ARCHIVING ALTERITY

QUEER AND RACIALISED KNOWLEDGE CREATION AGAINST, WITH/IN & BEYOND THE UNIVERSITY

By Maya Acharya
Aarhus University, Department of Education,
The Graduate School of Arts. February 2024.

Alterity: the quality or state of change, being changed, difference.

Abstract

This project focuses on queer and racially minoritised students in London and how they engage in carving out spaces of antiracist resistance within and beyond the university. My curiosity is led by how students collaboratively envision and practice knowledge creation and the possibilities of these practices in striving for more socially just worlds. I explore this through the lens of (an)archiving.

Learning from decolonial, feminist, queer-of-colour and abolitionist thinkers, organisers and scholars, including those participating in this project, I reflect on the methodological and theoretical possibilities of collaborative and arts-based approaches to reconfigure antiracist resistance beyond opposition and towards what I call alterity. In doing so, I also describe the journey, content and writing of this thesis as entangled with questions of knowledge and power, and my attempt to disrupt what Eve Tuck refers to as "damage-centred models of research" (2009) through enactions of epistemic opacity.

The thesis consists of three articles that look into collective archiving practices in different ways. The first is a co-authored piece with Gabriella Muasya and describes the making of an audiovisual archive as well as our concept of sensible ruptures which is rooted in affective, sensory and embodied ways of knowing. The other two are based on creative, arts-based workshops with queer and racially minoritised students/collectives in London, and explore practices of knowledge and space-making through the concepts of mess (Manalansan 2014) and radical care (Kawehipuaakahaopulani Hobart & Kneese 2020) respectively. These three anchors – rupture, mess and care – are ways of envisioning and broadening understandings of resistance as not limited to outward activism, tangible outcomes or (only) opposition to the oppressions of higher education but encompassing affective, relational and processual modalities of creative expression.

This ethnographic study contributes to the field of higher education by placing the experiences and resistances of minoritised individuals at the forefront. In doing so, I approach the university as connected to movements and struggles beyond its physical bounds, and resistance to its oppressions through transient, everyday and affective moments of mutual affirmation that arise in doing and desiring collectively.

Thinking through the epistemic potential of zine-making and DIY practices, this study is especially inspired by creative and speculative approaches to knowledge creation (Crawley 2018, Hartman 2019, Olufemi 2021, Gopinath 2018) in its argument for the desiring, decolonial possibilities of these practices as ways of both expanding notions of the archive and disrupting dominant knowledge paradigms in academia. Alteric archival practices, I suggest, are oriented to social change beyond colonial systems and logics; they constitute the unwieldy and creative work of envisioning life-affirming worlds; of accumulating possibility through gestures, relations and practices.

Resumé

Dette projekt fokuserer på kollektiv vidensproduktion mellem queer og racialiserede studerende i London, og hvordan de engagerer sig i at skabe plads til antiracistisk modstand i og hinsides universitetet. Jeg er optaget af, hvordan studerende i fællesskab forestiller sig og praktiserer vidensproduktion, og potentialiteten i disse praksisser, når de stræber efter social lighed. Jeg undersøger dette gennem en optik af '(an)arkivering'.

Gennem dekoloniale, feministiske, queer-of-colour og abolitionistiske tænkere, organisatorer og forskere, inklusiv de deltagende i dette projekt, reflekterer jeg over de metodologiske og teoretiske muligheder for kollektive og kunstbaserede tilgange til at re-konfigurere antiracistisk modstand hinsides opposition og mod hvad jeg kalder alteritet. Ved at gøre dette, beskriver jeg også processen, indholdet og udformningen af denne afhandling som sammenfiltret med spørgsmål om viden og magt, og beskriver mit forsøg på at forstyrre hvad Eve Tuck refererer til som "damage-centred models of research" (2009) gennem iscenesættelser af epistemisk uklarhed.

Denne afhandling består af tre artikler der undersøger kollektive arkiverings-praksisser på forskellig vis. Den første er skrevet med Gabriella Muasya og beskriver hvordan skabelsen af audiovisual arkivering såvel som vores koncept om 'sensible ruptures' er forankret i affektive, sensoriske og kropslige vidensformer. De to andre er baseret på kreative, kunstbaserede workshops med queer og racialiserede studerende/kollektiver i London, og udforsker vidensproduktion og rumskabelse gennem henholdsvis et koncept om rod (Manalansan 2014) og radikal omsorg (Kawehipuaakahaopulani Hobart & Kneese 2020). Disse tre forankringer - brud, det rodede og omsorg - er måder at forestille sig samt udvide en forståelse af modstand, som ikke kun er begrænset til udadvendt aktivisme, håndgribelige resultater eller (kun) opposition til de videregående uddannelsers strukturer, men som også omfatter affektive, relationelle og processuelle modaliteter for kreativt udtryk.

Denne etnografiske undersøgelse bidrager til forskningsfeltet for videregående uddannelse ved at placere minoriserede individers erfaring og modstand i forgrunden. Ved at gøre dette, tilgår jeg universitetet som forbundet med bevægelser og kampe udover dets fysiske grænser. Jeg tilgår modstand til dets undertrykkelse gennem forgængelig, hverdagslig og affektiv momentum af gensidig bekræftelse der opstår når man gør og ønsker kollektivt.

Ved at tænke gennem det epistemiske potentiale der befinder sig i zine-skabelse og DIY praksis, er denne undersøgelse især inspireret af kreative og spekulative tilgange til videnskabelse (Crawley 2018, Hartman 2019, Olufemi 2021, Gopinath 2018) i dets bestræbelser efter de dekoloniale muligheder i disse praksisser; som måder hvorpå vi kan udvide forståelsen af arkivet, og forstyrre dominante vidensparadigmer i akademia. Jeg foreslår, at en alterisk arkiv-praksis er orienteret mod sociale ændringer hinsides koloniale systemer og logikker; de konstituerer det uhåndterbare og kreative arbejde, det er at forestille sig livsbekræftende verdener; at akkumulere mulighed gennem bevægelse, relationer og praksis.

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If I say I, I mean / a lot of people

– Victoria Adukwei Bulley, 2022

Introduction

I write to tell you that I know nothing as always ...

c'mere, tell me the rest of it.

– Bernadette Mayer, 1989

Dear Reader,

This is a project about knowledge, about its power and possibility, about how we come to know the things we know and about what resistance aimed towards social justice might look like within the landscape of higher education. It is an argument for reconfiguring resistance as more and other than opposition. It is an exploration of knowledge practices that reach elsewhere – towards what I call alterity.

I want, from the onset, to say something about my own position in relation to this project. I've been unsure about where to start but, if you will bear with me, I would like to start tangentially, with a memory embalmed as my first experience of collective resistance within an institution of learning.

It begins with my family's move from the UK to a small island in northern Norway. I landed as a preteen and was enrolled in what was called 'innføringsklassen'. Introduction or initiation class, would be a rough translation. The idea being that all the newly arrived migrant kids would split their schooldays learning Norwegian, Maths and Home Economics (the latter of which consisted of cooking meals in various shades of beige). There were around 15 of us with different heritages including Iranian, Iraqi, Somali, Afghan and me, with my nebulous blend of Nepalese and Ukrainian. I don't mean to alarm you; this is not a diaspora coming-of-age story. It is about desire and disobedience.

Every year, all classes would partake in a school-wide talent show. Our teacher had conscripted us to collectively perform a piece written by celebrated Norwegian singer Halvdan Sivertsen called *Sommerfuggel i Vinterland* (Butterfly in a Winterland), a song about a man looking out of his window at a scene in which a migrant woman and her child carry their possessions across the snow, comparing them to butterflies. The chorus goes: "*And you gave me a smile/ butterfly in a winterland/ no one can take from you/ the colours you showed me*"[1]. Although we did not, at the time, have the language to unpack the exotifying and othering gaze crystallised through these refrains, we met them with instinctive and unanimous scorn. We longed to instead perform *It's Raining Men* by the Weather Girls, a salacious, upbeat (and, in retrospect, deeply queer-coded) song, the title of which pretty much sums up its core message. As a group of misfits, the consensus was that this number would showcase our (as-yet-absent) social appeal. We would seize control of our image, the choreography would be spectacularly hot, our peers would beg us to teach them our moves. We would emerge victorious, oozing clout. Our scheming went as far as to potentially obtain access to an older sibling's fishnet stockings, which we agreed were the pinnacle of seductive cool.

Perhaps it doesn't seem particularly remarkable, political or tender, but I understand our defiance as a joyous reclamation of gaze, a transmutation of institutional whiteness through the tools that were available to us. I don't know what became of our group. I wonder how many of us are queer. I imagine us in a musty gymnasium, dressed to the nines, performing our refusal in front of the teachers, giving it our all.

This is how I remember it. The thing about memory, though, is that it eludes capture. It's such a feeling. I can't recall which song we sang. Whether we accomplished mutiny or whether the lines I learned off by heart were about a cis White man projecting his worldview through a frosted window. I don't know if we ever managed to procure the stockings. What this memory does though, is encapsulate a moment of conjuring, through our desire and coming together, a flash of something other than what already existed for us within the structures and oppressions of the

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[1] My translation.

institution, even if imperfect, even if fleeting. That potentiality, those flashes, are what this project is oriented towards.

As part of a wider, comparative project on student movements, this project is rooted in the UK context and, more specifically, in London. My curiosity has been led by experiences of minoritisation and how antiracist organising formations carve out spaces of resistance in the context of higher education. Researching alongside queer and racially minoritised university students, I explore the politics and possibilities of collaborative knowledge creation practices as ways to both counteract and move beyond colonial logics and hegemonic ways of knowing and being in and beyond academia. As I've done here in the introduction, I connect this research with personal experience, not to anecdotally interiorise this work but as a way to highlight how our subjectivities are never value-free but always implicated in our motivations for, approaches to, stakes and affordances in research, an argument that finds support in decolonial, queer and feminist scholarship. Intimate histories can be a narrative tool (Hajratwala 2007), a way to "reach for other modes of associative argumentation and evidencing" (Muñoz 2009, 4). My claims to knowledge are entwined with a situated self, and I write about queerness and racialisation from a layered socio-political location as a queer, biracial (White and South Asian) person with a middle-class background, born in Nepal, raised in the UK and Norway and living in Denmark.

While this project is centred around knowing and learning, it has equally been a project of uncertainty and unlearning. There has been an uncanny kind of looping motion in creating knowledge about knowledge creation; dissecting and critiquing the university while gaining access to and working from a privileged position within the university; pushing against normative academic forms in writing while making work intelligible for academic evaluation. I don't want to sidestep this messiness but rather take the opportunity to say that this research has been (emotionally) entangled in ways that have felt challenging as well as generative to thinking and working through the project.

(Mis)education: antiracism and the ivory tower

The prominence of student movements mobilising to address the legacies of colonialism in higher education has steadily gained footing in recent years, spurred by interventions such as Rhodes Must Fall at the University of Cape Town in 2015 (Rhodes Must Fall Oxford 2018), reverberating through the Rhodes Must Fall campaign in Oxford, initiated in 2016. In the UK, other examples include The National Union of Students' 'Why is My Curriculum White' (Begum & Saini 2019) and Liberate My Degree campaigns (Clarke 2020), the 137-day anti-racist student occupation at Goldsmiths University in 2019 (Weale 2019), and initiatives such as The Free Black University (The Free Black University 2023), to name just a few.

These initiatives of colonial reckoning have paved the way for widespread debate surrounding the entrenchment of colonialism with classrooms, curricula and teaching practices, as well as the role of antiracist and social justice organising within such spaces and the purpose, potential and limits of knowledge more broadly. Notions of racial justice and what it might mean to decolonise the university are also entangled with academic discussions in relation to research and challenging the dominance and canonisation of Western epistemologies (Bhambra et al. 2018, Wilson 2008). Studies have also shed light on how higher education institutions in the UK have effortlessly absorbed an agenda of decolonisation, translating it into a 'neoliberal antiracism' which models itself on individual responsibility and inclusion (Ahmed 2012) while leaving intact existing infrastructures of racism and whiteness (Rahul 2020, 49).

As decolonisation and antiracism as frameworks continue to proliferate both in academia and in contemporary student-led movements, and as cohorts of students and staff within higher education become increasingly heterogeneous, it becomes pertinent to study minoritisation in this context more attentively, looking into connections with everyday practices, navigations, resistances and contestations at the university.

In thinking about antiracism within higher education, the UK, and London more specifically, is interesting because of its historic role at the centre of Empire (Gopal 2021) and its long history of student mobilisation and resistance (Hoefferle 2013). Moreover, decolonisation movements must be understood in the context of racial justice and liberation struggles in the UK more broadly; as Priyamvada Gopal reminds us, there are important connections to be made between institutions of knowledge production in Europe and the project of Empire[2]. She writes:

"These are institutions that have benefited historically not just from the flow of resources and profits from colony to metropole but also allied advantages; they have been able to accumulate archives, specimens, objects and information afforded to them, even now, by the power of colonial knowledge-gathering – ethnologising, museumising, mapping, anthropologising, narrating, cataloguing, dissecting and classifying peoples and lands outside what was deemed 'Europe'. Indeed, the Western university form became a widely established colonial institution, flourishing into the post-independence present across Asia, Africa and Latin America" (2021, 877-878).

In exploring the politics of knowledge within higher education, it's important to retain this understanding of Western universities as directly embroiled in race-making, dehumanising and exclusionary logics (Bhambra et al. 2018). Concrete cases, for example of how the establishment of research institutes such as the London School of Economics were rooted in the eugenics movements (Dilwari 2019), how SOAS – the School of Oriental and African Studies – was created with the explicit purpose of training civil servants to further colonial dominion in Asia and Africa (Newbigin 2019), or how many disciplinary formations still taught at universities have their origins in British imperialism (Harding 1993), all show how the UK's most prestigious universities emerged in tandem with and in response to the workings of British Empire. I'm reminded of a line that appears in the poem *My Empire*, by Kaveh Akbar, where he writes: *"And because of this knowing / A pile of rubble"* (2021, 25), evoking the intimate ties of Western institutions of knowledge production to the material, cultural and epistemic devastation of lands and people. These histories brought on by colonial subjugations perpetuate oppression and inequality not only in higher education but throughout society (Imadojemun 2023).

When looking into racial inequalities within higher education, the sieve of history lays bare. Studies show not only skewed racial demographics but also clear gaps in admission and attainment between racially minoritised students and White students (Boliver et al. 2021, Arday & Mirza 2018), that Black PhD students and early-career academics are less likely than White counterparts to procure funding as well as permanent contracts or senior positions (Arday 2022), and how a rise in institutional Islamophobia negatively affects Muslim students and staff (Akel 2021). We also know that racism and marginalisation pervade academia at all levels and that the legacies of colonialism continue to emanate through whiteness as a structuring, affectively alienating force and invisible norm in institutions, which has tangible disadvantages for racially minoritised students' and staff's experiences and wellbeing (Arday 2021, Ahmed 2007, Puwar 2004). As Paul Warmington writes: *"there exists a stubborn refusal to acknowledge that academia itself might be complicit in the (re)production of racial injustices, that it does not just passively 'reflect' disadvantages already existing in society but actively (re)creates inequalities"* (2018, vi).

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[2]Understood as modern European imperialism formed through colonisation of people and lands and referring here specifically to the British Empire and its quest for dominance (Kumar 2021).

This body of scholarship clarifies that reckoning with colonial legacies is not just relevant but crucial to the study of higher education in the UK. This project is also interested in contributing to the field of educational/critical university studies, adding perspectives to scholarship that place the experiences of minoritised individuals at the forefront. However, I am less interested in mapping out the legacies of colonialism as they pertain to higher education but more interested in exploring knowledge creation and everyday resistances that configure the university as connected to movements and struggles beyond its physical bounds, and fastening this to questions of epistemology more broadly. I follow Gopal in her assertion that interrogating the inheritances of colonialism in higher education entails "re-examining the definition of knowledge itself – including what and how we come to know – in very fundamental ways" (Gopal 2021, 880). The university is a compelling nexus to start from, as it is a site where epistemic and material violence transfuses but where it is also made possible. Moreover, the university is a site of oppression, yes, but also of resistance (Crawley 2018, 6).

While there has been a steady increase in studies providing nuanced accounts of the experiences of racially minoritised individuals in UK higher education (Yu et al. 2023, Stoll et al. 2023, Owusu-Kwarteng 2021, Arday & Mirza 2018, Gabriel & Tate 2017, Bhopal 2016), these have tended towards documenting racisms and oppressions and less so towards minoritarian resistance practices. Those that focus on resistance often do so within the purviews of organised activism, the targeting of university reforms or affects, processes and actions that take place on campus (Verma 2022, Ahmed 2021, Peters 2018, Tate & Bagguley 2017). Moreover, although researchers have also explored the experiences of queer students in UK higher education (Ellis 2008, O'Riordan et al. 2023), the literature is relatively limited and there continues to be a lack of intersectional studies that explicate minoritisation through the lens of both racialisation and queerness as co-constituted, something which this project also aims to bridge.

By focussing on queer and racialised resistances within and beyond the landscape of academia, I am striving to emphasise agency as something that often gets neglected in theories of transformative social change (Bhattacharyya et al. 2020) and also to elevate the traditions of dissent and resistance that are so integral to queer of colour communities. I take my cue from Stephanie Davis, who writes that it is important to address the gap in literature on collectivised political action by and for queer and trans people of colour, particularly in the UK, as a way to also subvert the framing of these experiences through deficit or damage and substantiate the lineages and possibilities of such resistance practices (2023, 18).

With this in mind, my research question reads:

In what ways is collective knowledge creation envisioned and practised among queer and racially minoritised students as this takes place against as well as with/in and beyond the university?

And furthermore: *What are the creative possibilities of these practices in striving towards socially just worlds?*

Interlacing contexts: the UK and Denmark

It is important to mention that while this project is about students in London, I carry out this research from my location within a university based in Denmark. These geopolitical contexts are interlaced, both in the processes of research and in the articles. I have a foot in both places, and this project also attempts to speak into knowledge practices across these backdrops; Article 1, for instance, draws on autoethnographic material and explicitly reflects on the Danish context. This is also a reflection of how Europe's colonial history sprawls across borders. This project has been

influenced by the frameworks of Danish higher education – as well as public discourse around issues of race and minoritisation more broadly – and how these make possible/constrain research that deals with issues of race, colonialism and minoritisation (Guschke et al. 2023).

In Denmark, for instance, research on racialisation is much less pronounced, which is also due to Nordic exceptionalism and ethnonationalism (Hassani 2024, Habel 2012), an ahistorical colonial innocence, structural denial of racism and unwillingness to verbalise racial inequality, often relying on semantic surrogates like 'ethnicity', 'immigrant' or 'foreigner' (Löwe Hunter 2023). This is also connected to an overemphasis on gender as the defining factor for equality in educational institutions, and how this staves off questions of race and Islamophobia (Hvenegård-Lassen & Staunæs 2021). Despite these obstacles, there is a small but expanding body of academic literature around processes of racialisation within Danish universities by racially minoritised scholars. Studies by Oda-Kange Midtvåge Diallo (2019, see also Kollektiv Omsorg 2023, Diallo & Yohaness 2023), and by Bontu Lucie Guschke (2023, see also Gushke et al. 2019) have offered generous perspectives which also meld queerness and race, while Copenhagen-based collectives such as DCN & Marronage (2020) have also done vital work in outlining how processes of anti-Blackness unfurl within and against Danish institutions. Research by Mira Skadegård Thorsen (2017) and Iram Khawaja (2022) look into universities and pedagogy as spaces of institutional whiteness, how racially minoritised students and scholars negotiate positions of (in)visibility and strategies of passing in these spaces (Khawaja 2023, Khawaja forthcoming) which ties in with how racialisation is entangled with ethical considerations of researcher positioning (Andreassen & Myong 2017, Khawaja & Mørck 2009). There is also a swell of research into the affective dimensions of racial differentiation: Tess Skadegård Thorsen (2019) and Khawaja (2023), for example, explore the affective tolls of racial differentiation in higher education through the concepts of minority taxation and minority stress, respectively. Tringa Berisha (2023) offers the concept of racialised spatial attachments to explore how space and affect converge to shape subjectivities in educational spaces, while Ahrong Yang extends the concept of 'racial forecasting' (2021) in exploring the experiences of young students of colour. I mention just a number of concepts and studies emerging from a Danish context here to highlight and express regard for the work that is being done in and about academic spaces, as well as to say that my project builds on a growing body of research not just in the UK but also the Nordics.

A note on terminology

The words we use matter and at the same time language moves – it's both localised and ever-changing. For instance, the UK context, with its history of racial justice organising, is different from Denmark, where there is an aversion to articulating race (it is for instance illegal to collect racial and ethnic census data) and where racially minoritised groups are experimenting with and developing language to align with their experiences (Löwe Hunter 2023). Within this thesis I use different terms depending on who is being referenced and in what context. I mainly use the term 'racialised' and 'racially minoritised' to describe being racialised as non-white in order to theorise race as a fiction albeit with very real ramifications and to emphasise minoritisation as a relational *process* of differentiation (Fanon 1953, Myong 2009, Phoenix 2022). I also distinguish between the terms Black and person-of-colour (POC) as well as ethno-racial identifications such as South Asian, East Asian, etc. Recognising that these designations are contextual, contested and imperfect, that they often risk collapsing diverse groups of people into a monolith, they function here as placeholders from which to articulate minoritised subjectivities bound through colonial history. My general rule has been to try to reflect the terms that are preferred and used to self-identify among the individuals who have been part of this study. For instance, I use QTIBIPOC (Queer, Trans, Intersex, Black, Indigenous and People of Colour) to refer to groups organising under this umbrella term, as well as using the term 'queer' expansively to encompass both sexuality and

gender (as well as a theoretical lens and approach). While I started out with a focus on students enrolled at universities, during the course of fieldwork this expanded to encompass a broader and more varied category. When I refer to students, this includes both students in the regular meaning of the term but also organisers and knowledge workers who are engaged both in and beyond the university.

A note on citation

In writing this thesis I have not been married to one discipline but draw on different fields of study as a way to heed the "undisciplining" (Sharpe 2016) of thought as well as to purposefully foreground the multiple lineages of scholarship that this work is indebted to. The articles make space for the collision rather than competition of different concepts because I see possibility in their impact to explore themes of minoritisation and knowledge creation. I think of citation as part of a methodological and ethical practice (Ahmed 2013) underscoring that "how we cite others conserves who we are too" (Mortimer 2021, 103). Intentionally drawing on material that spans across poetry, conversations, literary works, journal excerpts, zines, friends, artists, organisers and scholars has been a way to disrupt the categorical capture and hierarchisation of these knowledge sources (as more or less legitimate) and consecrate them within a joint project of theorising. Also to make record of those who have helped me find my way, intellectually and emotionally. At the same time, there are limits to my perspectives/proclivities, for example the primacy of English language texts and output from the Global North, as well as the criteria of a dissertation, which is its own type of genre. My hope is that the bibliography can function not as an enclosure of study but as a moving enfleshment of thought – an archive in of itself.

Structure of thesis

This is an article-based dissertation, meaning that it consists of three articles as well as what is called a 'kappe', writing that situates these contributions within a wider context and theoretical framing, as well as describing and reflecting on the journey of this project: the choices, pivots and considerations I've made. Content, form, methodology, theory and analysis are interwoven tenets in the project and I try to be transparent about this balancing act. The three articles all deal with collaborative knowledge creation practices in some form, and I connect these practices through the concept of archiving.

Article 1, *Sensible Ruptures: Towards Embodied and Relational Ways of Knowing (*published, *Kvinder Køn & Forskning*), is co-authored with Gabriella Isadora Muasya and puts forth our concept of 'sensible ruptures' as a way to explore queer and racialised experiences in Danish academia. We do this by drawing on autoethnographic material which we weave together in the making of a collaborative, online, audio-visual archive and which we unravel in the article through writing letters to one another. This is a method inspired by queer epistolaries of repair and is, as we argue, a way to centre friendship and relationality as a vital part of knowledge creation and a corrective to the isolations and harms of academia. What 'sensible ruptures' conceptually offers is a way to take seriously affective, embodied and sensory ways of knowing, especially as they pertain to an institutional and national context shrouded in ambiguity and denial. We reflect on the method and process of creating the archive as a way of going beyond disembodied, individualised and distanced colonial logics and experimenting with a different way of co-creating knowledge.

Article 2, *Being/Making/Leaving a Mess: Collective Anarchiving Against and Beyond the University* (forthcoming, *Meridians*), is based on a series of collaborative, arts-based workshops carried out with a group of queer and racially minoritised (Black and POC) university students in London. The workshops culminated in the creation of a collective zine on antiracist resistance titled *Held*.

Through the prism of mess, the article explores the process of the workshops and analyses the conversations that emerged through them. I use the concept of anarchiving to suggest that the materials, affects, intimacies and relational residues of the workshops – the validating and sharing of our experiences – are all part of a practice of knowledge and space-making. I argue that this anarchival practice constitutes an epistemology of desire which embraces alteric rather than oppositional epistemic possibility. Moreover, the different layers of mess that surface work to unsettle hegemonic archival and academic impetuses: mess becomes a way to think through the disorderly, porous and transgressive qualities of the archive as a profoundly queer and anti-respectable undertaking.

Article 3, *"That's something worth protecting, imo": Caring for Knowledge in Collective Organising* (submitted, *Feminist Review*), is based on an online workshop I facilitated with members of three London-based, grassroots collectives – *bare minimum*, *SHY* and *daikon** – and through which we also created a zine, titled *Collective Knowledges*. The article links the concept of care to discussions of epistemology and resistance, analysing how the groups understand, grapple with and deploy care in their organising and creating knowledge together towards socially just worlds. I weave the narratives from our conversation with descriptions of a collaborative creative writing exercise, using this to refract arguments surrounding the collectives' approaches to care. Their insights emphasise the importance of care in knowledge creation against and beyond institutional bounds, showing that care is not simply a mode of sustaining resistance but that care and resistance are interdependent.

Before the articles, what follows is structured into six chapters. Chapter 1, *Reconfiguring the University*, is anchored in notes from my ethnographic fieldwork and explains what sparked a move towards engaging with students and collectives – and reconfiguring resistance – beyond the physical bounds of the university. Chapter 2, *Enacting Epistemic Opacity*, reflects on ethical dilemmas in research in relation to gaze and harm and describes how my project design shifted according to these considerations. Chapter 3, *Extenuating Circumstances/The Crisis Is Already Here*, explores the implications of carrying out this project in the context of a pandemic. Chapter 4, *Decolonial Knowledges, Abolition and Desire*, makes a case for desire and imagination as central to my understanding of alteric knowledge creation practices. In doing so, it outlines some of the key theories and literature I engage with, drawing especially on queer, feminist and decolonial scholarship and tracing my own movement from concepts of refusal and antiracist resistance as oppositional frameworks towards abolitionist approaches. Chapter 5, *Reflecting on Methods*, describes how I arrived at my methodological choices and the questions, potentials and tensions they reveal. Specifically, I elaborate on collaborative arts-based approaches, archiving and zines as key parts of my methodology. Finally, Chapter 6, *Loose Ends,* offers an overview of my main contributions and how they are tied to an overarching argument around the creative possibilities of collective archiving practices as modes of moving beyond dominant knowledge paradigms. I end with a summary of the thesis in the form of a zine.

1. RECONFIGURING THE UNIVERSITY

And all of their ghosts are burning
Above the city.

– Jay Bernard, 2019

In the title and throughout this thesis, I locate my research project in relation to the university using the prepositions 'against, with/in and beyond'. My intention with this chapter is to elaborate on how I arrived at this orientation. In doing so, I draw on two encounters from my ethnographic fieldwork in London: the first is a visit to Deptford Town Hall, backlit by a student-led demand to have colonial monuments removed from the building's facade; the second is an art piece consisting of 29 tonnes of carrots at Goldsmiths University and a student-led initiative to repurpose the carrots for a mutual aid project. These two examples function as entry points for this project's configuration of the university – its commitments, hauntings and implications beyond the physical bounds of the institution – and to demonstrate how the university is inevitably and inextricably entangled with communities and histories beyond the realm of the academy. Ultimately, this chapter illustrates how the encounters I describe, encounters shaped and driven by queer and racially minoritised students, shifted my conceptualisation of the university and, by extension, resistance, leading to a transfiguration of the project (design) itself.

Splatters and spectres

Initially, this project set out to explore antiracist student resistance at Goldsmiths University of London, a well-known arts university based in South London. Founded in 1891, Goldsmiths has cemented a reputation for itself as an institution committed to social justice. Despite the university's official line, there has been long-standing critique toward its lack of material and structural reckoning with oppression, particularly when it comes to the experiences and realities of racially minoritised students and staff. This was cast into ever-sharper focus at the time that this project began – the start of 2020 and a pandemic that brought with it profound grief, precarity and (racial) violence. Recent years have seen a string of student and staff-led protests and strikes pushing for more just conditions at Goldsmiths. One of the most widely publicised was the occupation that took place in 2019 organised by GARA (Goldsmiths Anti-Racist Action), a protest group led by Black and POC students. The 137-day occupation made international headlines (Weale 2019) and resulted in the university's Senior Management Team committing to an extensive list of demands spanning budget allocations, a reparative justice programme, mandatory antiracism competency training for all staff and a public statement from the university acknowledging its complicity in racism, to name a few (Goldsmiths, University of London, 2019). The win was momentous. I read about it from afar.

A year later, I started my first stretch of fieldwork in London, the idea being to speak with racially minoritised students and staff about their experiences with decolonial and antiracist organising at Goldsmiths. Interviewing individuals organising in different ways, I spoke to some of the students from GARA. They relayed how the university's senior management pursued legal action against them during the occupation; the mental toll of persistent exhaustion and fear; the harrowing affective and physical transgressions they experienced at the hands of institutionally mandated policing and surveillance measures; how, long after the campaign, demands continued to be unmet.

GARA's occupation took place at Deptford Town Hall, a building acquired by Goldsmiths University in the late 1990s. There are four statues placed at the top of the building. Three men – ██ Francis Drake, ██████ Robert Blake and ██ Horatio Nelson[1] – colonisers directly involved in the transatlantic slave trade and responsible for the enslavement, trafficking and murder of people in the Caribbean and West Africa, and a fourth, understood to be a representative figure, depicted holding a sextant and binoculars. The statues testify to the

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[1] I deliberately obscure their titles here as an attempt to break with the reproduction of their veneration.

borough's intimate ties with the transatlantic slave trade: Deptford's Royal Naval Dockyards was where slave ships would be assembled or repaired before setting sail. One of GARA's demands was that the university remove the statues and open the town hall for the local community to use. In 2022, Goldsmiths stated that they would retain the statues and instead add explanation panels on the window ledges of the building.

In the autumn of 2020, I arrive in London to start my fieldwork. The very first place I visit is Deptford Town Hall. The building is inconspicuously situated on the high street and, as with many of Goldsmiths' campus buildings, is physically and historically enmeshed in its surroundings. I approach the doors, which are locked. As it stands, only students and staff members have access to the interior. Attached to the iron fencing that hems the building is a small placard with descriptions of the statues and their colonial history. This placard, intended to be temporary, was developed by GARA in conjunction with researchers Joan Anim-Addo, Les Back and Paul Hendrick. Red paint, remnants of the protests and occupation, is splattered against the door as well as the facade, some reaching several of the statues suspended above.

Less than 500 metres from where I am standing is the address of the New Cross Fire, an arson attack which took place during a joint birthday celebration for Yvonne Ruddock and Angela Jackson on January 18th, 1981 and resulted in the deaths of thirteen Black teenagers, injuring 27 others. The two inquests into the fire returned open verdicts. In the aftermath of what came to be known as the New Cross Massacre (widely understood to be a racist attack) and in response to the lack of response and accountability by media, police and government, an action committee was formed with 20,000 people mobilising to march from Lewisham to Hyde Park as part of the Black People's Day of Action in March the same year. This historic moment, preceded by years of racial oppression and violence against particularly Black communities, catalysed uprisings in Brixton later that spring, also known as the Brixton riots – another pivotal moment in UK race relations.

I describe these events, this landscape, to say that as I stand outside this building I am not standing on neutral ground, that we never are. Racial and colonial history permeates the area, punctured repeatedly by the presence of Goldsmiths: large banners promoting the university, signs pointing towards lecture halls, shop windows promoting discounts for students, maps of the campus area.

Later this same day, I stop by a bookshop a little further down New Cross Road and pick up a poetry collection titled *Surge*, written by local author Jay Bernard and published the same year as GARA's occupation. Writing about the New Cross Fire in connection with the Grenfell Tower

Fire of 2017[2], Bernard speaks to the failures of accountability and justice in relation to record, revealing a vexed relationship between public narrative and private truth. Bernard's poetry intentionally merges past and present, evoking the notion of haunting as an entryway to this blurring as they write: "*I am from here, I am specific to this place, I am haunted by this history but I also haunt it back*" (2019, xi).

Hauntology (Derrida 1994) offers a lens through which to understand how the legacies of colonialism, Empire and racialisation surface as ghostly matters connecting histories and temporalities within the context of higher education; how the past is active not just in shaping but constituting the present, and how "abusive systems of power make themselves known and their impacts felt in everyday life" (Gordon 2008, xvi). We are haunted, politically, materially and affectively, by the racial calculus (Hartman 2007) of these hierarchies, forged through the amalgamations of slavery and colonial brutality that surface as what Hartman refers to as its 'afterlives' (2007)[3]. Such afterlives in the UK can be traced through racialised discourses surrounding immigration – such as the implementation of Hostile Environment policies and 2018's Windrush Scandal, which saw the unjust detainment, deportation and disenfranchisement of Caribbean-born Commonwealth citizens. The spectre looming large here is the pervasive ideological construction of UK nationhood as White, a conception which Paul Gilroy connects both to colonial amnesia as well as a melancholic nostalgia for Empire (2004). As I have mentioned, this is not removed from higher education, and haunting therefore also offers a useful lens with which to explore such afterlives within universities as contexts where the colonial past is supposedly over and done with, and where whiteness functions as an affectively structuring force (Ahmed 2012). Importantly, the concept tends to time and space as urgent concerns. Taking this all into consideration, I am drawn to hauntology's advancement of remembrance and forgetting as politically effectual processes (El-Tayeb 2011), in which the racialised and ontological categories of personhood, of humanness itself (Wynter 2003), undergirds spatial and ideological expressions of public memory. Space must thus be understood as racialised (McKittrick 2006, Berisha 2023), as well as imbued with the capacity to haunt.

From this vantage point, the UK's colonial past cannot be isolated from the stakes made manifest through the desecration of Deptford Town Hall and the statues memorialising this same history, thereby conferring the past as not past at all (Sharpe 2016). Attending to the monuments through the framework of hauntology allows us to move beyond binary conceptions of time/place and give substance to the significance of monuments not just for enshrining but legitimising certain versions of the past. As such, I understand the statues not simply as positivist expressions of history but as representational scaffolding stabilising specific knowledges while eliding others. Or, to put it another way, the monuments materially activate and distribute invisibility as an organising structure (Evans 2018, 133). In a similar vein, the paint splattered in protest is an activating force hinging on both absence and presence, casting, in red, an alternative narrative of what is made invisible and thus revealed through such commemoration. Asking what is perceptible and present, and for whom.

In the anthology *Higher Education Hauntologies*, theorising hauntology through posthuman and new materialist perspectives is proposed as a way to advance social justice in higher education (Bozalek et al. 2021, 2). In my extended focus on the interplay between materiality and power in this chapter and my research more broadly, I am led by scholars who elucidate the vitality of matter in relation to race (Kim 2015, Chen 2012, Jackson 2020, Ahuja 2016, Wynter 2005, Kimmerer 2013), and also draw attention to how considerations of race in decentring human subjectivities, while often

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posited as a something 'new' (in the case of new materialism as a field), has long been central to epistemologies and ontologies of, for instance, Indigenous, disabled, Black feminist and queer-of-colour thinkers; to "those humans who have never been quite human enough" (Tompkins 2016).

The paint is not contained to the building itself but stains the surroundings, implicating the devastations caused and represented by these men beyond the confines of their geographic and historical placement and emerging as a bid for the university to reckon with its investments, materially and ideologically, with coloniality[4]. It is a reminder of previous apparitions of violence in this area and context, like those killed in the fire of 1981. This temporal, spatial and political interconnectedness is echoed throughout GARA's campaign demands which are not limited to the tearing down of the statues, and thereby critique of the representational foundations they teeter on, but affixing this to wider epistemic and political claims. Claims encompassing structural, systemic change – to curricula, management, resources and local infrastructures – as part of a broader struggle to reckon with the afterlives of coloniality in higher education (Goldsmiths Anti-Racist Action Occupation 2019).

I have returned repeatedly to this first encounter with Deptford Town Hall and, by extension, with Goldsmiths because it crystallises, for me, a visceral confrontation with the context of my research. Drawn to the contrast of red against the white facade, I find a poignancy in how paint, as an impermanent, fluid material, contends with the consecration of monuments as something static and lasting, and how this tension rejects the idea of history itself as materially and discursively stable. Red, signalling blood, signalling atrocity, marks the pavement where pedestrians must pass over and through. It is absorbed into the surroundings, pressuring the notion of disappearance (the paint will eventually wash away and erode) and summoning us to consider what or who is made indiscernible through the subjugations and dominations of hegemonic narrative. How the space itself connects to this erasure, the delegation of certain lives and lifeworlds to the periphery. Bearing witness to the sticky relationship between history and memory and retracing that which is not preserved, the students' intervention uncovers an alternative testimony, concealed but present. Drenched in conspicuous hue, the legacies of racial violence become perceptible as absence, taking on new phantom shape through the figures of the statues, themselves spectrally suspended, unmoored between realms. Attesting to the animacy of matter (Chen 2012), I suggest that the paint infuses the space with an affective-material intensity which destabilises the sanitation and containment of the university's colonial entanglements, unfixing time and space to transform its parameters.

