unfinished dream with biking photographs. Hatred from the local biking community became the seed for Zenith's success. A few years back, Zenith posted a picture of herself with the bike on a group travel to Azad Kashmir. Other members on the group weren't comfortable with online postings so she posted a solo one and a reporter wrongly picked up a story of Zenith traveling solo to Kashmir. This misunderstanding instigated hatred from the biking community to the point where her mentor, in her support, came to her place one day and told her to pack her bags and take up the challenge of riding on her own to prove herself.

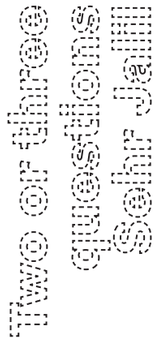
We talked about the line between fact and fiction. The words *urr chaley* (took flight) from the film's theme song resonates with Zenith's and her brother's journey. Her brother is her team. He's always with her in the journeys and also handles the media and business side of her image. The journeys were articulated in detail, but personal narratives were filtered out and changed. "The director told me, 'you had no resistance from family; there were no hurdles', and since this is not the norm, we need to create it—on the contrary, my personal struggles and the toxicity I faced were another realm that didn't need to be public. So it was mediated accordingly."[3]

Mr T.Y had become an important man in the history of Pakistan, as the president of the leading political party and a member of the national assembly. He had deep respect and devotion for the Jinnah family (the founder of Pakistan). Fatima Jinnah, Muhammad Ali Jinnah's sister, a dentist by profession and a major force in the Pakistan movement, was a presidential candidate opposing president Ayub Khan. Mr T.Y was in Ayub Khan's political party and leading the presidential campaign against Miss Jinnah. There was a conflict in his heart and mind. There was legacy, compassion, loyalty and respect on the one hand, and honesty, stance and professionalism on the other. Sometimes in life you cannot take sides. On 15 October 1964, Mr T.Y wrote a speech against Miss Jinnah for a big campaign gathering the next morning. He crumpled many pages. One after the other, on his desk—he never woke up.

Mader e Millat, mother of the nation, Fatima Jinnah lost the elections to President Ayub Khan in 1965. On 9 July 1967 she was found dead, in her bedroom, in her Mohatta palace abode. The result of the elections and cause of her death is conflicted, till date.

Dr K lived till May 2000, surrounded by her children and grandchildren. The younger women in her family mirrored her journey and progressed in education and work. Time walked on for her and she safeguarded every document, every story, as if it had happened today...

[2] Ibid.
[3] Ibid.



Which work of her art / literature / music / photography keeps resonating with you?

In the recent readings, a creative nonfiction work titled *When Women Were Birds: Fifty-four Variations on Voice* by Terry Tempest Williams. Anoushka Shankar's music. Barbara Walker's drawing installations. Georgia O'Keeffe's allegory and simplicity in flowers. Reshma's almost transparent voice...

Is there a work you would have wanted, but never managed to see properly? In a well equipped cinema, as an original in a museum? Attend the concert instead of listening to the record?

An Anoushka Shankar concert.

Who would you love to meet and have a conversation with? Where and what about?

Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, Anoushka Shankar and Reshma—two of them are not alive but I would like to discuss the visuality of/in their music with them.

Who has been an important source and influence for the way you think, work and live?

The work of local women artisans, the anonymous unsung practitioners of centuries old aesthetics traditions.

Which work of her art / literature / music / photography keeps resonating with you?

The work of Amrita Sher-Gil, Zubeida Agha, Lala Rukh, and others from the conceptual minimalist genre.

Which of her books did you always want to read, but never found a copy, the time, the entry point?

So many books to yet read! Poetry and literature in foreign languages...

Is there a work you would have wanted, but never managed to see properly? In a well equipped cinema, as an original in a museum? Attend the concert instead of listening to the record?

Iranian and Italian Cinema.

Who would you love to meet and have a conversation with? Where and what about?

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak.

Which woman artist / figure should be rediscovered and should get a retrospective or a solo show or a proper catalogue?

The work of women artisans from different cultures around the world.

Did you ever have a favourite heroine in fiction..., in reality..., in history?

My mother.

Goodbye Little Girl: Exiting the Planetary Patriarchy

Agency

Still from *Hello! West Indies* (1944): Una Marson dancing to Archie Lewis' singing "Goodbye Little Girl."

The Otolith Group. *Otolith I* (2003), film still.

Exit

Exodus

Yuri Gagarin, Pavel Popovich, Tereshkova, and Nikita Khrushchev at the Lenin Mausoleum, 22 June 1963. RIA Novosti archive, photographed by V. Malyshev.

Maybe we could try to circle back to the notion of gravity, which I feel we somehow symbolically started with while watching *Otolith I*. Thinking about gravity calls for thinking about planetary belonging, and leaving gravity behind implies the question of planetary dis-identification.

