

Loosely Sutured

A reflective practice memoir of a 'white' art educator's journey into the impossibilities and possibilities of 'white' anti-racist research in art and design education

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Abstract

This research is into the formation and disruption of racism, coloniality and whiteness in 'white' art educators, including those who identify as anti-racist such as the author. The researcher is a 'white' middle-class female art educator operating within an activist paradigm of social justice practice in art and design education. The research was conducted in the UK during an era of heightened inequity, fuelled by populism, government-led racism and xenophobia, and draconian cuts across arts education in England from early years to higher education.

The thesis presents an eleven-year research journey that is itself disrupted, running aground four times. Irreconcilable whiteness ambushes the claims to anti-racist design and form for the thesis. Enquiry into these ambushes contributes to understandings of what it can take for 'white' art educators to 'inhabit critique' and maintain anti-racist practice 'with its lengthy duration' (Ahmed, 2004). Thus, the thesis takes the form of a *reflective practice memoir* that critically contextualises texts, imagery and events from the timeline of the journey, forming evidence towards understanding the ambushes.

The research is rooted in the provocation 'How does it feel to be a white problem?' (Yancy, 2015). Anti-racist 'white' people should 'remain un-sutured' and experience 'crisis' about the fact of their racism, while continuing to act *against* racism (2015, Yancy's hyphenation).

Parts 1 and 2 feature two '*fieldwork*' journeys (with 'white' peers, with Black and global majority peers). Parts 3 and 4 feature two journeys seeking *form* (image-making, letter-writing). Each came to crisis and un-sutured. I conclude that 'remaining un-sutured' is vital, yet could for many paralyse anti-racist action. I propose instead a 'loose suturing' that leaves the 'white' person unable to conceal their racism to themselves, but able to strive towards anti-racist action. Being *loosely sutured* enabled the submission of this thesis.

Dedication and Acknowledgements

Firstly I thank the fifteen peers, contributors to the research, who entered into the research conversation with me between 2018–2020.

I commemorate the life of artist Emma Wolukau-Wanambwa (1976-2023). Emma's research on *Margaret Trowell's School of Art* in Uganda acted as a vital ambush for my thesis.

Deep thanks to my doctoral supervisor Dr Sarah Amsler (University of Lincoln, later University of Nottingham) who accompanied me throughout. Also my second supervisors Professor Pat Thomson (2018-2023), University of Nottingham), previously Dr Gary Anderson (2014-17 Liverpool Hope University). Your patience and insights have been invaluable.

I thank my thinking partners Tanveer Ahmed and Alberto Duman, and above all my life partner James Marriott. Your energy and support have enabled me so much.

Colleagues, friends and family brought ideas, support and humour and at key moments, some throughout: Aidan Jolly, Alana Jelinek, Ann Kinsman, Annick Météfia, David A Bailey, Catherine Armstrong, Claire Gordon, Clare Whistler, Chris Seeley, Di Wittner, Farzana Khan, Fern Smith, Fi Spirals, Fran Crowe & Bill Parker, Hayley Newman, Helen Sheehan, James Mastroianni, Jo Ram, Jill Westwood, Kooj Chuhan, Marsha Bradfield, Melissa Girling, Miche Fabre Lewin, Natalie Jeremijenko, Nell Hougueuz, Paula Serafini, Philip Twinberrow, Rory Gibbons, Rose Ziaei, Sai Murray, Tiff Webster, Will Essilfie. Our glorious 'Voices' group of Lincoln doctoral students: Drs Hadiza Kere Abdulrahman, Janet Jones, Kathleen Taylor.

Artists and young people from *Voices that Shake!.*: your vision and creativity is why I undertook this research. Also I thank *Platform:London*, my creative, collective workplace and home for thirty years. I am grateful for my teaching roles in Art, Design and Museology at the Institute of Education, UCL, since 2000, and my study there prior. Finally, I thank my dad, Brian, for enabling me to self-finance from beyond the grave, and for his love for a daughter who always questioned. Mum, Rhianon, *thank you for your unswerving support for me.*

Ethics

Ethics procedures and documents

Please see the Appendices for the Ethical documents for the fieldwork: proforma letter to participants, extract from Information Sheet, consent form, script for conversations, and Ethics Committee's approval letter.

Participants and contributors: names and anonymity.

I have only used individuals' real names where written consent has been given.

I have replaced names with randomly assigned alphabet letters where anonymity and confidentiality was requested.

Plagiarism and AI transparency

The thesis was originally written and submitted before ChatGPT and other AI became widespread.

In revising the thesis I have not used AI in any aspect of generating or editing.

I confirm that this work is all my own.

PROLOGUE

It's all about timing. The need for us to move with urgency towards an equitable and anti-racist Art Education is as pressing as ever. Working in art education at this time in our global history, we frequently find ourselves amongst the time-poor, caught in the compounding issues of reduced funding, teacher shortage, lack of confidence on addressing racism, the cost-of-living crisis and the climate change emergency. These multiple challenges and many more, creat[e] a perfect storm...

...how [to] balance the need to act with confidence, clarity, and swiftness with the vital need for deep critical reflection on ourselves and our environments.