Transformation brings me back full circle to Jay Bernard, as well as hauntology as a theoretical lens. Bernard's earlier notion of "haunting back" mirrors Avery Gordon's assertion that "the ghost is haunted, too" (2020, 337). Both authors complicate the affective relationship between the spectre and the haunted thing so that haunting may be formed as a dialectic and active process. What I take from this is that something is galvanised in the liminalities of social violence; as shadows of past and present seep together, moments of activation open up towards futurity, what Gordon contours as the "something to be done" (2011, 1). This understanding of haunting as something emergent, a communing toward possibility, has been amplified by Black feminist scholarship in which its political commitments, particularly in relation to addressing colonialism, intergenerational pain and anti-Blackness, are foundational to the concept; haunting is "unfinished business" precisely because justice has not yet been achieved (Saleh-Hanna 2015, 14).

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[4]Chapter 4 gives a more detailed description of how I understand and work with the concept of coloniality.

This is deeply resonant with the claims of the students who occupied Deptford Town Hall. Indexing the haunts and hurts of colonialism, their project mobilises as aspiration. Symbolically, politically and materially, their occupation transforms the space of the town hall, enlivening ground, literally and figuratively, towards alternative futures. The university is not simply 'the university', a fixed entity located neatly within the remit of its physical and present bounds but expands in absorption of interwoven histories, surroundings and temporalities. GARA firmly positions the projects of Empire and slavery as integral to understanding the ramifications of racial injustice in higher education and therefore the modalities of solidarity and change necessitated. My reading of these students' antiracist campaign, revolving around the paint-splattered backdrop of Deptford Town Hall as its haunted nexus, has very much informed my own perception of the university, propelling my choice to move away from ethnographic interviews among staff and students organising 'at' the university towards collaborative workshops and archiving practices with queer and racially minoritised students and collectives working both with, in, against and beyond institutional structures. This shift was both to better grasp the students' experiences and understandings of resistance, as well as to challenge what knowledge creation might do and be.

Not for human consumption: the case of carrots

The second encounter I want to share in this chapter also occurred at Goldsmiths. I outline it here as a tangible illustration of what a reconfiguration of the university's bounds *does* in relation to grassroots organising, how it bears consequence for the way in which resistance may be enacted and understood, and thereby also my approach to 'the field'.

On September 29th, 2020, 29 tonnes of carrots were deposited onto Goldsmiths' campus as part of an art installation by a university MFA student. The piece was intended to comment on the tension between urban life and food production. The heap of carrots quickly went viral and many students took to social media to critique the dumping of vast quantities of edible goods as insensitive and harmful, specifically within the racialised and classed context of Lewisham, a borough with large Black and South Asian populations and where just under 40 percent of children lived below the poverty line in 2020 (Trust for London 2020). On the heels of this discourse, positioning the carrots as emblematic of an institutional detachment to the local area, as well as a dissonance to its role in gentrification, four Goldsmiths students set up the Instagram account @goldsmithscarrots in protest, encouraging other students as well as the public to come and collect carrots. They also set up a stand next to the installation to sell soup, cakes and other food made with carrots repurposed from the installation, with proceeds going to local food banks. This

grassroots initiative eventually morphed into New Cross Packages, a mutual aid project initiated by students and made up of Lewisham locals working to distribute free packages containing food and essential care items to students and local residents, no questions asked. The initiative was launched in March 2021, open to all and included an online form for comments, feedback and suggestions for items to include in the packages.

The case of carrots at Goldsmiths sparked many conversations, dilemmas and paradoxes. As the event garnered traction, the carrots themselves became a viral photo op, with people visiting campus to take photos of the mound. This raised questions of performativity versus action, as well as the role of Covid safety as people climbed and lay over the carrots for pictures. With most communication taking place on social media there was also confusion as to who was behind the account, with the @goldsmithscarrots eventually posting "We are not the carrot artist" in their bio to clarify that their initiative was a response to, rather than part of, the installation. Some also critiqued the attention given to the carrots as superficial and distracting from other, more pressing, political issues. There were calls for financial transparency, with the students behind the account releasing a complete list of expenses, sales and transfers to food banks. The role of racialisation also figured starkly; the Instagram page, which was run by White students, included pinned posts regarding Black Lives Matter, foodbank resources, and how financial disparities were understood in the context of the racial demographics of the local borough. Simultaneously, there was the issue of cleaning staff at Goldsmiths, the majority of whom are Black and people of colour, and the question of who would be enlisted with the labour of maintaining the carrots and disposing of them once the installation was over.

In short, like any mobilising action, it contained tensions, contestations, mess. There is plenty to say about the carrots as controversy, as well as the aesthetic and performative dimensions of the students' organising. How, in unmaking art, the protest itself might be seen as an artistic intervention, how art-as-protest/protest–as-art occurs in tandem with the particularities of space and meaning around it, and that in this way the performance of protest happens "on the ground, in the flesh, at the moment, and in relation to a specific set of historical and social circumstances" (Eburne et al. 2018, 174). I find it interesting how the carrots synthesise the connection between aesthetics and political practice, calling to mind scholarship that insists on the significance of aesthetics in structuring meaning and value – aesthetics as the material and semiotic workings that make and unmake spheres of political possibility, to paraphrase Yusoff (2010, 73). However, while my curiosity is led by what the intervention *does*, the focus here is on understanding how this relates to the bounds and commitments of the university. I am interested in how, in rejecting the carrots as art, by redirecting its political commentary, repurposing and consuming them, students unsettle the notion of the university as a space socially, politically, economically and historically disconnected from wider communities.

During the direct action, I visited the students' food stall and later interviewed two of the individuals involved in setting up the carrots account and subsequent mutual aid project, Rose and Darcy. During our conversation, they made clear that their action, while sparked by an initial frustration towards the art piece (the way, to them, it signalled *"an apparently superior knowledge, to enlighten us with this grand, brash statement without doing anything to change the problem you're highlighting"*), was not a critique of the artist himself, but of their own and the university's role within the wider community. As Darcy explained: *"You've got to take into account the surroundings, the context, especially of this year with the pandemic. Students have been struggling to access essentials because of isolation and a lot of the food banks have been shutting down. It seemed like that hadn't been thought through in this artwork and that it is genuinely harmful because this is real food that's being wasted. We're not separate from Lewisham, we are it. Goldsmiths, like many universities, has become more and more a business in the last decades – buying up local buildings and turning them into enterprises that have nothing to do with making the resources in the community*

better for the people who live there – which also has colonial undertones of 'let's make this better for you' but it's not even doing that, it's not welcoming in the people who live here and have rights to this place."

For these students, it is impossible to divorce not only art from political practice but also their own role as Goldsmiths students and artists from the university's political, economic and historical positioning. Raising issues of elitism and responsibility, they connect the notion of passive artistic commentary to the neoliberal and colonial undertones of expansion and how this shapes the realities for those who live in the local area. In the claim that *"we are not separate from Lewisham, we are it"*, binary distinctions of inside and outside are collapsed. The carrots themselves mirror this blurring through the embodied act of consumption: as they are ingested, the body and the institution become infused. Through deliberate coalescence, the students expand the spatiality and materiality not just of the artwork but the institution itself.

This is also evident in how the protest enacts resistance to the ideal of disconnectedness not only spatially but in terms of the issues, struggles and commitments the students bring to the fore. In describing how they navigated the traction gained during this time, Rose explains that they found it important to use their social media presence to highlight other groups and issues: *"We thought it was important to share resources on Black Lives Matter, food banks and platform other groups at the university who have been doing this work around decolonisation and antiracism for a long time, especially with the media attention we were getting, to try and utilise that the best way possible. The poverty issue in Lewisham is absolutely connected with race and it needs to be clear for everyone in every instance that these struggles are not isolated."*

This understanding of interconnectedness also informed their decision to morph the project into New Cross Packages. While being the initiators of the protest and social media account, the students described the project as much more comprehensive, something *"bigger than us"*, and the mutual aid project as a way to collectivise momentum towards something with more longevity for the benefit of local groups and organisations working in the area. In this way, resistance becomes circumscribed not just within but beyond the bounds of the university; the bounds themselves become dissolved. By suturing different struggles and communities, by striving to pluralise and sustain their action as an approach to community-building rather than as a one-time event, the parameters for understanding and enacting change are augmented.

Standing at the carrot mound, there is a certain atmosphere of absurdity. The sheer volume of orange against the sleek facade of Goldsmiths Centre for Contemporary Art, the contradiction of small groups sipping newly-purchased carrot soup next to a formal-looking sign that states 'NOT FOR HUMAN CONSUMPTION' in capital letters. In the London rain, the carrots begin to rot. There are murmurs going around about rats. The process of decomposition amplifies the students' claim, refusing to capitulate the carrots to disembodied abstraction and instead reinstating them as food, as part of the surroundings, as something that shouldn't go to waste.

Remaking the parameters

The examples I've outlined above testify to my indebtedness to the conversations, interviews and encounters with Goldsmiths staff and students at the start of this project. These generous exchanges crucially moulded the boundaries of this project, spatially and conceptually. In conversation with others, I was able to grasp where my project was speaking from and to.

The first example demonstrates how the university is implicated in an ever-present colonial history that unfolds along multiple temporalities and continues to shape how the university is experienced and navigated by those who inhabit it. My encounter with Deptford Town Hall offered a prism through which to comprehend my surroundings and to reconfigure the location of the university,

and thus resistance to its oppressions, as bound not to a physical place but a merging of histories, matters and affects. Utilising hauntology to stretch the parameters of the university physically, temporally and politically, I argue that GARA's occupation and their configuration of the statues as not a singular demand but part of a systemic, forward-reaching politic, consolidates the institution as inseparable from wider surroundings and past-presents. In the second example, the ways in which students respond to the art piece also refuse to demarcate the event within the confines of the institution. Their connecting of struggles and oppressions magnifies the responsibilities and commitments of the university to the local area, as well as deepening the parameters for resistance. The two examples cast resistance across differentiated positionalities tied to queerness and racialisation, which also speaks to the stakes of visibility and safety. Or, in other words, what kinds of resistance are possible in such a context, and for whom?

The London-based student movements I platform here are part of an ongoing history of organising, theorising and mobilising for more socially just higher educational systems, as well as a more just world. Their undertakings offer blueprints for how we might engage with universities as sites of resistance and how such resistance may be envisioned in relation to the gradations of inequality and colonialism built into its structures. This was key to moving my attention from interviews and the notion of resistance as organised activism 'at' the university to engaging with collaborative workshops with students and collectives working both against, with/in and beyond institutional structures, and understanding resistance as configured fluidly across different spaces, communities and commitments.

As Dalia Gebrial makes clear, decolonial movements, as well as research, are about "responding to lived issues of inequality, colonialism and oppression – rather than just being a matter of legacies or unearthing historical accounts for the sake of it" (2018, 34). To do this, she argues, we cannot view the university as the primary space where transformation happens but as one node in a network of spaces and struggles; we must enter the space of the university as "a transformative force, to connect what is happening inside the institution to the outside, and to utilise its resources in the interest of social justice" (ibid). Such an approach demands an understanding of history, and therefore the bounds of the university, as unfixed and multidirectional, which is why it was vital to incorporate this understanding into how and with whom I wanted to do research.

It was conversation with queer and racially minoritised individuals, grassroots organisers and communities that urged my decision to focus on a more collaborative approach, to not simply locate my ethnography within the university's physical bounds but to co-create space with others, throwing binaries of inside/outside into question and recognising coloniality through the kaleidoscopic indeterminacy of its enduring realities. This choice was based on an attempt to do justice to what I was learning, seeing and sensing, to more fully grasp what resistance means and looks like within higher education. In order to do so, the project had to encompass the affective, the atmospheric and, importantly (which I come back to), the alteric. It had to access layers and geographies that were not discernible through the structure of traditional interviews. However, this reasoning was also subtended by the myriad ways in which this project itself has haunted me. By questions that have been following me around like omens. Is it possible to create knowledge in a way that does not reproduce harm, that does not further colonial logics of extraction and objectification? How might research on antiracist resistance recover something more than erasure, opposition, negation? How do we think and live alternatives to coloniality, and (how) can this be done from within the frameworks and ambivalences of academia, from my positioning therein? Does education bring me closer to those I am in solidarity and community with, or does it push me further away? The choice to create collaboratively was an attempt to reckon with these questions without the demand of absoluteness and clarity but to grasp at knowledge and the

possibility of its substance – to impress upon it, turn it this way and that, to yank at its boundaries with others and see what might become of it.

2. ENACTING EPISTEMIC OPACITY

Call me sea glass:
smooth around the edges
just the right amount of
opaque, clear & cloudy

– jaye simpson, 2020

Call me sea glass:
smooth around the edges
just the right amount of
opaque, clear & cloudy

My first experiences of writing were by hand. Soviet notebooks filled with elaborate swirls and slanted lines, neat proportions: lessons from my Ukrainian mother who taught me early the importance of script and, by extension, the stakes of perception, of legibility. Though most of my writing is digital these days and no longer requires the same intimacy of touch, I still carry this embodied inheritance in my consideration of who will read my words and how they will be received. My script changes shape, pressure, and texture depending on who I am writing for and to. I find my 'best' (i.e., most formal) handwriting is often my smallest. That when I write to loved ones, I strive for beauty. When I write for myself, however, turning inward, neat cursive dissolves into long, jagged lines, fissured loops and a disordered tempo. Intelligibility shifts, becomes beside the point. Writing becomes a space of sense-making away from exposure to other gazes. Often, the page knows what I am feeling before I do.

I share these oscillations of becoming and unbecoming legible through handwriting to open this chapter with a premise: that gaze and witnessing are rooted in the bodily and affective, in the conditions of our living, and that the question of where we set our sights (as well as others') in research – politically, ethically, methodologically – dictates the horizons of the knowledge we wish to create. In the following, I aim to deal with what it means to elucidate and how the process of navigating gaze in this project is related to ethics, which in turn is understood as a practice interwoven into all layers of research (Wilson 2008). Drawing on scholarship pertaining to gaze, witnessing and, in particular, opacity, I connect the latter to epistemic practice, arguing that opacity might offer a strategic means, not only of challenging what can and should be translated and absorbed into institutionally legible forms of research (Tuck & Yang 2014), but exploring knowledge beyond the negation of normative gazes.

This is not an inventory

As noted in the previous chapter, this project initially started as an offshoot of a wider one on student movements, and during the process of research I moved away from conducting semi-structured interviews with racially minoritised staff and students at Goldsmiths to a different approach, engaging in collaborative workshops and archiving practices together with students and grassroots collectives. However, those early conversations immensely influenced this project. The everyday theorisations and experiences that the 11 individuals I interviewed generously shared are foundational not only to the building of this work but also to the spaces created through it. Nonetheless, I chose not to include the interviews as 'material', meaning I do not analyse them as part of this thesis and its articles. That is not to say they are not crucial, nor are they absent; these narratives have informed the crux of this work and permeated my choice of approaches, directions, stances and considerations throughout the research process. They are simply not rendered apparent as visible and quantifiable data. These interviews are not the object of my study nor its arguments. I do not 'show' them.

The reasoning for this is that the interviews themselves – as well as encounters with queer, feminist and decolonial thinkers, organisers, grassroots groups, literature and theorists throughout the PhD process – guided me to recognise that this should not be a project ensnared in narratives of racialised pain. The interviews, focused on Black and POC students' and staff's experiences within the academy, indexed the myriad violences felt and lived at the hands of institutional whiteness, of systems that marginalise, extract, diminish and harm. Given that narratives of oppression are so often the default imposed on or afforded to marginalised people, given the ways that racialisation and queerness are stalked by suffering (Belcourt 2019), I arrived at the question of how this project might calibrate knowledge in service of more than the centring or evidencing of these structures. How might it avoid offering racialisation and queerness as lesions to be institutionally consumed or even re-inscribed through academic extraction? In other words, how might it go beyond "laying

its pedagogical and analytical investments in the exposure of violence" (Khan 2022, 321)? These questions were especially stark in the context of a pandemic, where (racial) violence, isolation and grief were ever-looming.

In my desire for something more, or something 'other', I arrived at the following aspirations: that the project not centre pain, be an inventory of oppression, or even an inventory of opposition to that same oppression; that it be oriented toward creation rather than extraction; and that it endeavour to incorporate modes of collaboration and care, such as those outlined in Article 3, where I conceptualise care as a praxis of liberatory struggle.

These desires all connect with the project at large – how to understand and do knowledge creation in a way that might assuage rather than enact harm. Whether this is even possible and the responsibilities of being implicated in both processes have been my most central ethical concern. For this reason, I understand ethics as an active practice, something that is imbrued in all aspects of my thinking and working with and through knowledge creation. Uncertainty, doubt and hesitancy are vital parts of this practice, not as quandaries to be solved but as useful ethical approaches, particularly in relation to the vulnerabilities involved in researching minoritisation (Kofoed & Staunæs 2015).

In *Decolonial Queer Knowledges: Aesthesis, Memory and Practice*, Sandeep Bakshi et al. ask: "*How else can grief over loss, memory and joy over love and protest over being consumed, categorised or subjected to other harm be experienced collectively without those wounds being re-inscribed, without causing further exhaustion?*" (2022, 29). Many scholars have elucidated the colonial stakes of gaze and witnessing in knowledge creation (Sealy 2019, Alexander 1994, hooks 1992), pointing to how representation itself may constitute a form of violence in reducing marginalised and especially racially minoritised groups and individuals to spectacle, to (research) objects for consumption (Campt 2021).

I recall the following lines by poet Mary Jean Chang:

"*How/ a body endures/ the toll of/ another glance*" (2023, 45).

Chang imbues seeing with pain, something that might require an intimate withstanding, a bearing at the level of the body. Which bodies are enlisted to endure at the expense of others' gazes? The question brings to mind Sharpe's (2023) contention that the repeated engaging in, and representing of, *brutal imaginations* of violence inadvertently materialises that same imagination, that we must acknowledge that the representational plain of suffering and violence is unevenly distributed. Or, in other words, "the architectures of violence fracture we; affect does not reach us in the same ways" (2023, 33).

In my own research, I reflect on how the handling of testimonies to institutional violence within academia is further complicated by the colonial gazes that permeate the history of research itself (Tuhiwai Smith 1999) and the ensnarement of gaze in the very processes of posing these questions as academic occupation, in the translation of lived experiences of racism and marginalisation into public knowledge. In asking how to uncover harm without reproducing it, I realised that this was not the project at hand. It is not only that I find this pursuit ethically contentious, I also find it uninteresting. The presupposition of seer and seen, the aestheticisation of proof and visibility in relation to queer and racialised harm is not simply injurious but limiting, restricting the terms on which we can explore questions of knowledge and power in research and curbing the types of questions we are able to ask. Becoming fixed to questions of harm or in a constant position of explanation reveals who our imagined readership is and neglects the capaciousness of queer and racially minoritised subjecthood, such as experiences of aliveness, worldmaking, resistance and

agency. I wanted to abandon the repeated locating and tracing of brutality, like drawing a chalk line around a body.

Suhaiymah Manzoor-Khan writes about struggling with this bind, describing how "there are those who settle all seeing there, in the wound" (2023, 222) and her wish to get beyond an analysis of gaze that is always "in relation to or attempting to escape relation to whiteness" (2023, 75). This pursuit is, as she describes, not about reversing seer and seen, nor about parallelisms and alternative gazes, but about attempting another direction altogether – beyond. For Manzoor-Khan, this bypassing movement is connected with a spiritual aspiration that becomes possible through ritual and practice, and which she terms 'stranger possibilities'.

Manzoor-Khan's work, as well as others', signposts me towards other types of testimony, such as embodiment, affect, spirituality, relationality and collective creation as vital modes of witnessing, ones that may offer access to new directions within research. In my decision to omit the 11 interviews, in the choice of collaborative and arts-based methodologies, and in my analytical focus on themes such as collectivity and care, I am interested in what might surface in setting my sights not on dissecting gaze but on a different, wavering horizon. I am curious about decolonial and minoritarian practices that might be irreconcilable with unveiling. For instance, in Article 1, co-authored with Gabriella Muasya, I explicitly refer to an ethics of opacity as we speak of whether it is at all necessary to be seen seeing ourselves and how some perceptions may be constrained, but others might become possible in exerting agency over how to make our audio-visual archive perceptible, and to whom. In Article 2, I challenge the conflation of evidence with scientificity in relation to archiving, employing the concept of queer ephemera (Muñoz 2009) to draw attention to how unobservability has historically functioned as a necessary strategy, particularly for queer and racially minoritised communities, in evading surveillance, governance and capture (Vang 2021). Additionally, I refuse the mediation of the zine itself as a research 'product' and the site of analysis is instead the intimate conversations, desires, and exchanges that happen in the messy space of the workshops. The narratives presented in Article 3 also touch on how different grassroots collectives engage with gaze, visibility and co-option in their navigation of care and collectivity in relation to institutions such as funding bodies, museums, and universities.

It is important to highlight that although I describe a desire to displace the gravitational force of violence as a nucleus of relation, this is not to negate the significance of acknowledging and analysing how violence works as a structuring force. I would argue that these structures, as they pertain to academia and dominant epistemic regimes, are present and subtended in much of the material I analyse, which explores how students and collectives navigate racialisation, queerness and collectivity with/in and beyond institutions of higher education. The rerouting movement lies in the premise and framing; rather than calcifying resistance as (solely) opposition to violence, I move, methodologically and analytically, towards alterity – those 'stranger possibilities' contained in collective archiving practices – asking how they may contribute to decolonial and queer theorising and practice.

At the same time, a collaborative approach in itself is not analogous with a (more) ethical one, something I expand on in my discussion of methodologies in chapter five. Collaboration does not diminish other structural power asymmetries that are present in my relation to interlocutors. It may, in fact, highlight these same asymmetries which invariably contour the tensions and limits of this project and, ultimately, academic research more broadly as an ethical and decolonial pursuit. Differences in positionality (how we are affected differently by structures of oppression) and precarity, our lifeworlds, capacity, time, compensation for labour, decision making and synthesising involved in analysis and writing all shape the research process and require reflection.

Troubling transparency

In formalised and institutional research settings, transparency is often assumed to be a cornerstone of ethical conduct (see for instance the Danish Code of Conduct for Research Integrity 2014). While it may seem an obvious criterion for research integrity, transparency carries with it an implication of observability, which may itself work as a concealing mechanism, obscuring the colonial baggage and power relations of research, as well as the epistemological, ontological and axiological assumptions called forth when we evoke notions like rigour and integrity.

My experience of transparency as a researcher felt fickle, layered: transparency towards the academy did not feel the same or as important as transparency and honesty towards the individuals I interviewed and collaborated with. Or, in other words, my ethics felt much more relationally than institutionally oriented.

Decolonial scholar Ronaldo Vásquez connects institutional demands for transparency and knowing to control, understanding transparency in connection with the coloniality of power[1] that governs hegemonic epistemologies in the Global North. He writes that "modernity has an obsession with visibility and urges to make everything 'transparent' in order to make sense of it and ultimately control it" (2023, 10). Witnessing (the racialised other) is built into understanding as a process of condescension and control. Poet and scholar Natalie Diaz connects this to affect, naming empathy as a predatory impulse, particularly in Western academic knowledge structures, where knowability is presumed to not only be possible but also good (2020, np). In order to produce empathy, the (racialised) other must be translated, witnessed into comprehensibility; in this way, the other's embodied experience or suffering only becomes worthwhile, substantial, if it can be 'made sense of', extracted. Seeing as believing. Inversely, what is unobservable is often seen as illegitimate/unscientific, something which also diminishes affect and embodiment as vital sites of knowledge (Ivinson & Renold 2021). At the same time, racially minoritised people remain doused in paradox, facing both hypervisibility through marked differentiation as well as the material and discursive effects of erasure (Lander & Santoro 2017). A point of particular importance in this thesis, for example, is how racially minoritised bodies are rendered out-of-place within academic institutions and how, on a structural level, racial and colonial violence asserts its presence precisely through historical invisibilisation, something I relate specifically to UK universities as well as institutional archiving practices.

This is all to say that gaze and witnessing are layered. Which is why I suggest that understanding (in)visibility in connection with racialisation and coloniality is crucial. Because it allows us to complicate transparency as aspirational in research, opening up ethics as a contextual practice that must consider the specific historical, material and social conditions that shape not only academic inquiry itself, but the lifeworlds of those with whom we are engaged in research.

Towards opacity

An uneasy relationship to legibility/knowability is central to the arguments of this thesis, which propose that alterity may function as a strategy that seeks to move beyond opposition-centred understandings of resistance. This shapes my reflections around knowledge creation and archiving practices as well as how I form my analysis and writing.

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[1] See chapter four for more detailed discussion of the concept of coloniality.

In my argument for unseeing/knowing as an ethical practice, I am moving with many thinkers, especially Black feminist and queer-of-colour scholars whose work expands notions of gaze and agency. I am guided in particular by Campt's work on Black visuality (2021) and the frequency of images (2019), Muñoz's disidentifications (1999), Marks' writing on haptic visuality (2000) and Sharpe's conceptualisation of redaction as a methodology in recovery of regard – a way of rendering with care and as a reframing of scholarship itself (2023, np). These scholars have in common that they understand seeing not as something passive but as a process which is both affective and dynamic. Their work shows how both witnessing and rendering are steeped in ethical responsibility – how they become practices involving care.

Crucially, though, I am indebted to the work of Martinican theorist and poet Édouard Glissant and his concept of opacity (2006). For Glissant, opacity, framed as a right, critiques the imperative of knowability as an essentialising or totalising force, or as the "ideal of transparent universality, imposed by the West" (1989, 2). This imperative is explicitly and importantly set against a backdrop of racialised othering, his experiences and observations in a Caribbean context and the influences of the négritude movement, which are vital to reading Glissant's conceptualisation as a profoundly anti-colonial argument. Glissant's opacity resists comprehension not only in defence of difference but in service of it. As Li Chi-She explains, "*subtly different from the common interpretation that opacity resists cognition, opacity is asserted not for the sake of exhibiting obscurantism, but for reinforcing and enriching the activities of the imagination based on ontological experiences*" (2019, 866). Opacity can be seen as an ontological response to questions of difference as well as a strategic intervention against colonial authority, white Western hegemony and gazes that would seek mastery.

A key feature of Glissant's influential concept of opacity is its connection to language, aesthetics and form. Many scholars have pointed to how the political and poetic merge in Glissant's work (2006), building this into arguments for opacity and ambiguity as an aesthetic and political strategy, particularly in minoritarian performance and visual culture (León 2017, Musser 2018, Huang 2022, Daniher 2018), one that might offer a means of challenging the objectification of minoritised bodies and how "the mission to understand aligns with colonialist and imperialist knowledge projects that deny the right to opacity to minoritarian subjects" (León 2017, 380). I am especially inspired by scholars working at the nexus of queerness, race, and cultural theory. Vivian L. Huang, for instance, explores inscrutability as an aesthetic and affective strategy which negotiates the equation of formal legibility with sociopolitical viability (2022, 2). Through a queer, Asian diasporic lens, they point simultaneously to the tensions of visibility – to how the "inscrutable, mysterious, other" has functioned as an orientalist trope, as well as how queer-of-colour cultures and aesthetics necessitate elusive manoeuvres and how performing inscrutability might disrupt white nationalist kinetics of assimilation and non-existence (2022, 4). Kevin Quashie also draws on an adjacent notion – withholding – in outlining his concept of quiet as a stance and strategy that confronts racialised hierarchisations of being. Distinguishing between quiet and silence, he argues for the former not as absence but as a "quality of being" (2012, 21) that allows for a type of sovereignty, an expressive and expansive inwardness. While silence denotes repression, "quiet", he says, "is presence … the abundance and wildness of the interior" (2012, 22). The aesthetic of quiet is "watcherless" (ibid). In this way, quiet offers a version of racially minoritised subjecthood that does away with opposition as its axis. It is important to note that in Quashie's work, quiet is specifically an argument for Black humanity, one that aims to transcend discourses of violence, or resistance to violence, in relation to Black culture and life in the US context. However, his thinking inspires the moves that I make in my research, in reconfiguring resistance away from binary ideas of tangible, outward and public 'activism', and a perpetual position of antithesis, towards non-oppositional frameworks, creative expression and alterity.

I am drawn to how these theorists work with opacity as a productive intervention that disrupts the kinetics of spectatorship and the stabilisation of queer and racially minoritised bodies/narratives – one that is not simply or solely an act of resistance but an active act of alterity. They also point to how (in)visibility and silence are fraught, how racialised histories are orbited not only by demands for scrutability but also by intentional erasures and silences. I too, want to point out that opacity, in this sense, is complicated. Weighted by material disappearances and violences.

It feels thorny, for instance, to write about opacity and decolonial resistance when, at this moment[2], people are speaking out and taking to the streets globally to protest the ongoing genocide in Palestine. Concurrently, we are witnessing a backlash of censorship, disinformation and suppression as politicians and media outlets continue to fuel and justify the loss of Palestinian land and lives. This is reflected within higher education, where pro-Palestine students and academic workers are facing repercussions for vocalising support. The indigiqueer poet cited at the beginning of this chapter, jaye simpson, was recently arrested and charged for participating in a solidarity action for Palestine. Her arrest brings to mind these lines from poet Roya Marsh:

"silence is not always a choice/ it can be / a protest" (2020, 54)

a reminder that opacity, withholding, or being silent is not always possible or desirable. Certainly, we have different conditions for relating to these processes – the question of how and to whom they are accessible. To be clear, I am not suggesting that opacity is inherently ethical or transformative, but neither is transparency. What I am suggesting in my work is that while it may seem counterintuitive in academia, which is so heavily premised on the call for transparency, opacity may function, in particular instances and contexts and with intent, as a useful strategy with which to explore the ethics of gaze, representation and knowledge creation regarding racialisation and minoritisation within the context of higher education. It may help us to interrogate the premise and purpose of the questions we (are able to) ask. When we pay attention to its function, sensitivities and allegiances, opacity may help to dislodge our analytic footing, to purposefully shift the sediments of coloniality in research and usher in alteric framings, gazes and purviews.

Epistemic opacity as queer strategy

As I've outlined, I am inspired by opacity as "an aesthetic and ethico-political response to the demands for transparency" (León 2017, 378), having tied these demands with wider claims to comprehension and control rooted in coloniality. While the works I cite connect opacity with performance, visual cultures and aesthetics, my contribution merges this with the epistemic, particularly in terms of archives and documentation and in relation to academic knowledge production.

Theorising opacity to foster ethics in relation to knowledge is not new. Zembylas' (2020) work, for instance, draws on Corey Walker's "ethics of opacity" (2011) to interrogate dominant colonial logics within the university context. However, while I align with Zembylas' recognition of how the university is tied up with the privileging of Western/colonial knowledge systems, systems presented as objective and universal and which organise "knowledge and its disciplines, the knowledge production and legitimation processes, the institutional culture and the university's relations to the society" (2020, 101), I diverge in how I understand the function of opacity in this context. I read Zembylas' argument for opacity as an argument for unveiling knowledges subjugated by these systems in order to reveal the dominance and universalising tendencies of Western epistemologies, of what has been *made opaque*. However, I see a danger of this project

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[2]I write this in November 2023.

falling into the trope of colonial benevolence, of 'giving voice' (Lather 2000), or of coercively insisting on the (academic) visibility of repressed knowledges and peoples. When I connect opacity with ethics, I am, of course, alluding to the conditions of coloniality that invisibilise/conceal marginalised knowledges but the aim is not to uncover these so that "opaque others can be welcomed" (Zembylas 2020, 111) and thus become institutionally legible. Instead, it is precisely through their opacity, their refusal to be conscripted into institutional forms and into certainty, that generative potential might be sparked. This approach is closer to what Michiko Olivia Gagnon, in their work on archives, refers to as an "ethics of unknowability" as a defiance of epistemological mastery and the desire to 'know more', instead embracing what is always partial or out of reach as a mode of relation (2021, 3).

I am interested in engaging opacity as a relational praxis, a way to challenge what can and should be translated/absorbed into research, into hegemonic ways of producing and disseminating knowledge (Tuck & Yang 2014). It is this practice itself, I suggest, that may constitute a form of decolonial ethics. A type of ethics (at times also expressed as an aesthetics) that tarries the past-presents of colonial obfuscation and racialised (mis)readings in its reckoning. I am proposing that epistemic opacity may function as a decolonial tactic, a specifically queer one, in the sense that it does not simply resist, contest, or oppose normative gazes but reaches somewhere else. Queer in the sense that it traffics in shadows, glimpses and gestures (moore 2022), in queerness as willful digression, a subtle smile discernible only to those in the know, a demand for alternative routes (Vuong 2022). This understanding of epistemic opacity is one that gears opacity towards bypassing the inflection of queer of colour life with suffering and towards transcending dominant epistemic regimes. It is a beckoning of the unfathomable, a commitment to ways of knowing and witnessing that are life-affirming.

In this project, I enact epistemic opacity through framing and omission – in refusal to centre and index queer and racialised harm. I understand this as an ethical practice and as a decolonial stance. My focus has not been on evidencing but on exploring alteric possibility, both in the resistances enacted by collectives and students but also methodologically, through arts-based and collaborative approaches, the use of redaction and poetry, theoretically by moving away from notions of recovery and institutional and heteronormative legibility in my understanding of archives, and analytically in my focus on the ephemeral, atmospheric, sensuous and affective.

Then there is also my own attendant and embodied experiences of opacity during the course of this PhD which has, at times, meant becoming elusive myself. I remember joking to a friend that I have been persistently 'on the run' from Danish academia, through my stints abroad and in seeking other spaces of connection and community to embolden my thinking and feeling through the project. The joke cushions a prickly truth, echoed in experiences of other minoritised junior researchers working in a Nordic context, about how visibility, opacity and belonging must often be negotiated within the whiteness of the academy (Khawaja, forthcoming). They highlight the risks and challenges of doing research on racialisation and racism, especially as racially minoritised scholars, whereby leaving, either the geographical context or the academic system, can often feel like a necessary escape (Guschke et al. 2023, 28).

Overarching all of this is the writing of the thesis, which is also intended as a type of (at times opaque) performance, blending, in its form, those same questions of pressure, texture and gaze that I absorbed through handwriting. The use of poetry as a "feeling around in the dark for the shape that you need but don't know yet" (Esfandiari-Denney 2023, 91) is an argument for uncertainty and intuiting as a decolonial approach to research (Wilson 2008) and as epistemic possibility. It is also an argument for the importance of affective and embodied knowledges. I

understand poetry, as well as the inclusion of autoethnography, personal notes, vignettes and visual art as a dig at/into academic form and a refusal to syphon felt and lived experience from theory.

The narrative sensibilities of collage, mess and fragmentation are inspired by the hybrid DIY aesthetic and ethos of zines – how through prints, marks and stains they exemplify what Eve Sedgwick might refer to as "texxtured objects", objects that demonstrably bear the narratives of their own becoming (2003a, 14). I like how the words text and texture come from the same etymological root: texere, to weave. In the same vein, I am striving towards writing as something compounded, tactile and deeply rooted in the body. I argue that the visual and narrative forms of this thesis are not distinct from the arguments contained in its pages but form part of the same tapestry.

3. EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES/ THE CRISIS IS ALREADY HERE

All day I feel some itchiness around
the collar, constriction of living. I write

the date at the top of a letter; though
no one has been writing the year lately,

I write the year, seems like a year you
should write, huge and round and awful.

– Ada Limón, 2023

My PhD and employment at the Danish School of Education started in February 2020, just a month before Denmark went into a national lockdown. The duration of this project transpired in parallel with a global pandemic. I've included this chapter because it feels important to note this. In part because I am worried about it evaporating, that we might succumb to a "mass forgetting" of the state-sanctioned neglects, suffering, illness, death and vulnerability that Covid-19 shored up (Piepzna-Samarasinha 2022, 45), and in part because these were the conditions from and with which this project emerged and this, I believe, matters.

At the same time, I want to write against the notion of crisis as a singular event, as something exceptional – to acknowledge that the end of the world as we know it has/must already come for those most marginalised (Maynard & Simpson 2022). Those who felt the brunt of revoked legal rights and sanctions, those for whom working from home was not a possibility, those who are disabled, those who lacked the infrastructure or social and financial resources to access vital provisions, those who were subjected to increased policing and surveillance, those who experienced heightened anti-Black and anti-Asian racism, those whose intrinsic value and humanity was diminished when the UK government called for "herd immunity" (Zenone et al. 2022); the latter being just one example of how crisis functions to justify necropolitical measures imposing large-scale vulnerability, or premature death to use Ruth Wilson Gilmore's (2007) words, on specific communities by materially and discursively protecting certain lives while deeming others dispensable (Agamben 2005, Mbembe 2019, Snorton & Haritaworn 2013). Despite politicians' persistent claims that Covid 'does not discriminate', the reality is that the communities most acutely affected by the pandemic were/are primarily racialised, disabled, trans, queer and working-class folk.

While working through this chapter, I've been sitting with a poetry collection by Franny Choi, the title of which is also its central thesis: *The World Keeps Ending, and the World Goes On* (2022). In it, the myriad tragedies of past and present merge through the wreckages of history. Choi's poems implore us to consider whose realities are evoked when we frame catastrophe as something impending, "like disaster hasn't come, isn't already growing in the yard" (2022, 79). They write:

"We did it, they scream into our window.
In the morning, We is all over the floor. We sweep We

Into a paper bag and label it EMERGENCY. The good news
Is that things will go back to the way they were

Which is also the bad news" (2022, 11).