I was thinking about Valentina Tereshkova, the Soviet cosmonaut, while *Goodbye Little Girl* by Archie Lewis was playing in the background during Garnette Cadogan's presentation. Think of that epic goodbye, that orbital, extra-orbital goodbye, that cosmic farewell by that particular little girl Tereshkova—daughter of a tractor driver and a textile worker, who worked at a tyre factory during the day and studied at night, only to become the first woman to have flown in space on the breezy morning of 16 June 1963. She spent three long days feeling sick in a small, uncomfortable, hot and utterly unsafe Vostok, orbiting the Earth forty-eight times.

Tereshkova, a 26-year-old girl from a small village on the Volga River, remains the only woman to have gone on a solo space mission. Awarded the *Hero of the Soviet Union* medal, atop Lenin's Tomb, on Red Square. But one should not think of Tereshkova's flight in Promethean terms, at least not her own. She is standing there, dressed in simple civilian attire, receiving the medal, smiling, squeezed between the men in military uniforms. Afterall, remember that the decision to send that particular little girl to outer space was part of the ultimate macho planetary game—the Cold War space race. Nikolai Kamanin, director of the Soviet cosmonaut training, simply could not allow the first woman in space to be American. That would, as he had put it, be an insult to the patriotic feelings of Soviet women. Really? The space journeys of the little factory worker, Valentina, and the little stray dog, Laika, are thus of the same kind. Making kin in outer space.

But to leave gravity behind—what an extraordinary prospect for any one little girl! One wonders about all the exciting and unpredictable lines of flight and autonomy such a radical de-grounding, un-bounding, de-terrestrialising exodus might open up. One could hardly imagine a more radical form of dis-identification than dis-identifying from the entire planet, policed and tortured by the laws of universal, extractivist white patriarchy. An egress into space so grand that it opens up exactly that—space. Space for establishing new laws, new codes, unburdened by gravity, but also, hopefully, by linear temporality. Imagine an exit of a different order—both non-romantic and non-instrumental. An exit from the masculinist phantasies of techno-scientific planetarity. Exiting the planetary patriarchy.

How would an exodus of such a militant *Little Girl* reconfigure the concept of autonomy beyond what Walter Benjamin referred to as mythic violence—that violence of mere law breaking and law making? Remember that „autonomy" comes from these two words: auto, self and nomos, the law. So, in the context of *Women on Aeroplanes*, we might want to ask: what would be a feminist way to give ourselves our own law in the context of planetary state patriarchy? I feel that we must look elsewhere though, beyond the history of women enlisted in state-forming projects and turn, instead, to the history of women in anti-fascist guerrilla strug-

gles, to the women of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation, to the women running community kitchens, to Black Panther party's breakfasts, to Rojava, to the scattered and uncapturable but firmly terrestrial and grounded everyday struggles of women, most of whom never boarded an airplane, not to mention a spacecraft.

Allow me to quickly share with you the little map I made during our conversations today. At the centre of it is the notion of autonomy. Underneath, I wrote two words: belonging and dis-identification. Above it, I have another two: infinity and gravity. And then I have something like the vernacular fundaments of it at the bottom, comprised of the dialectics between state politics and the politics of care. Now, what I want to suggest is a congruence of two paradoxical objects which we could call, playfully, gravitational infinitude and dis-identified belonging.

Of course, what I am suggesting here is thinking about infinity outside of the parameters of Euclidean geometry. What would that entail? Infinity without geometry? What if we dis-identify also from thinking the infinite as an extension of the known, as an endless iteration of that which is predetermined by the law; where, if you have any determined set of numbers, you can always imagine a bigger number that will always just be another number, and it will always be determined by what was there before. If instead, we want to think of infinity not in the sense of *beyond*, after which there's an abyss or *nothing*, but of infinity as an undefined and playful space of an encounter with *potentiality,* of dis-identified belonging and infinitude, then this procedure has ultimately not so much to do with exiting space. Rather, it is about exiting the normalised, Western category of time, that violent onto-epistemological tool of separation that Denise Ferreira da Silva describes so pertinently.[1] If you don't belong to the time of linear progression, of teleology, of counting time, if you are outside that time, then everything you have is space. You don't reside in time; you reside in space. In this space, as I would like to see it, are small vortexes, points of intersection and intensity, of autonomy and dis-identified belonging.

This brings me to the lower part of the map: state politics and care. While watching Jihan El-Tahri's films, saturated with images of 'non-aligned' statesmen in military parade uniforms, embellished with pins, badges and ordains of all shapes and colours, propped up on highly elevated stages and giving historical speeches, I was trying to think about the Non-Aligned Movement from the perspective of the Socialist Federative Yugoslavia, which in many ways offers a unique case study in the context of the Cold War politics. One often hears of progressive, Yugoslav, economic and social policies, about worker self-organisation, the anti-fascist struggle, and the Non-Aligned Movement. And, certainly, these are events and politics to which we should continue to claim fidelity. Although I continue to identify as Yugoslav, I am more interested in what official politics of state socialism, no matter how progressive, foreclose.