Choi, along with Athena Farrokhzad (from whose 2017 manuscript the title of this chapter is borrowed), refuses to be taken hostage by the notion of crisis as isolated singularity, instead drawing attention to the interconnected and ongoing urgencies of racial and capitalist violence. The pandemic calcified inequalities and was also preceded by them. What does it mean for things to go back to *the way they were*? Whose interests does this serve? Understanding Covid-19 as a contained circumstance, a sudden emergency, something to be overcome with a view to reinstating 'normality' not only dismisses the urgencies that have and continue to exist for communities with intimate proximities to death and loss (Maynard & Simpson 2022) but also creates a narrative in which "we can only ever move through crisis not around it, we can never reject it outright" (Olufemi, forthcoming). Racial violence, ableism and environmental devastation are continuous realities which we live, endure and evade differently. The world is already ending, ceaselessly, again and again.

Reason for delay

There is a growing body of literature investigating the impact of Covid-19 on university students. In the UK, studies show how disparities and inequalities have been exacerbated by the pandemic, drawing attention to the adverse effects on mental health (Allen et al. 2023), precarities relating to migration and visa status (Banerjee et al. 2021), financial anxiety (Perry et al. 2023), and stress for those with care responsibilities (Holmes & Nikiforidou 2023). The major shifts in pedagogical frameworks and policies, institutional infrastructures, and physical and mental well-being continue to bear consequences for higher education.

It was not just students affected, of course, but also university workers and staff, particularly those historically minoritised through structural racism and (cis hetero) sexism (Blell et al. 2022). It has, for instance, been noted that racialised academics and students were subjected to skewed expectations of efficiency, presence and productivity during the pandemic, often at the expense of their health (Vlachou & Tlostanova 2023). As Toni Wright et al. (2021) note, the effects of Covid-19 in the UK are connected with decades of austerity and neoliberal ideologies, policies and practices, which exacerbated the risks and adverse outcomes for those at the most marginalised junctures of race, age, gender and class (346). More recently, Diallo and Yohaness (2023) theorise from their experiences as Black feminists and researchers in Norway to conceptualise *Nordic burnout*, describing conscription into unsustainable physical, intellectual and emotional labour during Covid and in the aftermath of the 2020 Black Lives Matter uprisings. Their study underscores the importance of understanding the pressures of the pandemic through an intersectional, localised and contextual lens, emphasising the workings of anti-Blackness, anti-queer, anti-trans and anti-Islam structures across research and activism (Diallo 2023, 19). The interconnectedness highlighted by these scholars, exposing the uneven vulnerabilities within higher education and societies at large, means that in an academic project explicitly focused on queer and racially minoritised organising, Covid-19 is not simply a preface, backdrop or frame of reference; it is indwelling. The significance of what crafting a livable world might mean becomes all the more stark through the pandemic's lens (Phoenix 2022). Its effects are transfused on multiple layers, including the global socio-political scale: within the experiential realities for interlocutors, within the context of higher education, the practicalities of research, and what it means to be exploring race, queerness and resistance as a minoritised scholar.

Among many other things, doing a PhD during a pandemic meant constant uncertainty. About movement, access and timeline, yes, but also about what the project could and should consist of. Everything felt charged. The murder of George Floyd intensified discourse around state violence, colonial histories and racism; protests and actions were taking place across the world and monuments were being desecrated and submerged in Copenhagen and abroad[1]. I remember a colleague in Denmark telling me, after the toppling of a statue of Edward Colston in Bristol, that "this must be such an interesting time for you, for your project." The comment left me rattled. As if decolonial mobilisation amid mass death and protest was an intriguing academic delectable, a fortunate turn of events for my career.

The ethnographic material of this thesis is based on a total of 11 months of in-person research while living in London, as well as online conversations that took place throughout the first half of 2022 while I was based in Vancouver. I travelled back and forth from Copenhagen to London several times during the span of 2020/21, knowing I was meant to do fieldwork, but unsure what

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[1]In 2020, the statue of Hans Egede in Nuuk, Kalaallit Nunaat, was splattered with red paint and tagged with the word 'decolonize', while the sinking of a bust replica of king Fredrik V by a group of art students surfaced Denmark's colonial history and role in the transatlantic slavetrade.

that might mean and look like when the 'field' was in lockdown, university teaching and organising was increasingly moving online, and students were grieving, depleted, struggling to get by.

At one point in my second year, there was an opportunity to apply for a paid extension through my university. On the form was a box titled 'Reason for delay'. In it, I write: *It's impossible to calculate how the pandemic has affected the conditions for my – and others' – work.* However, what follows is nonetheless an endeavour in quantifying. I lay out lost opportunities and connections, sickness, disruptions to fieldwork, cancelled trips, closed borders, back-and-forth bureaucracy, tier four lockdown, restrictions. It feels strange to read it back now, a banal and insufficient rendering. As if a pandemic could be reduced to an individualised list of inconveniences, a paragraph to prove that this awful thing happened, was real, that it had consequences. What it doesn't include is the everyday, the sensory, affective and collective. The simmering fear for loved ones; the endless intake of information, numbers, death tolls; how local queer and BIPOC groups came together to provide care to those who were immunocompromised, to sex workers, to people living in camps; how days were filled by emptying them; how we would wipe down groceries, door handles, our hands; how my housemates in London made me three warm meals a day when I got infected; how I started reading poetry because it was all I could concentrate on; the quiet of the streets; the confusion and fatigue; the (im)possibilities of intimacy; how, in Cynthia Miller's words: "*everything became a record of what we touched, or hadn't – where our hands lingered, or didn't – how much distance we could afford to put between ourselves and others – what it cost us, what it didn't*" (2021, 36).

The institution granted me a one-month extension.

Categories of acceptable and unacceptable disaster

Amid the momentous changes of 2020, one of the most life-altering for me was a chance meeting with April Farquharson, who was, at the time, a student at Goldsmiths University. I interviewed April as part of my project, and this first conversation became a catalyst for our friendship as well as weekly chats (mostly online) where we contemplated living with/in dystopia and our positions and experiences of navigating academic institutions in London and Copenhagen as a Black woman and mixed-race person of colour, respectively. We sifted through poetry and pleasure, our heartbreaks, our losses, our projects. We started gathering these conversations online, including texts, memes and voice notes, and experimenting with mythologies, theory, and creative writing. The Archive (as we jokingly started referring to it) became an almost living organism, a question of the absurd, of fragmented epistemologies, a mode of mutual support, a way to push against the whiteness and 'esteemed rituals' of the university and create something that made sense, if only to us. Or, as April put it: "*The Archive is a practice in my own humanity, a merger of my worst fears held to light, an experiment in whether my dreams, my values, my joys are comparable to the reality in which I live, an out-stretched hand, more a less an undertaking in feeling less alone, an analysis of Yes! Me too! It fucking sucks, doesn't it.*" (Farquharson & Acharya, forthcoming).

Black-out poem

During one of our conversations in 2020, April shared a Goldsmiths University form that she needed to fill out to apply for an essay deadline extension, titled 'Extenuating Circumstances'. We pasted the form into a shared document and used it to collaboratively create a poem in which portions of the found text are kept while others are redacted (blacked out). We did this simultaneously, intuitively choosing which parts of the text to draw over while also being able to see the other's choices and movements in the text as we went along.

Unacceptable Circumstances COVID-19 Update remains

Students must self-certify

. A - Acceptable Reasons
C - Unacceptable Reasons

Serious personal injury , occurring for the first time, preventing attendance or completion of assessment or submission of work. illness of a child, partner or close relative (parent) but not extended family. Serious worsening or acute episode Students with a disability Ongoing difficulties or mental health conditions. Minor injuries fever Normal Stress Bereavement Death of a close relative (not identified in 'Acceptable') or friend. Categories of Acceptable Evidence Trauma (e.g. work required for assessment. Direct experience of disaster. Major fire Family breakdown Enforced eviction from housing. Financial problems or employment issues. accommodation problems General domestic/family problems. Responsibilities Updated resulting from COVID-19 such as caring caring Unexpected caring sudden death or illness child, partner or close relative. Caring for Key-Workers Students fall under 'key worker' category required to work IT failure unreliability Court Jury Acting as a supporting friend Tribunal. Categories of Acceptable and Unacceptable Extenuating Circumstances Miscellaneous Serious disaster. Any circumstances which have not clearly impacted on academic performance or do not clearly relate to the timing of the assessment. Visa problems. Misjudging time. Misreading time. public failure

I share the poem here to trace the metabolisation of our connection into this project of knowing together and as a practice of citation that recognises knowledge as always co-constituted, connected to those who sustain us, literally as well as metaphorically. This argument echoes in all three articles, in which there is an insistence on friendship as a kinetics for social justice and on intimacy and interdependency as impossible to cleave from our visions for mutual living.

At the same time, the poem is an example of us making sense of what the pandemic meant in the context of higher education. I find that the form of the poem, the drawing over certain sections to foreground others, enables new associations and opens up the text's poetic possibility. The evaluation of atrocity along institutional metrics of 'acceptable' and 'unacceptable' announces itself starkly through heteronormative framings such as 'family breakdown', 'death of a close relative', 'child, partner or close relative (parent) but not extended family'. Qualifying attributions such as 'normal', 'problems' and 'difficulties' unceremoniously detach finances, mental health, housing and domesticity from urgency and suffering. As a counterweight, we leave the word care whenever it appears. The poem casts light on the mundanity, normalisation and institutionalisation of violent conditions, the choices and balancing acts that students had to make. In its disruption, the poem reassembles the text to poke at, amplify and at times flip normativities and truths (students are established as key workers, official responsibilities are updated to include caring, trauma to include work).

The beauty of a black-out poem, I think, is that it uses disintegration, breaking down, as a means to create. It arrives at itself through destruction and, in doing so, carries along an abolitionist sensibility, showing how disintegration in the face of violence can be a generative force. How breaking structures apart might allow us to discover new meanings and dimensions already contained within. In this way, we take the conditions of the university and break them down. We drench them in ink, refusing to cooperate with the official narrative, wringing out the text to (un)cover its claims.

4. DECOLONIAL KNOWLEDGES, ABOLITION & DESIRE

I think... these flashes of the luminous world should be shared. I don't believe the imagination can fix everything (I am a rigorous materialist!) but it can do some of the work: the work of creating openings where there were previously none.

– Jackie Wang, 2021

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I have been having trouble sleeping recently, losing track of time, knowing that I need to wake soon, to work, to write. I've been dreaming of figure skaters, sharp blades, ice and iridescent costumes. I'm not sure why. In these nocturnal hours, I reflect on dreams, how they affirm rest as something active. How, for all their slipperiness, even as they fade, they manage to linger in the body throughout the day, sometimes much longer. I have been thinking about how dreams give us access to something beyond the material world, those "luminous flashes" that poet and abolitionist scholar Jackie Wang reminds us of in the lines above (2021, 98). How dreaming is as a type of desiring work that forgoes the world as we know it, a way to imagine a different reality, to "wake up holding something new" (Adukwei Bulley 2022, 76).

In this chapter, I want to make a case for desire and imagination as pivotal to the thinking and doing of liberatory knowledge. In doing so, I outline key theories I engage with in my arguments around knowledge creation. I draw especially on decolonial scholarship that seeks to dream and do knowledge 'otherwise' (Crawley 2018, Olufemi 2021), interrogating research not only at the level of methodology but also epistemology and ontology. In doing so, I trace my own movement from concepts of refusal and antiracist resistance as oppositional frameworks towards abolitionist approaches. Learning from abolitionist thinkers, organisers, communities and scholars, including those participating in this project, has steered a focus on practice while also insisting on desire and imagination as vital forces that allow an accumulation of the possible. This has been core to how I conceptualise collaborative (an)archiving practices as well as my central argument for reconfiguring queer and racialised knowledge creation practices against with/in and beyond the university as expressions of alterity.

Tracing decolonial knowledges

To engage with decolonial pursuits within higher education and knowledge creation more broadly, it is imperative to first address the project of Empire as an epistemic and ontological project as much as a material, economic, social and political one, and how these aspects are mutually implicated in upholding the subjugations of colonialism.

Decolonial critique comes from a range of traditions, justice movements, and schools of thought that challenge universal claims to knowledge and how these peripherise and submerge other forms of knowing and being, especially from the Global South. Concepts such as epistemic violence (Spivak 1988), the structural denial, erasure and devaluation of knowledge systems deemed illegible or inferior, and epistemicide – the destruction/eradication of non-Western, non-white and otherwise minoritarian knowledges and their bearers (de Sousa Santos 2014, Solano & Icaza 2019) – alert us to how Western genealogies of thought order and hierarchise knowledge and that the epistemic implications of this – for instance, the loss of languages, histories, forms of governance, ancestral teachings and indigenous ontologies – must be understood as a matter of justice (Fricker 2007).

In my research, I am inspired by many different paths of thought that might loosely be understood as decolonial feminist perspectives. I say loosely because these are part of and influenced by different traditions that are vast, nuanced and often interconnected. For example, anti-colonial theorists such as Aimée Césaire (2000) and Frantz Fanon (1952) who write into a genealogy of national independence and Black liberation movements, diasporic postcolonial scholars who interrogate the representational and discursive facets of imperial domination (Said 1978, Spivak 1988, Bhabha 1994), and the modernity/coloniality school of thought of Latin America from which concept of coloniality (Quijano 2000, Mignolo 2011, Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013) emerges. The colonial matrix of power, or coloniality, is defined as "the darker side of modernity" (Mignolo 2011) and offers a model for understanding complex structures of ongoing European colonial

control along three intertwined analytical axes: the coloniality of knowledge, being and power.[1] Indigenous feminist scholars have also long grappled with questions of how research itself is colonially entrenched, complicit in justifying racist and colonial agendas, and how these complicities are a matter of material, epistemic and ontological violences (Tuhiwai Smith 1999, Simpson 2021). Offerings from US Black feminist scholars have expanded perspectives on how coloniality structures our worldview (and subsequent realities) at the level of being, delineating humanness itself as an ontological and discursive category along racialised lines (McKittrick 2014, Wynter 2003, Jackson 2020).

These (far from comprehensive) trajectories shore up points of historical and theoretical interlacing. The itineraries of anti/post/decolonial scholarship are heterogeneous and not fixed. It is challenging and outside the capacities of this dissertation and my knowledge to do justice to the breadth of decolonial frameworks that interrogate coloniality in relation to knowledge. What I offer here is an impression. However, I do want to touch on the conceptual relation between the prefixes of anti/post/decolonial and how their overlaps are complex and contested.

Lisa Leigh Patel (2014), for example, has written about the stakes that lie in concepts of the anticolonial in contrast with the decolonial, pointing out that an anticolonial stance allows for a rigid locating, critique and opposition to coloniality, as well as an exploration of our own relationship to it, something which may also be lost in inclinations to water down the element of praxis in decolonisation. However, she suggests, as others also have (Rose-Redwood et al. 2020), it lacks the active "stripping away colonization, as the term decolonization gestures to do" which may risk playing down material change (2014, 358). An adjacent critique has been levied against postcolonial studies for its signalling of 'post-' as synonymous with something 'after' – a temporal connotation undermining how we might address coloniality as ongoing and pervasive reality (Grande 2004). While postcolonial studies is also a vast field to which interrogating dominant knowledges imposed by colonial powers has also been central, Gurminder Bhambra (2014) notes that the postcolonial has tended to remain in the remit of the cultural and scholarly, particularly of the diasporic Global North, and absented conversation with decolonial scholarship. While acknowledging the particularities of geographical, disciplinary and historical orientations, her work tends to this gap by tracing alignments between the postcolonial and decolonial and how we might leverage these connections to disrupt Western epistemological dominance. At the same time, there are still antagonisms, erasures and tensions to be found in tangling and untangling these intellectual branches. For example, as Breny Mendoza (2016) argues, a neglect of Black feminist and women-of-colour feminisms' contributions to decolonial thought and a reinforcement of Western traditions and Eurocentric hegemonies through which decolonial theorising is often assumed and its political claims diffused (4). For instance, within the context of the university, scholars have pointed to what is called the 'decolonial turn' (Maldonado-Torres 2011) within the Western academy, a shift which has generated a greater focus on decolonising (for example in movements to diversify curriculums) but also the risk of co-option where decolonisation often becomes an adjective or metaphor rather than a practice inseparable from material struggles for racial justice and the liberation of lands, bodies and resources (Tuck & Yang 2012). This is also what Ahmed (2012) speaks to when writing about how diversity, inclusion and equality measures in higher education tend to be superficial, rhetorical and additive, often veiling issues of race and curbing any actual structural change.

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[1] My own understanding and research into the coloniality of knowledge follows Maldonado-Torres' definition of coloniality as "long-standing patterns of power that emerged as a result of colonialism, but that define culture, labour, intersubjective relations, and knowledge production well beyond the strict limits of colonial administrations" (2007, 243).

This is all to say that there is no unified genre of decolonial feminist literature nor universal map to decolonisation.[2] It is not a fixed destination and writing about decolonial knowledge in relation to and from within the Euromodern university comes with its own ambivalences, tensions and contradictions. As Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang (2012) remind us, decolonial resistance cannot be a purely or primarily intellectual endeavour, and its theorisations, teachings and practices have existed and continue to do so far beyond the domain of educational institutions. Academia is just one of many interconnected sites of decolonial theorising. I mention this to stress that my own journey towards decolonial thought is rooted in teachings from in particular QTIBIPOC organisers, artists, writers, practitioners, poets, mentors and teachers who embody the radical work of cultivating knowledge towards a just world. With a background in media and cultural studies, then migration studies, and eventually landing, somewhat awkwardly, within educational anthropology, my foundations within the university have also not followed a clear-cut trail and continue to veer across disciplines, theories, concepts and learning encounters: a haphazard but maybe also useful strategy in "undisciplining" (Escobar 2007, 190) as a way to dislodge the reinscription of academic normativities and exclusions.

There are innumerable ways to approach what it might mean to decolonise knowledge. What is, I think, vital to the perspectives I have mentioned is that epistemology is profoundly entangled with the shadows of colonialism and that these shadows unrelentingly cast the shapes and atmospheres of the present at all layers of experience. Coloniality emerges from colonialism but persists as something we "breathe…all the time everyday" (Maldonaldo-Torres 2007, 243). What has been most instructive in my meeting with decolonial theory, in addition to its focus on decolonising as a practice, is its multidimensional approach to epistemology in which knowing/being/sensing cannot be conceived independently, or separately from the colonial project. The work of Black feminist, indigenous and queer-of-colour scholars in particular has guided me to understand the relationships between epistemology, ontology, materiality and affect as circular and constituted through colonial grammars (Spillers 1987, Wynter 2003, da Silva 2011, Chen 2012, Muñoz 2020). This work illustrates how knowing itself is racially imbricated – materially, bodily and affectively – through binaries and distinctions that hierarchise existence – such as human/non-human, animate/inanimate, alive/dead – and that these categories are also structured racially. To retain this multivocality, I find it useful to think along the lines of onto-epistemologies, to avoid upholding their separation. While it is also uneasy to submit to epistemology and ontology as academic concepts that are also steeped in colonial logics, I use them together here to grasp at how knowledge is a kind of mattering that structures our existence. Coloniality functions as the lens through which I view and grasp these onto-epistemological relations, and thereby also as a way of looking into knowledge practices. Reckoning with the material injustices of the world is not incompatible or diminished by giving attention to processes of knowledge creation. Instead, they are mutually dependent. Coloniality relies on the legitimisation of specific narratives and worldviews: knowledge is not just discursive, knowledge is the remit of the conceivable and, therefore, the possible.

The emphasis on coloniality as functional through multiple dimensions has also enabled me to grasp the nuances of queer and racially minoritised experiences within the academy. Specifically, the theorisation of queerness as engendered through and by colonialism – what Maria Lugones (2007) refers to as 'the coloniality of gender' – has informed my approach to race, gender and

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[2]As mentioned there is consideration to be had around the prefixes post-, de- and anti-, with their theoretical roots as well as political implications (Groglopo and Suárez-Krabbe 2023). Although I've found most utility in the term 'decolonial' in relation to this project, I align with Zuleika Bibi Sheik's concept and call to "anti-colonially decolonise" as researchers, a process and stance which interrogates the ontological and epistemological foundations of the work we produce, functioning "at the level of normativity, that is 'the why'… it asks of us "Why are we producing knowledge?" and whether our work is contributing to the violence and erasure of coloniality" (2021, 11).

sexuality as part of a shared analytic, a teaching also embedded in the concept of intersectionality (Crenshaw 1991, Hill Collins 1990, Combahee River Collective 1977). There is a wealth of scholarship that elaborates on how colonialism is entangled with the construction of gender and (hetero)sexuality through systems of capitalism, racism and heteropatriarchy (i.e. Bey 2022, Rahul 2020, Snorton 2017, Oyěwùmí 1997), offering inroads to analysing how these binary modes of categorisation and knowing affect us at the most intimate and bodily proximities. Furthermore, the connection between queerness and race is not just an analytical tool in this project but a theoretical anchoring. As I also outline in Article 2, I write into a field of queer-of-colour critique that bridges decolonial and queer studies – literature that shows us how issues of race, nation-states, citizenship and colonialism establish racialised cis-heteropatriarchy as a project of (sexual) development rooted in coloniality, and how these connections expand, rather than particularise, the lens of queerness and its uses (Jirvaj et al. 2020, El-Tayeb 2011, Eng et al. 2005, Ferguson 2004, Muñoz 1999). I do not subscribe to queer theory as only or primarily an approach to sexual orientation, but as profoundly linked with questions of racialisation and minoritarian experience (Ahmed 2006): queer as "that which is in all ways aslant … to the normative" (Atta & van der Vlies 2019, 1). Limiting queerness to sexuality, as Siobhan B. Somerville explains, does not do justice to the breadth of queer critique nor its intellectual lineages. She writes that queer theory: dislodges "the status of sexual orientation itself as the authentic and centrally governing category of queer practice, thus freeing up queer theory as a way of reconceiving not just the sexual, but the social in general" (2022, 787). The focus, analysis and basis of this project is, therefore, that race, gender and sexuality are mutually constitutive categories and moreover that merging and thinking across decolonial and queer theorising might equip us to productively challenge subjugations and hierarchies within knowledge production (Lakhani 2020).

The order of things: coloniality and academia

Decolonial theorising has offered me tools to examine how coloniality relates to onto-epistemologies and how this plays out in landscapes of higher education. How certain paradigms of knowing are privileged in academia has been important in understanding what it might mean to resist coloniality in this context.[3]

One of the ways to approach this is to look at the underlying assumptions that structure academia: what is taken for granted when thinking of the who, what and why of knowledge creation. Scholars writing in a European context have described how academic institutions are, for instance, structured by whiteness as habit and experiential norm (Essed 2004, Ahmed 2007, Wekker 2022, Arday & Mirza 2018, Puwar 2004), othering non-white bodies as out-of-place within these landscapes. Moreover, they are built on projects of logocentrism and phallogocentrism, in which knowledge and sense-making are legitimised through "*rational principles from the perspective of a male eurocentric consciousness – in other words, building an allegedly ordered, rational, and predictable world*" (Escobar 2007, 183) reflected in Sylvia Wynter's concept of the European Man (2003) as the barometer of humanity. This can be connected to a Western academic ideal of objectivity/neutrality, in which there is a presumed distance between researcher and researched and a failure to account for how our subject positions and identities are always politically implicated in the production of knowledge (Dillard 2010, Navarro et al. 2013). This further constricts the realities of research for minoritised scholars, whose work is often devalued and diminished via claims of bias, an undue focus on race/colonialism and navel-gazing (Guschke et al. 2023, The River and Fire Collective 2021). Minoritarian and especially racially minoritised individuals are also often positioned as the subjects of research, a pattern emblematic of an epistemic impulse to represent the 'other' and one that

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[3]I paint in broad brush strokes here, but am speaking of and from the Global North (more specifically the modern Western university within Denmark and the UK), which is the backdrop that influences both my research and my own position/perspective.

reinforces colonial modalities of appropriation, mastery and extraction (Tuhiwai Smith 1999, Shilliam 2015).

The extractive nature of research, in which knowledge is positioned as a commodity to be obtained and produced (often at the expense of minoritised individuals and communities) rather than created, is something which Igea Troiani and Claudia Dutson (2021) refer to as a neoliberal commercialisation of teaching and research which emphasises efficiency, production and competition, highlighting the effects of colonialism and capitalism as twinned projects (Vergès 2021), also within higher education. The logic of knowledge-as-production is also tied to knowledge-as-productivity, in which academic research emphasises a constant search for novelty, projecting time itself as infinite chronology (Vázquez 2023). This impetus to hurtle forwards (which mirrors ceaseless production as a force of environmental and worldly demise) is, Rolando Vázquez suggests, a temporal violence: contemporaneity is privileged as "a normative category that praises the time of the now as the time that is real and that is valuable" (2023, 59). This also reinforces the myth of ownership (another paragon of racial capitalism) in the sense of knowledge as a contribution of something 'new' that has not been done before and ideas as a type of property, something we lay claim to through (academic) authority, individualised authorship and privatised publication. In her book *The White Possessive*, Aileen Moreton-Robinson describes these as the "possessive logics of patriarchal white sovereignty" (2015, xi) that rationalise the colonial domination, dehumanisation and disenfranchisement of racially minoritised communities. It's helpful to consider that although the politics of citation, collaboration and authorship within academia are no doubt complex, the sociopolitical logics of possession are not neutral and link directly to struggles against racial injustice (Walcott 2021).

These processes are also accentuated by the privileging of the written word in academia as a criterion of legitimacy (Baszile 2019). While it may seem superfluous, what Belcourt calls the "problem of form" in academia (2022, 3) is a problem that claws at the heart of Western knowledge structures, revealing the limits of what we are taught knowledge can do and be. How we are conditioned to absorb and channel/disseminate knowledge is therefore an important part of what it might mean to decolonise (academic) knowledge, something I explore with Gabriella Muasya in Article 1. Academic writing, as Denise Baszile describes, tends to "*invest in linearity, a contrived objectivity, a veneer of neutrality, and dispassionate language…all of these practices work together as the complex of legitimate truth-making that reinforces the narratives of Man, and thus the domination of Western onto-epistemological perspectives in the current order of knowledge*" (2019, 14). Essentially, the workings of academic authorship, and the coloniality of academic research more broadly, adhere to a division of the body and the mind which sacrifices the lived, embodied, affective and sensory as sites of knowledge, as well as insisting on the primacy of an autonomous subject, observing but distinct from the outer world. Posthuman and new materialist scholarship (also referred to earlier), which deals with "*the materiality of human bodies, and explores consciousness, feeling, affect, and other circulatory and shared social phenomena as they rise out of the substance of the world*" grapples with this porousness, but has also been critiqued for not giving enough attention to race (Tompkins 2016, np). Moreover, while scholars have elucidated how the category of the human itself is underpinned by the colonial construction of humanness as White (Jackson 2020, Wynter & McKittrick 2015, Weheliye 2014), Tompkins reminds us that onto-epistemologies the decentre the human are not inaugural to academic scholarship itself but have long been familiar "to those humans who have never been quite human enough" (2016, np). My work has been informed by these perspectives that complicate the relationships between subjects and objects, bodies and materials while retaining a gaze on coloniality. For instance, in Article 1, we discuss how the making of our audiovisual archive is co-constituted relationally and by our surroundings. Our archive of ruptures includes the more-than-human, through elevating materials such as linoleum soap, gum and water, and how these form the sensory and affective dimensions of our embodied experiences. Or in Article 2, where I

unfold 'mess' in a way that might allow an encompassment of the spatial, material and affective registers of the workshops as a type of space and knowledge-making.

No promises from the university

Having sketched the stratification of coloniality within higher education, how academia upholds the onto-epistemological locus of the West and the knowledge paradigms that keep these in place, a question we might pose is where to, from here? If "research is the problem", to quote Sheik (2023, 227), then how might a research project like this, and engagement with the university more broadly, inhibit or cultivate knowledge practices that are oriented towards freedom? Or, to quote Muñoz: ways of knowing and being "that allow us to see and feel beyond the quagmire of the present" (2009, 1)?

These are questions that have been with me throughout the PhD process and a kind of weight that has sometimes felt like standstill. The university is not, to paraphrase Harney and Moten, the one (2020). While I agree that we cannot lay our decolonial investments within the university as a site of emancipatory knowledge, I have found guides in queer, feminist and decolonial approaches. These have offered if not an assuredly tangible way forward then ways that are askew, titled, incremental: rebellious and conspiratorial pathways that make their commitments known. Ways of research that seek to thwart, dissent and disobey, that encourage us to become undisciplined, to evade the mechanisms of academic legibility that uphold oppression (Sharpe 2016, 13). For instance through methodological and ethical approaches that challenge hierarchies in research, as well as centring marginalised voices (Icaza and Vázquez 2018, Darder 2019, Tuhiwai Smith 1999); research that aims to be accountable to, in concert and in ceremony with the communities of which the researcher is part (Wilson 2008, TallBear 2014): the crafting of explicitly positioned and political research that embraces lived and bodily experience as a foundation for theorising (Haraway 1991, hooks 1994); engagement with dehumanism as ideological and structural acts of "stripping away the violent foundations of colonial and neocolonial mastery that continue to render some beings more human than others" (Singh 2018, 4); relational practices of writing and citation (DasGupta et al. 2021, Smith et al. 2021); through the creation of spaces of radical pedagogy (Hill Collins 1990, Freire 1996, hooks 2003); and care (Piepzna-Samarasinha 2018, Nishida 2022); the fostering of solidarities and redistributing of resources with/in and beyond the university (Aparna 2020); and harnessing fugitivity as a practice and opening (Harney and Moten 2013). The works mentioned here have all been important sources of grounding and inspiration. I have also found inspiration and support among scholars working from a Danish context, where more and more studies are working with abolitionist approaches and decolonial methodologies[4] in knowledge creation, for instance through collaborative autoethnography (Diallo & Yohaness, forthcoming), co-theorising, counter-archiving, collaboration and care (Friborg 2023, Diallo 2023, Loving Coalitions Collective 2023), memory work (Khawaja 2022, Andreassen & Myong 2017), affective and embodied approaches (Naseer 2023, Aldaraji 2021, Gaonkar 2022, Khawaja et al. 2023), challenging coloniality within the Danish university (Suárez-Krabbe 2011), attention to the spatial dimensions of knowing (Hassani 2023, Berisha 2023), and the centring of marginalised/colonised voices in citation as well as through first-person narratives and oral histories in ethnography (Löwe Hunter 2023).

Within decolonial literature, the concept of refusing colonial systems of subjugation has been especially important for building my theoretical, analytical and methodological approach to this project. In her influential work on ethnographic refusal, Audra Simpson (2007) outlines refusal as

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[4]For more on coloniality and decolonial discussions in the Nordic region, a recent anthology edited by Adrián Groglopo and Julia Suárez-Krabbe (2023) offers generous perspectives.

a critical method and strategy of knowledge production that takes seriously the interests, sovereignties and commitments of the (Mohawk) communities to which she is beholden. Tuck & Yang (2014) extend this conceptualisation by highlighting how refusal is more than withdrawal or circumvention, not just an interruption – "a no" – but a conscious and generative stance that rejects institutional structures in the insistence that "there are some forms of knowledge that the academy doesn't deserve" and that "research may not be the intervention that is needed" (2007, 224). Refusal is, in short, political in its transformative aims and can therefore also help us to go beyond romanticising resistance as heroism, as a narrative of "triumph over violence" or as "confirmation of the failure or partial failure of systems of oppression" (Abu-Lughod 1990, 53). To paraphrase Carole McGranahan, if resistance can be seen as defying dominance, then refusal is a rejection and reconfiguration of this hierarchical relationship altogether (2016, 323).

Building on this corpus of work, my approach is also to normalise refusals in the processes of research as well as in the practices and experiences of the students and collectives involved in this project, not as an omission or flattening of knowledge but as something generative. At the same time, I want to move even further towards refusal as conceptually oriented towards possibility. Refusal can be understood as a critique in of itself, a troubling of what the university can and should have access to. However, as I also outline in my reflections on opacity, I have been less interested in critique or negation as an oppositional or negative force but rather what becomes of its wilful character: refusal as "a generative and creative source of disorderly power to embrace the possibility of living otherwise," to use Tina Campt's (2018, np) phrasing.[5] Which is why, even though the concept of refusal has deeply impacted my thinking around decolonial resistance and my role and responsibilities as a researcher, I prefer to use the term alterity in my work. The etymology of the word includes the root 'alter' – the state of change or being changed – and in this I locate movement towards something 'other' as well as a process of transformation. Alterity also grants the adjective alteric, which allows me to connect the otherwise (as realm) to practices – the doing. It also helps avoid a slippage into resistance-as-opposition (to be caught in orbiting the institutions, structures or oppressions that are being refused) as well as allowing me to connect to theorising and thinking around knowledge practices that move in the registers of desire and creative possibility. Particularly, as I explain below, abolitionist perspectives.

Beyond negation: abolition and the magnitude of desire

When I first started this project, it was with an interest in decolonial and antiracist student movements. Antiracism was a term used in many of the movements I had been following in London and was also a term that I chose to incorporate in my fieldwork, for example as an overarching theme for the collaborative workshops I facilitated with queer and racially minoritised students. I have since gravitated more towards abolition as a framework because I have found the most resonance there, both in terms of the political claims and organising of the students/collectives involved in this project as well in my own movement from viewing antiracist resistance as outward and public 'activism' in opposition to colonial and oppressive systems to focusing on resistance through practices and spaces of desire, creation and care. It is important to mention that abolition is not a monolithic or a static concept. Recognising that there are many ways to think about and with the unfolding term, my wish is not to diminish its contestations, complexities and overlapping geographies. In this section, I am speaking to my own understandings and strands of learning from explicitly abolitionist thinkers.

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[5]This also dovetails with Dorthe Staunæs' work on affirmative critique and affect (2019) which, in conversation with concepts such as Eve Sedgwick's reparative reading (1997), looks to educational settings in formulating a methodology of critique that goes beyond criticism as negation and affirms possibility in its vitalisation of an otherwise.

Abolition is not a new idea and has political roots in movements to overturn slavery and prison systems. My learning about abolition is largely owed to Black feminist abolitionist thinkers working in a US context, such as Angela Davis, who writes that "*abolition, as a tradition, a philosophy, and a theory of change … is a political vision with the goal of eliminating imprisonment, policing, and surveillance and creating lasting alternatives to punishment and imprisonmen*t" (2022, 50). The UK also has a long tradition of abolitionism especially among Black grassroots coalitions, and contemporary abolition organising has established ground since the 1970s (I refer to Kennetta Hammond Perry's 2022 work for a nuanced and comprehensive historiography). Abolition is often seen as a project of building a world free of slavery, police and prisons, and while this is a core tenet of abolitionist organising, abolition cannot be reduced to dismantling the carceral system, at least not without recognition of how carcerality is embedded in the fabric of our lives, including educational systems (Hammond Perry 2022, 543). While this may seem provocative to some, the Cradle Community collective point out (speaking from a UK context) that Black, POC, migrant and working-class communities, especially those among them who are queer, disabled, trans, have long been failed, targeted by, as well as organising against, carceral structures and institutions such as prisons, detention centres and border regimes (2021, 11). At its core, I understand abolition as envisioning a world where we "address harm without relying on the violent systems that increase it" (Kaba 2021, xviii), meaning that it stretches to upheaving all aspects of punishment, violence, exploitation and oppression within society, all systems that produce dispossession. It is a radical project: its demands are not for repair or reform but for transformation – to turn our energies towards the creation of "different vocabularies for living" (Snorton 2020, 315). Abolition is about dismantling the world as we know it in order to build safety and freedom for all.

So what does this have to do with knowledge?

Abolition as a prism has been helpful to me in thinking about the university and knowledge creation in several ways. One of these is its straddling of the visionary with material practices and struggles, echoing decolonial scholars' cautioning against seeing change as an academic enterprise. Abolition, as Ruth Wilson Gilmore teaches us, is a verb: it is about doing, or as she describes it, "rehearsing" the kind of reality we wish to bring into being: an abolitionist politic maintains that theorising and intellectualising cannot be the exclusive or primary site of transformation (2022). As a case in point, my engagement with abolition has very much been influenced by learning, thinking and doing alongside the groups and students I have gotten to know through this project. In the UK, grassroots organisations such as *Sisters Uncut*, *No More Exclusions*, *Cradle Community* and *Abolitionist Futures* have taught me about the task of abolition. This work is ongoing. For example (as I describe in Article 3), among collectives such as *bare minimum*, *SHY* and *daikon** in building abolitionist resources and through their practices of support, mutual aid and care. As Diallo (2023) describes, in her work with African Norwegian youth, abolitionist knowledges and practices are founded in lived experience. They are already happening and continuously being formulated, which is why she also describes a research process of "joining in" what she conceptualises as black study – embodied and collective practices of theorising, community making, knowledge and language creation (2023). Her work, and others', reminds us that abolition is not reliant on the university; its genealogies are harboured within liberation movements and especially Black feminist traditions. This teaches us that any vision of a life-affirming world must contend with racial injustice (da Silva 2020) and that it must do so through action, by putting ideas to use.

Further, abolition can help complicate the work of racial justice from the standpoint of the university and academic research. Abolition is, as Christian Sharpe clearly articulates, not solely about contesting and exposing violence. Whereas antiracism can fall into a project of explaining and documenting brutality, abolition is about "transforming the given…an abolitionist imaginary is trying to create the world of relations we want in the world now. It is the act of destroying

completely the world, the end of the world" (2023, np). In short, abolition is not about reforming the university, increasing representation and diversity or (im)proving inequalities. It's not about decolonial seminars and adding minoritised scholars to reading lists but rather commitment to structural transformation, evoking "a refusal to believe in or invest in the very same institutions that have engendered the crisis" (Hartman 2018, np) and recognising that these institutions necessarily include the university itself.