Now I want to juxtapose my messy mind map with this other map, an actual historical map that shows the situation in Europe in May 1943. Everything that is green on this map is the occupied territory. As you can see, there are these little pink dots that mark the only liberated territories in Europe at the time. These dispersed pink dots of freedom stand for the movement of the anti-fascist struggle of the Yugoslav communist partisans. And, importantly, 34% of the partisan guerrilla fighters were women. That means that around 150,000 Yugoslav women joined the guerrilla struggle against fascism. Now, keeping in mind the footage I referred to from Jihan's films, I want to draw attention to what happens the moment when the guerrilla struggle turns into a state—be it a nation state, or, in this case, Socialist state. Although the Yugoslav Communist Party introduced new legal codes to ensure the legal equality of women and so on, patriarchy persisted. Yugoslav feminists often lament the fact that after the battle had been won, Yugoslav women guerrilla fighters were more or less expected to *return* to the kitchen and resume their duties of social reproduction, even though it is known that they *never left* the kitchen, and that even during the liberation struggle, women were operating machine guns as much as they were nursing the wounded and cooking in improvised kitchens and on open fire in the mountains and forests where the battle was happening. What is, thus, often unconsciously inherited by the Yugoslav feminists is the deeply masculinist, neo-Marxist presumption that what is somewhat sententiously called *political subjectivation* happens in that phantasmagorical, transparent space of 'true political' that unfolds in clean, linear time, on the grand horizon of universal history, of that which has nothing to do with the ahistorical and torturous circularity of dirty dishes, poopy diapers and smelly socks.

To return to the question of state politics including Non-Aligned Movement, we could ask a simple question: How come NAM survived (in whatever form)? And add a counter-question: how come Tricontinentalism was crushed? Why was Mehdi Ben Barka murdered? Was it not for the fact that the political horizon of Tricontinentalism was truly internationalist and recognized all kinds of grassroot, guerrilla struggles beyond state politics?

Can we imagine not leaving the earth and the gravity behind but rather embracing a messy, minor planetarity based on the politics of care, of that which resides not in the grandiose nomos of the Earth, but rather in its messy oikos? Such deeply grounded, terrestrial politics would thus not be based on the globe as seen from outer space, that globe, which, as Spivak says, only exists in our computers, but rather on what Yugoslav feminists in the 1970s called, "the invisible matter." That invisible matter that inherently resists subsumption into the structure of the state, that exists in the dis-identifying and complex borderlands of Gloria Anzaldúa, between small vertigos that happen in the space and outside of linear, Promethean time, unordained, unelevated, unruly, near the fire of the earthly oikos. I am committed here not to the Prometheus who heroically brings us fire but to the fire itself and those who maintain it and care for it. Can we think about fire without Prometheus?

I am remembering now Temitayo's playground-intervention. Playgrounds can be restricting and dull. Liberating playgrounds means opening up a space for an unprescribed play that is not captured by calculation of time, where the time passes differently and where dis-identifications turn into invocations. How can autonomy be rethought from a position of a different kind of game, a different kind of play beyond the men-run, state-based theatre of operation that we witness in Jihan's films? I would like to think of our gathering as a site of unprescribed play with a lot of space for women who never boarded an airplane, and for planetary politics from the perspective of the invisible matter.

The Otolith Group. *Otolith I* (2003), film still.

[1] Denise Ferreira da Silva, "Toward a Black Feminist Poethics: The Quest(ion) of Blackness Toward the End of the World." *The Black Scholar* 44, 2, 2014, 81–97.

Interview with Jihan El-Tahri

This text is a revised version of the public discussion after the screening of *Behind the Rainbow* (SA, 2008) during the WoA gathering "Stopover" in Frankfurt/Main, 22 June 2019 at TOR Art-Space.

Kodwo Eshun This is the fourth time that I've seen *Behind the Rainbow*. Tonight actually went by the quickest. *Behind the Rainbow* is a masterpiece. Jihan is one of the greatest political filmmakers of our era. Let's not wait until she is in her grave to acknowledge that. That is part of why we're all here; we don't often get the opportunity to discuss your films in a collective setting such as this. I want to start by returning to a point that you made yesterday when we were discussing *Behind the Rainbow*. You talked about how you build your films by identifying critical turning points. In *Behind the Rainbow*, one of those is the moment in which the ANC makes the decision to leave the structures of apartheid in place for at least 5 years through the so-called "sunset clauses" with the result that, as you say, the people come to understand that the judiciary that threatened democracy will stay in place—they realise that they cannot necessarily expect justice. In other words: the continuity of apartheid beneath the promise to change apartheid creates a contradiction that in turn creates a profound disillusionment.

Jihan El-Tahri I struggled quite a bit to find the way to make this point through the chronology of events. I thought that I had a starting point with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission [TRC], which is the event that I had probably done the most research about. I'd read all the statements, spent months going through them, but in the end I decided to exclude it entirely from the film. The narrative that I needed to trace was how the ANC got to Polokwane—the 52nd National Conference of the ANC in 2007, which ends with Jacob Zuma's election as party chair over Thabo Mbeki. To understand how that moment of complete division in the party happens, becomes inevitable, to tell that story, I needed to follow an uninterrupted thread. And the TRC, I finally realized, was not going to help you unravel the process that leads to the breakdown.

KE Yes.

JET To plot an uninterrupted timeline for my films, I establish these very extensive chronologies. No explanation, no point of view, just a date and what happened. And for this film, my chronology was about 700 pages. It's like every detail I ever found is listed. The research took perhaps five years. Initially I was trying to get one of my former students from South Africa to make this film, but no one was interested so I decided to do it myself. And actually as I was going into editing, a new book came out, *Thabo Mbeki and the Battle for the Soul of the ANC* (2005) by William Gumede. It was one of the first really serious books coming from a space of intimate knowledge of the ANC. So I had to stop and check that I didn't need to adjust anything. I'm glad I did, because all sorts of chronologies came in that hadn't been written anywhere else.

KE Yes, because all of these histories have their own chronology, but it's important for you to assemble a synthetic history from these chronologies.

JET Yes. So, once I have compiled and ordered the chronology, I go through the whole thing and try to identify the turning points. Obviously, there are hundreds of them. It's really a question of identifying where the story will begin and where it will end. Because ultimately, I recognise that I can only tell one story. I can't tell five stories in one film.

KE What are the cinematic choices that help you make that decision?

JET What you see in the film is three kinds of footage. There's the archive footage, most of it from pre-2001. There's my own footage. And there's the footage from people I send out to film for me. Intentionally, they don't look the same. But all of the original footage—everything that I and the people who shoot for me film is completely static. That's one of the ways I install visual calmness in a very confused or complicated situation. My shots are always fixed, including all the footage you see inside the rowdy national conference, for example. Which makes deciding where you're going to put the camera a very complicated decision.

KE How do you know where to position your cameras within the ANC National Conference?

JET It's basically about the configuration of the room. Before the conference started, I saw where the signs were, so I knew, for example, that the Limpopo delegation was in the back. I put one camera there because I knew most of the Zuma supporters were going to be in that area. One camera just filmed that. I knew where all of my characters were, so one camera was moving around the room to keep track of them. I had the third camera right in the centre of the passageway, where the different delegations were, and it was positioned in an angle that could capture everything happening on the stage. Voilà. And I was running between them and screaming [laughs].

KE Terror [Mosiuoa] Lekota looks so shocked as he realises that he has lost all authority.

JET Terror was in a state! He was being booed from all sides. At that point he was both the Chairperson of the ANC and the Minister of Defence. He was embattled: the corruption scandal around the arms deal had just become headline news and to make matters worse, in the midst of all these ANC divisions, he had made offensive statements about Zuma that same week. He had painted himself in a corner by openly siding with Mbeki. But in terms of the film, identifying who's who and their relevance to the story at each point gets very complicated. So the name and title captions are another thing you have to decide. Do you just give each of them one title throughout? I follow Thabo Mbeki from the late 1960s in Swaziland onwards. I could call him President of South Africa the whole time, but that would kill the story—at different stages he gets different titles. Everyone has different titles as you move on.

KE They understand each other in terms of continuous antagonism and alliance. As you watch, you think that you understand where someone's position is going to be and then it changes. That kind of agility is incredible. It is a process of transition that itself is in transition.

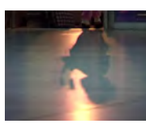
JET You could actually see the political structures in motion, in the process of transformation. That's the reason I made this film. My obsession, the one question that runs through all my films, is: What happened to thwart the grand vision of independence? All the hopes that were going to make the future fantastic? What happened, that we are still where we're at today? *Cuba: An African Odyssey* (2007) was about this moment of independence and what went wrong. While working on that film, I realised that the real problem comes at the moment of transition. That's why South Africa became really important for me, because the ANC was a liberation movement from that same era of anticolonial struggle in the 1960s, but they were going through that moment of transition decades later. Initially I thought that the transition was the moment that Mandela comes to power, but then I realized it wasn't—he hardly governed, and everything was fine. The moment of transition started when the ANC had to deal with the task of daily governing. I remember that I was watching the live broadcast of the Hefer Commission inquiry around September 2003, it was a sort of trial of very senior ANC stalwarts—I actually thought it was a new soap opera on TV, until I recognised one of the faces. That was when it struck me that major internal problems were happening inside the ANC. So I decided to start filming everything that happened.

That process of internal breakdown, brothers becoming enemies, it applies to Egypt, Congo, Algeria, Senegal, Ghana, each of these countries—after independence, that moment of transition led to an internal power struggle within the party itself.

Just an anecdote. With that South Africa film, I'd done years of research and interviewed everybody five hundred times—everything was in place for me to start filming. I told my cameraman, who is German, to come to Joburg and we had decided on twenty-six days of shooting. Six months later we hadn't shot a single image! Suddenly nobody would speak to me anymore. Everybody would speak to me off camera, but every time we'd make an appointment to film them it didn't happen. We were only able to shoot public events.

I couldn't understand what was going on. But I think it had to do with how important it was during this period of the transition to consolidate the mythology of the ruling party, the ANC government, as the only possible contender for power. They'd already eliminated all the others: Black Consciousness, the Pan-African Congress (PAC), all these people whose role in the struggle had been sidelined. The fractures that were happening inside the party were kept internal. Nobody wanted to speak because if they did, then this whole effort to keep that mythology together might fall apart.