Thinking with abolition has helped me reconfigure my view of resistance from antiracism and activism 'against' the university to focus on alteric practices of knowledge creation and shape my methodology in ways that attempts to align with such refusals. These wisdoms have also helped me to sit with some of the uneasy paradoxes of being part of the same structures that we seek to eradicate, ambivalences which I expand on in the next chapter. I keep returning to an extract from Moten and Harney where they describe an abolitionist practice of presence in relation to academia. They write: "*fuck the future of the university… no promises from the university, no demands on the university, just the presence of our practice in love and battle, in and through its ruins, on the other side of its dying gasps and last words*" (2020, 12). What stirs me is the commitment to destruction as not only necessary but expansive. The affirmation that not everything can or should be sustained; some things must go. That if we are truly interested in knowledge as a practice towards liberation we need to look beyond the university and unabashedly conspire against its colonial machinations. At the same time, I understand this type of destruction not as pessimistic, masculinist annihilation but an abolitionist practice of "world-making of fugitive hope" which "occurs in the mundane places of our subjectivity, or the minutiae of our living" (Bey 2022, 211). As Marquis Bey proposes, the doing is in the mess of the everyday, what Cradle Community (2021) refer to as tearing down and building "brick by brick". This also allows us to explore and appreciate invisibilised work, feminised work and especially affective modalities and the work of care as vital practices for such world-making.

The epistemic possibilities of desire

My main learning from abolitionist theorising and practice, however, has been its emphasis on imagination and desire as pivotal to building life-affirming worlds. Abolition offers visions for collective flourishing but not as something distant or fantastical. While there is an enormity to its project, there is also possibility. To refer to Gilmore again, abolition is about presence, not absence, and the tools for its realisation are already here (Wilson & Lambert 2018, np). As she explains, if oppressive systems have been made, it follows that they can be unmade; they are not inherent: "what the world will become already exists in fragments and pieces, in experiments and possibilities" (ibid). In this way, abolition approaches possibility not as far-off abstraction ensnarled in what Berlant might refer to as "cruel optimism" (2011) but closer to the informed hopefulness of Muñoz's "concrete utopias" which, while embracing the potential of dreams, are still connected to historically situated struggles (2009, 3). This has been a springboard for theorising imagination and desire as crucial to archival practices that embrace alteric ways of knowing and being. In this project, I connect desire to epistemic possibility. Desire is a through-line in all three articles, especially in relation to archiving as a type of collective knowledge and space-making, what I refer to in Article 3 as anarchiving.

Thinking along abolitionist tracks of desire and possibility allows us to go beyond (epistemic) resistance as opposition to, and defined by, coloniality in relation to higher education. This is not to circumvent or minimise coloniality but to upturn it as the status quo, to set loose thought, to ask different questions and recover the freedom to enact other ways of thinking and existing in the world. To take on the work of creating new openings (to bring us back to the lines at the start of this chapter). These openings ripple desire as an orientation, moving how we might craft research, especially among minoritised individuals and communities. Tuck, for example, calls for

"desire-based research" as an antithesis to "damage-based research", the latter being concerned with documenting harm and reinforcing notions of minoritised communities as broken or in need of benevolence or saving (2009, 416). In this project, I endeavour to follow Tuck's framework (in Article 3 explicitly), as well as others attuned to the possibilities of desire, by connecting these arguments to the epistemic possibilities of (an)archival practices.

Here, I would like to highlight two concepts in particular which have guided me: Ashon Crawley's writing on 'otherwise possibilities' and Lola Olufemi's 'imagining otherwise'. The first specifically relates to resisting the university's oppressive structures. Crawley writes: *"When we begin to think about what something might be, we are in the terrain of the as if, we are in the hopes for the failure of the what is, we are desiring and imagining and sensing otherwise possibility"* (2018, 17). I understand Crawley's 'otherwise possibility' as an invitation to affirmatively politicise the imagination against, despite and even from within Western knowledge regimes. What I also take from this is that desire works as the affective soil from which imagining as "a practice and process" (2018, 8) emerges. By not surrendering the 'as if', through the dreaming accrual of other ways of knowing/being/sensing in the world, desire can vitalise epistemic possibility.

Lola Olufemi, another scholar whose work on imagination has deeply moved my thinking, also writes about taking the imagination seriously as part of a liberatory politics, reminding us that "the imagination is central to the cultural production of revolutionary movements" (2021, 35). What I have found especially relevant and inspiring are the connections she makes between political imaginations and archiving practices as a mode of creation, of making spaces for 'imagining otherwise', for example through affective and speculative manoeuvres.

Taking up and thinking with these concepts has led my understanding of desire as intimately tied to knowledge: desire as an intrinsic part of alteric knowledge and space-making. To envision and imagine can be understood as a type of desiring work, and this is what I try to emphasise when I think and write about resistance within the context of higher education. Desire is, as poet Anne Carson would say, "no light thing" (1998, 132). Desire is crucial to the ways that we create, conceptualise and configure knowledge, which is why it is interesting to look at how the epistemic possibilities of desire manifest through the creative and collaborative workshops of this project, as well as my own pathways as a researcher. Politicising desire is also a way to challenge which feelings are and are not considered political and to attend to the everyday affects of sexuality and intimacy as relevant to organising and political praxis (Wilkinson 2009, Lorde 1978). Desire works both at the level of theorising (anarchival) practices and in allowing me to valorise pleasure, the erotic, the intimate and sexual as essential parts of these processes, as well as the lifeworlds of the students I collaborate and create together with. In the next chapter I delve further into my conceptualisation of the archive and how this is closely linked with desire.

5. REFLECTING ON METHODS

Meanwhile, there is our rotation in words and gestures, we are knotted and tangled, we are shrouded, pressing on.

– Asiya Wadud, 2021

As I describe in the previous chapter, decolonial feminist research, Black feminist perspectives, queer-of-colour critique and abolitionist approaches form part of the vast body of work which has allowed me to explore how I might craft this project. It has also made clearer for me how the distinctions between theory, form, methodology, ethics and analysis are not clear-cut but blur together in my research. In this sense, it might be more accurate not to think of my methods as isolated 'tools' but as part of an interconnected and dynamic approach to knowledge creation. As Yasmin Gunaratnam and Carrie Hamilton explain, methodology is encounter, a zone of contact, not a unidirectional journey of gathering information but a fluid and relational inculcation: an "*in media res wandering, if not a bewildering getting lost, as well as a retrospective retelling—and oftentimes irrespective of how standardising and 'scientific' a methodology aspires to be*" (2017, 2). While this can feel and be messy, I see it as part of challenging the paradigms of knowledge that I learned and internalised through academia and its hunger to separate: theory from practice, body from intellect, personal from political, research from 'activism'. Nithikul Nimkulrat writes that "all forms of knowledge are connected in one way or another through unlearning and learning" (2021, 195). In many ways, my methodology also reflects this (ongoing) journey of learning as well as unlearning my aspirations and ideals as a PhD student and researcher. I do not want to use this space to qualify my 'data-collection' by way of listing and quantifying. Instead, my intention with this chapter is to reflect on the different methods I've incorporated, how I arrived at these choices, what these approaches might make possible, and what questions and tensions they have revealed. Specifically, I elaborate on collaborative arts-based approaches, archiving and zines as key parts of my methodology. These encompass both decolonial desires and the possibilities of alteric knowledge practices, as well as the limitations, contingencies, power imbalances and technologies of coloniality that circulate through academic research. I explore this through the notion of ambivalence as an affective undercurrent in my research.

Wandering

As I have mentioned, I started this project with quite an A4 idea of what ethnographic fieldwork should or could look like. I knew that I wanted to centre racially minoritised students' experiences, and I knew that I wanted my research to feel somehow useful or practical to the different claims and interests (around antiracism and decolonisation) that student movements in London were engaged in. However, when I got to the 'field', I was confronted with many sobering gulfs between my assumptions and the realities. For instance, as I explain in chapter one, my assumptions of what or where the university was, and my assumptions about what 'useful' might look like in the context of the pandemic and the exacerbated exhaustion, burnout and violence that students were faced with. I was initially interested in groups organising around antiracist/decolonial resistance, such as Goldsmiths Anti-Racist Action (GARA) and talked to several of the students/staff involved in the GARA campaign through semi-structured interviews, informal conversations as well as attending numerous online meetings, gatherings, actions and banner drops organised by Goldsmiths student activist groups. However, as I started to set up interviews, I quickly found that not only was discussing the campaign, in many cases, a revisiting of extremely painful and vulnerable experiences for the students, but also that all the conversations I had with students turned towards everyday resistances both within and beyond the coloniality of institutional spaces. For instance, that protest is, for some, not a choice but a condition of life. That walking down the street or into a classroom can be political. They spoke of finding community not just at the strike or sit-in or abolitionist reading group, but in moments of pleasure and self-expression, in catching a friend's knowing look across the room when a lecturer says something racist, in unapologetically expressing their tastes, heritages, queerness, as they moved through campus. Resistance was not something only 'out there' activism or necessarily a public-facing occurrence; it could be found in the minutiae of living, in the affective multitudes of what it meant to exist in the world as queer and racially minoritised individuals, in relations of kinship, care and support.

It was not just that the framework of interviews and a focus on 'student activists' at the university did not fully grasp these aspects, but the format had started to feel, for lack of a better word, icky. Although the conversations were, as some students mentioned, spaces of catharsis and connection in the sharing and validating of experiences, I was questioning (as I explain in chapter two) for whom this knowledge was for and how it might be perpetuating and reproducing harm. I became more drawn to how I might galvanise my position as a PhD researcher and the resources afforded to me through the university towards amplifying resistances in relation to pleasure, care and connection and to perhaps foster spaces of creativity and respite. This impulse was also rooted in my own desire and craving for such space, entangled with my experiences of navigating academia which (as Article 1 describes) were starting to cause rupture. It was also part of reflecting more deeply on how my position and commitments to queer and racially minoritised communities of which I felt part were ensnared with the wider themes of the project, and how I might theorise from lived experience, my own as well as others'.

Inspired by decolonial methodologies that unsettle hierarchies between researcher and researched (Wilson 2008, TallBear 2014, Tuhiwai Smith 1999) and emphasise personal narrative and lived subjectivities (Morega & Anzaldúa 1983), I began looking towards collaborative and arts-based approaches as a way to disrupt conventional modes of knowledge production as something distanced from the individuals and communities I was engaged with. I became curious about how art-based methods could offer tools to create what Lena Sawyer and Nana Osei-Kofi (2020) – drawing on Mary Hanley's (2011) work – refer to as "counternarratives" to hegemonic ways of knowing and which, in my project, I theorise through the lens of anarchiving (Article 2), a concept I come back to later in this chapter. Arts-based methods can be understood as "any social research or human inquiry that adapts the tenets of the creative arts as a part of the methodology" (Jones & Leavy 2014, 1). Osei-Kofi et al. (2010) write that art-based research methods hold decolonial and emancipatory potential in "validating, legitimizing, and centering subjugated knowledges" (334). Building on this, I was interested in how art offered tools to move away from the intellectually abstract to centre praxis and relationality, and perhaps give room to less Eurocentric forms of knowing through a non-linear and explorative approach. One where the process might reflect "knowledge cultivation instead of knowledge production: certain open-ended, non-zero-sum, non-competitive logic of oxygenation from which other insights can grow or resurface" (Vardhani Rajan et al. 2021, 27). I was also curious as to how art-based methods could be a way to critically move beyond the primacy of language and honour embodied modes of knowing – a way to grapple with affects, materials and atmospheres as vital sites of inquiry (Sedgwick 2003), to probe at what cannot be languaged with words. This was especially important in creating as space hospitable to topics of racism and other forms of oppression, as these processes are often vulnerable, affectively charged and veiled in ambiguity, especially in spaces of higher education where race is "a silent but powerful organizing principle" (Wekker 2022, 201).

Decolonial contestations in collaborative and arts-based methods

Art has been an essential part of expression and meaning-making in my own life. Zine-making, archiving and arts-based practices such as creative writing, collage and lino-printing became entry points to draw my own "rebellious methodologies" (McKittrick 2021) into building a decolonial research practice and co-creating knowledge with others. These approaches were multimethod in that they combined different art forms and also emerged at different points of the research process, both in the methods of collecting 'data', in analysis and in the forms of writing and dissemination. For example, in putting together this dissertation I intentionally draw on poetic inquiry (i.e. citing and thinking with poets, the black-out poem), visual material (photographs, illustration and the making of a 'thesis-zine') and queer typography (Soulellis 2021) as ways to transgress the bounds

of traditional academic publishing; to interrogate what and where we think of as sources of knowledge; to bring theory to affective and embodied scales and inundate writing with feeling. In Article 1, I collaborate with Gabriella Muasya in making an audio-visual archive (of sound clips, video footage, illustrations and photographs) and in using queer epistolary as a method of unravelling our experiences within Danish academia. In Article 2, I describe how I facilitated arts-based workshops with nine queer Black and POC university students in London where we created a zine together through a collaborative research process of anarchiving that emphasises the ephemeral, spatial, material and relational, and how the mess of this practice might displace models of extraction and preservation. Article 3 is mainly based on an online workshop which was shaped collaboratively by the group (formed of members of three London-based grassroots collectives). I foreground collective knowledges through their narratives and analyse these in tandem with the creative writing piece we conjured together as part of our reflections on care. This is also part of a collaborative archiving practice in which we created a zine documenting our conversation.

Collaborative (an)archiving practices (I come back to and explain this concept shortly) and collective modes of knowledge creation are central to each of these articles. This is linked to an overall argument that values intimacy, dependency and friendship as vital to a decolonial research practice and a recognition of knowledge as something that is always relational. That our thoughts, words and beings rub off: we are continuously infiltrated by and infiltrating one another. This argument is inspired by a minoritarian method of closeness (Gagnon 2021, referenced in Article 1), where there is a deliberate orientation towards proximity, towards the affects and materiality of our surroundings and in the foregrounding of friendship, relationality and embodiment as vital to the praxis of research, which is also a critique of depoliticised, distanced and contained subjectivity in knowledge production. At the same time, the article touches on how closeness can be fraught, which carries through to the tensions and limitations of doing collaborative research.

While collaboration might allow us to divest from normative research and expend institutional resources towards creating spaces that are more aligned with collective and social justice-oriented aspirations, it also raises tensions, for example of power, ethics and representation. Scholars have pointed to the decolonial potentials of collaborative and arts-based methods to reject ideals of neutrality, a way to study with rather than about, and to move away from mastery as a colonial inheritance of domination in knowledge production towards an anti-oppressive research process that is shared and supportive of the needs and perspectives of those with whom we study (Seppälä et al. 2021, Singh 2018, Osei-Kofi 2013, Brown & Strega 2005). However, decolonial and feminist methods are not exempt from the colonial and patriarchal paradigms of Western scholarship, and can also perpetuate a colonial 'innocence' through claims to solidarity that are still extractive, othering and grounded in colonial logics (Tuck & Yang 2012). As outlined in the previous chapter, we know that research is never neutral and there is a fundamental and perhaps incommensurable tension in any decolonial claims that come from within the university, a tension which I also see in this project. I understand decolonial research as its own oxymoron – always imperfect and partial, but I also think of methods as desire lines (to play with Ahmed's 2006 concept of paths that deviate from sociopolitical norms and expectations) – trails that record unruly and non-normative traversations across this terrain. To be a researcher in the academy is a position of power and, as Hartej Gill et al. (2012) remind us, requires reflection on the complicities and contradictions of doing research and a commitment to decolonisation as an ethical responsibility and never-complete practice.

Reflecting on complicity and power has influenced the design of this research project, and thinking with decolonial methods has helped me consciously ground my research in the lifeworlds of queer and racially minoritised students and collectives to build spaces of theorising where we might learn and create together. Situating myself actively as a researcher and an embodied participant in this

process and broader social context has been a way to dissolve self-enclosure, to take seriously the question of 'who is my work answerable to?'. I do this research because I want to augment the worlds and futures of queer and racially minoritised communities. My own lived experience means that there are affinities and points of connection that bind me together with and inform my access to those I have been studying with. Our engagement in academia overlaps in ways where it seems disingenuous to maintain a border. As I've mentioned, my work also aims to challenge dichotomies between researcher/researched, activist/scholar, insider/outsider. At the same time, I'm wary of overstating my inclusion in a collaborative 'we', how this risks diluting my responsibility and the differences in our positions and stakes. I understand 'we' as a dynamic and shifting marker, one that practically binds our solidarities in the here and now, but the boundaries of which can contract and dilate in conjunction with the educational institutions and structures we come up against (Berisha, forthcoming).

For example, in Article 2, I describe how the idea behind our workshops was to share decision-making in terms of how often to meet, what the format and outcomes of the workshops would be, what we desired from the process, and what themes and materials we wished to work with. At the same time, my role both as researcher and facilitator meant that I had a lot of power and control over the space and in shaping the zine. For example, though we collectively decided that I would facilitate the majority of the workshops in terms of introducing the materials and theme[1], this was also based on the fact that I was able to dedicate time and energy to the project as it was part of work I was being funded for. There were clear contrasts in our circumstances and capacities – the responsibilities and constraints people had outside of the workshops – which means that respective participation in the project was not evenly distributed but dependent on the differing subjectivities and social/political/economic conditions underlying our lives. While we were all students at universities in the UK/Denmark and all had lived experiences of racism and queerness, we come from different backgrounds: some of us cis, some gender non-conforming/trans, some mixed-race, some working-class, some facing anti-Blackness, some facing Islamophobia, some disabled and others not. These differences, as well as many others, shape our lives, knowledges and the types of conversations we were and were not able to have in such a space. Another factor is that a project like this was only accessible to those who had the capacity and resources to meet in person over several sessions and who were able and comfortable to work with arts-based practices.

In Article 1, we enter the project of collaboration more horizontally in that we are both PhD students who are paid to carry out this work as part of our employment and are co-authors of the piece. At the same time, we discuss how our project of capturing experiences is founded in our differently racialised and minoritised positions (as a Black Afro-Danish woman and queer person of colour), and in our writing, reflect on how, while the archive aims to put these in conversation to rupture the alienations and colonial machinations of Danish academia, this can also risk homogenising queer and racialised as monolithic categories. We also discussed how to navigate

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[1] By facilitation I mean that each session opened first with a check-in (a round where we could state feelings/how we were entering the space) and then an introduction to the theme, which we would then collectively bring our reflections/experiences to. For instance, in the first workshop on 'Mess', we decided that each of us would bring a memory or object that related to the theme, which we could then share with the group and talk about. In the second session on 'Joy' I had asked the group to send me any words/images/texts that related to the theme beforehand, which I then printed and we used to create collaborative collage poetry. After this initial introduction, we would engage with the arts-based element of the workshop: zine-making, creative writing and lino printing, respectively. The creative writing exercises were facilitated by one of the group members. Other than introducing the practices/materials, there was no specific framework/facilitation for our conversations. These emerged organically, cross-cutting the making, doing and sharing of the space. At the end of each workshop we would gather, share what we had made (if we wished to) and talk about the process and pieces together. The timeframe for the three workshops were also loose so that people could join later or leave earlier if they needed to, but each lasted approximately three hours.

our decision-making power in opening up the archive to others – deciding who it should include and how it should be made available. While narrowing access limits the archive in some senses, we also saw possibilities in opening up vantage points and vulnerabilities.

One of the most critical considerations in collaborating with students and collectives for me was that the workshops should not feel like a demand or drain on those involved, but at times it felt challenging to draw the lines between collaboration and labour. For instance, in Article 2, I had initially thought we would design and put the zine together collaboratively, but scheduling a time when everyone was free for this was difficult and, it turned out, not a priority among the group. This was more straightforward in the workshop with the collectives as the zine consisted of a transcript of our conversation (transcribed by me) which the group had access to and individually edited before printing the zine. Still, I remained with the question of whether taking on facilitation, layout, design and collation was a way for me to extend my time, skills and positions of privilege in a way that might benefit the group, or did it diminish an ethos of co-creation? Even though our sharing of knowledge and experience was grounded in relationships of openness, trust and, in many cases, friendship, was this foundation capacious enough for everyone to feel comfortable to share their desires or concerns? Similarly, it could have been an option to write the article or analyse the transcripts of the conversation together so that the articles would recognise and reflect the group as co-theorisers; however, to me, this meant asking for time-consuming and unduly uncompensated work. The consequence is that while some aspects of the process were shared, I was ultimately responsible for making decisions that represented our conversations and synthesising these into analysis and writing.

This also brings up the question of ownership. One of my motivations for using zines as part of my methodology was so I could use resources from the research project towards things that could more tangibly and practically be shared – materials that the group members were interested in learning to use/work with, cooking/buying food for the workshops, and publishing copies of the zine that the group could keep, share or distribute. While I could not financially compensate participants, I could offer something in these small ways. The zines were also a material manifestation of the knowledge we co-created and a way for us to collectively steward this beyond the realm of academia or the conditions of this thesis. This was important in recognising the vulnerability that comes with building and sharing knowledge from lived experience. It also allowed me to include material that was not necessarily 'part' of the workshop but that was important to the group: in both zines, *Held* (Article 2) and *Collective Knowledges* (Article 3), everyone was invited to send or share any material they wanted to include in the printed zine that there perhaps had not been room for in the workshops or that emerged in reflections afterwards. In this way, the zines function as a type of circumvention or what I have described as an enactment of epistemic opacity. At the same time, in using zines as part of my methodology I am also shepherding them into the realm of academia – pressuring their anti-institutional form – an ambivalence that I return to.

The examples I've shared here reveal some of the limits of collaborative and arts-based methods, how relationships in research are context-specific and can never be truly horizontal, how power-imbalances become perhaps even more pronounced when trying to transcend individualised methods and that collaborative methods are not inherently more politically 'radical'. These tensions demand an unfolding process of reflexivity and ethics, something I approached by trying to stay attentive to how the groups' desires, capacities and needs might change; by contributing as an active participant in workshops; by reflecting on my role as researcher and being honest about my motivations, doubts and ambivalences in the project; and by having ongoing conversations/check-ins with the others where we could voice how we felt about the process and outcomes. Looking back, I think there are many things I might have done differently, like making

the research design more flexible so that the overarching theme and framework might be shared; giving more consideration to the accessibility of workshops; allowing more time for exploration without such a condensed or linear timeline so that there might have been more room for co-facilitation; and to have had more conversation about how to subvert the criteria and 'output' of academic articles so that they could better be shared and benefit or represent collective desires. Nonetheless, the antagonisms I've outlined here are important in reckoning with the realities of research, its power asymmetries and how we can both enable and hinder transformative ambitions through collaborative approaches.

Rummaging through the debris, looking for the archive

I situate the creative and arts-based methodologies of this project within an overarching framework of (an)archival practices. Archival studies comprise a vast and elaborate field; here, I position myself in relation to some of the theories and concepts that inform my approach to what these practices encompass and entail.

When I think about archives I think of how, when I return to my family home, I have a habit (probably more of a compulsion) of sifting through cabinets, boxes, photo albums, any domestic depository I can find. Occasionally someone will walk past, roll their eyes. It's not that I'm looking for anything in particular, I just find it soothing to leaf through the debris: drawers stuffed with burnt matchsticks, childhood odds and ends, perpetually unopened gifts, yoghurt tubs filled with beads, forsaken cassettes. Objects collected over time that index memories, losses and migration trajectories. After reading Martin Manalansan's (2014) text on how mess, clutter and disorderly bodies, things, memories and emotions constitute the 'stuff' of queer immigrant archives, I wonder if my ritual is a kind of archival impulse. If I am attempting to take inventory of the house of us through this cataloguing of strewn artefacts, fragmented notes, blurred meanings, complicated love. That maybe it's not a mess I am trying to make, but a theory of origin. I think, also, of all the embodied and affective inheritances that can't be rummaged through but that nonetheless imprint on our bodies. Poet and scholar Billy-Rae Belcourt refers to feeling as a "politics of citation" (2020, 15), suggesting that the way we move through and respond to the world evokes our affective and generational legacies. It's somehow comforting to think of my everyday idiosyncrasies as a type of familial referencing, my body a breathing record of the bonds of kinship deposited within me.

I share this overture as a conceptual starting point for how I understand archives: not just with a capital A – in the 'classical' sense of a public, physical and static repository, often housed in a formalised institution – but as a valuably ambiguous signifier that challenges how we define and legitimise notions of knowledge-making and documentation. I also gesture to how my methods are dependent on my own personal archives – the chronicle of intimacies, memories and feelings that catalyse our motivations and interests. I think here with Nirmal Puwar, who tends to the body itself as an archive, contending that as researchers, we carry our projects across time and space as an accumulation of embodied "histories, obsessions, dreams and materials" (2021, 3) that are deeply consequential for our methodological encounters. In this way, I also view my use of autoethnographic material or autotheory – drawing on the self and body as a prominent part of theorising – anecdotally throughout these chapters of the dissertation and especially in the material of Article 1, as a type of archival work. These methods are a way of foregrounding the affective paraphernalia we all carry that emits through our approaches to research. The archive is not just something exterior, but what we bring with us.

The archive is always incomplete, the archive is (also) elsewhere

An encounter with the history of archives is inevitably an encounter with colonial epistemic orderings of destruction as well as preservation, the felt omissions and splintered confrontations of the past in the present. What I mean by this is that archives have historically been a core instrument of state governance – a tool of classification and surveillance of colonised 'others' (Stoler 2002) – both deliberately and inadvertently destroying subjugated histories and memories. Anjali Arondekar (2009), for example, examines how British colonial archives served to control and submerge queer sexualities in India during 19th-century imperial rule, while Thomas Richards (1993) has explored how Victorian archives were a way of organising information to prop up imperial fantasies in service of colonial domination and control, techniques which were also taken up by disciplines such as anthropology (Harding 1993). What these studies demonstrate is that archiving is never a passive endeavour and archives are sites of contestation: the narratives submitted to historical preservation are tied up in power, questions of who gets to delineate what is worth retaining, and how. Archival framings, gaps and erasures can function as a form of epistemic violence and domination (Hartman 2008). Or, as Jordy Rosenberg writes, via Derrida, "the archive does not preserve so much as occupy the site of the destruction of a memory – an impossible, ghostly archaeology – unexcavatable and haunting" (2018, 310).

The 'archival turn' has often been concerned with locating and reading against the grain of these epistemic injures and chasms (Stoler 2010) as well the surrounding conditions and practices that (dis)allow particular formations, particularly in regard to paper archives. For example, pursuits that aim to 'recover' material that has been overlooked or intentionally marginalised in official record-keeping (Qvortrup & Giraldo 2022, Atton 2022, Ghaddar 2016). While these are crucial in highlighting the structures that place archival value onto certain bodies (of knowledge) and not others, and how "symbolic annihilation" (Brown 2020) is connected with material dispossession, focussing (solely) on archival repair obscures the many types of knowledge preservation and transmission that exist. To understand the archive beyond recovery is to understand that it is not singular or restricted to official storage systems but includes a plurality of forms, sites and materials that are not all legible in the same way. For instance, oral histories, performance, storytelling, textiles, objects and even gossip can be seen as important forms of archival knowledge in regard to sharing collective histories, particularly among marginalised groups (Dolar et al. 2022, Lee 2019, Kabir et el. 2018). The structures of the archive – how we define what and where it is – dictate what it might hold. My aim has not been to rail against the archive but to converse with theories that expand its borders. Following queer theorists such as Ann Cvetkovich (2003), I have come to understand archives as a form of collecting/gathering but not necessarily one that is text-based, public, displayed or scrutable. Archives as emergent and drifting, encompassing different spaces, bodies, materials and affects.

In thinking about what it might mean to engage (an)archiving as a queer practice, the relationship between queerness and archiving has also been salient. One of my most lovingly frayed books is Julietta Singh's *No Archive Will Restore You*, in which she writes about compiling her own body archive – what it might mean to gather the bodily traces, repositories, sheddings she is constituted by. At one point, in considering the unease of inevitable entanglement with other kinds of bodies, she writes: *"Lest I forget, though, that we also shed ourselves over time. This body is not the body it was then and is already becoming another body. This formula offers degrees of relief and panic in turn. It is also another kind of fiction. Suddenly I am aware of the body as both archive and archivist – in a crucial sense, it gathers its own materials"* (2018, 32).

I find this compelling, and kind of thrilling. Not only because she reconfigures the archive as an agglomeration of everyday, personal, intimate and embodied knowledge, but because it is a

conceptualisation that is dynamic and evasive, recognising archival stasis as "fiction". I imagine an unruly, disobedient archivist, a body so quick to morph that whatever and whoever touches you, enters you, would in turn be configured, shifted, disoriented differently by the very fabric of you. The body as a kind of anti-evidence – what José Esteban Muñoz calls queer ephemera– refusing archival logics of surveillance and proof to become something that might evaporate at the touch of those who seek to destroy it (1996, 6). The undertow of evasion is vital to thinking about what Muñoz describes as the strained relationship between queer communities and archives. Not only have minoritarian experiences been hidden/denied in official records, but often these individuals and communities did not want or could not risk the repercussions of being captured (Maynard 1991, 198). Therefore, to look into minoritarian pasts is necessarily to look outside normative archival spheres that advocate for archival record as something fixed, and into the archive as a proliferation of fragments, traces, personal narratives, multifarious truths and covert disseminations. This consideration has also led me to think with archival practices rooted in DIY subcultures, such as zine-making, as part of my methodological approach to exploring experiences of queerness and racial minoritisation as these have been intrinsic to communal histories and traditions among minoritarian groups.

Mending to making: anarchiving as queer/ed method

As Carmen Maria Machado writes: "the complete archive is mythological, possible only in theory" (2019, 3). In surrendering to this premise, how might we then release the pursuit of redeeming 'truth' to the archive, denounce its authority and move the vernaculars of record somewhere else? Rather than (only) try to mend or fill gaps in institutional archives, how might we approach archiving as a creative practice, concurrently addressing the paradoxes and possibilities of the archive not only as "sites of power, knowledge and violence but also reimagination, redress and healing" (Agostinho et al. 2019)? This question loops back to my earlier movements from oppositional resistance to abolitionist approaches to knowledge. In relation to archives, Saidiya Hartman (2019) offers templates in her work. Looking into the lives of young Black women in the US at the beginning of the twentieth century, she shows how the weaving of speculative narratives based on archival silences (a process she terms critical fabulation) is a mode of both addressing these silences and as a way of engaging queer futures. My understanding of and approach to archives owes a lot to Hartman as well as scholars such as Christina Sharpe (2016), Lola Olufemi (2021), Gayatri Gopinath (2018) and Julietta Singh (2018), who all harness art, literature and autobiography to open up the possibilities of the archive as an experimental and speculative practice, as a political space of imaginative potential and reworking. These approaches have been crucial to my understanding of archives not just in terms of documentation, memory preservation and the past, but as a practice that can blur temporalities and be a site of emergence and creation.

In my work, I differentiate between Archives in a 'traditional' sense of official/institutional and static repositories, and approaches that seek to build the archive elsewhere and in versatile forms. I situate my methods within the latter category and engage specifically with the concept of anarchiving. This is a term I borrow from Stephanie Springgay et al., who characterise anarchiving as explicitly collective, political and resistant and connected with community-based processes (2019, 2). I have been drawn to anarchiving because it encompasses these elements as well as those things that are considered 'in excess' of the archive – the ephemeral, material and affective – which have been important parts of what I have wanted to grasp in my research: how knowledge creation is knotted with materials, atmospheres and surroundings. The anarchive insists on tensibility, attuned to archival changes, transformations and erosions. In doing so, it also emphasises the possibility of archives as makeshift, fleeting, temporary and therefore that archival disintegration is not necessarily "a loss but a generative force" (2019, 1), which I also understand as a potentially abolitionist disposition. Notably though, Springgay et al. connect anarchiving to practices of

research-creation which engage with archiving as a practice "committed to queer, feminist, anti-racist, and anti-colonial frameworks and ways of being and doing" (2019, 2). This is also important to me in reflecting that my methodological aspirations are to centre queer and racially minoritised experiences and abate dominant Western academic norms of knowledge production in research.

Anarchiving is a concept that builds on and dovetails with counter-archiving, which is a method that starts and flows from QTIBIPOC histories and activism and the contributions of these communities to archival genealogies that systematically deny their presence (Haritaworn 2019). As Syrus Marcus Ware explains, counter-archiving intends to disrupt the canonisation of whiteness: "*counter-archiving highlights the problems of a presentist agenda that selectively highlights and erases subjects, spaces, and events to expand its own power in the present into the future, without letting go of the past or the future. It further questions what acts, subjects, and inscriptions legitimately constitute an archive*" (2017, 175). Centring queer and racially minoritised narratives and marshalling archival praxis as a way of challenging the coloniality of knowledge have been core to shaping my methodology and I think counter-archiving could have been an equally functional concept for me to use in describing, for instance, the collaborative and arts-based practices of the workshops. At the same time, I was less inclined towards defining our practice through the notion of anything 'counter' since, as I've explained, my theoretical foundations and analysis are so heavily premised on shifting away from opposition (not to suggest that counter-archival practices congeal themselves along these lines). At the same time, I want to stress that when I use the term anarchiving I am standing on the shoulders of, and overlapping with, theorisations of the counter-archive. What I find illuminating in both concepts is their connection to the political needs of the present and evocation of collaborative and creative knowledge-making as a minoritarian practice. I understand anarchiving as a specifically queer practice, drawing on Jamie Ann Lee's definition of queer/ed archiving as both verb and noun, in that it is an intervention that upsets "the normative archival structures that continue to uphold and reproduce exclusionary dominant power dynamics" (2019, 176).

I also appreciate anarchiving's focus on "excessive potential" (Springgay et al. 2019, 1), which has sensitised me to archival practice as a method of relational, material, temporal and spatial muddling – something I explore through the notion of mess. Anarchiving is also adamantly not limited to acts or objects but can be located in the unsettled, the processual. In Article 2, anarchiving allows me to analyse the workshops not just as a method of material creation (i.e. the zine) but also a type of space-making, the argument being that gathering to create and share knowledges, to care for and validate each other's' experiences is a type of archiving in itself: the anarchive emerges through our doing, relating and bringing into being together. While I use anarchiving explicitly as a concept in Article 2 and had not yet come across the concept when writing Article 1, I think it could also apply to our creation of what we instead refer to as a practice-based audiovisual archive. The same goes for the workshop process and making of a zine described in Article 3; however, my analysis here is less focused on archival practice and more on exploring narratives of care and how they can be envisioned as radical.

Knowledge as a wet dream

Drawing on the concept of anarchiving also gives space to the importance of desire in my approach. In Article 2, for instance, I argue for an anarchival praxis that absorbs the sensory, erotic and sexual infrastructures of our experiences as vital parts of knowledge creation.

Many scholars have honed in on the bodily or erotic charge present in archiving practices. Archival engagement itself has been described as a source of pleasure, arousal and seduction (Bradley 1999, Waerea & Paul 2023). madison moore's work on queer nightlife describes the accidents, spills, slippages and glitches of the dancefloor as a type of archive: those "unlikely sites that trade in

voluminous and messy pleasures, fun, and excess" (2021, 191) while Sophie Mak-Schram writes about the process of research as a type of archival knowledge creation doused in desire, even when it is not speculative: "*the need to make something shimmer with meaning is the submerged desire in much research…to make something slick and soft by the way of inserting your thinking into it, alongside it, on top of it – surely this is always an act of desire*" (2023, 62).

Communing with these works, I push against the sanitisation of archival practice or the 'neatening' of queerness as an ordering force that would make knowledge – especially academic knowledge – into something respectable, carrying colonial connotations in its demand (Glover & Glover 2019). As Ajamu et al. so clearly articulate, when writing about queer archives "we can be locked into talking about sexuality, but not talking about sex" (2010, 588). That for all our academic talk of how archives are constituted by embodied experiences this often comes with palatable selectiveness, a failure to recognise "that our dicks, asses, lips, nipples are also archives" (ibid, 593). In my analysis, I wanted not only to speak to desire in terms of abstract dreams and longings for queer futures but to make clear that these futures include the full scope of queer life, including all its dirty and deviant leakages. In Article 2, for example, I pay attention to how pleasure and (sexual) desire are integral to anarchiving and do not try to 'straighten' or clean up the narratives I analyse, instead asking how they might challenge the assumed boundaries of the archive and account for the many and messy livelihoods of queer and racialised subjectivity.

The anarchive is ongoing

My use of anarchiving is, as I have tried to show here, an intentional methodological choice connected to an overall theoretical field that aims to challenge notions of the archive as a dominating force, as contained, static, singular and universalising, which is, in turn, a challenging of hegemonic modes of knowledge creation. Although using anarchival practice in this way has been fruitful in attuning to those involved in its creation, it also means that I am engaging a method and approach which is slippery, less tangible or easy to pin down. This complexity has been both productive and challenging in synthesising my analysis and writing.

I think there is also a danger, in submitting archival practice as a method of alteric knowledge and space-making, to romanticise the anarchive as a process detachable from its exterior. What I mean is that while things may be uniquely queered, reconfigured, made and unmade in the space and doing of the anarchive, it is not fenced off from the colonial, cis-heteronormative and otherwise oppressive logics and structures that bear down on the university and the world at large. One of the ways in which I practically address this is by not theorising the anarchive as 'separate' from an outside but, particularly through the lens of mess, as porous (for example in highlighting encounters that shape how we access/arrive in the space and practice, and what remains when we 'leave', physically and relationally). I haven't landed in these reflections but leave open-ended the question of how to remain critical to the limits of anarchiving as a method of non-normative space and knowledge-making, without forfeiting its alterity.

Zines and ambivalences

After one of the workshops with students, where we created mini-zines (an 8-page zine made using a single sheet of paper), I catch myself in a feeling of unease. As I place the zines carefully into a sealed brown envelope, I think of how it is, in some measure, an act of care – because they are beautiful and precious and created by people I hold dear – and also with an intent of preservation because they are, after all, part of the PhD.