God knows what happened, but one bright morning one person actually gave me an interview—and then, everybody else did. I think for this film I have like 300 hours of footage! No TV or cinema wants you to have that ratio of footage, but that's what it took.



KE When you are faced with that amount of footage, what decisions are guiding the shape of your narrative? How, for example, would you describe your use of voice-over narration in *Behind the Rainbow*? What sort of intervention is made possible by using your own voice?

JET My narration is mainly there to smooth the transition from one thing to the other—whatever information you need to get to the next point. My voice, and the film, are mainly a platform for those who were there, first-hand eyewitnesses, to tell their side of the story the way they

lived it. I never really have a conclusion. South Africa was facing the same crossroads as all the other African countries. And it's a slippery slope. Are they going to take that way, or are they going to learn from those other difficult transitions and try something else? Obviously, they went down the same road.
When I started making films, it was with more observational and social stories. I began to deal with political history as such later. I wanted to have a voice, to transmit the world from my perspective. We in the South have not had that moment of telling of our story, the way they in the North have done so. I'm not particularly keen on being fancy and sexy or being regarded as an innovative filmmaker. I just want to tell the story which I believe is important in the form that is appropriate to understand the complexities. And of course, had I been making these more classical or tradition films in the 1970s, that would have been the appropriate form, because that's when the West was telling its stories in that form. Now they've gone beyond that. I don't think we're there yet, it's a documenting phase we need to go through. I think many more films should be done in that classical, traditional form, because it's really about trying to pin down and weave together the content, the visual and the archive. I should also say that the fact that there are hardly any women in my South Africa film is also part of the representation of that era. So, I don't follow what is trending nor do I feel obliged to prove that I can make a film in fancy new forms. I don't care really.

KE You once told me that *Behind the Rainbow* had a circular structure, which I didn't fully understand. But this time, I could see how you begin at the end. You circle around an ending and then open a wider circle that goes all the way back to the 1960s and returns to the present. As it gets closer and closer it slows down until you start mentioning days. You start saying, "six days *after* Jacob Zuma is charged" or "four days after Zuma is charged," and then comes the allegation of rape against Zuma.
You say that nobody knew, back [in 1992] at the time of the "sunset clauses" what they would set in motion. You, as the voice-over in the present, know the outcome, but they, the protagonists making history, do not. At this moment where the people we have seen are acting in real-time, it becomes clear that the narrative voice knows the ending before the people we are watching do. It's a fascinating moment in which temporalities of the retrospective and the contemporary cross each other.

JET That's where the circle begins. I always begin at the end because what I'm interested in is understanding how we got to where we are at. It's the current situation that I try to unravel, so you sort of start there and try to find an uninterrupted thread. Initially I thought I should start the film in 1963, the year of Mandela's arrest and the Rivonia Trial, but then as you move on you say, "okay but that ends with Mandela's presidency, which is not where I need to get to." I tried starting at 1976, with Soweto, but that didn't work, either. So that's why I begin in 1983, with the birth of United Democratic Front (UDF) and the ANC's call to make South Africa ungovernable. That was a narrative that continued to unfold. I'm always trying to find the uninterrupted line that connects us to today.

KE The implication of a circular film is that it's not finished. It concludes, but the conclusion is not an ending.

JET Of course. People keep asking me to do the next part of this film or the next part of the Saudi film [*The House of Saud*, 2004] or the next part of god knows what. Look, I don't do the next part. I believe that all I can do is to put one brick in the wall. Others can say, this is bullshit and add another brick to the wall of questions and knowledge... It opens the space to deal with these issues.

Antonia Majaca There is a kind of underlying current to this entire story, which is the history not only of communism but the history of international anti-communism. It becomes obvious in that moment when the GEAR [Growth, Employment and Redistribution, a five-year development strategy adopted in June 1996], this technocratic reform, which [you suggest] was intended to be a way to navigate between this huge debt that needed to be dealt with and the urge to remain independent from the IMF. For me this was a very strong moment in the film, where it becomes so palpable that the predicament is so complex. If you have 40% unemployment, none of the ideological background really matters.

JET It's what Victor Moche says: "Well, you can't eat freedom." Ultimately that's what the film's about. What does a liberation movement do when its dreams are confronted with the reality of governing? Your desire to rectify the injustices of the past are confronted and contradicted by the reality of governing the present. And throughout all these years of dealing with liberation movements in my films I've been trying to figure out why is it that we're always in that fix. I personally believe that liberation movements should never govern. They might be heroes but at this different juncture they just do not have the required skillset to govern.

KE But who does? The apartheid system set up the ANC to fail. Apartheid saddled them with debt. Apartheid is a historic failure that leaves the country bankrupt. It puts a gun to the head of the new government and forces them into these terrible choices from the outset.

JET Let me share one story Jorge Risquet told me. At the Dakar Conference in July 1987, when they were negotiating to end apartheid, Thabo Mbeki met with Jorge Risquet, who was the chairman of the Communist Party in Cuba. The South African Communist Party (SAPC) would hold its next congress in Havana in April 1989. Thabo goes to see Fidel Castro and he says to him, "Do not let your Bacardis go." That was the one piece of advice that he had for them. I was like, "What? What does that mean?" Risquet explained to me that in 1959, when Fidel went to America right after taking power, they allowed the Bacardis to leave with all their assets. That was one thing the Cubans said: "Do not allow capital flight." But what did they do? What did Mandela do? He allowed De Beers to leave and was later bought out by Anglo American. Despite that warning, they let go of all kinds of assets that they could have kept. I'm not saying they should have nationalized them, but they didn't have to allow them to transfer all the funds. All these assets were out before you could say good morning. So, no. I disagree that they didn't have options. They did have options, but they were playing to the gallery of the World Economic Forum in Davos rather than thinking about what they were going to do about this mess.

Annett Busch To come back for another moment to the narrative structure of your film—the way you organise image and sound. There is something very interesting happening with form and this question of having a choice or not. How do we, as spectators, get the idea that things could be different? Because, as you say, you are telling the story to explain why things are the way they are, and at the same time you have to create a storyline that shows the ramifications of decision-making. Otherwise, the reality we face begins to appear without alternative, which would be quite depressing. So you establish these parallel strands. There is one line that shows what the public sees the form of representation. A parallel line is built up through the interviews, and then another one through your voice-over narration. You don't use these in order to tell us how things really are, but as the spectator constantly navigates between these different strands and layers, as you work with repetitions, the way we look at the images begins to change. You show the performances at the ANC gatherings over several years—dances, songs—and we can see how these rituals start to lose their meaning, becoming empty and even ridiculous, and one can see the process of disconnecting... OK, that's not a question, but a suggestion that even in a, let's say, classical documentary form—the kind that can be shown on television,— you introduce so many layers that subvert this "classical" form...

JET I don't believe in the existence of a single truth. And so I don't necessarily look for 'the' truth. There's a minimum common denominator, a baseline that allows me to say "OK, I know that this happened because I've interviewed my characters and their assistants and everyone around them and everyone from all sides agrees on this bit and then goes off on a different thing." So when you're trying to tell a story, everybody comes with their own sensibility and from their own perspective, and rightly so, because that's who they are and what they are bringing to the table. I'm not trying to say who's right and who's wrong.

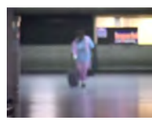
KE There were at least two great themes in the film. One is the clash of 'brother' against 'brother'—Thabo Mbeki and Jacob Zuma, comrades forged in the underground—and what happens to them. And the other related great theme is the relationship between liberation network, ruling party and the diffusion of corruption in the era of independence. That's the theme that emerges in Chinua Achebe's *A Man of the People* (1966) and Ayi Kwei Armah's *The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (1968). So many novels and films work through this theme in which liberation networks, almost despite themselves, become vehicles for corruption through the form of the ruling party which finds itself changing, almost despite itself.

You hear it in Victor Moche who says, "Nobody's going to judge me, no judge is going to tell me what corruption is. If I go to a comrade in Robben Island and ask to get this thing done, the comrade does it. No judge is going to sit there and call it corruption." That is a fascinating moment, because you realise that "Oh, that's how it would happen." Because in that context, it becomes a matter of saying that "I get to say what is a network and what is corruption. It's not for you to say."

JET Moche explains how you had to depend on your comrades to survive in the underground because you'd be standing in line and the fridges would explode. You'd be under constant threat, so whom you depend on, whom you trust—all of this makes for a lifelong bond. It's not subject to question. And these networks from the past are translated into the present. They come back from exile and they don't know anyone, so they rely on their struggle comrades, who become the new gatekeepers. It didn't have to be that way. They could have opened the political sphere up to the PAC, to the Azanian Peoples Organization, to all of this. And not just the comrades. When all of these people were in exile, amongst them and amongst their friends, there were all kinds of people. There were technocrats—I mean, the reason the negotiations were so elaborate, the reason why the constitution of South Africa is so elaborate, is they'd been working on it for years and years. Lots of South Africans who were living abroad worked on it, not just the ANC. But these people were never taken into the political structures. You know, in Ghana, it wasn't just Nkrumah and his people; there were all these other people who also had a good education. It was the same in Nigeria. But it's kind of, "We won, we have the right to lead." And then they decide to lead alone. I think for me that's one of the central problems.

KE Is that why you think that liberation movements should not become ruling parties?

JET Secrecy and loyalty are probably the two main attributes of a liberation movement fighting for independence. It is these two qualities that then become a major problem within the institutions of the state which require transparency and technocrats. So, when I say the heroes of the liberation struggle do not have the right skills for governing, I mean that after decades of functioning as an underground organisation and refining the skill of compartmentalising information, how do you expect them to do away with this overnight? Transparency becomes an issue even with unimportant details. Same goes for loyalty, you cannot expect someone coming out of years of struggle often against a faceless enemy to simply trust a person he knows nothing about simply because they have the merit. I remember one of the people in my last film *Egypt's Modern Pharaohs* saying that Nasser felt embattled and he had to choose between loyalty or merit of the ministers he was to choose. He chose loyalty. That is how the military took over the state, because Nasser at that point did not have any civilians he trusted enough with the vision he wanted to instate. If you look around the continent that is what has happened in most countries after independence.