In many ways, these zines actualise the tensions and paradoxes of this project. Utilising zines in my methodology (as part of a practice of anarchiving) has been a way to engage with forms of knowledge and education that have long existed beyond institutional systems, and especially among marginalised communities. My feeling of unease is also a curiosity, led by what arises in this process as it takes shape with/in, as well as against and beyond, the oppressive structures of the Western university. What does it mean to affirm the transgressive and imaginative potential contained in the "fruitfully contentious spaces" (Goulding 2015, 167) of zines as practice, form and outcome when extending these into the realm of academia? The tension here lies not only in thinking about the cross-contamination, so to speak, of harnessing anti-institutional forms of knowledge creation as part of institutionally contingent research. Rather, it links to wider questions of taking seriously commitments to the struggles and communities of which we are part, while reckoning with the profound ways in which academia is entrenched in maintaining and furthering the colonial project (Wekker 2022, Bachetta et al. 2018, paperson 2017, Chatterjee & Maira 2014, Ahmed 2012).

In the following, I outline some of these antagonisms by weaving together my own relationship and approach to zines (as a method of anarchiving and collaborative ethnography) with reflections on zines in relation to transgressive desires to dismantle legacies of coloniality in the delineation, creation, recognition and dissemination of knowledge. Firstly, I give an introduction to zines, for those who might not be familiar, and situate their practice within a broader historical as well as academic context.

I didn't know what a zine was when I first started making them. In the early 90s, my sister and I were two nerdy, immigrant kids, recently migrated to the outskirts of London from Nepal. A lot of our childhood was spent gleefully getting lost in our imaginations and we would often create our own little booklets, glued together and full of intricate stories, self-fashioned hybrid mythologies, drawings, personal manifestos, codes that only we could decipher. Sometimes, we would share them with friends, inviting others to join in our world-building. These were, as I see it, the first collaborative zines I made. Out-of-place, geographically, affectively, linguistically, these publications were, in retrospect, a way for us to make sense of an environment which could feel alienating, to cut and paste together our own narratives and logics.

I have since come to understand zines as (usually) non-commercial, non-professional, small-circulation DIY (do-it-yourself) pamphlets or print publications which their creators produce, publish, and distribute independently (Duncombe 1997), and zines are regularly a part of my life as sources of knowledge, connection and inspiration, as something I create alone and with friends, as part of facilitating workshops for community groups, as a tool in teaching, as something I collect and curate as part of Venom Zine Library (a project co-run with writer, researcher and organiser Janna Aldaraji) and, more recently, as part of my research.

Examples of zines

Make/shift objects

The very definition of what constitutes a zine is itself contested, some taking issue with positivist definitions (Ware, 2007) while others argue for a need for distinction to preserve the DIY, underground aesthetic and ethos of zine practice. Often-cited scholars such as Stephen Duncombe (1997) have suggested that the nature of zine production and its opposition to commercial and traditional modes of publishing and distribution consecrate it as an inherently anti-capitalist medium, while others reason that there is no specific ideology that can be said to demarcate zine culture and that the refusal to be underpinned by a set of identifiable stances, themes or politics is itself a more foundational characteristic of the format (Poletti 2005). Further studies have approached zines by positioning them within a historical (often North American) lineage of social movements and subcultures such as the civil rights movement, punk and riot grrrl[2] (see Spencer 2005) while scholars and zinesters such as Elke Zobl (2009) have critiqued the dominance of an Anglo-American-centric historicising of zine culture, pointing to and archiving the abundance of international zines, distributors, communities and DIY projects, especially as they pertain to feminist movements.

These tensions reflect not only discords among zine-makers as individuals and as part of wider communities but also speak to the potentials and possibilities that arise from this very instability, from the ungraspable quality that zines seem to represent, their refusal of a property relationship to information and expression, their interrogation of authoritative knowledge, the way that they are "unstable and impermanent, both in their materiality and content" (Lymn 2014). In her work, Jessie Lymn analyses zines from the vantage point of archival studies, contending that considering zines beyond materiality, as (queer) practice, enables us to understand them as a spatial and temporal disruption of the fixed space of the archive. In short, zines challenge what an archive is and can be. Following Muñoz's conceptualisation of queerness as antagonistic desire for other modes of being (2009), it is perhaps particularly this "queer sensibility" (Halberstam 2011) of zines as an opening for non-linearity and queer futurity that, for me (and undoubtedly for others), holds appeal in mobilising them as a method of collaborative and counter-hegemonic knowledge creation. I like that zines can be messy, that they are embodied, often made by hand as labours of love, that they rally against individualised ownership through an aesthetics of cut and paste, mixing, mashing, borrowing, experimenting. When I write about zine-making and world-building as a child, I am writing about desire for alternative understandings of memory, history, temporality and futurity, what I repeatedly come back to as an alteric desire for "the otherwise" as "a posture … a firm embrace of the unknowable, the realm that is-not-here" (Olufemi 2021, 7). Learning from and leaning into teachings on the importance of imagination as a valuable tool in material struggles for social justice has been crucial to the choice of zines as method. In this, however, there arises a friction between the generative potential of zines as non-institutional, collaborative, community-based, experimental, anti-authoritarian sites of knowledge production/circulation and the ways in which consolidating zines as a site of academic inquiry and ethnographic material 'disciplines' these practices into something comprehensible, contained, and subject to the hierarchies of evaluation and legitimacy that permeate academia. This friction is an undercurrent in my research that has offered energetic potency in the sense that it has stirred my approaches and reflections, preventing me from standing still in my findings but unravelling them in open-ended ways.

I am by no means alone in engaging zines as part of academic research; many scholars have published books, monographs and articles examining zines as artefacts and practices, particularly in relation to social and political resistance, subcultures, pedagogy, archival collections, and

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[2] An early 1990s, US grassroots feminist movement which emerged as a response to patriarchy, domestic abuse and sexual assault.

feminist movements (Duncombe 1997, Green & Taormino 1997, Ramdarshan Bold 2017, Clark-Parsons 2017, Nguyen 2012, Przybylo & Jacob 2022, Ashtari et al. 2022, among others). Others have utilised zines as a methodological practice (French & Curd 2022, Velasco et al. 2020) and this project is especially indebted to Janna Aldaraji's (2021) use of zine-making as part of a decolonial method of collaborative autoethnography crafted through an online reading group exploring racialisation and bordering in a UK context. Looking over the literature, it could be argued that this proliferation of scholarly output and emerging interest has in turn established zines as a 'legitimate' part of academic inquiry, bringing with it opportunities as well as questions and challenges.

DI-why? Mapping meaning, rooting in community practice

Lymn (2014), for example, discusses the tense relationship between cultural theorists and their construction of the subcultural 'other' as a source of material, often extracting from groups of which they are not part. However, in considering this power dynamic in relation to zines, she fails to account for the way in which zines not only pertain to subcultural 'scenes' and cultural/artistic expression but are also intimately tied to modes of survival, community building and resistance. This is especially pertinent when considering that historically, zines have been a meaningful way to create, share and distribute knowledge among marginalised communities by "offering marginalised communities a site for critique, exploration, and culture production" (Boatwright 2019). Zines offer non-institutionalised spaces for knowledge creation and autonomous self-expression, especially by and for marginalised communities that may not have access to mainstream printing and publishing structures. In the UK, for instance, zines were extensively used by Black women and women of colour organising in the 70's and onwards (Siddiqui 2019, Matich et al. 2023). Nat Raha's work on trans health-care zines in the UK further demonstrates how zines form a necessary and embodied politics that "detail the practice and imaginaries of trans social reproduction, autonomy and liberation" (2021, 188) in the face of transphobic legislation. Furthering discussions of the historiography of zines, Mimi Thi Nguyen (2012) and Kristen Schilt (2005) also explore how the discursive construction of zines in relation to social movements often negate racisms and the critiques and contributions of racially minoritised communities.

These histories and insights show that zine practices are closely entwined with racial politics and encompass complex histories in relation to the coloniality of knowledge production and dissemination. I believe it is essential to not void research practices of this history but to consider the purpose and context of zines in research – who is involved in their creation and what are their connections to the practice? For me, zines' historical emergence feels directly connected to the lives, politics and struggles of those I have been researching with. The historical connections between past and present via zines is something I try to foreground as an important motivation for using zine-making in relation to queer and racially minoritised students/collectives – because DIY publishing and zines have been an integral part of scaffolding kinship networks, sharing knowledge, and building solidarities and social justice movements among minoritarian communities in the UK and beyond. Zines and self-publishing are (as I highlight in Article 3) already present in the lives and work of the individuals and groups I engage with; they are not something that I introduce from the 'outside' but are already part of a wider history and landscape in which these individuals are situated and involved with.

Printing on university copy machines: academic trepidations

In Denmark, scholars such as Oda-Kange Midtvåge Diallo and Nico Miskow Friborg (2021) have conceptualised zine-making as a counter-archive and radical pedagogical tool, while Aldaraji's (2021) study on racialisation, affect and bordering makes use of zines as a transformative and

collaborative space that intentionally upheaves binaries of researcher and researched. In conversation with these works, both of which conceptualise zines as encompassing transformative potential, I mediate on Diallo's and Friborg's imperative of creating "*knowledge which is accessible, community-based, collaborative, useful and accountable to our communities as well as to students/teachers/activists, and which causes as little harm as possible*" (2021, 21). One of the benefits of zines, they write, is that they are not confined by the rules and limitations of the academic industrial complex (18). This has also been an important aspect of my attraction to zines, but what are the implications when zine practices become entangled with research in ways that are not so easy to extrapolate, when the zines themselves become moulded and subjected to the extractive and regulatory dimensions of academia? When they become objects of academic scrutiny and surveillance? I contemplate this particularly in collaborating with queer and racially minoritised students and collectives and the vulnerabilities involved in sharing our experiences together. This evokes an ethical question in protecting the relational space we cocreate and the materialisation of this through zines. Wanting to go against the grain of performing results within academic and capitalist logics of production (the zines as an end result, obtained through a linear research process) informed my decision not to focus my analysis on the zines per se, but the conversations that took place before, during and after the workshops and the affective and material processes of anarchiving. The zines are also not reproduced or included in this dissertation (for example as an appendix), with the exception of their front covers.

However, as I also note in Article 2, the form and materials of the zine are inevitably enmeshed with the process of its creation. And despite my choice to preserve the zines as a tangible manifestation of the process that exists of and between the individuals that have been part of this project – to refuse its categorisation as a (research) product to be absorbed into institutional custody – the fact remains that they inevitably take shape under the conditions of the institution and, in some senses, are also held by the university, by this very writing. In navigating what parts of our co-creation to make legible and the implications of harnessing zine/DIY culture as a decolonial practice of knowledge creation in relation to academia, I've been grappling with a deeper question. How to reconcile decolonial desires with producing work that validates and perpetuates institutions inherently entrenched in oppression?

This is an ambivalence that broils under the surface of these pages but which has also been an informative and driving force. I don't know that this paradox is reconcilable but I also don't know that reconciliation is the aim – none of us are unmarred by the systems of racism, cis-heteropatriarchy and capitalism that exist both in and beyond the walls of the university. I am also hesitant to reinforce a university-community binary by claiming that zines and zine-making – with all their commitments, histories and complex affinities – are territorially apart from institutions of higher education. What I have learned from the many thinkers and practitioners who have been critically unsettling the university from within is that decolonial research methods are a contingency: not a destination but a point of departure. Moreover, that there exist, and have always existed, many gradations of decolonisation throughout the colonial machinery of the university: in teaching, in spaces of fugitive reorganising; in acts of solidarity, care and dissent; in moments of transience and connection; in the building of knowledge that puts our "impossible positions" of "desiring against the assemblages that make us" to work (paperson 2017, xxiii).

In this way, ambivalence, rather than something to avoid or immediately resolve, can be a generative emotion which helps us hold multiple truths and move toward uncertainty (Wan 2020). Akwugo Emejulu describes ambivalence as a "misfeeling"– a rerouting affect that suspends us in "a moment of contemplation … a pause, a hesitation – before meaningful action can take place" (2022, np). Ambivalence can be an indicator of what is yet to be done. Trepidation of academia is beneficial, and in critically contemplating what it means to be doing research in defiance of, as well

as for, the university, ambivalence has offered "a space of education and an affective reminder of our complicity" (Keet et al. 2020, 6) – moments to quiet down, learn and move from my unease.

ARTICLE 1

Sensible Ruptures: Towards Embodied and Relational Ways of Knowing

By Maya Acharya and Gabriella Isadora Muasya

Maya Acharya, PhD fellow, Danish School of Education, University of Aarhus, msa@edu.au.dk, https://orcid.org/0009-0001-3378-7749

Gabriella Isadora Muasya, PhD fellow, Danish School of Education, University of Aarhus, ginm@edu.au.dk, https://orcid.org/0009-0005-6044-3158

Abstract

This paper explores queer and racialized experiences in Danish academia through what we call 'sensible ruptures': affective, embodied and sensory ways of knowing. Taking seriously these modes of knowledge, the article outlines the creation of an online, audio-visual archive. Weaving together text, audio and images to unfold our concept of sensible ruptures, we demonstrate how the audio-visual can meaningfully contribute to capturing the affective and material fabric of racialized and queer experiences with/in Danish higher education. Sensible ruptures underscore the importance of understanding the complex processes of racialization in an institutional and national context saturated by ambiguity and exceptionalism. We contend that thinking not only against, but beyond, disembodied colonial logics offers a different mode of knowledge creation, reconfiguring the self as permeable: constituted through and with our histories and surroundings. We centre friendship as a vital part of this process, harnessing queer epistolary to perform our pursuit of, and argument for, knowledge as always and inevitably relational.

KEYWORDS: racialization, queer studies, affect, embodiment, archives, epistolary

Introduction

We, Gabriella & Maya, an Afro-Danish woman and a queer, Nepalese-Ukrainian person of color, respectively, found each other in the process of navigating higher education in Denmark and learning what it means to become academic researchers. In writing this article, our aim is to explore queer and racially minoritized[1] experiences in Danish higher education through what we conceptualize as 'sensible ruptures': affective, embodied and sensory ways of knowing. Giving weight to these modes of knowing, we created an audio-visual archive with the intention of carving out a different way of co-creating knowledge.

Entering Danish academia simultaneously, we shared a focus on how racialized students create spaces of resistance and belonging within and beyond the university. Confiding in each other and conversing together, our own encounter with the university has also been a reckoning with the ways in which the academy is rooted in violent histories and colonial ideals of objectivity, extraction and productivity that sever theory from embodied and lived experience (de Sousa 2017; Bhambra 2018; The River and Fire Collective 2021). In this environment, knowledge sutured to white, cis, middle-class, able-bodied straightness becomes situated as rational, normative, neutral and thereby able to transcend the confines of the body (Bacchetta et al. 2018; Diallo 2019; Harris and Nicolazzo 2020).

During our first year as PhD fellows we quickly encountered, through everyday interactions, the ways in which our projects were met with: anxieties around the 'controversy' of these students' resistance and themes of de/anti-colonialism as a threat towards the academy; around our stakes and positionality; and around collaborative/creative methodological approaches. We shared experiences of coming up against ideas, customs and behaviors that enforce how the preferred or professional researcher must maintain a relational and depoliticized distance in order to produce a disembodied subjectivity that is so often idealized within academia, and to which innumerable interventions have been made[2]. In 2020,

in the thick of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as exacerbated long-standing systemic racist harm towards marginalized groups and a growing national political rhetoric of hostility towards scholars engaged with topics of gender, race and sexuality, the tensions around the (im)possibility of bracketing our subjectivity surfaced in our conversations.

By accounting for our bodies through these conversations, as bodies 'out of place' (Puwar 2004) in the academy, we identified different ways of relating and responding to the institution. We saw ruptures starting to emerge, both in the binary categories we had been taught (of researcher/researched, personal/political, rational/irrational), in the normative ideals of who and what constitutes legitimate knowledge, as well as in our own affective landscapes. On the basis of sharing our positionings and experiences, we developed the term sensible ruptures as a way of resisting disembodied sensibilities in Danish academia and experimenting with ways of co-constituting knowledge. The term - which derives from affective and sensuous ways of knowing and being (Ivinson & Renold, 2021; Puwar, 2021) – became a springboard for our desire to create an archive, one where we could map our embodied experiences in an attempt to make sense of research as a process rooted in the bodily and its relation to the world.

In early 2022, we began to meet regularly to outline the beginnings of this online audio-visual archive[3]. Drawing on our experiences as queer and racialized individuals, the archive explores our notion of sensible ruptures, emerging as a collection of video clips, audio recordings and illustrations organized as a form of collage and tethered to different bodily and material locations. Combining these mediums, we created affective atmospheres informed by our senses and embodied experiences. Each audio-visual clip is connected to a wider whole with footage of water serving as both an entry and exit point. In between, there is no linear narrative or trajectory, but five connecting points titled STIMOROL, LINOLEUM UNIVERSAL SOAP, GUT, BREATH and ADRIFT. The latter functions as an anchor; each

clip eventually leads to this conjoining video of our bodies in water.

In our desire to subvert normative ideals of knowledge creation and emphasize a collaborative process, we make use of letter writing inspired by the concept of 'queer epistologies of repair' (DasGupta et al. 2021). Honoring how letters have historically been a site of learning, knowledge sharing and enacting queer bonds for those in opposition to the conditions of white, cis heteropatriarchy, the authors generously extend their correspondence as a method of solidarity and sustenance: letter writing[4] as "speaking out loud, co-reflecting, caring, and supporting each other" (DasGupta et al. 2021, 491). Evoking the support and hope that queer epistolary offers, our conversation[5] is both a current between our experiences of adriftness in academia as well as a desire to move beyond imposed modes of knowing, productivity and individualism. The following exchange unfolds the concept of sensible ruptures in relation to the experiences encompassed in the archive as well as critically analyzing the process, meaning and implications of its making; together we share considerations on gaze, access, language and closeness/distance. The letters are interspersed with wider methodological and theoretical reflections, positioning our project in relation to an overall contribution regarding topics of racialization, affect, materialism and embodiment.

This paper asks: how can queer and racialized experiences be explored through affective, embodied and sensory ways of knowing? We argue that experimenting with an audio-visual, practice-based approach offers ways of thinking against and beyond colonial logics within Danish academia. We underscore the importance of capturing complex processes of racialization and marginalization, which are not easily fixed and are intrinsically linked to affect, within this landscape. Additionally, in understanding friendship as a crucial part of knowledge constitution through our project, our letter writing and archive propose new forms of relationality that affectively break with disembodiment and alienation in Danish academia.

Drifting between through letters

Dear Gabriella,

It's been a little over two weeks since I last saw you. I hope you've arrived well in Cape Town, so exciting to think of you there, carving out new beginnings!!! I'm slowly finding grounding again after returning from my research stay in Vancouver. Glad we had some time to overlap in Copenhagen in between all the transience, to be in the water together, in the residue of summer. Also so glad we ended up choosing that shot of us jumping into the sea to frame our archive. It makes so much sense to me in terms of how we've talked about the project and how it's unfolded. Water as embracive, returning to submerge, cleanse, simply be. Water as both grief and solace; a place to be both adrift and held, where there's space for pleasure and support, as well as devastation and loss. Water as reflection, a way to grasp ourselves, and as refraction, a way to distort and bend this perception into new directions and forms. (Okay, I know I'm a sucker for the water metaphor. Omise'eke Natasha Tinsley (2008) reminds me that although reaching into the metaphoric possibilities of the sea may allow for a type of linguistic queering, we must also not lose sight of the specific material formations, both past and present, of violence, memory and resistance, the sea holds).

And that line from the poem you chose, layered on top of the clip ADRIFT. From Adrienne Maree Brown: that "water seeks scale, that even your tears seek the recognition of community" (2017, 109). I found that so beautiful in considering how, for me, this archive came out of a desire for connectivity; that sharing and collecting our experiences like this is not just a way to make sense of them, but a creative project to imagine something new and uncharted, a way of being together beyond the oppressive temporalities and orderings of academia. There is potential in that. Which is to say this friendship, in very real ways, expands my sense of what is possible – that my understanding, (un)learning and knowing is forged within and through intimate processes of relation. It cannot exist separately from these breaks and bonds, which is why

I understand our archive, the notion of sensible ruptures, and this correspondence, as a creative intervention enacting possibility against a colonial present. Or, as I read recently, taking the liberatory potential of friendship seriously means a "renewal of our imagination about who we are and who we wish to become" (Banerjea et al. 2018, 2). Which is all really to say, thank you.

I think a vestige of (continued) coloniality is the dismissal and diminishing of these forms of intimacy for the same reason that we are taught to swallow the fantasy of an emotionally contained, independent subject, separate and distinct from the rest of the living world. I had this conversation around dinner the other day where we were talking about whether or not we believed in reincarnation, and my friend said something that stuck with me. They said that our bodies are in a constant process of shedding, death and rebirth. In this way we're porous and permeable, always and inevitably entangled with each other. I'm sure there's a bunch of hotshot new materialist scholars who would agree.

So much of our work, our experiences, and this project itself has orbited around what it means to know. Against the contours of the institution, we have felt bound by hierarchies of legitimacy that determine what knowledge is viable and worthy.

Repeatedly, DK academia has asked me to justify (too) closeness; to extrapolate my body from my work, as if they are not one and the same. This has been framed in terms of academically hazardous proximities to the students I'm engaged in research with, to methods of carrying out this research, to the themes of racialization and social justice, to investments in identity, affect and politics. This perturbation is often tied to an implication of bias or lack of rigor, and a consistent imperative to explain and justify, which itself can be seen as a mechanism of structural oppression. It's been noted that there is often backlash towards work that engages experience as theory as naive, static, or essentialist (Calafell & Moreman 2009, 128) as well as a skewed expectation toward marginalized scholars, whereby "especially BIPOC, but also trans, gender non-conforming, queer and disabled researchers are expected to reflect on their position to avoid being accused of bias and navel-gazing" (The River and Fire Collective 2021). I'm holding on to closeness, to our archive.

Still from video ADRIFT, 2022

I notice I keep referring to the project as an archive. I still feel kind of cringe about using that term but also not sure if 'audio-visual un-fucking project' is right either lol. So much has been written about the archive, a word laden with notions of authority, binding what and who can be known, how things come to matter. What I'm really interested in is what creatively crafting this kind of space can do. Julietta Singh tells us that "no archive will restore you, no text but those we cannot read" (2018, 23). She writes about the body-archive, attending to her own history and its bodily traces, material and felt. I'm drawn to this idea of tracing the untraceable, the corporeal, accounting for that which cannot be read or comprehended in a literal sense. I wonder if that is what we are doing in the gathering and manifesting of these ruptures, in our project?

Somewhere in transit,
Maya

Hi Maya,

Your letter gives me a sense of home - thank you! I hope your journey back has been gentle and that you're finding your place and rhythm.

Thank you for naming closeness. I wanted to note that we've talked about how writing these letters to each other is a way to deliberately choose closeness as a minoritarian method (Gagnon 2021). Materially (attending to our surroundings), relationally (centering friendship), methodologically (favoring proximity through embodiment and epistolary), and ethically (as an avowal of the vulnerable and connected, as well as a critique of distanced subjectivity).

Your reflections on the value of friendship and the desire for relationality in academia deeply resonated with me. For me, our friendship has been a space of intellectual intimacy, rest and joy and created moments where I regained a sense of self. There is a poignant bell hooks quote I wanted to share, which I think hits at the heart of our desires to create different forms of relational knowledge: "to heal the splitting of mind and body, we marginalized and oppressed people attempt to

recover ourselves and our experiences in language. We seek to make a place for intimacy. Unable to find such a place in standard English, we create the ruptured, broken, unruly speech of the vernacular" (hooks 1994, 175). From our own individual and shared experiences, we also chose to make sense of and theorize the broken – we stayed with the ruptures, interrogated them, cried and laughed about them together. I see our archive as having emerged out of our friendship where we held each other in our needs to explore and make meaning of our experiences, but also, as you write, a making space for possibilities of knowing otherwise. Our weaving together of similar yet different affective experiences – joys, pains and curiosities – and supporting each other through different ways of knowing, seeing and listening has been one of the most exciting and challenging learning spaces.

In particular, the archive became important because it gave us a practice-based and visual medium for us to explore what it means to exist, think, argue and work in Danish academia: a context which is dominated by color blindness (Lagermann 2013), colonial amnesia (Marronage 2021) and racialized exceptionalism (Danbolt & Myong 2019). Where experiences and knowledge of structural oppression are so often rendered invisible and the subtle mechanisms of racism veiled in ambiguity. And a wider societal context where marginalized groups are still developing and experimenting with language in order to make sense of their experiences and break with forms of alienation (DCN & Marronage 2020; Löwe Hunter 2021). These types of harm inflict self-doubt/self-blame, second-guessing whether instances of discrimination and harm occurred or not, and if they are individual, institutional or structural (Khawaja 2023). I really think this is why our audio-visual approach has been so important for us, because it not only allowed us to denormalize harmful words/phrases/questions in academic contexts, but also to take seriously felt and material experiences beyond words – sitting with the affective and sensory dimensions of these instances working with a 'show don't tell' approach. We played and experimented with images and sounds and voice-over narration, stitching together fiction, poetry or diary excerpts. And although

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words, both spoken and written, are a part of the archive, they function more to create an affective atmosphere than to 'explain'.

I was wondering, how have you experienced the creative possibilities and limitations of text/ language in exploring our experiences through the archive?

Settling in,
Gabriella

Dear Gabriella,

I think language is – like closeness – fraught. Filled with potential for harm, as you describe. Closeness feels like a signal, a move towards collaboration and feeling which extends not only through the archive but also our writing. Basically, the writing itself is embodied, coalescing with and performing our argument. Which reminds me of Ocean Vuong's (2020) observation of the epistolary form – that it demands the reader enters a conversation that is inherently excluding and that this disorientation is important: we are not speaking to an external 'you' but, first and foremost, to each other.

Reflecting on closeness and the encounter between the bodily and the material, I'm wondering if you noticed how, in the archive, each rupture (with the exception of ADRIFT) is titled with either a bodily location or a material (BREATH, LINOLEUM UNIVERSAL SOAP, GUT, STIMOROL)?? I know this wasn't a premeditated choice; however, it carries meaning in terms of our epistemological framing – how we insist on knowledge as material and bodily, and in doing so reveal something about the assumed proximity/distance of these materials to the knowing (human) subject.

There's also a connection to language here, often neglected in the literature, about how material and language are co-constituted, and therefore how the discursive contours of what we can and cannot articulate, matter. Which is a long way of getting back to what you named about how the audio-visual gives us room to engage with sensory and affective knowledge beyond language as narration. This is meaningful in reflecting not only

on the conceptual usages of sensible ruptures, but also the dominance of colonial languages; what it means to be at home in a language that is not your own, and the limits of what kind of home that can be (Ramayya 2019, 19). Articulation is sticky. I think this relates to how we have given a name to something in an attempt to make it tangible, and that us speaking the concept of sensible ruptures into existence is testimony to the ways in which language constrains the experience of racialization in this landscape you describe; how these experiences become illegible through the negation of the affective and bodily. Which is why it was necessary for us to turn to other mediums to attend to those silences, to what is effaced by this linguistic worldview. As Natalie Diaz notes, "if language is a technology, speech is only one way of it. It is not the body but an estimation of the body" (2020, n.p.). I see our reach for sensible ruptures as striving towards a different type of technology, towards sensory and affective vernaculars that are built with and through an unfolding bodily lexicon.

hugs (not words),
Maya

Affect, Racialization and Danish institutions

This paper is premised on an understanding of the university as a space in which colonial histories are deeply entrenched in a way that is not relegated to the past but rather ongoing and, importantly, felt; universities are spaces in which certain bodies are 'at home' while other, minoritized bodies, are made 'out of place' (Puwar 2004; Ahmed 2012). Following these scholars, we emphasize the affective dimensions of racialization within academic institutions. Increased attention has been paid to affective approaches in examining racialization in Denmark (see for instance Myong & Bissenbakker 2014; Andreassen & Vitus 2016; Vertelyté & Staunæs 2021; Goankar 2022, among others). However, there is a limited and lacking body of literature around processes of racialization within Danish universities, particularly by

those with lived experience of racism. Important interventions have been made by scholars such as Oda-Kange Midtvåge Diallo (2019) and Bontu Lucie Guschke (2023), while Copenhagen-based collectives such as Marronage & DCN (2020)[6] have also done vital work in outlining how processes of racialization unfurl within and against Danish institutions. Contributions from Mira C. Skadegård (2017) and Iram Khawaja (2022) expand on universities and pedagogy as spaces of institutional whiteness, while Tess Skadegård Thorsen (2019) and Khawaja (2023) meaningfully address the affective tolls of being minoritized in Danish higher education through the concepts of minority taxation and minority stress, respectively.

We bring affect and embodiment to the forefront of discussions of racialization precisely to underscore the importance of understanding these processes in socio-political contexts where they are obscured. This paper builds on the aforementioned studies through our collaborative, practice-based approach, yet diverges in its attention to affect and embodiment as sites of resistance and epistemic possibility. Through this pursuit of creating knowledge otherwise, we also insist on the entanglement of affect and material, inscribing ourselves into perspectives that bring materiality to the fore, complicating relationships between subjects and objects, human and non-human (Chen 2012; Weheliye 2014).

Specifically, we align our project with the argument that committing to a more capacious understanding of what is animated (imbued with life), or "what and who counts as human, and what or who does not" (Chen 2012, 30), allows us to queer our subject positions. Additionally, we understand knowing itself as materially implicated, that human subjecthood is underpinned by racial hierarchies of anti-Blackness and the colonial construction of humanness as White (Wynter & McKittrick 2015; Jackson 2020; Wilderson 2020). We therefore recognize that different racialized subject positions have different relationships with different types of matter according to ideological, economic, historical and political processes. In doing so, we orient towards materiality as an entry

point for exploring sensible ruptures, thus conceptually expanding the archive itself to include the more-than-human.

Hi Maya,

Thanks for your letter! I hope you're well :)

I have been thinking it is also important to reflect on the limitations of the audio-visual in terms of which senses can actually be mediated; photo and video is obviously for hearing and seeing and not for example smelling, tasting and touching. I remember how we grappled with this, since our different experiences were based on so much more than hearing and seeing.

For example, in my video clip titled LINOLEUM UNIVERSAL SOAP, I try to mediate the affective experience of a particular kind of Danish institutional scent. A creeping scent born of the combination of linoleum floors and universal, odorless soap – which reminds me of something that is trying not to smell, but is made conspicuous by its insistence on being absent. In making the archive, I sat with this feeling of a smell-pretending-to-be-a-non-smell, connecting it with institutional homogeneity, or an 'odorless' ('colorblind' and 'innocent') society – distant from and clean of colonial wrongdoings (Wekker 2016). Audio-visually, I mediated this experience – sensory despite itself – through the style of the video, using handheld point of view shots of feet running up and down grey linoleum stairs that loop indefinitely. I layered these moving images with repetitive mechanical sounds of a printer, giving a distinct character and 'soundscape' to the academic institution itself. Against this backdrop, a voice-over narrates embodied memories of Danish institutions and how we learn about places differently through our bodies. Reflecting on how smell can unveil structural issues, and how for some it might go unnoticed, and for others it might reek. The process of making this video made me think of how ruptures are stored in the body, stretching across time and space. Here I consider Christina Sharpe's assertion that what is relegated to the past is a question of how we are unevenly located in the present (2016), contending that "the past that

Still from video LINOLEUM UNIVERSAL SOAP, 2023

is not past reappears, always, to rupture the present" (9). A rupture then is not something that just occurs in the moment but it lingers, like a longing, a warning or curiosity and communicates something about how the body is always-already connected with its social, cultural, historical, political and material surroundings, stirring together time and space. Our archive has become a way of weaving together a sort of 'affective material fabric' by making use of our different embodied experiences. Perhaps in this way, our archive is a rupture in of itself? How was it for you exploring your ruptures through images and sound?

*with gratitude,
Gabriella*

Between Theory and Practice:
On Cracks and Fissures

We are indebted to and stand on foundations laid by the manifold de/anti-colonial and Black feminist theorists who have historically challenged and fought against heteropatriarchal, white supremacist and colonial forms of oppression (Lorde 1984; Collins 1989; Harrisson 1991). Our project is situated within older and on-going debates circulating objectivity and subjectivity and informed by long-standing issues around closeness/distance, neutrality and disembodiment in research (Dillard 2000). As the letters allude, we are inspired by the liberatory potential of theorizing from lived experience through practice (hooks 1994). Breaking with detached ways of producing knowledge, we align ourselves with hooks' merging of theory and practice as a reciprocal process. Our concept of sensible

ruptures and archive go hand in hand; we not only theorize our memories, encounters and everyday experiences, but in order to do so, we center the process of creating the archive itself as an experiment in examining possibilities of knowing.

Ruptures emerge as the result of contradicting forces; they can move slowly, lingering for years in a state of potentiality or accelerate and tear a building apart when contradictions can no longer be absorbed (Forensic Architecture 2022). In challenging colonial systems of thought, the idea of breaking with, cracking open and fissuring have been applied as conceptual lenses and metaphors to analyze the relationship between knowledge, power and border thinking (Fanon 1967; Mignolo & Walsh 2018), and as ways of creating decolonial possibilities. Decolonial cracks and fissures are locations of thinking and doing practice-based decolonial work within modern/colonial/heteropatriarchal systems. In the book *On Decoloniality Concepts, Analytics, Praxis* (2018) Walsh develops the notion of cracks by categorizing herself as a militant/activist intellectual, whereby cracks can lead to radical forms of pedagogy that challenge these systems within academia. Although we, too, challenge disembodied colonial sensibilities centered around distance, our conceptualization of ruptures is less geared towards an intellectual activism within the institution. Rather, our practice-based approach to sensible ruptures allows us to think through the generative potential of creatively co-constituting knowledge against as well as beyond the disembodied colonial logics of academia.

Hi Gabriella,

I love the way that you describe the archive as an affective fabric, weaving together collectively and distinctly! Your understanding of the way the format reflects this, underscores the possibilities of the audio-visual in allowing us to layer different moments and histories in such a way that they touch, interlace and commune with each other.

Thanks for asking about my clips. In the archive, there is the segment called BREATH,

consisting of a collage I made by gathering different words jotted down during various institutional, online meetings throughout the first year of the pandemic. Often, during these meetings, I found myself writing or doodling – something I do to focus my attention. I noticed that these scribbles became a way for me to express feelings and frustrations that I wasn't able to say out loud. To me, they illustrate minute outbursts: swear words, sarcastic comments, painful realizations in moments when I felt clenched, unable to speak up. Material inscriptions that are paradoxical in both their silence and articulation. Then there's also the video titled STIMOROL, a clip of me arranging small, white, rectangular pieces of gum into a symmetrical grid, as I talk about illness, mental health and a profound sense of loss. In the audio, I grapple with what it might mean to account for a faltering body charged with the institutional "imperative of productive redemption" (Lee 2022, 259) that continues to attach to the narrative of the model minority. The clip is interspersed with photos of hospital visits, a tray of beige food, an x-ray, disposable pyjamas – material remnants of what it means to be an improper body, a feeling/failing body, within institutional systems. The gum alludes both to the orderings of whiteness in academia – its disciplining of bodies illegitimized through raced, classed and gendered markings – as well as to an experience during a doctor's appointment, to acquire documentation for sick leave, in which I impulsively grabbed several packets of liquorice-flavored Stimorol. Aesthetically, the repetitive motion of systematized assembly is juxtaposed to the affective landscape extended through rumination.

The reason I've chosen to draw out these examples is not only because they emphasize materiality as linked to our-selves, but because they encapsulate the unruly, almost convulsive, nature that is emblematic of these (seemingly nonsensical) ruptures. In some ways sensible ruptures can be understood as reactive, and although they of course emerge from the specificity of racialized and gendered antagonisms in Danish academia, I understand them less as opposition or response, but rather spontaneous fissures demonstrating a jolt (towards reclamation, of taking or talking back

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in these examples); a return to the body, a move towards a sense of self, or a potentiality of self beyond the colonial claim to disembodied, individualized, ableist subjecthood.

I think this temporal distortion is crucial to our definition of sensible ruptures, echoing what Sharpe says about the undoing of time and space. I also think of tempo in the rupture INTUITION, created as a homage to embodied knowledges, or what might otherwise be understood as 'gut feelings' that reside in those bodies subjugated by history. Taking seriously these visceral ways our bodies remember and convey, the video plays with tempo by making use of extreme slow motion at the same time as the frame zooms out. At first you see just a close up of a belly button before the video reveals a hand cradling a stomach, which gradually becomes a body filling the screen, pairing slowness with expansion. Artist Arooj Aftab's voice reverberates beyond the moving image, creating an atmosphere that is out-of-sync with the temporal impetus of academic productivity. Slowness becomes the condition for knowing.

There is of course ample and generous literature on alternate temporalities, where queer/disabled/raced space-time is collapsed and reassembled against normative futures (Halberstam 2005; Hartman 2006; Muñoz 2009). Following these theorists, I think this temporal reconfiguration we've been considering extends to the archive as a whole. Maybe that's what you're getting at when you say it is a rupture in of itself? Rejecting notions of linearity/coherence in that queerly inconsistent way, the ruptures loop and connect continuously, speaking from differently bodied subject positions but blurring, in the sway of voices and images, towards a collective desire for a way of knowing and being against the exclusions and alienations of academia.