The Fat Psychotic Bisexual

he leans forward, staring at me intently, a slight smile on his face. On graduation day, he comes over to hug me goodbye. He holds me a moment longer than appropriate and that's the end of my crush.

Next I get involved with a married man. I like to caress his face, kiss his throat, unbutton his shirt, just a little. I do whatever it is he wants me to do. At 1 a.m. when I can't sleep, can't lie down. can't spend another second without hearing his voice, I call his house. He answers before his wife can hear the phone. He's angry at me for calling. I say I love you but he doesn't listen. He says, good night, slams down the receiver.

After he breaks it up with me, I date a drug addict who uses me to fund his heroin habit. A writer who used me for material for his novel. I have a cyber fling with a computer programmer who lives in the States. Eventually I move in with a musician who treats me like shit. When he goes to play with his band in clubs at night, I stay home. I watch TV and clean the house. I sweep, I dust, I scrub. I darn the hole in his Def Leppard t-shirt. Every night, he comes home high or drunk. He talks a mile a minute and every other word is fuck. He grabs me by the throat, rips my favourite blouse. One night he throws me down on the bed so hard I split open my lip.

I am at the end of my tether when I see a psychotherapist. I sit in a plush white chair. I listen to her tell me I'm addicted to fucked up relationships. She says I'm confusing love and fear. You start out thinking they are exciting but the reality is you're confusing feelings of flight, extreme panic and sometimes hatred for one hell of a crush. She smiles at me gently. Her voice is soft. She has a curvy nose and small round face. Her lips are cherise. I think I am falling in love with her. I tell her about my feelings but she dismisses them. I leave her office. I feel depressed. I walk out the door and down the carpeted corridor.

The depression lasts for days. It seems like my sadness is all I've got. I lie on the bed. Can't even sit up. I am inconsolable. My eyes are wet and red from crying. I do nothing but mope around all day and watch videos. I wake up in the morning and go straight to the video store on the corner. I take out another movie and try not to think about my therapist, or the musician or the married man. I watch all the romantic comedies in the video store. Then move on to horror. Then martial arts. I watch *Kung Fu Cult Master* and develop a crush on Jet Li. I love his spin kicks, his slipped feet, his balletic moves. I love his hair, like black silk, the way it sweeps across his forehead when he is executing a chop. Eyes as deep as his soul. His quiet precision when he attacks.

I play the fight sequences in *Lethal Weapon 4* over and over again and masturbate. I do so many repetitive motions with my right hand that my arm starts to ache. I am afraid I will develop carpal tunnel syndrome. I go to the internet cafe. Log on to the Jet Li fan site. I learned Jet is a Taurus and his Chinese star sign is a Rabbit. Learned that he's a very shy and timid person. He is very conservative, eats healthy meals and works out every day to stay in shape. On the website, I find an email address where fans can mail Jet.

I write him a letter.

Dear Jet,

How are you? I am not so good. I am deeply in love with you and think about you all the time. I am coming to China to meet you. It will be hard for me in China. I speak no Mandarin or Cantonese. I am allergic to sweet & sour sauce. Because of a defect in my heart I get sick easily. Hot moist climates make me nauseous. My body has no patience for humidity. I am agoraphobic and need lots of space.

I will be arriving on the 24th of April at Beijing Capital International Airport. My flight leaves at noon. I am afraid of flying. Because I'm an African I'll be stopped at the airport. I will have my bag and my rectum searched for contraband.

I need you to come pick me up. If you can't come, could you please let me know by telephone. My number is 27214345527.

I don't have much money and I don't know martial arts but my love is pure and true.

I am born with a septal defect, a hole in the heart. The hole is located between my heart right and left pumping chamber. A deep cavity that forces too much oxygenated blood into my lungs. My life expectancy is low. Thanks to surgery I survived. But I never fully recovered. Because of the whole. I am defective when it comes to love. I only love someone if they do not love me back. They start loving back, my feelings fade quickly, become dark and muddy. They get swallowed up and then they disappear.

I first noticed the defect at school. I am fourteen. I am pretty in a cute sort of way. I have curvy thighs and sharp little breasts. I have a huge crush on a boy. He is older than me. A rebel. He tapers his pants and pierces his ears. His fingernails are dirty, and he does not shine shoes. In between classes, he smokes in the toilet. One time I go to a friend's house for a party because I think he might be there. I wear my sexiest outfit with the hope of getting his attention and somehow I do.

I end up drinking vodka with him in my friend's bedroom. I'm lightheaded and giggly. After midnight we start making out, his tongue inside my mouth, his right hand feeling up my left breast. Not too much feeling it up as squeezing the nipple, squeezing in short rhythmic bursts, harder each time. When we stop kissing, he takes my face in his hands and tries to look at me. He says something softly, something like, you're so beautiful.