Reflecting on this affective pursuit of alterity as I rewatch STIMOROL now, I notice how the themes of mourning and loss are interwoven with longing. I hone in on the lines: "Losing my bearings/ my temper/ my nerve/ my mind" as well as "I want to be touched and feel home. I want to hold someone and feel close to myself". I read this yearning for closeness both as a desire for an embodied self – that healing of the split that bell hooks speaks

about – as well as a longing for a relational future yet-to-come :')))

There is a conceptual potency in our choice of the word rupture that I want to excavate. The choice of the word 'sensible' has layered meanings: a way to subvert notions of neutrality that saturate how certain types of disembodied knowledges are presented as distanced, detached, dichotomous and thereby rational, as well as alluding to the ways in which these seemingly 'irrational' ways that resistance surfaces make sense as bodily expressions of existing and navigating in academic institutions steeped in oppression. Sensible also in terms of engaging the sensory: how institutions make themselves felt in bodily ways and how this feeling in turn produces other forms of knowing – knowing always and inevitably entangled with the body – that calls into question which bodies are assumed as knowing bodies and which bodies, through their opposition, cause friction, ruptures. How these ruptures are also testament to the way in which embodied knowledge resists the imperative to fragment the self, how affective experiences shift and disturb the very fabric of academia.

The rupture then alludes to a fracturing of a structure (i.e. the mechanisms of coloniality that govern DK academia), and in that, the potential of its destruction. But why rupture, and not crack, break, rift, crevice? For me, the reasoning lies in the motion, going back to the notion of spontaneity, multidirectional jolts in time-space, unruly and differently ruled ways of knowing. Something echoing Jafari S. Allen's description of "generative flashes in which pasts are present" (2021, 3). I am stuck on the term generative. A rupture is sudden, unpredictable, disruptive, disobedient; it is also, importantly, not static. Etymologically adjacent to eruption, a rupture does not simply break apart, it emanates – something comes of a rupture, it carries a force, an energy, a willfulness for something to emerge. I don't offer the term generative in terms of production or output, but in the sense that despite (or perhaps precisely because of) their commitment to abounding disorderliness, their incapacity to be forecast or foreclosed, sensible ruptures cut open a space of possibility. Which, in encompassing the affective dimensions of institutional violence, allow

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the refraction of racialized and queer embodiment as inexorable responses and interventions to those same structures. Structures that are devastating, as well as demand devastating.

I wonder if these thoughts on sensible ruptures resonate with you, or connect to your understanding of the archive itself as a rupture?

One more thing before I head: in outlining these examples, I arrive, once again, at the paradox between the desire to theorize from our lived experiences, and the vulnerability that comes with that. This links to conversations we've had around how to do the archive. Realizing that the project was not a display of pain or explanation, so often the default mode of narration afforded/imposed upon marginalized people, we asked how we could create an archive where theorizing and articulation is not simply a mode of education, documentation or extraction for a white gaze, but instead a striving for knowledge as liberation?

constantly out of time,
Maya

Hey Maya,

Yes! and conceptualizing ruptures as an embodied experience that rejects temporal linearity in a queerly inconsistent way makes me think of the different formats and platforms we considered to explore ruptures in a non-linear way. Do you remember we especially discussed the relationship between the concept and format? We experimented with the extent to which the audio-visual archive should fit into a traditional storytelling arc, i.e. with an introduction, a middle (with a conflict or climax) and end with a resolution. We tried this, and it didn't work, because the linear storytelling format flattened the complexity of a rupture and also risked erasing our individual experiences by homogenizing and essentializing them. Instead, we leaned into the interactive multi-story format with no clear beginning or end, where we could mediate the different affective atmospheres of a rupture by playing with sounds, images, time and rhythm to create a different way of making sense of our embodied experiences.

This format also lends itself to telling many stories within one story – it offers different perspectives on the same topic by giving us the choice of

Still from video STIMOROL, 2022

linking and looping the videos. Especially the use of the loop function became a visual entry point for us to think through the ways in which these ruptures are exactly that: relational, connected and reoccurring, blurring notions of beginnings and endings, with some of my experiences tying into yours and vice versa. The technical process itself, the making of the archive, became a way to think through the relationship between affect, materiality and bodily knowledge. The filming, editing, naming of the videos, dragging and dropping of clips, deleting and experimenting with sounds and images became catalysts for us to co-create knowledge. I appreciate how our practice-based approach is very much an interconnected yet open-ended way of co-creating knowledge about racialized and queer experiences, which celebrates incompleteness in knowledge production (Nyamnjoh 2020) blurring the boundaries of knowledge making inside and outside of Danish academia.

This is why I see our archive as a form of rupture in of itself, because it is not separate from the notion itself – we needed the format to think through and conceptualize sensible ruptures. It then becomes more than a term to identify racialized and queer experiences; it becomes a practice-based approach striving towards a distinct epistemological space.

But, we are now approaching a new phase: after the making of the archive and writing of this article, what do we want to do with this audio-visual project? Who could this archive be for, how can it evolve beyond our experiences? We have discussed how the archive is not for consumption and explanation of racialized and queer peoples' pains/struggles or necessarily seek to advance institutional systems but rather create a space for other racialized and queer peoples to make sense, care for and explore their embodied knowledges – nurturing the ruptures we carry.

Happy first day of spring,
Gabriella

Dear Gabriella,

Okay, I think this is The Question. If the stuff of the sensible rupture, what comes of it, does not seek output or consumption, but possibility, if we are not seeking to rupture as proof, documentation or evidence, and if the rupture isn't static, then what is generated in these sudden and momentary instances, how might we work with their debris? In short, as you ask, what is to become of our archive?

When I think of the debris and 'nurturing the ruptures we carry' (love that btw!), I'm reminded of Kara Keeling's concept of 'futures past', where she gives life to those "struggles and things that people tried to make happen but were defeated in" (2020, n.p.), how those efforts for futures are not a mirror to the present but nonetheless not lost, they still have a power and charge. Carrying along this idea that shattered struggles and intents may still reverberate in the now, it's important to be clear that sensible ruptures don't seek a reductive destruction or to simply dismantle the systems that they emerge from (and thereby illuminate), but instead enact a desire for a more capacious way of creating knowledge. They are not invested in breaking as an end but as a means. By attending to the affective minutiae of existence as racialized and queer people, the ruptures embrace the irreconcilable, the unlanguagable, the felt, the flesh, as the grooves along which we might unearth, and perhaps nurture, a different kind of epistemology.

Thinking about who the archive is of and for, I'm intrigued by how your question of access relates to refusal. Tina Campt outlines the transformative potential of refusal as it relates to haptic images, specifically in work by Black artists, by shifting the optics of gaze to radical forms of seeing. This vantage point is one that demands affective labor "of discomfort, feeling, position and repositioning" (Campt 2021, 17). In her offering, as well as those of many others on the ethics of visibility (Alexander 1994; Odumosu 2019; Sealy 2019), we are reminded of the colonial stakes of witnessing as an affective process, one that demands and moves.

In talking about how our archive might conjure further rupture, I've been thinking about our decision to open it to others who find themselves at

the juncture of racialization and queerness in Danish academia, inviting them to contribute their own ruptures. By exerting agency over access, how we make it visible, and to whom, the archive becomes a practice in breaking with structures of spectatorship and consumption. This also goes back to our conversation on intimacy and how academic comportment enforces ideals of individualization and ownership when it comes to knowledge. Our co-creation insists on relational knowledge as well as building an ethics of opacity, where those who seek to access the archive must also become engaged in maintaining it as a site of embodied possibility. The archive becomes a space not only for subverting gaze but for freeing new perceptions as we look towards each other. It's cool to think about how we might create a genealogy of ruptures and gazes; one that is invested in mutuality rather than universality.

The way sensible ruptures introduced itself as a concept was very much on brand, as in, it felt explosive. It came from an urgency between the two of us, an inexorable need to make meaning of our experiences, our tears seeking scale. The potential of the concept though, I think, lies in its collective expansion; how we intend the archive as a project that is perpetually unfolding and relational. In this sense, our desire for feeling, for one another, for connectivity, is both a premise and a promise.

see you in the water <3
Maya

Towards a Relational Horizon

In asking how queer and racialized experiences can be explored through affective, embodied and sensory ways of knowing, these letters conceptualize the notion of sensible ruptures, troubling who and what is considered 'sensible' in the academy, and reflecting on what it means to take embodied knowledge seriously through the audio-visual.

We argue that sensible ruptures offer a lens to analyze not only how institutions make themselves felt, materially and affectively, but as a way of expanding what it means to be a knowing subject in Danish academia. Connecting the concept of sensible ruptures with the archive, we show how the body and its relation to material surroundings are intertwined. We examine the relationship between the material – linoleum floors, soap, gum packages, and paper collages – and the affective/felt as mutually contingent to sensible ruptures; one does not make sense without the other. Characterizing these ruptures as spontaneous, disorderly, intuitive, everyday and breaking with linear notions of time and space, we contend that they offer generative potential, breaking open modes of interrogating and creating knowledge.

There is an insistence, spanning not just the concept of sensible ruptures, but the making of the archive itself, as well as the letters comprising this paper, on alternate ways of knowing. An insistence on knowing as inevitably imbrued with the body, reconfiguring the self as always permeable, constituted through and with our histories and surroundings. While revealing and resisting the logics of disembodiment that permeate academic systems, we emphasize the generative qualities of this intervention, not as an undertaking in documentation of racialized pain/harm/oppressions or institutional validation, but as an exercise in possibility. Tuning into the sensory, we ask, what might be discovered if we tend to these ruptures, transfused in the minutiae of everyday experience? What understandings might we uncover through digressive and disorderly paths that jolt from the body?

Our letters traverse these routes through intimate dialogue, intentionally embodying both our practice and our proposition. The correspondence itself performs our desire for, and argument towards, relational knowledge. Describing the making of the archive as both a return to and an undoing of the self, we have sought to reject the imperatives of singularity, instead elevating the ways friendship and feeling sustain us within and through conditions of alienation. Merging conversation with analysis, theory, citations that cover poetry, journal excerpts, friends and scholars, our use of queer epistolary also refuses the categorization and hierarchization of these forms of knowledge, enshrining them as mutually constituted. We offer

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analyses of different sensible ruptures in the archive, as well as the sonic and visual choices we made in arranging these ruptures, to demonstrate how an audio-visual exploration of these instances can meaningfully contribute to capturing the embodied, sensory and affective aspects of racialized and queer experiences. Crucially, by allowing a different type of vernacular, the archive addresses the necessity and potential of substantiating these experiences. Pointing to the specificity, and oftentimes vulnerability, of researching and articulating experiences of marginalization in Denmark, we contextualize our project through the urgency of those absences – of language, reckoning with colonial histories and acknowledgment of structural racism – that saturate Danish academia.

Reflecting on tensions of gaze and access, we open the archive to other racialized and queer people in Danish higher education in the hopes of collectively developing sensible ruptures. In this sense, the archive is an ongoing, open-ended project. It's important to highlight that we weave together our experiences to valorize interdependence, but not to collapse or conflate: we mean for the space to be a practice in collective knowledge creation, recognizing our distinct positions and experiences, not a move towards the universal and homogenizing. We have gathered these ruptures as an experiment towards a relational horizon, hoping that our work can contribute to enlivening ground for new terms, methods, concepts, connections and creations to continue to shift and arise. We establish ruptures as necessary, not simply for enduring those systems implicated in the colonial project, but for pushing at its limits, towards emanation and possibility.

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Notes

[1] Recognising that these categorisations are contextual, contested, shifting and imperfect, we use racialized to describe the process of being racialized as non-white.

[2] For insight from Black feminist and Indigenous scholars, see Dillard (2010); Navarro et al. (2013), Simpson (2007), Wilson (2008).

[3] Scholars have expanded conceptualisations of the archive beyond the textual, attending to its affective dimensions (Cvetkovich 2003) and addressing archives not only as "sites of power, knowledge and violence but also reimagination, redress and healing" (Agostinho et al. 2019, 5). This project is inspired by scholars such as Sharpe (2016), Singh (2018) and Hartman (2006), who open up the possibilities of the archive as a space of creative potential.

[4] In the DK context, Skadegård and Thorsen (2019) use epistolary to foreground their intimacy in researching monstrosity, gender and race. Also see Midtvåge Diallo et al.'s (2023) recent work on Afro-Nordic feminism, using letter writing as counter-archiving.

[5] The letters presented here reflect our conversations throughout our PhDs and have been edited for the purposes of this article.

[6] Marronage is a collective of decolonial feminists who work with resistance narratives through editorial work, events and protest. DCN is an organisation working to strengthen community among Afro-Danish groups in Denmark.

ARTICLE 2

Being/Making/Leaving a Mess:
Collective Anarchiving Against and Beyond the University

ABSTRACT

Harnessing mess as a conceptual and analytical lens, this paper unfolds the experiences of queer and racially minoritised university students in London through zine-making as a mode of collective anarchiving. Furthermore, mess become a way to tease the conceptual boundaries of the archive as a linear and static repository of documentation and knowledge. I deploy the term anarchiving to describe how, through collaborative and creative workshops, the materials, affects and intimacies emergent through the process of zine-making become a praxis of knowledge and space-making. In messing with archival and academic impetuses by collaboratively creating towards disarray, I argue that this anarchival practice embraces alteric rather than oppositional epistemic possibility.

Introduction

In the autumn and winter of 2021, I facilitated collaborative workshops with racially minoritised[1] university students in London, culminating in the creation of a collective zine, titled *Held*. The workshops were formed through an open call, to university students in London, to participate in a research project on anti-racism, academia and resistance. In this article, I analyse the discursive and material articulations that surfaced during the process of the zine's creation, employing mess as a prism through which to both unfold queer and racially minoritised experiences within the academy, and argue for the affective, temporal and analytical potential of messiness in exploring what I conceive of as collective anarchiving practices.[2]

As part of fieldwork on antiracist resistance within UK higher education, the workshops emerged through the want for a collaborative, experimental, and creative approach to research, to facilitate a space where the process was one of co-creation and where we could archive and share knowledge across our experiences as queer and racially minoritised students.

Inspired by the connection of fugitivity with the undercommons (Moten and Harney 2013, Rachid et al. 2023) I suggest that the workshops and the relations formed between us became an act of queer

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[1]Recognising that such categorisations are contested, shifting and contextual, I use the term racially minoritised to refer to the process by which people are racialised as non-white. In this article, I used the term racialised to refer to this process, as well as self-identified terms Black and POC (person of colour) in relation to the interlocutors.

[2]Several scholars have argued for immersion in mess as a productive approach to research and knowledge creation. See for instance Law (2004) on mess as method, Haraway on mess complicating the boundaries between matter and beings (2008) and Allen (2021) on messy positionings and affinities in anthropological fieldwork.

of colour space-making (Bacchetta et al. 2018) which rethinks resistance as affective and embodied alterity. Additionally, I harness the concept of mess to posit that our collective practice of zine making defies opposition-centred approaches to archiving and knowledge creation, instead striving towards what Eve Tuck (2009) describes as an epistemology of desire.

Guided by an attunement to mess on different levels – conceptual, material, methodological and analytical – this paper writes into the fields of queer and archival studies. Within this nexus, my use of mess is indebted in particular to Martin Manalansan (2014), emanating from his conceptualisation of mess, clutter and disorderly bodies, things, memories and emotions as the "stuff" of queerness and queer immigrant archives. This article deploys Manalansan's understanding of queer *as* mess, referring to mess as the aberrant, unruly and disorderly, as well as "an analytical stance that negates, deflects, if not resists the 'cleaning up' function of the normative" (2015,1). In engaging with mess as a lens as well as a stance, I also align with Lee's (2019) definition of queer/ed archiving as both verb and noun, a commitment to theoretical as well as practical and political intervention, an "upsetting of the normative archival structures that continue to uphold and reproduce exclusionary dominant power dynamics" (176).

Zines are small-circulation, self-published booklets which are often produced, published and distributed independently. Recognising zine-making and self-publishing as historically rooted in radical countercultures and marginalised communities, as an anticapitalist mode of challenging ownership/hierarchies in knowledge creation and distribution (Goulding 2015), I engage with zines both as queer/ed and decolonial method, connecting them to scholarship surrounding the archive as a space of possibility, experimentation and bodily (re)orientations, rather than a static site of knowledge (Gopinath 2018, Hartman 2007, Sharpe 2016, Von Reinhold 2020), as well as approaches that queer the archive beyond text, tracing the archive through fragments and sheddings to vitalise its material, haptic and affective dimensions (Allen 2021, Cvetkovich 2003).

In this article, mess, as related to queer desire, sex and pleasure, is furthermore a way of teasing the conceptual boundaries of the archive. I argue that emphasising the sensual, sexual and erotic aspects of the students' experiences as vital forms of meaning-making offers insights into queer and racialised experiences within and beyond higher education. Moreover, in unsettling and exceeding traditional paradigms of archival documentation, I understand the space-making of the workshops as a form of archiving in of itself – what Stephanie Springgay et al. term *anarchiving*. The anarchive encompasses,

as they describe, research-creation practices, and should thus be understood "less a thing, then a process or an action" (2020, 898). In engaging with the potential of matter, affects and lived experiences, anarchives are political, resistant, and collective, as well as invested in "queer, feminist, anti-racist, and anti-colonial frameworks and ways of being and doing" (ibid). Emphasising the mess of the ephemeral, material and relational in my analysis, I posit that our practice of collective zine and space-making is anarchival in that it is not defined simply through act or object, but encompasses the materials, affects and intimacies implicated therein. Attending to queer and racialised experiences in excess of extraction and preservation allows the summoning of new archival impulses and possibilities.

The analytical framework of this paper is anchored within a queer-of-colour critique that sutures decolonial and queer studies, foregrounding race, sexuality, gender and class as inextricably implicated in histories and ongoing formations of colonial domination and thereby intrinsic to decolonial thought (Arondekar 2005, El-Tayeb 2011, Haritaworn 2015). As Suhraiya Jivraj et al. note in their special issue on *Decolonial Trajectories: Praxes and Challenges*, queer of colour critique comprises a relatively recent yet expanding body of work, including influential scholarship from theorists such as José Esteban Muñoz (1999) and Roderick Ferguson (2004) and traceable across multiple locations that bring together academic as well as creative and activist thought (2020, 454). Queer of colour critique has, amongst other interventions, interrogated a turn towards 'queer liberalism', drawing attention to a lack of reckoning with issues of race, nation-state, citizenship, diaspora, and the violences of Empire in queer studies, pointing to the ways in which racialised heteropatriarchy is indexed as project of (sexual) development rooted in a colonial narrative of modernity (Eng et al. 2005). Writing into this lineage of scholarship, this paper takes point of departure in analysis that decentres sexuality as a privileged and contained site of study, instead engaging the students' experiences as multiply formed in relation to racialisation, disability, gender and the entanglement of these categories with the coloniality of power. Moreover, in thinking through zines as a form of queer/ed anarchiving, I am guided by an engagement with queerness in relation to decolonial epistemology, asking how queer of colour critique might also contribute to rethinking and delinking from colonial hierarchies and norms of knowledge production (Lakhani 2020).

The following analysis revolves around mess as a conceptual and analytical lens through which to unfold the experiences of queer and racially minoritised students within higher education as well as the process of zine-making as a mode of collective anarchiving. The article is structured in five parts,

each accessed through a layer of mess. The first, *Messed up*, describes the students' critique of the colonial structures and hierarchies of the university, relating these to imperatives of objectivity and disembodiment. *Messing up* reckons with experiences of failing and being failed by the university, demonstrating how narratives and affects that surfaced during the workshops subverted ideals of productivity and success. The following section, *Hot mess*, explores the intimate residues of queer and racialised experiences as crucially imbrued in reconfiguring both archival practice and the university beyond its assumed boundaries. In extension, *Leaving a mess* attends to the material, spatial and relational aspects of the workshops as an unravelling of what the archive may contain. Lastly, *Messing with* outlines an overarching argument connecting desire to knowledge creation – one which defers colonial epistemologies, moving towards resistance as a desiring and alteric mode of knowing and being.
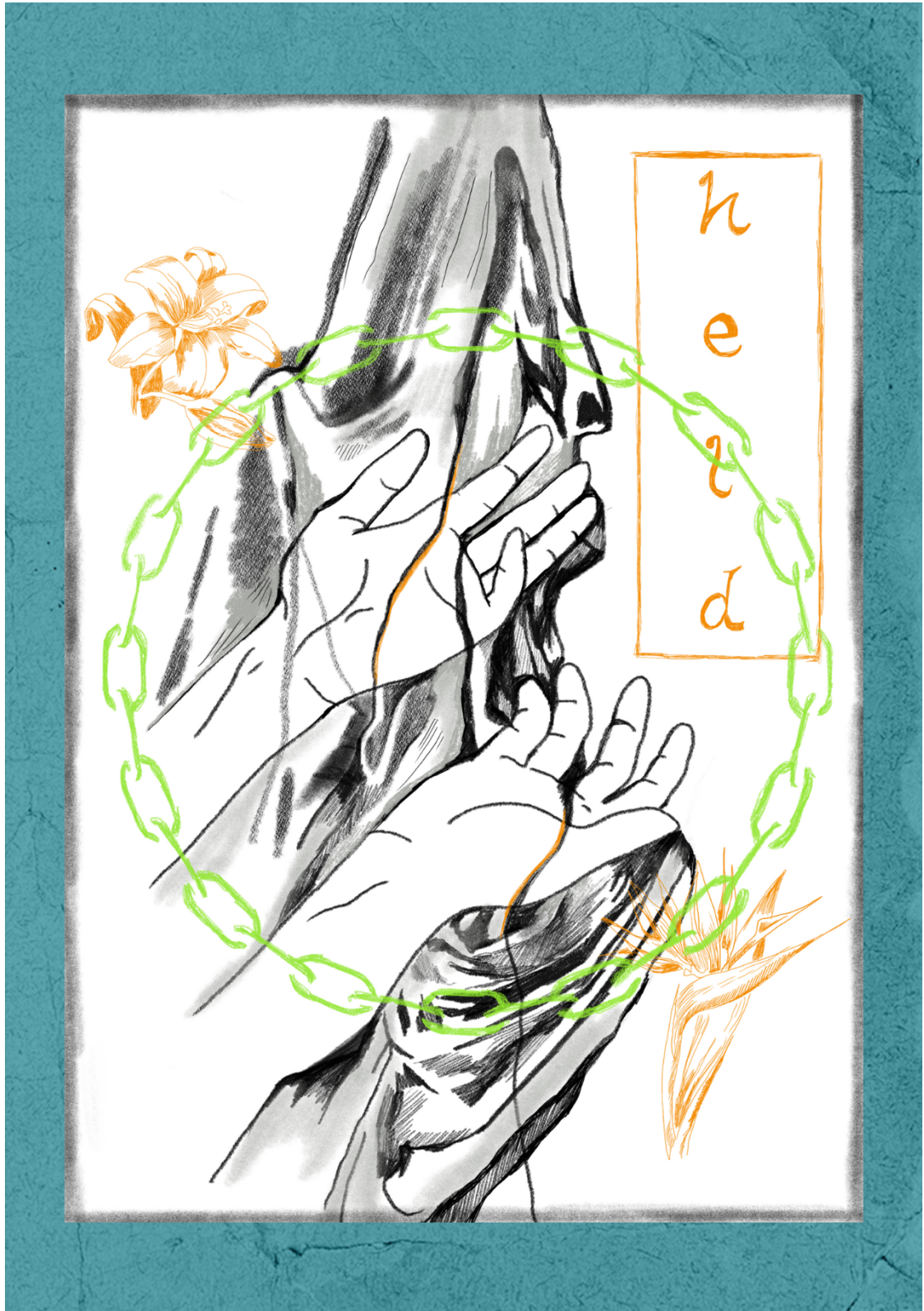
Figure 1: Zine cover, "Held"

Making mess

Participants responded to an open call (Flyer, 2021) for racially minoritised university students to partake in a PhD research project on anti-racist resistance where we would work with arts-based practises and create a zine together. The flyer was posted physically at Goldsmiths University and SOAS campuses, proliferated across social media (Instagram and Facebook) and through contacting student interest groups at various universities in London. The group took shape as a conglomeration of nine students (BA, Masters and one PhD student) from various universities in London, plus me. The group, including myself, was constituted by cis women, non-binary and gender-non-conforming individuals, all racially minoritised (i.e. Black and POC), all in their mid-to-late 20s, most identifying as queer. Under the rubric of 'anti-racist resistance within and beyond academia', we first met online for an initial conversation where I presented my background, motivations and context for the project; we discussed the desired framework and outcomes for the workshops, our respective capacities, as well as collectively choosing the themes and materials the group wished to work with. It was during this gathering that the word 'mess' repeatedly surfaced in relation to our conversation about the university (for instance in terms of messy boundaries of embodiment and disembodiment and what it felt like to navigate academia). Mess became both the opening theme of the workshops and the name of our newly established Whatsapp group chat 'Making Mess', where we could communicate practical information about the workshops, as well as anecdotes, links to events and other remnants of our lifeworlds. In addition to 'Mess' we chose the themes 'Joy' and 'Truth' based on these initial conversations.

The three workshops took place in person: two at SOAS where we were able to gain access to a group room, and one at my then-home, a queer house-share in South London. As well as actively participating in the workshops myself, I largely functioned as a facilitator in terms of introducing materials and providing the infrastructure to work with different practices such as mini-zines, lino printing and collage, while the conversations were co-facilitated by the group in the sense that they emerged organically and did not adhere to a specific structure. The session on 'Joy' was also facilitated by one of the students, who introduced us to different creative writing practices. We subsequently met several times online to discuss how we experienced the workshops, as well as to decide on the practical elements of putting the zine together. I explicated that participants would be anonymised, that the group would have collective ownership of the printed zines and decide how they would like

to use/archive/distribute them, and that only conversations and material consented to would be used as part of the research project.

Entering the process from my location as a queer, biracial (Nepalese-Ukrainian) student myself, the project was premised on my active and situated participation as a personal-political being. Engaging an arts-based and creative methodology that rejects notions of objectivity and neutrality is an attempt to disarrange the colonial hierarchies of mastery within knowledge creation, to know with and amongst rather than about (Singh 2018). While my own experiences as a queer student of colour are integral to the affinities that undergirded our being, exploring and creating together, the complexities of proximity, distance, difference, complicity and power are an inevitable and continuous process of negotiation within research (Khawaja and Mørck 2009).

Although the workshops and conversations aimed for collaborative decision-making (for instance in terms of themes, materials, shared stewardship of space and the zine itself) the tensions and limitations of collaboration (i.e. in the synthesising of data, differences in our positionality, capacity, time, and remuneration) percolate nonetheless, or perhaps even more starkly, in striving for a more collective research practice. The task at hand becomes not methodological absolution, but to critically navigate the responsibilities of research and power in recognition "that research, no matter how transformative in its design and outcome, can never escape the colonial clutch of academia" (Aldaraji 2021).

A core consideration was how to navigate my role as researcher in making certain parts of our co-creation (institutionally) legible in specific ways. Although this article does touch on segments of the zine's form and content, which is inevitably enmeshed with the process of its creation, my primary focus is not on the zine per se, but rather the conversations that took place during and after workshops themselves (these were recorded in accordance with the group's consent). This is partially an ethical choice to preserve the zine as a tangible manifestation of the process that exists of and between the group – to refuse its categorisation as a (research) product to be absorbed into institutional custody. Although in some sense the very writing of this article is an affirmation of this as impossibility, the zine nonetheless exists not unfettered by, but in excess of, this analysis. To dream the zine as a collectively authored body of work, shaped and stewarded beyond the entrapments of academia is its own type of protective evasion: an unlatching, rerouting gesture. Additionally, it is also to trouble – to mess with – the separation of 'product' and process in academic inquiry, instead

framing the praxis of archiving as a disordered continuum, giving way to relational, material, temporal and spatial muddling.

Messed up

"I think I just hate being in academia, I think I just hate the system. I think it's really fucking messed up that you have to leave a big chunk of yourself, of who you are, at the door in order to engage with academia, or the corporate, or to get paid, and how I can't just show up."

In this excerpt from our conversation during the first workshop, one of the students, Amina, describes a "*hatred*" of academia, or more precisely its "*system*". This reflects a concurrent theme of dissatisfaction with the university in our conversations, specifically its pedagogical practices, its unwillingness to materially and systemically address racism and other forms of oppression, as well as its extractive and neo-liberal proclivity, what has been characterised as the proliferation of 'academic capitalism' within UK higher education (Troiani & Dutson 2021), a disciplining of staff students and university workers into a politics of exhaustion, to borrow Akwugo Emejulu and Leah Bassel's term (2020). The students' manifold descriptions of burnout, alienation and out-of-placeness is concurrent with others who have unfolded the genealogy of colonialism and racism in UK universities, and its material and affective implications for Black, POC, working-class, disabled, Muslim, queer, trans and gender non-conforming individuals (Ahmed 2012, Akel 2021, Arday and Mirza 2018, Bhambra 2018, Puwar 2004). This has been demonstrated to play out through structurally unequal distribution of admission, attainment and access to support, as well through the affective toll of navigating classed, raced, and gendered exclusions in learning environment and socialites of higher education (Mirza 2018).

Our workshops took place amid the crises of COVID 19, and the students described a landscape which disproportionately impacted minoritised communities, with surging staff cuts, precarity, strikes, increased surveillance and policing on campus, in addition to the violences and legal sanctions inflicted by the government and dominant media discourses scapegoating these same communities. Within this terrain, there was a clear sense of grief and despair. As one of the students, June, shared with the groups during one of the workshops, speaking of her own relationship to academia:

"I don't think it will ever change. In a world that tells femmes that they're not enough, be less emotional, feminine, angry, whole. That no amount of work will make you enough, that you do not know anything you know. That you need a degree, a Masters to be verified, accomplished, productive. To be more and to do more. Then? Then what? For a White man in a suit to educate you on your home country. To explain neoliberalism to you and all the ways the women got it wrong. I don't know the reasons I'm doing this anyway. Trying so hard for a system that doesn't see me as human anyway. That this is broken, racist, and based on the flagship of imperialism and colonialism."

I find it relevant that both June and Amina locate the 'brokenness', the 'messed-upness', firmly within the structures of the institution itself, a critique of its colonial and neoliberal entrenchments which are seen as ensnared with the wider political and social context. Amina alludes to this false separation, speaking of the imperative of "*leaving a chunk of yourself at the door*", needing to sever parts of your identity and experience, which is understood as having gendered and raced implications ("*less emotional*" is considered in relation to femmes and anger, while the depiction of a White man educating you on your home country evokes colonial histories and the raced relations and hierarchies of research and knowledge) in order to be able to even be present, to "*show up*". Or, as June says, the feeling of constant movement towards an impossible attainment: "*no amount of work will make you enough…To be more and to do more.*"

The sense of frustration and exhaustion connected to minoritisation can be understood through the concept of minority taxation (Thorsen 2019) which sheds light on the affective implications of minoritisation within institutions of higher education. This toll has furthermore been analysed as a form of minority stress, underscoring the social, affective and psychological costs of these processes (Khawaja 2023).

However, our anarchival practice does not settle in evidencing these experiences; the students' narratives both implicate these affects within the realm of the structural 'mess' of the institution, and gesture beyond documentation of individualised harm. This connects to anarchiving as a process of creation that attempts to dislodge structures and narratives that engender queer and racialised subjecthood with pain.

"Then what?" June asks. The question lingers. There is a sense of ambivalence in both of these narratives, the investment in "*a system that doesn't see me as human anyway*", circumventing the question of what it might mean to disavow and distrust this system, while still showing up, if not to the

institution then, as illustrated through the workshops, for each other and in doing so, I argue, gesturing towards alterity. Scholar Amanda Wan offers ambivalence as potent because of its disorientations, its potential to engender theories of difference that "account for the queasy interrelatedness of pleasure and violence", which allows us to understand and enact ethical relationality in a way that does not disregard power, but attends to uncertainty, "through – not despite – the vulnerability that it produces" (2022, 2). In this way, ambivalence not only troubles our stakes and investments with the university, but expands the conditions of relation in our collaboration and praxis, in creating a space where it might be possible to "*show up*" messy and multifarious.

Another expression of ambivalence was cast through the notion of deception. During our third workshop, themed 'Truth', several of the students spoke about what they perceived as the lies inherent in academia, such as an innocence around its entrenchment in a colonial present; the notion that rigour is exponentially quantifiable (*Roz: "it's like the more you gather the more you can say and produce, the more it's worthwhile"*); and that this is connected to a rational, disembodied and depoliticised objectivity. For instance, reflecting on the feeling of being an 'imposter' in these spaces, and sharing an experience of having lied about their work to their supervisor (by "*toning down the colonialism and race stuff*"), Nish shares the following: *"You spend so much time not feeling true, or not feeling loyal to this institution when they are feeding you so much untruth – I think fiction and lies make a lot of sense in these systems where you have to unlearn so much."* Framing this in tandem with a structural brutality, Kavita replies that she understands this kind of deception *"less as untruths but lies to survive the violence of academia."*

She goes on to add: *"I find often that in academia it's not really acknowledged that what you write is from your own perspective, and I think it's partly in pursuit of this myth of objectivity, or neutrality. Like, even though in social sciences a lot of people have gotten past thinking we can be objective, there's still this resistance to outright saying it."*

Haleema, responding: *"I think the way she (my friend) talks about it is also that she has this idea that there's a truth out there that she hasn't found. I think that's really interesting cos when I write essays I'm like, what do I think and how do I support that, not 'how do I find the truth'."*

Pointing to the ways in which "whether one admits it or not, one is oriented to one's work from the location of the body and all that that may mean" (Sharpe 2023, 114), the notion of objectivity itself as a "myth" indexed into structural codas of the institution is set against the feeling of individually manoeuvring the machinations of academia in fraudulent ways. There is a sense of ambivalence in

this juxtaposition of academic claims to objective truth with the need to unlearn in order to survive the violence of the institution, which itself is concealed and made innocent through these same ideals. Truth is troubled, something which is also reflected in our praxis of archiving, which makes use of the speculative, for instance through creative writing and collaborative collage-poems, as a form of creative expression and knowledge creation in the zine. Through the students' critique of an institutional imperative for compartmentalisation, the tidying of an embodied self, as a demand that should be considered broken, flawed and incomprehensible, their narratives destabilise the positioning of who, what and where is, in fact, 'messy' or 'messed up' within the academy, in this way subverting colonial logics of a rational, disembodied, sovereign subject.

Messing up

In sharing our experiences with/in the academy, the theme of failure surfaced repeatedly, particularly in regard to feeling insufficient, to anxieties around evaluation, of feeling like an 'imposter', mental health struggles, and the notion of being unable, as well as at times unwilling, to meet the criteria and demands of higher education. Or, as June described during one of our conversations: *"These systems weren't made for me. I think it's this idea of like, I have to get it right all the time or else I'm broken and unworthy or that there's only one valid form of how to know."*

As racially minoritised individuals, many of whom are first generation university students and second generation immigrants, the parametres of failure, both when it comes to the work of the institution and the work of antiracist organising, seep beyond individualised narratives of success, instead entangled with the pressures of structural oppression, bonds of community/kin, and ideals of respectability: the notion *"that I'm one of the lucky ones, I should be grateful because I'm smart and I made the cut,"* as Leila put it. To be 'one of the lucky ones', here, acknowledges unlikelihood, hinting at the uneven and profoundly raced, classed and gendered landscape of academic merit and thus a system that is 'made for' certain bodies and not others (Patel 2016), while also orienting itself towards a logic of gratitude in which the promise of success is granted to the deserving subject, binding them in a beneficiary relationship to institutional governance. This process of assimilative obligation is echoed in the onus of conforming to the 'right ways to know', the precariously contingent positioning of someone who must perpetually 'get it right', lest they are deemed unworthy.

Messing up then, is not simply construed as a personal shortcoming bound to the present but a constellating of structures, relations and histories. A multidirectional reckoning with the colonial legacies of higher education, the material and discursive constraints of mandated accomplishment for marginalised people, as well as migratory pasts and yet-to-come futures that stretch towards and beyond security/survival. In tracing these messy orientations, I find it particularly interesting that Leila uses the phrase 'make the cut' to describe an affectively charged ideal of attainment. To avoid failure, one must enter into a process of severance, a cutting of interconnectedness and temporal entanglement in order to fit an individualised and institutionally recognisable mould, that of 'one of the lucky ones', the exceptional, and thereby deserving racialised subject.

Despite, or perhaps in extension of the above, our conversations also expressed a deictic understanding of institutional failure, an acknowledgement that who fails and who is failed by the university is in itself built into a system of deficiency. To take an example, during one of our workshops, Amina shared an experience of organising as part of an antiracist campaign for the recent inclusion of racial trauma as grounds for extenuating circumstances at her university, a first within UK higher education. She describes her experience in the aftermath of the university accepting the proposal:

Amina: *"I was shocked to be honest, when they accepted it. I thought that was normal, I thought every university had it (extenuating circumstances for racial trauma). To be honest I think that's why White people came for my neck when they went public. It's wild that the institution was absolutely fine with making the policy happen, there was no pushback. Then, a lot of right-wing newspapers were essentially making up stories, like how you can now get your university degree without going through the normal processes. And it's not. We have extenuating circumstances for loads of other issues, just not systemic racism, which is specifically to protect marginalised communities. They didn't even read it, they were just like 'racial trauma, you can extend the deadline', and ran with it. And then the university basically threw us to the media to get publicity. So they're sending emails to council members saying 'this is amazing' and at the same time I'm getting death threats and being called the n-word and they didn't do anything."*

Kavita, responding: *"That's terrible, I'm so sorry that happened. It's just so fucking disgusting that they didn't put support systems in place. Also, it's really hilarious. Well not hilarious, but just so ironic that it's about racial trauma, and then you're being attacked racially for it and they won't put a support system in front of you, but you can have your essay deadline moved, lol."*

In this exchange, we see how what it means to mess up is layered and sutured through both the students' and the institution's attempt to configure failure in relation to harm. At the surface, there is the requirement of documentation to evade failure, the demarcating of 'extenuating circumstances' premised on recognition and justification of certain types of failure and not others. Interestingly, racial trauma is only a recent incorporation and one that is described as provoking violent pushback, specifically towards the Black students involved in the campaign. Moreover, in understanding systemic racism as integral to the colonial inheritances of the 'messed up' institution, to be a racially minoritised body, a queer body, a disabled body, is to be an already failing body (Kafer 2013) and, as the students repeatedly outline, consistently failed by structures and systems that render one as such. In harnessing the students' campaign to dilate the grounds for failure as an emblem of institutional progress and achievement ("*this is amazing*"), institutional failure is evacuated and responsibility obscured. In a twofold manoeuvre, the university is positioned as both acknowledging and displacing accountability for systemic racism. If we are to understand failure as the neglect or omission of action, the irony or absurdity contained in Kavita's "*lol*" here, highlights the racial harm perpetuated not just by hostile response and the lack of support, but in the very instance of this dis/avowal.