He starts trying to kiss me again but suddenly my feelings for him are all gone. All I can think about is how I should not be grounching someone I barely know. How he might have VD or some other horrible disease. I pull away and tell him I need to go to the bathroom. In the bathroom, I wash my hands and my arms. I wash my breasts where his hands touched me. Rinse out my mouth. I slip out the bathroom, walk slowly home.

The pattern continues at university. I develop a crush on my English tutor. He has a curly brown mullet and wears leather jackets and jeans. I write him secret love letters and drop them into his essay box. I stay after class to ask him questions. When he answers,

Thabiso Sekgala

Who has been an important source and influence for the way you think, work and live?

Chimurenga, Intifada, Acker, Adnan, Armah, Akhmatova, Abe (Kobo), Ahmed Bouanani, Hani, Hedayat, Busi, Buchi, Kippie, Krasznahorkai, Farrokhzad, Fanon, Shahrzad, Chude-Sokei, Cixous, Cortázar, (the cry of) Winnie, Mongezi ("You ain't gonna know me"), Nina, Kalonji, Kakudji, Al-Koni, Kongo Astronaut, El-Tahri, Anna Kavan, Duras, Delany, Dyani, Feni ("You wouldn't know God if he spat in your eye"), Ba Ka Khosa, BOP, POC, Boeta Gee, Miles, Mapfumo, Mansaray, Mambéty, Mongo, Pizarnik, Press, Zao, Zola, Lorca, Zurita, Zhuwao. Seitlhamo, Keleketla, Kouélany, Ko-Shun, Eastman, Kodwo Eshun, Hak Kyung Cha, Okot p', Gil Scott, Gama, Ramps, Ra, Akomfrah's BAFC, Bekolo, Benfodil, Galeano, (General's) Politburo, (Real) Rozano, Staffriders, Yambo, Neo, Ntone (captain my captain), Deep South, Dominique, Dudu, Achille, Biko, Bjork, Betty D, Bessie H, Holiday (Billie & Harmony), Sobukwe, Werewere, Lorde, Letta, Lispector, Linyekula, Liepollo, Mingus, Miles, Moses, G-Force Reagon, Fong Kong Bantu Soundsystem, Vicuña, Vallejo, Labou Tansi, Taban, U Tam'si, Trane, Tarkovsky, Tutuola, Yemisi, Brenda, Marechera, Mafika, Mombelli, Motadinyane, Dollar (Abdullah and Sapeta), Césaire (Aimé and Suzanne) and more more more future! (with thanks and apologiesto Chimurenga's roll call).

Which work of her art / literature / music / photography keeps resonating with you?

Dumile Feni's "You wouldn't know God if he spat in your eye"
Scroll: ellipses.org.za/IssueThree/IfGodSpat

Which of her books did you always want to read, but never found a copy, the time, the entry point?

So much still to be translated: works by Ungulani Ba Ka Khosa, Mohammed Khaïr-Eddine, Werewere Liking, Sony Labou Tansi (poetry), Sinzo Aanza and more and more...

Is there a work you would have wanted, but never managed to see properly? In a well equipped cinema, as an original in a museum? Attend the concert instead of listening to the record?

Brenda Fasie live!

Who would you love to meet and have a conversation with? Where and what about?

My great friend and collaborator Victor Gama—of course we've met many times but we have a long standing dream to open a bar on the road that runs through the Namib desert. I'd like to meet him there and discuss the sound of the wind singing through the wires on the ruins of telephone poles destroyed during the civil war...

Which woman artist / figure should be rediscovered and should get a retrospective or a solo show or a proper catalogue?

Bessie Head—did you know she penned a cyborg manifesto years before Donna Haraway?

Did you ever have a favourite heroine in fiction..., in reality..., in history?

Too many!

In fiction? Maybe the Ugly Ghost in Amos Tutuola's *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts*?

In reality. Here are two current ones:

I'm currently working on a libretto based on the life of Maria Felipa, a revolutionary from Itaparica Island, Bahia, Brazil, who led a group of 200 people, primarily women of Afro-Brazilian and of indigenous populations of Tupinambás and Tapuias, against colonial forces in the Battle of Itaparica, January 7-9, 1823. The group regularly used performative tactics like the "seduction technique" (seducing and sleeping with Portuguese sailors and then burning their boat) and also dressing as souls of the dead using masks and sheets to scare away the colonists!

I'm also currently enthralled by Coptic Saint Mary (344 – c. 421), also known as Maria Aegyptiaca, who was born somewhere in the Province of Egypt, and at the age of twelve she ran away from her parents to the city of Alexandria. Here she lived an extremely dissolute life, often refusing the money offered for her sexual favours, as she was driven "by an insatiable and an irrepressible passion." She later repented and saved her sexual favours only for the son of god. In the end she retired to the desert to live the rest of her life as a hermit in penitence. Legend has it she still wanders the dunes naked seeking out men...