Through the narratives shared during the workshops and analysed in this article, the students offered a political frame through which to understand experiences of 'messing up' – a way of placing failure both within specific social and political conditions that dictate institutional life, and in uneasy affective landscapes as both impossibility and inevitability. From this bind, there emerged a sense of what I might describe as joyful defiance in the creative 'work' of the workshop. In the mess-themed workshop particularly, several of the mini-zines created espoused an embrace of failing at the task at hand, the word "bad" repeating over and over. *"This is a bad zine. This is not art or good, it is a crime scene. There is so much going on and I'm expected to do work. Fight me."* one declares. *"I did a bad job and the world did not end."* Another is simply emblazoned with the words *"FUCK OFF"* and a grinning mouth. The aesthetic is celebratory, bright colours and glitter. A smudged print advises: *"Before you do it, do it badly";* ballpoint scrawls in the margins add: "*You are allowed to break. Maybe you are Broken, you don't owe the world happiness."* As we chat and share our zines with each other, Haleema offers: *"I wanted to make something bad. Messy implies there's a correct way of being."*

There is a kind of mischievous antagonism to be found in the rejection of creating something 'good' or correct, as well as the wilful insolence of the sentiment *"fight me."* Following Halberstam's conceptualisation of failure as a fundamentally queer undertaking, one that breaks with

heteronormative and capitalist ideals of (re)productivity, subverting hegemonic ideals of success becomes a way refusing the promise of orderliness that successful subjecthood offers (2011, 3), instead valorising the unruly, the messy, in a quest towards a different way of being in the university and world at large. This is not to diminish the material/affective realities of what it means to become aberrant to the schema of success, something also encompassed in the sober affirmation: *"maybe you are Broken, you don't owe the world happiness."* At the same time, this break can be read as a different kind of shattering, fracture in the name of reconstituting what wholeness may look like. In these inscriptions, we find a notion of failure as anti-respectability (Glover & Glover, 2019) that directly admonishes academic ideals of productivity, coherence and diligence in favour of "recuperating failure as a necessary condition of resistance" (Singh 2018, 37).

Hot Mess

Kavita: I've had this Frank Ocean song in my head the whole week: (singing) "I'll be the boyfriend in your wet dreams tonight…" Instantly, Leila, Haleema & Roz join in, continuing the lyrics. Nish puts the song on a little speaker and their voices blur together with Ocean's. The song, about grief and queer love, becomes a type of affective atmosphere, the cacophony of voices swelling in the room, repeating, like an incantation.

Our conversations during the workshops, while orbiting experiences of racism, critiques of neoliberalism and the colonial underpinnings of the institution, were just as much filled with the pleasurable and at times painful detritus of our everyday lives, with topics often veering towards desire, sex and queer relationships: what Leila referred to, during our conversation about the process post-workshops, as "*chatting shit as well as about the deep stuff*". For instance, during the first workshop on *Mess*, the distinction between casual and dating is raised and discussed, as well as non-monogamy, followed by deciphering the romantic undertones of one person's recent "*ambiguous hang*". We talk about period sex (*June: "sex is so messy"*), about the racially biased algorithms of dating apps, about taking the rap for your sibling's hidden dildos. In revisiting our conversations, I was struck by the way the erotic, dirty, intimate and pleasurable were interwoven in our exchange and creating together. Throughout the zine, (queer) desire, love and pleasure consistently appear: a piece of creative writing describes "*fumbling hands, as you unzip jeans*", a collaborative collage poem titled *Ingénue* is described to the group as a speculative story of a "*woman over it all, who runs away from heteropatriarchy to live her best life as part of a lesbian commune*". Resisting the inclination to extrapolate these instances from the 'relevant rest' of the conversation, to see them as somehow distinct, I ask what might be uncovered in evoking

not only the "*deep*" (and thereby worthy of attention) but also the "*shit*", that perversely intimate residue that reveal to us the embodied and porous aspects of the students' queer and racialised experiences? The sweat-drenched stories from the club, the gossip and salacious asides, inventories of crushes and heartbreaks, the confiding in each other of longings and yearnings.

The idea of archives as carrying an erotic or bodily charge is not new. Scholars such as Singh (2018) and Puwar (2021) have theorised the archive not only as comprising but collapsing into the body. Archival engagement itself has been described as a source of pleasure, arousal and seduction (Bradley 1999), and promiscuity (Ajamu et al. 2020). madison moore's (2021) work on queer nightlife describes the accidents, spills, slippages and glitches of the dancefloor as sleaze: those "unlikely sites that trade in voluminous and messy pleasures, fun, and excess", oozing alongside alternative spatial and temporal logics, and against the colonial orderings of heterosexuality.[3] In gathering and valorising the students' experiences and affects as repositories of knowledge, my intent is also to unsettle the rigid containment of traditional archives, to argue for a malleable anarchival praxis that may absorb these deviating and deviant secretions.

During a workshop where we experiment with making lino prints, Faith carves out an image of two cherries, one of which interrupts the word *ENTIRETY*, written below. They explain that the print is about allowing themselves to experience the entirety of their desires, to not diminish these wants in order to appease others. They specify that they are alluding not only to their relationship to the academy, their struggle to find support for the directions they yearn to take with their research project (for instance an undermining of arts-based methods and topics of colonialism), but also their sexuality. In this example, as with others, these aspects are relayed as precisely not distinct; in directing attention to sexuality, desire and pleasure, I posit that this allows a writing against the logics of disembodiment experienced by the students in higher education, as well as capturing the students' refusal of a contained and sanitised self. Foregoing a neatening or straightening their narratives, the demand for an entirety of experience also reconfigures the university as implicated in the material realities of what it means to be queer and racially minoritised, calling into question the borders of inside/outside, academic/personal, and understanding the erotic as a source and form of knowledge (Lorde 1978).

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[3]For elaboration on the entanglement of colonialism with the construction of gender and (hetero)sexuality, Lugones (2008), Snorton (2017) and Oyěwùmí (1997) offer comprehensive insights.

In this consideration, it is important to mention the experiences conveyed were not solely connected to desire and pleasure, but also at times to (sexualised) harm. At the beginning of our first workshop, Kavita asks if she can take a few minutes to share an experience she had on public transport, coming to the workshop. She describes how she and her girlfriend were verbally and physically assaulted by a stranger:

"...this man who was two metres away from me started shouting 'lesbians' at us and I was like urgh. And we weren't holding hands or kissing or anything so it was obviously from the way that C presents herself. And then he was like to me 'do you like her?', and I was like 'it's none of your business'. C always gets super aggressive with these things which is great but also super uncomfortable and she just started shouting at him "do you like cock?" (...) Apparently, he got a knife out, but I didn't see it. It was really weird, I just felt like I had to say it."

Echoing other experiences shared among the group, the extract above demonstrates how the complexities of race, gender and sexuality profoundly saturate lived experience and thereby the ways in which we engage with, and are able to care for, each other in creative and collaborative practice. How, to quote one of the students, research is never just research but "*meets the blurred edges of everyday life.*" The outside is not simply the outside, but spills 'in', refiguring the space of the workshop beyond its physical and temporal boundaries, and our collective creation (of the zine, but also our relation to each other) as a continuous arrival. Thus, the way that the space is able to dilate (or not) in holding and caring for the multitudes – the mess – of lived experience, affective and embodied, is significant.

Mess, here, as related desire and sexuality teases the conceptual boundaries of the archive. It points to the way in which the entirety of embodiment, including the "low, the funky, the flesh, the things that make bodies moan, groan and shudder" (Collins-White et al. 2016, 471) – is often disregarded as a valid source of knowledge or given space within institutional archives – and how this directly related to the ways in which the survival of subjugated communities has necessitated circumvention of legibility and surveillance. Documentation of life among queer and racially minoritised communities is therefore inevitably engaged with the ephemeral, to that which evades capture (Muñoz, 2019). Attending to the sexual, the aberrant, the *hot mess*, thus becomes a way of thinking through the disorderly, porous, transgressive and sensuous possibilities of our zine-making as a profoundly queer and anti-respectable undertaking (McFarlane and Cummings, 2020), a capacious way of archiving that challenges its assumed enclosures and embraces the messy multitudes of queer and racially minoritised personhood.

Leaving a mess

The title of our zine is 'Held'. We landed on the title together, during a conversation post-workshops, while reflecting on how we felt about the process and space created. Held alludes to the way in which, as Leila put it during this conversation, the workshops were a space to "*both be held and hold each other*", a way of nurturing connection. Holding can also mean to suspend; I am drawn to Christina Sharpe's description of how notes, as memory, pitch, observation or record made with care, might be held across distance, time and space, so that "with them you may be held, and held" (2023, 3). In this section, I continue to complicate what the archive does and does not hold, how we might grasp and give contour to those material, transitory and relational remains which do not coalesce into neatly legible forms.

One point of entry is to attend to the literal mess of the workshops, to the spatial matter itself. I share here two of my own notes: two descriptions of two tables. The first is at SOAS, where one of the students was enrolled and procured a group room for us to use:

We're somewhere in the labyrinthine underbelly of SOAS. After a tense negotiation with the security guard where I lie about our student statuses and meticulously write out our names on a sheet of scavenged printer paper, we're finally ushered in. None of us are strangers to being conspicuous; I try to be discreet about the sloshing juice cartons, acrylics and overflowing magazines in my bag. We spread out for the workshop, rearrange the layout, jackets strewn across plastic chairs, an array of corner shop crisps, pens, scissors, paint, and cuttings tangled across the table. The theme is Mess and I've invested in fitting materials: glue pens, things that ooze and stick, glitter that explodes when you remove the cap, a leaky marbling kit that requires a tub of water that we fill from the toilets down the hall. A spraycan leaves a jet of black across one of the tables and several of us, giggling, combine frantic efforts to scrub it off with loo roll before leaving.

The second is from our final workshop at my then-home:

Amina arrives late and grabs some of the mattar paneer from the big vat in the kitchen. I found a gold table cloth from East Street Market which, along with everything on top of it, seems to be glimmering: the paints, glasses of juice, the chipped green bowls, phone screens, the fire from the candles, the silver of lino cutters. There's music playing from the speaker, June is showing someone how to do a headstand, there's movement in and out of the room, somewhere on the

table my recorder is recording but the sediment of our conversations and voices compound and blur until they're… not indistinguishable but indiscernible, punctuated occasionally by a laugh.

Both of these somewhat contrasting scenarios pertain to space-making and the materiality of the environments in which the workshops took place. In the first, we are in what I describe as the 'underbelly' of the institution, the basement of SOAS, an institution explicitly established as a colonial project, for the purpose of training administrators, military officers, doctors and missionaries for postings across Asia and Africa. There is a certain irony, or perhaps pertinence, of talking about racialisation, resistance, queerness, the muddle of our intimate lives in this particular space. The undercurrents of stealth in the above excerpt, the slanted and surreptitious mode of access, the material overturning of the space itself, evokes Fred Moten and Setfano Harney's (2013) notion of the undercommons; how thinking with fugitivity in the university, not as exit but as flight and resistance, occupying the ambivalence of being "in but not of" the institution, to follow Karma Chávez' (2017, 68) reading, might nourish practices of queer of colour space-making(/taking, to evoke Moten and Harney's ethics of theft). We harness university funds, resources and rooms to engage in what Mariam Rashid et al. might term "fugitive convivial praxis" – a communal gathering aiming to "unsettle and resist forces of governmentality in the neoliberal colonising university" (2023, 1). In my own turning to the undercommons, I find a generous and generative lens through which to position our collective praxis as alteric rather than (primarily) opposition-centred resistance towards the colonial logics and oppressions of academia. Additionally, I extend the notion of this fugitive gathering (the coming together of beings, knowledges, experiences, and affects through the workshops) to encompass a mode of collective anarchiving in which the affective dimensions and materiality of the space – the mess of it – may itself be understood as constitutive of archiving as a form of knowledge creation.

For instance, in considering the mess of the spray-paint, I weigh the relation of this joyful splatter to the institutional imperative to erase and contain the presence of marginalised people within institutional spaces of higher education. How, even as we are trying to remove the traces of our being there, to contain and clean the mess, Leila jokes that we're "*vandalising*" the space as a "*fuck you*" to the institution. I read this remark as intentional hyperbole (we also all agree that we do not want to burden the cleaners with extra labour. As a digression I won't pursue here, the unequal distribution of this labour, in short who ends up cleaning whose mess, both figuratively and literally, is also worthy of consideration); however, it brings into focus the splatters, etchings and stains we leave as their own

form of resistance, a desecration of the university space, a materialised antithetic to colonial notions of purity and cleanliness in relation to whiteness (Taylor 2019). This absence-presence hints at something not quite here, but possible. A fleeting defiance which, though wiped away, nonetheless creates, marks, shapes.

I have, earlier in this article, argued for desire as a core aspect of our zine-making and conversations, not only thematically, but also in terms of reconfiguring the temporal and spatial dimensions of space we are able to create. To expand this argument, I would like to share one more conversation extract from this same basement workshop:

June: Is there anywhere else we can go? Cos like academia is shit, acting is shit, corporations are shit, the diversity and inclusion places are shit, like where else can we go?

Kavita: we'll stay in this room forever, we'll never leave

(laughter)

Leila: that's the only option. Lock the doors. And the little man guard outside losing his mind and us being like 'nope we've locked the doors'

Leila: we're occupying this building until this shit changes

Haleema: exactly, we can just do crafts every day

Nish: we've got the luxury cookies, we'll be fine

In this extract, a question is posed: about direction and space, yes, and more profoundly about livability. *Where else can we go?* I read this as: how do we survive, thrive, within harmful and oppressive structures? This is not simply about academia, but understands the university as one iteration of the mechanisms of racism, capitalism and heteropatriarchy that permeate the conditions for living. In response, Kavita jokes that *"we will stay in this room forever"*. Of course, it is not a viable solution to never leave the basement of SOAS, but the momentary speaking into life of this fugitive vision, a future-present in which we simply stay, doing crafts, as one of political action (framed as an occupation) expresses a desire for an 'elsewhere' within reach, enshrining our gathering as a space both against and beyond the institution. Where time and space is collapsed through separation from exterior domination, imagined as a locking of doors. Evasion of governance becomes symbolised

through the figure of the angry "*little man guard*", the diminutive sizing down not only refusing ("*nope*") but decanting these systems of surveillance and control. In this imaginary elsewhere, there is, again, an expression of resistance not simply as opposition to these structures, but as alterity. There is an acknowledgement that *"shit"* needs to change, but at the same time an entirely different space is configured, one where there are cookies, nourishment, art; a space of collectivity, creation and care. Although this space does not *actually* exist, the enactment of desire that underpins this vision, its speculative shaping, is, I argue, a very real and discerning answer to the question posed. *Where else do we go?* We continue to desire. We stay, elsewhere.

In the second vignette from my home space, there is not the same sense of covertness, of scavenging, of being in relation to space in a mode of fugitivity. Astray from the institutional apparatus, the space is structured differently, for instance in the way it spills over, unrestrained, expanding beyond the table or room itself, and in the affective registers it contains. There is a more dynamic sense of relationality; home-cooked food is shared, there is movement and bodily touch, the flat whiteness of the institution is replaced with luminosity.

The stuff of the space brings it into being as a vessel for relationality in a different way, opening up registers of union and care which, as Piepzna-Samarasinha (2018) reminds us, are necessary not just for, but as a form of, resistance for marginalised people. Despite permeating our workshops, these registers are not easily compartmentalised, or even comprehensible. This becomes evident in the act of recording, the conversations and affective frequency of the space, though taped and thus audible and technically documented, merge and layer in such a way that they are not extractable as 'data' that can be individualised and categorically distilled. In tending to what is 'left behind', those messy remains and transient traces that defy linear notions of archival preservation and proof, I argue that these are not only material and affective, but also relational. The 'relational residue' – the spaces, friendships and remnants we create of and among each other – although not fixed or bound, are nonetheless an integral part of our praxis of anarchiving, of creating, sharing knowledge and affirming each other.

During this last workshop, in exchanging reflections around endings and departure, Haleema creates several lino prints carved with a Persian saying, gifting it to the rest of us in the group. She explains that the saying: جایت سبز , meaning "*your place remains green*", is a way to signify that the space you occupied, though you may no longer be present, continues to nourish and be nourished. The

sentiment encapsulates how relational repositories – of intimacy, friendship, collectivity – vitally inflect our praxis across time and space, how we carry and are carried by these bonds.

Messing with

In the above, I have attempted to flesh out the ephemeral, affective, material and desiring qualities of or workshops as a type of anarchival practice, one that allows for the intimate residues of our lives, for the unruly mess of experience. I have argued that this mess, not only the students' experiences but the way in which we have approached the creation of knowledge together resists systemic categorisation, makes connections across time and space, and spills over the bounds of linearity, scientificity, objectivity and productivity revered within the university and that the students repeatedly come up against. Mess, in this way, functions on different levels. Mess as a theoretical and analytical lens to capture queer and racialised experiences in higher education. Messy beings whose experiences do not fit neatly into established categorisations, messy methods that do not follow systematic approaches of quantifiability and productivity, and messy outcomes that challenge coherence, evidence and the governing forces of scholarly inquiry and archival knowledge creation.

Interrogating these structuring forces by collaboratively creating towards disarray becomes a way of messing with established modes of understanding and creating the archive as a static repository of knowledge. This, I argue, is intimately tied to desire. Desire not only as a crucial aspect of the students' queer and racialised experiences – the *hot mess* of their lifeworlds that challenges the santisation and neatening of narratives – but as a charge throughout the conversations that reroutes our practice of anarchiving as a mode of space and knowledge-making. Several archival scholars have drawn on Tuck's call for "desire-based research" (Lookabaugh 2022, Springgay 2020, Ware 2017), which she describes as a counterbalance to research that centres damage through pathologising marginalised communities through binaries of broken and conquered, thus reproducing relationships of colonial subjugation and state control (2009, 416). I am also drawn to Tuck's framework with which to approach archival practice; however, specifically with regard to the epistemic possibilities of desire. I understand desire as intimately tied to knowledge, as "that messy, sometimes un-gentle, self-shattering descent into the underside of reason" (Rosenberg 2018, np). Working along the tracks of those who connect the speculative, fabulation, the otherwise, as paths to doing and living possibility (Hartman 2019, Sharpe 2023, Olufemi 2021), this article convenes unruly and digressive routes to think through desire as a type of knowledge and space-making that shifts focus from understanding resistance as (solely) opposition to alterity. Our practice, I argue, is an anarchival one precisely because it is invested

not in evidencing or resistance as a 'countering' of the institutional oppressions of the university (and thus centring coloniality), but in messing with its very premises. It is this collective desire that makes way for the mess of disjunction, revelling in the overspill towards knowledge and space-making that urges practices of recuperation, care and creativity, and that contours a space of holding and being held.

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ARTICLE 3

"That's something worth protecting, imo":
Caring for Knowledge in Collective Organising

ABSTRACT

This article appends the concept of care to discussions of epistemology and resistance, analysing experiences of grassroots organising to explore how care is enacted and navigated in relation to collective knowledge creation. Specifically, it explores how three London-based collectives (two members of bare minimum, two members of SHY, and one member of daikon*) understand, grapple with and deploy care in their organising and creating knowledge together. The analysis is primarily based on a collaborative online workshop and harnesses the concept of 'radical care' to explore the connection between care, resistance and epistemology, centring both the political ethos of the collectives themselves as well as the history of care as a praxis of liberatory struggle. In describing the collectives' navigations, I argue that they articulate a practice of radical care that resists colonial and capitalist modes of labour; that they approach care as profoundly relational and irreducible to either affect or action; that they reject dichotomised models of care as linear, unidirectional or transactional; and that they insist on malleability – of ideas, desires and needs – in their striving for mutual liveability.

Introduction

Engaging with concepts such as epistemic violence (Spivak 1988), epistemic disobedience (Mignolo 2009), refusal (Simpson 2007) and epistemicide (Santos 2014), scholars have long connected epistemology with questions of power and resistance, premising knowledge as politically implicated. This article aims to append the concept of care to these discussions, analysing experiences of grassroots organising in a UK context to explore how care is enacted and navigated in relation to collective knowledge creation. Drawing on a conversational workshop with three London-based collectives who work with knowledge creation across anti-capitalist, queer, anti-racist, abolitionist and disability justice-informed critiques, the article shows how care is not simply a mode of sustaining resistance in collective organising but can be understood as a form of resistance in of itself; one that cultivates conditions for alteric ways of creating, enacting and caring for epistemologies against and beyond systems of oppression.

It is important to mention that this project was carried out as a global pandemic was transpiring, disproportionately affecting marginalised communities and casting questions of care into sharp and brutal focus. Declarations of a 'care crisis' (Piepzna-Samarasinha 2022) crystalised for whom this crisis could be configured as a singular, unprecedented event and those populations for whom emergency is an ever-present condition of living. In the UK, political shorthands such as 'pre-existing conditions' and 'herd-immunity' represented a barely-veiled rhetoric of disabled people's lives as expendable. The unequal distribution of care lay bare. Who is afforded care, and on what

grounds? Who is conscripted to care and to be cared for? Who can afford (to) care? And, importantly, what do we mean by care?

This article explores how three London-based collectives understand, grapple with and deploy care in organising and creating knowledge together. The analysis is largely based on an online workshop, conducted in the spring of 2022 with two members of *bare minimum* (Lola and Christie), two members of *SHY* (Holly and Fez) and one member of *daikon** (Han). Each of these groups works with collective knowledge creation in different ways and the individuals who took part in the workshop study at or recently graduated from universities in London. Understanding knowledge as configured and implicated beyond institutional parameters, I reached out to collectives whose work positions itself at times within but simultaneously against and beyond institutional settings such as universities, galleries, and national funding bodies. The collectives themselves are constituted by students, artists and workers, as well as all/none of the above.

The intention of the workshop was to share reflections and experiences, as well as to create a collaborative zine which would archive our conversation together and could be used/circulated according to the group's wishes. I knew some of the participants personally, while others I met during my time carrying out fieldwork in London through mutual connections and interests in DIY publishing and queer and antiracist organising. The zine contains a transcript of the conversation, which was collectively edited by the group, as well as a joint creative writing exercise we all participated in during the session. Subversive knowledge creation strategies have a historical anchoring in UK political organising, and self-publishing through mediums such as zines has been integral within various grassroots movements, particularly Black and women of colour feminist formations such as OWAAD (Siddiqui 2019). Creating a zine together was both a way to intentionally foreground and align with this tradition, as well as a mode of creating and documenting collectively beyond the foreclosures of individualised scholarship within academia. In this article, I give attention to the workshop participants' narratives, honing in on the ways care is articulated and how this is connected to knowledge creation, both through experiences of collective organising, as well as the practice of the workshop itself. I use the concept of radical care to undergird my analysis and as a springboard from which to explore the connection between care, resistance and epistemology.

Coming together in conversation

The material included in this article emerged from several informal encounters and conversations with members of each collective, where I explained the nature of my wider project and we shared experiences of working collaboratively and what it means to create knowledge conspiring against institutional frameworks. These initial exchanges sparked the idea of harnessing resources offered through my PhD project to create a collaborative zine while also connecting and sharing experiences of collective organising among different queer and antiracist grassroots groups working with knowledge creation in London. After coordinating and discussing potential formats via online conversations and email correspondence, we landed on a workshop that would take the shape of a conversation, facilitated by myself. During this workshop, we discussed different questions under the rubric of 'Collective Knowledges' with the intent of creating a zine together based on this conversation. Guiding questions were decided on together beforehand based on the interests of the groups and what they wished to share and reflect on with each other. These questions were: "*What does it mean to care for each other when working collectively? What do those processes – the doing – feel like? How can we think about access and differences when doing collective work? How do we negotiate the pressures of productivity and visible action? What does it mean to produce collective knowledge beyond/against institutions?*" Before delving into conversation, in order to allow the format of the workshop to reflect an ethos of collectivity, vulnerability and exploration, I started by faciciltating a creative writing exercise in which each of us brought a piece of text which resonated with the theme of the workshop and that we wanted to share with the group. The texts were then joined together by pasting them into a shared online document. During the exercise, we spent five minutes collectively rearranging each others' texts, followed by five minutes adding words to the document and, finally, five minutes removing words from the document.

Each of these collectives – *bare minimum*, *SHY* and *daikon** – have in common that they are formed of individuals who occupy multiple margins (across class, race, gender and sexuality), who organise against and beyond institutions, and who work collectively with knowledge creation in various forms. Equally, a through-line in their work is a politics rooted in anti-capitalist, queer, anti-racist, abolitionist and disability justice informed critiques. *bare minimum*, for instance, describe themselves as a collective of differently positioned friends (queer, disabled, poor, racialised) that "*believes in doing nothing or at the very least, as little as is required of us. We hate work — the drudgery of wage labour, the grind, the side hustle, the neoliberal requirement for self-improvement … We reject all ideas of recognition, linear progress, all notions of success inside capitalist rubrics.*" (bare minimum, 2020). The collective strives for

an end to capitalism, or "*the abolition of everything but care, mutual aid and community*" while also accentuating a strategic relationship to institutions in striving for a world "*which has not yet been realised*" (ibid). *SHY* similarly critiques notions of productivity while focussed specifically on higher education and providing resources that represent BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and People of Colour) voices. Committed to "*the process of decolonising and democratising education*", *SHY* "*seeks to make academia accessible so that intellectual information does not remain in only the hands of those that are privileged*". The collective aims to "*bring the revolutionary texts that we have found empowering and share them with our communities*" (Tough Cookie Mag 2021, 42). Their work includes writing for *Sweet Thang*, a zine that celebrates work by Black women and non-binary Black folks. *daikon** also work with zines, creating radical and educational resources by and for South East and East Asian people of marginalised genders in the diaspora. The collective has published several issues, most recently *Abolitionist Approaches to Hate Crime*, and describes their collaboration as based on an "*ethic of solidarity, care and good faith*" (daikon* 2023). My focus on care grew from the collectives' engagement with the concept. Care was described as central to each collective's practice, and was a connecting theme in sharing and reflecting together during our conversation. Although I do not see myself as part of a collective, I shared and situated my experience as someone involved in collective organising, for instance, in co-running (un)told (alongside Elisabeth Bruun Gullach), a curatorial project featuring BIPOC writers, and Venom Zine Library (with Janna Aldaraji), both based in Copenhagen. The latter aims to collectivise access to zines, share resources on zine-making and self-publication as a radical tool to document local movements.

In the following, I analyse our conversation as it is documented in the zine[1], bringing to the fore the participants' experiences and narratives of care. I give significant space to their quotes as I want to elevate their insights and reflections as inherent to the analysis – not distinct from but part of (co)theorising care. Additionally, I weave this analysis together with descriptions of the creative writing exercise as a way to refract and reflect the space of the workshop and process itself as an extension of our various experiences, and an expression of how care might be navigated. The collective writing practice functions as both a practical and metaphorical hinge through which I reflect on various enactions and arguments surrounding the collectives' approaches to care.

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[1]The group had access to and edited the conversation transcript before its inclusion in the zine/this article, while we agreed I would be responsible for the layout and design of the zine.
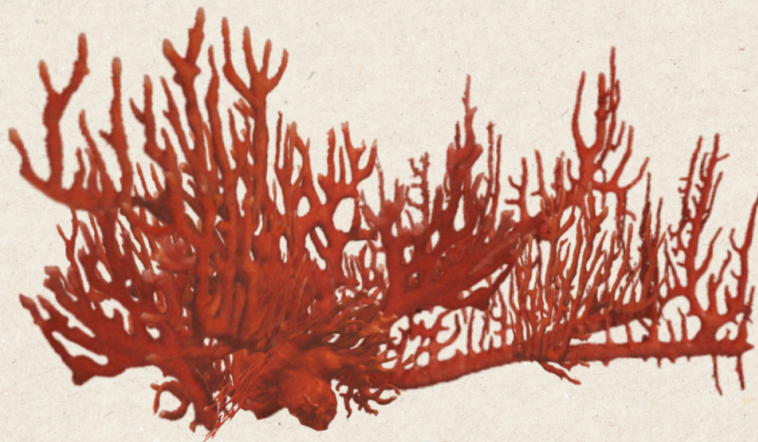
Figure 1. Zine-cover, Collective Knowledges

Framing care

"Care is complicated, gendered, misused. It is often mobilised to enact violence, not assuage it, yet I cannot surrender it" (Sharpe 2023, 333).

Care is integral to existence, central to many social and political movements, to sustaining a livable world, and yet, as Christina Sharpe so clearly articulates, care is also complicated, contested and co-opted – stretched in ways that paradoxically evoke violence, spurring some to question whether the word can or even should be recuperated (Eales and Peers 2020). And still, perhaps because of the way that care clings to both power and liberation, it is difficult to unstick, to do away with. Care's haunts and harms stir a certain hesitancy in committing it as a theoretical and analytical conduit for this paper, yet, in sifting through the material of this research, I find care everywhere, stubbornly present, vital and unyielding.

Feminist scholarship has long grappled with both the potentials and pitfalls of care. Much of the literature has orbited care in relation to mandates of (re)productivity within capitalist regimes of exploitation, often pointing to the ways in which care has historically constituted forms of uncompensated and invisibilised feminised labour (Federici 1975, Noddings 1984). However, criticism has been levied against the work of liberal feminist scholars for neglecting not only the racialised and colonial underpinnings that continue to shape care labours (Hartman 2016, Nakano Glenn 1992), but also in erasing the way in which care has been weaponised to perpetrate violence against especially queer, Indigenous, Black, POC and disabled communities (Eales and Peers 2020, Seiler 2020, Emejulu & Bassel 2018). Moreover, this literature pushes back at the heteronormative and eurocentric suturing of care with (white) womanhood and domesticity (Fisher & Tronto 1990). Or, as Martin Manalansan (2008) articulates, in his reflections on migrant domestic workers, accounting for the narratives and experiences of queer and trans people disrupts and expands theorisations of care work beyond "home-based" or "authentic" kinship and emotion. To this end, writing from trans, queer, disabled, Black and queer-of-colour feminists has provided innumerable interventions demonstrating how care supersedes a narrow paradigm of labour and has been integral to sustaining bonds of kinship, resistance and survival against and despite failures of care in infrapolitical systems (Wong 2020, Malatino 2020, Edelman 2020, Piepzna-Samarasinha 2018, Nash 2018, Lorde 1980). Particularly for those who are marginalised, care may thus encompass all that enables and protects lives – work which "inaugurates a more livable world", to quote Nat Raha (2021, 642). Following these scholars, this paper aims to destabilise definitions of care rooted

in normative social reproduction; contingent affects of benevolence/empathy (care-as-feeling) or as moral obligation, which uphold mechanisms of governance and oppression (Seiger 2020, for instance, offers insight into how this is linked to a biopolitical project of white supremacy, in which empathy is historically coded as an evolutionary achievement and disposition of whiteness). Instead, it argues that care is inextricably linked to justice (Lake, 2023). From this springboard, care is understood "as a practice and politics aimed at resisting the gendered, biopolitical regimes of settler colonialism and racial capitalism" (Grande 2021, 45), thus centring both the political ethos and positioning of the collectives themselves, as well as the history of care as a praxis of liberatory struggle.

In order to imbue substance to this distinction, I use the term "radical care" to describe the experiences and tensions of care enacted, negotiated and reflected upon by the collectives. I borrow this term from Kawehipuaakahaopulani Hobart and Kneese, who, in a special issue of the same title, describe radical care "a set of vital but underappreciated strategies for enduring precarious worlds" (2020, 2). They posit that although this type of endurance does not seek to diminish or fully disentangle itself from the "dark histories" associated with care, it extends an otherwise – an alteric way forward (2020, 3). Following this definition, I understand radical care as a politics and praxis which is critically attuned to the violences and neglects of capitalist and colonial systems, while purposefully "operationalising care" towards liberation (ibid). It is a type of care that emphasises collectivity, drawing on offerings from critical disability justice scholars and activists in disrupting notions of fixed, autonomous selfhood and understanding interdependence as foundational for constellating kinship and solidarity in organising (Piepzna-Samarasinha 2022, Mingus 2017, Chen et al. 2023).

than you can imagine.

desire was warm recently /   salt / devotion as salt / gives way to salt
as you are / a body boiled down to desire/ as a noun, as to say *desire* / *all over my face or say desire/*
coming down my leg / or desire feels cold/ which lets you know /

do not make choices as your fearful self or your angry self.   Lovers   here to tell you that
there is a choice in front of you.   Do not be fooled into thinking that a choice is
simply a road that diverges into two paths.   a winding staircase that goes on further Branching,
dividing, rejoining   Who are you dressed up as? I know it's hard. Look
upon   the person you want to be, for that is how you will become them

do you?, and you didn't ask. I'm not,
                    You look very nice, but why are you   ? *You didn't even ask what I'm dressed up*
as. Did you eat before you went out? *I had those nuts I told you that already.* Ok well that's not really
dinner.   *I feel like a tiny child*
I just want some kind of acknowledgement it's so sad you don't even   *I came back but I might as*
well have just not   Animal   Mineral   Sartoronicles

Recently / I cut the fruit, measure the honey [...], i text Christine & she says, *i was bout to text you,*
bitch [...] you request like a demand, *make me some of that mango cornbread* you made coming out
coming in

        the storm / i would love you even if you killed and I'd love you to / you love me despite the
history of my hands, their mangled confessions /   you who screens my nudes
            / you are the drug that knocks the birds from my heart / o the horrid friends who were
just ships harboring me to you / & how many times have you loved me without my asking? / / with yo
ugly ass / *You don't even know* at the end of the world, let there be you / my world from
acknowledgements by Danez Smith

how often have i loved a thing because you loved it / including me: I think collaboration can rescue us
from our own fear! *(Thank you)*

community feels at times   changing, fickle

Visibility is something which has become increasingly difficult, and I need to find more accessible
ways to be, to become. I have been fucking exhausted by processes and systems. Knowing how to
make myself visible and the realisation that some things I just have to make peace with, and learn
how to build

I've been thinking a lot about this conversation between Fred Moten, you, God and Stefano Harney
on the nature of   . They said something like, collaboration
heightens our *responsiveness* to one another. I'm stuck: what does it **mean** to remain responsive,
open, attentive to those people you place yourself in community with? how often have i loved a thing
because you loved it / including me. Even if/when that etc. That's something worth protecting, imo.

Figure 2: Creative writing exercise

Care against capitalism: circumventing institutional regimes

At one point in our conversation, Fez shares an anecdote, recounting how she and Holly had worked tirelessly on a resource they were creating collectively for *SHY*. Caught with an idea, Fez changed large parts of the content without consulting Holly:

"My mind is working and I'm thinking about all these things and I'm imagining how it looks and I've got a vision, and I basically spent hours undoing all the work we'd created together. When Holly logged back on and was like 'where are all my infographics, where are all the things I put there?' I was like 'they're gone'. That was a moment where I realised that I hadn't cared. Cared about the time that we'd put in, I hadn't cared about Holly's vision, I'd just been considering what was in my mind, and I think that was a very capitalist thing to do, or a really student-like thing to do. To just log on and fix everything."

Fez describes this as a moment of realisation, noting that this was not a way that she wanted to create collectively. She juxtaposes a caring praxis, in which collective efforts and visions are valued mutually against a capitalist mode of productivity and efficiency, with the impetus to "fix", which becomes an individualised undoing of care. Fez goes on to explain how this prompted questions of process, how *SHY*'s work is in fact diminished when labour is viewed through a lens of production: "*Whenever we try to turn it into this rigid thing, like let's meet on this day and spend this amount of time on this, it never works*". Care is not contained in the labour of work – the outcome – itself, but in the practice of creating structures of collaboration that allow *SHY* to circumvent modes of rigid and quantifiable knowledge production. This sense of collectivity as both defiance and reconfiguring of capitalist systems of labour can be seen as emblematic of the type of care that is radical in its quest to divest from oppressive regimes. This was similarly echoed in the practices of the other groups. For instance, Lola, in reflecting on *bare minimum*'s ethos, notes how it can be difficult to sever oneself from these influences in seeking to denounce them:

"*What capitalism or the structure of work does is not only reduce us to individual units but sever that connection and responsibility and obligation that we have to the people that we work with. And in trying to create a different structure, it's sometimes hard to really imbed that.*"

Part of this pursuit of a different structure entailed aspects such as playfulness and creative expression but also a vulnerability in accepting these relational processes as contextual and fluid.

Or, to put it another way, the notion of collectivity does not necessarily equate to a neat and quantifiable mode of unanimity. As Christie explains:

"...as for how we make decisions and do stuff, it's technically on consensus. But often it will be just one or two of us working on something and making little decisions that feel fine and everyone kind of trusts that we're doing things in the spirit of bare minimum, and accepts that things that we might say, even though we say or create them as part of the collective, might not be how everyone feels. The point is that we support each other."

I find it interesting that consensus is distinguished from collectivity here, which allows for care to emerge not simply as part of an equal distribution of productive labour/decision making power, but as primarily concerned with subverting the politics of labour *as* productivity; it involves practical and affective incisions that slow, defer, support and reroute in order for new structures and practices to emerge.

Though underwriting a disavowal of capitalist conditions, our conversation simultaneously reckoned with what it means to be entangled with institutional systems of knowledge production. The collectives detailed the double-edged sword of collaborating with institutions such as universities, galleries and funding bodies, describing both the potential of resources, scope and legitimacy that this grants, as well as the 'risks' that come with such engagement. For example, Han explained how they understood institutional collaboration as beneficial to outreach while also potentially undermining a politics that aims to transcend institutional frameworks:

"There's also some level of 'what are the optics of this? What audiences are we reaching?' With big institutions obviously it's more likely that more people will see our work and it will have a greater reach, but if you keep working with similar institutions your track record might suggest that you're into that and then maybe people who are anti-institutional will question your work."

This risk of dilution, namely the evacuation or watering down of political demands, was also highlighted by pointing to the dilemmas of co-option, whereby the notion of collectivity is mobilised by institutions in order to market themselves as radical, or, as Christie laconically observes, collectives *"are apparently very hot right now"*. She further points to how a politics of theft (Moten and Harney, 2013) is one way of manoeuvring within this landscape, discerning that *"change from within is not possible with institutions … but also, we're very happy to steal their money and do what we want with it."* Lola also notes that a surge in collective work is tied to tangible conditions of austerity –

scarce resources and institutional regimes that don't care – but may also offer entry points to "*undermine the competition or hierarchy that's embedded in institutional structures… in favour of a much more plural approach or orientation.*"

The extracts confront the complexities and paradoxes of being enmeshed in institutional systems while simultaneously seeking to overturn their uncaring logics. Within these tensions lie different possibilities and approaches of circumvention, of taking and redistributing resources, and refusing to be beholden to capitalist modes of individualised productivity. In thinking through the frictions of negotiating a defiance of institutional frameworks while working within as well as beyond its grips, I am drawn to consider the piece of creative writing we created together; how in combining our chosen texts, rearranging, breaking them apart and moulding them together we engage in a process of dismantling to create something anew, wayfinding alternatives within the dimensions and precarities of the page. The lines are unruly and disjointed, collectively merging into new forms and meanings. This, I suggest, extends and transpires through a practice of care which also embodies vulnerability as well as carefulness. Considerations are made – of what to preserve, of how to approach each other's' pieces, of what the core meanings and sensibilities are as the text shifts. For instance, a hesitancy to overwrite that hints at and cautions against the violences of erasure (the last part of the exercise, deleting each other's' words, was described as the most difficult). The doing of the work, the *how* of caring for each other's words is integral to shaping it as a collective poetic, one that might allow for a grammar beyond the structures within which it is contained.

Care as romance, care as conflict

This practice of collective creation was also one that involved relationality; some of the members knew and had worked together across their respective collectives previously, while some hadn't. Despite this, all of the collectives respectively work within constellations of friends, people that they care for deeply. Thus, the type of care described by the collectives was enmeshed in intimate relations, with all of the all affective abundances that these involve. In this sense, their visions align with radical care's reconfiguration of care-as-labour in understanding care as inexorably relational, becoming something "drastically different from most ways care is thought of in the world, as an isolated, begrudgingly done task that is never a site of pleasure, joy, or community building" (Piepzna-Samarasina 2018, 46). To quote Lola from *bare minimum*, this type of work "*feels like a romantic relationship and in a lot of ways it is.*" However, as Christie reflects, affective bonds do not

detract from the demands and negotiations of collective work; if anything, the stakes become more pronounced:

"You'd think it would be easier to manage that when it's not an evil institution or something, and it is, but it comes with a whole new set of things that you have to pay attention to when it's people that you really love. I feel like that is something I'm trying to sort through in conversation with others and I'm interested to hear what you all think as well."

These reflections show how care both encompasses affective investments and is not minimised or flattened through intimately augmented relations. On the contrary, questions of care become more central to the collective's work. One of the lines from the collective piece of writing reads: *"community feels at times / changing, fickle"*. Our conversation mirrors a reading of care which, in its emotional inflexion, was also onerous, often difficult. Care was also not simply construed in positive terms of enjoyment, affection and pleasure, but also involved reckoning with frictions and antagonisms. One of these was the need to weigh priorities in a way which safeguarded kinship against the impositions of production. As an example, here is an extract from Lola:

"I think the ways that people practise care are not only through physically showing up for each other, but at the end of the day knowing that we would let this go if we needed to. That this is not more important than the connections that we build with one another."

In staying attentive to each other as friends in the course of their shared projects, care might also mean relinquishing these projects entirely. Care thereby becomes not only active engagement in the maintenance of *bare minimum's* work, but more crucially about maintaining the connections that sustain the collective; care not only as conserving, a holding on to, but also letting go. Additionally, the collectives' experiences show how care also means confronting difference, or as Lola notes, that: *"when we're thinking about care, to also think about conflict, that those two things aren't necessarily opposed to one another and that sometimes we come into conflict with each other precisely because we care."* This understanding of care, as capacious enough to not simply withstand but at times to actually equate to conflict, can be seen through the lens of transformative justice approaches, in which care and conflict are not diametrically opposed but in which organising towards radical futures demands the care of holding conflict, in order to cultivate justice beyond punitive and carceral logics (Chen Thom, 2019).

Another way in which the collectives configured care beyond dichotomies was through their understanding that affective bonds and kinship, while central to their work, did not dictate the parameters for building infrastructures of care. For instance, Holly speaks of what it might involve to replicate *SHY*'s experiences of conflict with those with whom they are not in relationship with:

"I guess it's easier when you're in a friendship with somebody because you understand each other and the processes all kind of make sense in the context of that. I was thinking about what Lola said about conflict, and it does still feel like care, in a relationship. Someone will bring something up but you know it's coming from a position of them knowing and caring for you. I was thinking of Fez's story about changing all that stuff and if it had been some random person I didn't know doing that, how I would feel. To me it didn't, at the time, feel like a difficult memory but more just a funny thing. But then I also want to think about how I can create that process with other people. Because you know, you're not always going to be doing collective work with your best friends… I think Fez supports me in more ways than she's aware of. I want to think about ways to replicate that."

In highlighting that *"you're not always going to be doing collective work with your best friends"*, Holly's articulation invokes radical care in its eschewal of empathy as a criterion for care. Care is not affectively conditional. This can also be viewed as emblematic of an abolitionist politic, in which care is not predicated on binaries of good/bad, imbued with qualities of sympathy/benevolence or moral calculations of eligibility (Gilmore 2022), but instead requires problematising who is a deserving subject, or who is even afforded subjecthood, within racist and colonial regimes (Jackson 2020).

Same difference: the myth of commensuration

The piece we assemble together also echoes another facet of radical care, namely its refusal to take on a transactional character. While we each contribute a segment that resonates with us individually, and we each have the same amount of time at our disposal, we do not bring an equal amount of text or engage in the same amount of editing, deleting and adding; we bring our different capacities, speeds and modes of working, in co-creating together. These enactions are subtle, small, not easy to distil. The text is not a neat compartmentalisation of our contributions but exceeds individual demarcations to become something more than the sum of its parts.

In a similar vein, the collectives reflected on how the *"equal distribution of labour is mythical"* (Lola) and that *"grappling the seriousness of care means that sometimes we aren't always meeting in the middle, that*

sometimes you will always be providing more care to someone that you love than they have the capacity to give back, and that that's okay" (Christie). In this sense, the collectives' focus on interdependence gestures to processes of care that are not formed through exchange or measurement, an argument amplified by disability scholars proposing a 'cripping' of labour and dependency (McArthur & Zavitsanos 2013). This myth, "that care work – within and beyond the home – can be somehow equalized … ushers into the ostensible private sphere the same forms of neoliberal task tabulation that circulate (unjustly) in our waged labor" (Hil 2020, 45); radical care can thus be seen to resist these institutionalised and capitalist discourses of commensuration.

While acknowledging this fantasy of uniformity, or, as Han notes, that *"it would be nice to have everything equal but I think it actually doesn't ever work like that in the end because different people have different capacities"*, the collectives also shared how accounting for these differences in their organising also brings with it challenges. For instance, Han shared how, when they took a step back from *daikon**, it was difficult to reconcile the feeling of having lower capacity with accepting that "*other people are picking up the things you are not doing*", even when this has been articulated and agreed upon amongst the group. This tension between an ethos of non-transactional care and an internalised pressure to still account for contributions was also iterated by Holly:

"Because of how me and Fez have been working recently, it's like there's always one of us catching the other and helping to pick things up. Sometimes I feel really bad when I'm not able to engage with things as much as she is, but if I know she's having a difficult time, or not able to do stuff, or busy, I'm more than happy to. So sometimes I'm motivated by the care I give to other people, but with me I'm always like 'I'm not doing what I need to be doing', so I think I need to be better at bringing that back to myself as well and understanding that it's okay that someone else helps out. I always feel like I need to be contributing but sometimes it's not always in a physical thing you're producing but how you support other people to do the things that you're both unable to at a specific point."

Here, Holly reflects both on the desire to replicate an ethics of radical care, one that is rooted in mutuality rather than mensuration, not with others but with herself, and the challenges of doing so. We could read this as a type of negotiation of the 'I' and the collective in navigating what care is and should be, which involves releasing an ideal of contributions as something that can or should be quantified. In moving beyond care as a transactional exchange, Lola also suggests the notion of supplementation to think through collective work. They explain:

"In all those gaps where one person can't do something or another person is AWOL, I think about all of those moments in which care means supplementing each other with our skills and our resources…When I'm tempted to move towards a place of frustration, I remember those times when someone comes up with an idea and I'm like 'I'll write it', and someone else is like 'okay I'll do the visuals', and someone else says 'I'll try and think about how to put it out there' and it seems to work quite perfectly."

The mode of collective work articulated here insists that while instances of care might not be immediately evident or equally visible, they are still in mutual relation. Expanding care past tabulation and equivalence is something which has been theorised by scholars as a form of mutual aid, which offers a useful lens to understand radical care as a non-transactional praxis of supplementation. Mutual aid is a bottom-up, anti-authoritarian form of political participation that seeks to build more survivable conditions through social relations, mutuality and coordinated collective care (Spade 2020). Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, writing from a crip-femme perspective, shows how, particularly for those who are disabled, mutual aid often occurs at a micro-level and according to divergent capacities (2018, 46). Through her concept of care webs, she shows how strategies of care consist of subtle forms of survival work and that care is often low-ley, small-scale, offline, quiet, and, to some, invisible (2022, 65). These lines of thought echo Holly's characterisation of a process that involves accounting for care as support rather than *"a physical thing you're producing",* as well as Lola's notion of supplementation of skills and resources, which, while less tangible or quantifiable, encompasses care's myriad and less evident manifestations.

Social media and smoking areas: moving care

These small and subtle instances of relation and care can also be seen in contrast to external pressures of visibility. For instance, several of the collective members spoke of online presence as the assumed default for output and work, and what it might mean to oppose a prescribed, demonstrative visibility. For instance, Holly and Fez spoke of distancing from social media both as a response to its limitations as well as to their own capacity. Fez describes how,

"...during COVID, there was a lot of performative activism during that time. Social media became this pit of black squares and infographics, and you know, everyone and their nan sharing stuff about what people had been talking about for years. It was just exhausting … it was exciting to begin with and we wanted to take up space within that but then soon realised that these were just posts, essentially. And that's not to say that people don't post things that

are transformative or lead to change, or invigorate people, but it's just that we found that difficult and unsustainable to do. So yeah, with us, for the moment, social media is limited but that's not to say it will always be like that or should be like that for other people. It's about being transparent with ourselves and acknowledging what brings us joy and what doesn't."

Mirroring the exhaustion and move towards transparency that Fez refers to, Holly also adds that withdrawing from social media has allowed her to work more meaningfully and tune into what feels most comfortable for her:

"It's taken me a long time to make peace with that because it feels against what everyone else is doing, but I think that's to do with the journey that I've had over the last two years with disability and giving myself permission to work in a way that suits me. But that doesn't mean I'm never not going to engage – it's about finding alternatives."

Here, visibility is also articulated in direct relation to disability and modes of knowledge sharing that assume a version of communication that is not viable and accessible to all. The extracts above show how structures of visible output, while not diminishing their potential for education, invigoration and change, do not lend themselves equally. How authentically reckoning with capacity means understanding that everyone does not, and cannot, work in the same ways. Additionally, as Holly notes, the notion of engagement itself is mobile and may fluctuate according to how one feels and one's positioning at any given moment.

Holly also speaks of finding alternatives to formalised spaces of work and online output. In the text we write together, there is also a sense of fluidity, of moving in and out of different spaces: sexual intimacy, domesticity, spaces of community, a winding staircase, celestial conversations with theorists. While these spaces interlock, their scaffolding is at times opaque; there are the omitted words that hold up others, the line breaks, the breath and spaces in between. In relation to alternate spaces – the offline and impermanent – *bare minimum* also touched on how much of their work, their collectivity, also takes place *"on the streets, at the club and in the smoking area"* (Christie). This challenges the ways in which we imagine spaces of (academic) knowledge production, recasting the locations from which theorising emerges to encompass the embodied and everyday (Puwar 2021). While agreeing that smoking areas can be fruitful spaces for connection and sharing ideas, this also reanimated the discussions around difference and disability, with Holly reflecting that access to smoking areas currently felt distant, if not impossible. She connects this to a more malleable approach to thinking about collectivity in relation to space and to care:

"I guess along the way we create different spaces, and spaces within each other, we find different opportunities through conversations and people that we meet; we help to support each other's' ideas and capacities. So, in the break, Facetimed Fez and I was like 'this conversation is difficult for me because at the moment I'm struggling with doing things independently, let alone collectively' and talking about smoking areas and stuff - I'm barely going out at the moment. I used to find that a great space. Or you know, thinking about my feelings about university at the beginning, with my little backpack thinking 'this is going to be great', and then that started to feel uncomfortable, so I had to move away from it. Instagram suddenly became this collective space where anything was possible, and then that started to feel really uncomfortable. So I feel like I'm constantly finding new spaces, or rejecting ones that used to feel good but don't anymore. It's hard and maybe collectively it's about understanding that it's this malleable thing that isn't necessarily fixed to one specific space or person but that it's always moving to different places and wanting different things."

In pointing to how smoking areas, and more specifically sociability, are not accessible to all in the same way, Holly proposes an understanding of both space and collectivity which is malleable and shifting. Describing her own trajectories across spaces such as academia and social media, her reflections circumscribe space not only as an external, physical realm but in the cultivation of care and support within and for one another in ways that can be modified, displaced and altered. Furthermore, malleability is also connected to uncertainty, to a type of not-knowing as core to collective work; in order to create knowledge in a caring way, one must be attuned to the impermeability of ideas, desires and needs. This notion of consistent movement and adjustment is an underlying aspect of radical care as articulated by the collectives. To offer an example, here is a reflection that Lola shares:

"I'm trying to think about ways to sustain a kind of collectivity that is adaptable and able to move, whether from real life to online, to other forms of connection. I think that's really what I want to end on because I think that's important - just in the way that the pandemic really changed our social relations. I think we can't really operate any more as if there isn't the possibility of the same kind of rupture, and I think that has to change our understanding of what collectivity means as well."

This rupture, embodied through the pandemic, spurs a conception of collectivity that is not static. Instead, its very porosity is what enables a practice of care that is mutable, reflecting a diversity of needs and positionings. In this way, akin to practices of care as potentially small-scale and subtle, collectivity is also reconfigured as something that may take on transmutable shapes; care,

collectivity and the spaces that these practices inhabit must become adaptable in order to be sustained.

To return to the writing exercise, we see a reflection of transmutability as central and valuable. How, through collective creation, the text transpires in a constant process of negotiation. Against the inertia of fixed knowledge, the lines shift and morph – what we started with is not what we end up with. Even as the form is altered through the touch of each individual, this does not diminish meaning but instead adapts and transforms it. The traces of care seep through as a collective practice of suspending foreclosure in anticipation of new visions, expressions, and worlds.

Conclusion

The narratives shared in this article explore how care is narrated and navigated in relation to collective knowledge creation in grassroots organising. Through the prism of radical care, I write these experiences into an analysis that remains critical to the multiplicity and complexities of care, how "lives are enabled as well as hindered by care" (Nishida 2022, 9), arguing that the collectives enact and articulate care as an explicitly political world-building and liberatory practice. One that is not just a way to sustain resistance but forms a necessary condition for, and inextricable part of, collective organising against oppressive systems. Care and resistance are interdependent.

Throughout the article I have made use of our creative writing exercise as a way to refract my arguments and move the reader around in the process of the workshop itself as an expression of how care might be navigated.

The radical care described and enacted by the collectives enables conditions for creating and enacting epistemologies against oppressive modalities, such as capitalist modes of individuality, productivity and efficiency that also underpin academia and formalised ideals of what it means to 'do' knowledge. At the same time, the collectives' experiences highlight the complexities of being enmeshed in these same systems while simultaneously striving to transform them. They describe approaches of circumvention and undermining, of taking and redistributing resources, and how paradoxes of co-option versus access and the, at times, untenability of such balancing acts, do not preclude a core anti-institutional ethos.

Furthermore, the article emphasises that the relationality of care is often fraught and that conflict and care are not opposing forces but instead compel attentiveness to power dynamics and differences in positionalities and needs. A practice of radical care is not a clear-cut undertaking in virtuosity, but inevitably filled with the demands of what it means to be attuned to one another as well as one's own internalised influences.

By rejecting a hierarchisation of care, the collectives give way to expanding care beyond purely action or affect, instead showing that it takes multiple, subjective, multidirectional and unquantifiable forms. The term "messy dependencies" put forth by Akemi Nishida (2022, 130) is useful here as a conceptual lens in relation to care. As many organisers, thinkers and scholars before (Raha 2017, Kittay 1999, Sins Invalid 2017), the collectives contend that (radical) care is inherently collective and consistently foreground interdependency in their visions for a just world. Their narratives stress the messiness of these dependencies in that they problematise relationships of reciprocity as transactional, unidirectional (from one person to another) or commensurate. Messy dependencies of care are messy in the sense that they go beyond dichotomised understandings of care as something that can be contained within unidirectional exchanges, tangible actions or even linear time, which, as Nishida reminds us, is also important in not dismissing those more intangible, subtle, cross-generational and feminised forms of care as vital, especially in considering disabled individuals and communities (2022, 23). Similarly, the collectives articulate care within non-visible practices, the minutiae and mundanity of the everyday. As the narratives above show, care can look like supplementation, emotional support or transient moments that may take many shapes within many different spaces.

Radical care, here, I suggest, is fluid. It circulates and takes a variety of forms, not only in terms for caring for each other's beings and capacities, but also in caring for the processes of the work itself, in remaining open, vulnerable, hesitant to each other in relational processes of love and friendship as well as in the work of the knowledge they co-create, and the spaces from which this knowledge might emerge. I have described this praxis in terms of malleability and movement, but it might be further grasped as a type of "epistemic vulnerability", understood as "an openness to be affected and shaped by others" (Snyman 2015, 270). The conversation in itself contains traces of such epistemic vulnerability, for instance in sharing and shifting ideas around accessibility, disability and how spaces of knowledge sharing such as smoking areas might be generative for some while detrimental to others. The interlocutors do not simply care for one another's beings, but also the knowledge that they (are able to) co-create. By remaining attentive to the doing, the

how and the where in the (always-already relational) process of knowledge building, in rejecting certainty, care is also attunement to what is epistemically enabled/forestalled through the work and bonds of collaboration. Valorising vulnerability-as-openess in connection with radical care promotes a recognition of needs, ideas, desires and the material conditions of precarity as multifarious and ever-shifting, which in turn becomes testament to the irreducibility of care. Caringly building knowledge against dispossession is therefore a process of movement. Movement both in terms of galvanising change and movement in the demand for uncertainty, malleability and vulnerability as an antidote to the stasis of universality. Radical care in service of queer, anti-capitalist, feminist and abolitionist worlds is configured as necessarily ongoing, cast through recognition that our fluctuating selves are interdependent and entangled and so, therefore, is our collective liberation.

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6. LOOSE ENDS

There's something queer about leaving loose ends untied

– Billy-Rae Belcourt, 2019

If I am being honest, I would rather not write a conclusion. Both because it feels daunting but also somehow misleading to offer anything in the way of finite answers in a project so compounded with uncertainty. What I mean is that this project is stitched together through the overarching notion of alterity as something other than the order of things; alterity as the at times intangible, fleeting threshold between the known and unknown. Something desiring, speculative, malleable and shifting. I also mean that this project reflects a research process tinted with contradiction. This is work that is not always so sure of itself and where, as I have described, desires and ambivalence churn together as affective undercurrents. This is also part of an argument that insists on the irreconcilable, that not knowing might be its own pursuit in building knowledge that is "in but not of" the university (Chávez 2017, 68). Ambivalence has been valuable in pushing this project forward, encouraging me to ask different questions and move along alternative and at times opaque routes. In this way, uncertainty is not an antithesis but a constituent to the contributions of this project.

Although I do not see this as a finished or finite project, I have attempted, in these pages, to offer insights into the research question I started out with:

In what ways is collective knowledge creation envisioned and practised among queer and racially minoritised students as this takes place against as well as with/in and beyond the university? And: *What are the creative possibilities of these knowledge practices in striving towards socially just worlds?*

In responding to this question, I have explored different organising formations and engaged with queer and racialised students and collectives within and beyond the university. Guided by decolonial, feminist, abolitionist and queer-of-colour scholarship, this journey has led me to collaborative and arts-based methodologies, carrying out creative workshops and exploring how the knowledge processes and practices of these gatherings can be understood as forms of (an)archiving. These practices demonstrate several points and possibilities.

For instance, as I also describe through field notes of encounters and conversations with antiracist organising formations at Goldsmiths, that students reconfigure the bounds of the university by unsettling it as a space socially, politically, economically and historically disconnected from wider communities, which also expands the parameters for resistance towards its colonial subjugations. This opens up a theoretical understanding of resistance that is not limited to public-facing activism or (only) opposition to the oppressions of higher education but encompasses affective and relational modalities of creative expression that envision and build knowledge towards social justice beyond the physical remits of the university.

In exploring the possibilities of knowledge creation practices as forms of (an)archiving, I suggest that rather than presuming resistance as a state of enduring relation or material outcome, resistance is not necessarily about what is accomplished but about what lies in the doing, and that the (an)archival practices of this study (methodologically and as a form of knowledge creation) might be rethought as modes of resistance mobilised towards alterity. In contrast to oppositional resistance, which risks repeating or orbiting the norms imposed on us through structures of oppression, alteric archiving practices can be seen as the imaginative and creative work of gathering and becoming to "confirm the new world coming" (Hemphill 1992, 171) through our gestures, relations and practices. Alteric archiving as expressions of creative agency, as an accumulation of the possible. This is not to negate the material conditions of oppression that disadvantage minoritised groups within and beyond the university, nor to diminish or delink from the importance of material political struggle to upheave these structures. Instead, it is to push against damage-centred narratives that have been so prevalent in research among minoritarian groups and to insist that such work – the accumulation of the possible – is and has always been integral to

political organising and lineages of liberatory struggle in queer and racially minoritised communities.

I think back to the memory I shared at the start of this dissertation, of performing *It's Raining Men* with my classmates and how it mirrors my reflections here in the conclusion – of resistance and knowledge production being less about accomplishment and end-results and much more about the processual and relational minutiae of the everyday. The 'truth' of what ended up happening in our school performance was overshadowed by the sense of our coming together; what landed as my embodied memory was the feeling of desire, the gleeful possibility of shifting and changing the oppressive orderings of the institution, even momentarily. This reflects what I have been attempting to capture in this project – the transient, everyday and affective moments of mutual affirmation and possibility that arise in the collective desiring for something beyond, for futures that might not be tenable but "that must happen, regardless" (Bey 2022, 203).

The analysis shows how collective knowledge creation is practised by students and grassroots collectives in ways that include desire, and that the desire for social change is not severed from sexual and erotic desires but that the pleasures and pains of their lifeworlds are an important part of how they envision and build knowledge towards more socially just worlds. Moreover, the students and collective members articulate and practice care as an intrinsic part of this alteric worldbuilding; care is present in all three articles as part of a collective (an)archival process. What the presence of care in these studies ultimately emphasises is interdependence as an antithesis to the distanced, disembodied and individualised colonial logics that are emblematic of Western academia. One of the main arguments in this dissertation has been for the importance of relationality in knowledge creation and in carrying out research with decolonial aspirations. The analysis insists that friendship and care should be taken seriously as political interventions in work oriented towards social justice. This argument, contained in the articles as well the methods I employ, is also a way to disarm the myth of a discrete self: dichotomies of researcher/researched, political/personal, activist/scholar and claims to value-free subjectivity that we are taught to idealise as markers of legitimacy in academia. It is to say that we cannot know alone, and the way we do, create and think about knowledge should reflect this.

This is also linked to what I see as the methodological contribution of this thesis, which is infused in the creation and writing of the dissertation itself. I harness collaborative, arts-based approaches, anarchiving and zine-making as explicitly queer and decolonial methods as ways to attempt incursions to ownership and consumption in Western knowledge paradigms. These are not unilateral ways of gathering information but ones where there is unapologetic emotional investment and joint venture while also remaining cognizant of the power dynamics, nuances and tensions that such approaches involve. I also work with the notion of enacting epistemic opacity as a challenge to the demands of institutional legibility, arguing that opacity can be a useful strategy to explore the ethics of gaze and representation in regard to themes of minoritisation in the context of higher education.

This project is anchored through three distinct themes: sensible ruptures, mess and radical care. These are also conceptual openings that form my engagement with archiving, which is the lens through which I understand and analyse the various knowledge practices outlined in the articles. These concepts expand traditional notions of the archive to include the sensory, the bodily, the affective, the ephemeral, the creative and speculative, as well as the porous entanglements of archiving with space and material. Rethinking the archive in these ways has been central to an overarching argument for the creative and decolonial possibilities of students' collective archiving practices as modes of moving beyond dominant knowledge paradigms in Western academia.

Sensible ruptures, for instance, offers a conceptualisation of knowledge as embodied, sensory and connected with our surroundings, something which we attempt to reflect by experimenting with an archival practice that goes beyond a text-based approach, including visual and auditory materials that tend to atmospheres and affects within the landscape of DK higher education.

The concept of mess has also been a way to go against the limitations of taxonomy, evidencing, linearity and classification in traditional modes of archiving and knowledge production more broadly. Mess functions not just as a conceptual lens but as a queer analytical stance (Manalansan 2014) in the sense that it resists normative archival impetuses, allowing us to think through the archive's disorderly and transgressive qualities. I also draw on the concept of anarchiving (Springgay et al. 2019) to explore how the materials, affects, intimacies and relational residues of the workshops – the validating and sharing of our experiences – can be understood as constitutive of what we think of as archiving, and an important part of knowledge and space-making among queer and racialised groups.

Finally, I leverage the concept of radical care (Kawehipuaakahaopulani Hobart & Kneese 2020) to make the case for care and resistance as co-constituted and to describe how the collectives' knowledge creation practices can be understood as expressions of radical care in which care is not linear, transactional or reducible to either affect or action. Instead, it is malleable and involves a vulnerability in terms of relations as well as the process of (caring for) the work of knowledge creation itself. Ultimately, what I try to demonstrate through these concepts is that thinking of the archive, record and therefore knowledge as plural and mutable can offer new modes of sensing and understanding.

In lieu

Projects like this come with a time-line and the temporalities of research often do not account for the ways that encounters linger and pull at us far beyond institutional cut-off points – the unfurling imprints of "thinking, digesting, being acted upon and hesitant writing" that Yasmin Gunaratnam refers to as "vital time" (2013, 161). I know much more and much less than when I started this project. I understand the temporal compression of academic work as connected to a myth of finiteness, the inference being that at the 'end' of research we will have obtained some mastery over our topic, we will have inched closer to certainty. A feminist decolonial view, Intan Paramaditha suggests, might instead see knowledge creation as something persistently undone: "an experiment, a risky, unfinished project rather than a fixed location" (2022, 34). As mentioned earlier, I wish to write against finite-ness, hence the title *Loose Ends*. In lieu of offering conclusivity, I wondered how I might leave the door ajar, how I might leave this project in the DIY registers that have carried me through it. So, I made a one-page mini-zine. You can print or photocopy it (double-sided) or rip it out. I have added a short how-to guide that explains how to fold it (or you can read it unfolded, starting bottom left and moving anti-clockwise). The zine is meant not as a conclusion but as a moment to gather, summarise and hold different elements of this project with the hope that it might allow for others, especially those who do not have the time or capacity to read through a full dissertation to engage with it. Kathy Acker writes that "*if a work is immediate enough, alive enough, the proper response isn't to be academic, to write about it, but to use it, to go on*" (1999, 117). The thesis-zine, as I've called it, is a modest attempt towards this open-ended aliveness. It is a hope that this work might, in some way, go on beyond the realm of academia and move somewhere else, altogether.
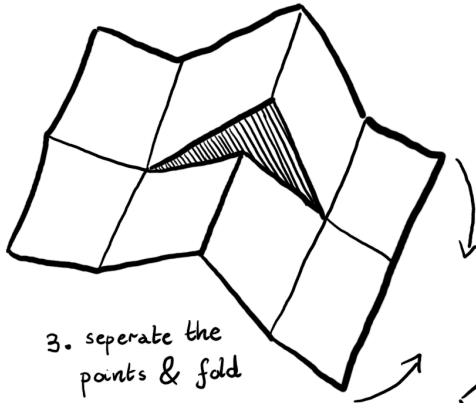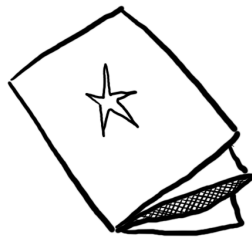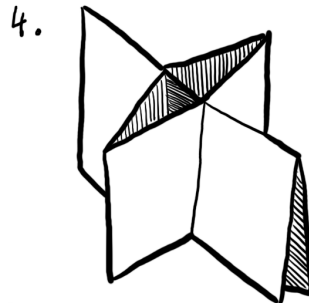
How to fold a mini-zine
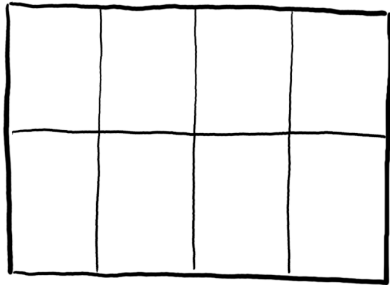
1. fold a piece of paper into 8 equal parts
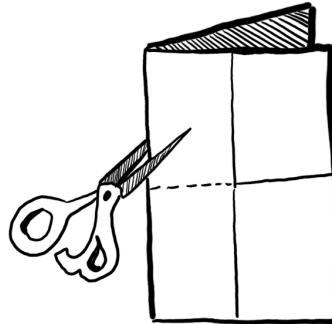
2. fold in half sideways & cut halfway into the centre along the middle crease

3. seperate the points & fold the paper lengthways

4.

5. all pages should now fold into a small, 8-page zine!

THESIS-ZINE

by Maya Acharya, 2024

The project looks at knowledge practices amo... queer Black and POC students through the lens of archiving. It includes three journal articles which explore collective archiving practices in different ways. Even tho the thesis is academic work & has to be evaluated by a committee, I attempt small rebellions, pushing against some of the expectations & norms in academic writing. Like in citation practices & melding theory with lived experience. I also start each chapter with a line of poetry I love.

I did a PhD, which was kind of intense and took a while. I made this zine to share some of what I've worked with and written about. My thesis is called *Archiving Alterity: queer and racialised knowledge creation against, with/in & beyond the university* and it's about antiracist/decolonial resistance in higher education.
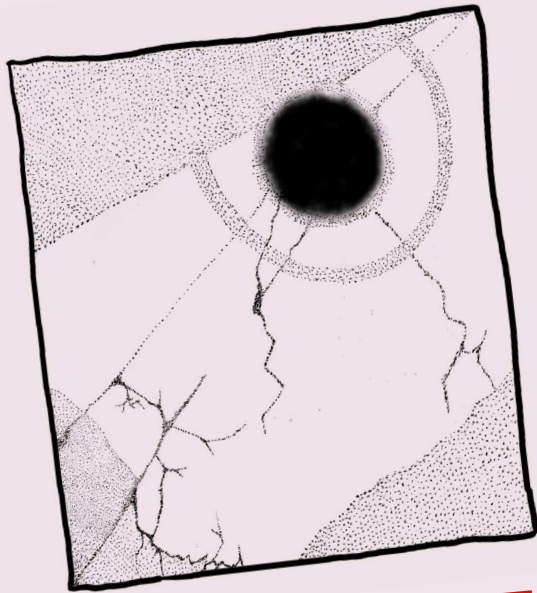
Article 1 is called *Sensible Ruptures: Towards Embodied and Relational Ways of Knowing* – I wrote it with my friend Gabriella Muasya. It was a vulnerable article to write as it deals with our own experiences in Danish academia, describing how we made an audio-visual archive to explore our concept of "sensible ruptures". We write the article using a method of queer epistolary, which basically means letter writing. This is also to centre relationality as vital to knowledge creation: to insist that we never know alone.

Article 2 is called *Being/ Making/ Leaving a Mess: Collective Anarchiving Against and Beyond the University* & based on collaborative workshops with queer & racially minoritised university students in London. We experimented with things like collage poems, lino-printing & zines to explore anti-racist resistance. I use the concept 'anarchiving' to suggest that the materials, affects and intimacies of the workshops – validating and sharing together – form a practice of knowledge & space-making.

Article 3 is called *"That's something worth protecting, imo": Caring for Knowledge in Collective Organising* and is also based on a workshop that I facilitated with members of three London-based collectives – *bare minimum, SHY & daikon**. We made a zine together called *Collective Knowledges*. The article is about how care is practiced & navigated by the collectives, & I use the term 'radical care' to explore this. The analysis is woven with descriptions of a collaborative creative writing exercise.

The thesis also reflects on context & process. Like how I started out with a focus on student activist groups, interviewing racially minoritised students & staff at Goldsmiths. (I also researched a mound of carrots, but won't go into that). It was a pandemic – ppl were going through it. I was questioning the research purpose, not wanting this to be a project of evidencing oppression. This informed a move to collaborative, arts-based methods, & making some things opaque in the thesis (epistemic opacity).

I talk about the potential of zines and anarchiving to reconfigure how we think about the archive. Not as a fixed repository, but encompassing our bodies, emotions, surroundings – things that are also impermanent. Archiving can also be creative and speculative, which is part of an overarching argument for the desiring and decolonial possibilities of collective archiving practices as ways of moving beyond dominant knowledge paradigms (how we think of what knowledge is legitimate and who it serves) in academia.

Where I land is that archival practices help reconfigure resistance as not only "at" the university and not (only) as something oppositional. Rather than orbiting colonial structures, alteric archiving is invested in what lies beyond their upheaval. It can be seen as the imaginative and creative work of gathering and becoming to "confirm the new world coming" (to quote poet Essex Hemphill) through our gestures, relations and practices. There's lots more to say but I'll stop here. Thank you for reading <3

RUPTURE

"Sensible ruptures don't seek a reductive destruction or to simply dismantle the systems that they emerge from (and thereby illuminate)...they are not invested in breaking as an end but as a means. By attending to the affective minutiae of existence as racialised and queer people, the ruptures embrace the irreconcilable, the unlanguagable, the felt, the flesh, as the grooves along which we might unearth, and perhaps nurture, a different kind of epistemology."
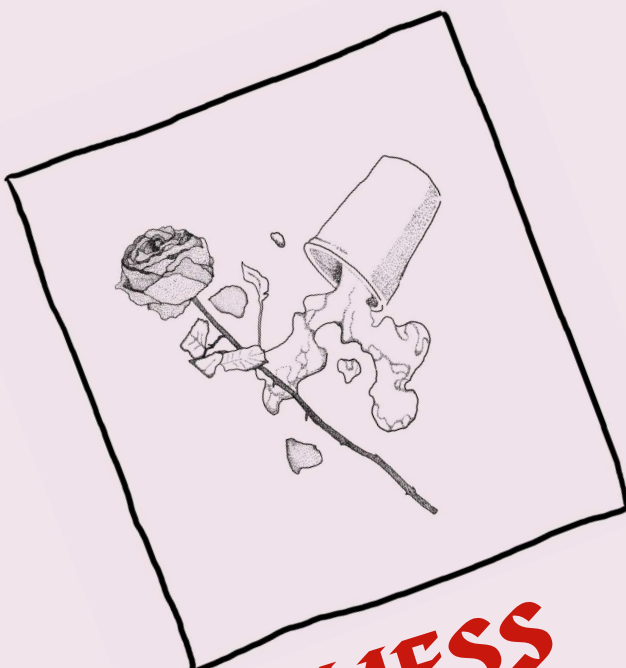
works that have guided and moved this project: t.ly/9JAkx

CARE

"Caringly building knowledge against dispossession is therefore a process of movement. Movement both in terms of galvanising change and movement in the demand for uncertainty, malleability and vulnerability as an antidote to the stasis of universality."

"Attending to the sexual, the aberrant, the hot mess, thus becomes a way of thinking through the disorderly, porous, transgressive and sensuous possibilities of our zine-making as a profoundly queer and anti-respectable undertaking, a capacious way of archiving that challenges its assumed enclosures and embraces the messy multitudes of queer and racially minoritised personhood."

MESS

Alterity: the quality or state of change, being changed, difference.

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