(Marlene Wylie, 2023, my italics)

November 2024

In her speech *A race against time: Art Education in a time of crisis*, Marlene Wylie identified tensions that resonate with the making of this thesis: the need for urgency and action, and the need for deep, critical reflection. In 2023, Wylie, a Black art educationalist and visual artist, was elected as the *first ever* Black or global majority President of the *National Society for Education in Art and Design* (NSEAD). This fact gives Wylie a particular authority, coming from lived experience in UK art and art education, on this tension between urgent action and reflection, on racism within social inequity *as it shows up in art education*.

I start the prologue with this quotation to invite you into that tension. As a 'white' art educator in late middle-age who has long claimed to be an activist for social justice, the action-reflection cycle is intrinsic to my teaching and learning practices. Yet in the urgency of addressing the racism that happens in the street, workplace, school, neighbourhood, society, the space for reflection can feel squeezed and illegitimate. A PhD thesis is an absolute privilege, a space for reflection and for new knowledge-making, but the white-dominated 'ivory tower' can also feel like a place of irreconcilable complicity with an exclusive, raced and classed system, detached from action. It can exert - and we can internalise - theoretical,

methodological and ideological constraints on what is allowed to be imagined there. I think of the words of African-American poet and writer Audre Lorde:

What does it mean when the tools of a racist patriarchy are used to examine the fruits of that same patriarchy? It means that only the most narrow parameters of change are *possible and allowable*. (1979, p.111, my italics)

You will shortly read how, up until a few weeks before the deadline I did not have any 'fruits'. In the thesis I explore the causes, caught between the 'tools of a racist patriarchy' and ambushes of white privilege in me and in the system. However, once I broke open what I imagined was 'possible and allowable' for the *format* of the thesis, I empowered myself to *collate* what has become a *reflective practice memoir* of my very attempts *not* to use the tools.

While this thesis may now be 'over', the social extremity that Marlene Wylie describes above is not. If anything it has intensified. The thesis was written across several time periods pre-2022, but was revised in the context of 2024. The timing affects the revisions, and affects how you read it. To this end I summarise here: In June, the General Election returned a Labour government, yet so far there has been little let-up in anti-immigrant policy-making and action. The new government has not censured the Israeli government on their remorseless war against the Palestinian people, whose unspeakable suffering has global ramifications. The same election returned the most diverse parliament in UK history. Yet it also returned five 'white' male MPs for the new, populist, anti-immigration Reform Party. 14.3% of all voters voted Reform, and alarmingly, polls show that this could now increase to 21% (McGeoghegan, 2024). In August 2024, the nation grieved from the shocking murders of young children at a dance class in Southport, UK. Rioting by numerous 'white' mobs was swiftly planned and executed in towns and cities across the UK. These were mostly 'white' men, but many 'white' women and children were involved.

The aim of these attacks was absolutely to terrorise. The mobs assaulted people and broke into mosques, cultural centres, restaurants, shops, hotels and hostels housing migrants. There were death threats to immigration solicitors and to advice/support organisations for

migrants and asylum seekers. Individuals and families who were Black or of the global majority were violated on the streets, in their cars, and in their homes. Many people self-curfewed. None of this was new except the scale: the coordination of an unprecedented number of riots showed that 'white' acceptability of racism and the organising of race-hate has risen to another level. The government acted quickly to arrest and charge rioters, but what about the policy-changes to tackle root causes and those on the frontline? Many teachers in schools cried out for more resources on anti-racism to help them defuse tension in their classrooms and schools, and rebuild community (Sigodo, 2024). There were multiple counter-protests against such violence, and much ongoing solidarity-building between neighbours and communities, yet the situation seethes. The country is in a ferocious struggle over Britain's identity as inherently 'white' or as a productive intercultural liberatory space of equity, exchange, mutuality and reparation. As colleagues put it:

The education system has failed us, the arts sector has failed us, mainstream activism has failed us. Therefore we embrace creativity and our imagining of different futures and possibilities. (Voices that Shake! in Virasami, 2024, p.114)

Our imaginations are dominated by visual narratives coming at us through screens and the street. Artists, creatives and a visually literate population play key roles in critiquing and abolishing racialised narratives. 'White' art educationalist Tyler Denmead calls art a 'race-making technology' (Denmead 2024). To confront this 'race-making' and we need more anti-racist visual artists, art educators and visually literate publics - 'white', Black, and global majority. Since the Black Lives Matter uprisings of 2020, there has been a massive upscale in recognition of Black and global majority artists by the 'white' artworld. A week ago, the 2024 Turner Prize for contemporary art was awarded to Jasleen Kaur, Scottish Sikh artist and outspoken pro-Palestinian. Yet cultural institutions can easily slide into default 'race-making' to whiteness. In this febrile climate, Marlene Wylie's statement *hails* us: we must step up for 'equitable and anti-racist Art Education' and be critically reflective. I offer a thesis hailed by this, with a focus on 'white' anti-racist art educators, that examines the striving between theory, ethics, action, reflection, and action once more.

INTRODUCTION

March 2023, revised autumn 2024.

Dear Reader,

This thesis explores the (im)possibilities of doctoral research in art education *as anti-racist action*, when, for the 'white' art educator/researcher, the research's legitimacy, its accountability, its claims as anti-racist action hit the reef and breaks up. This happens for three key reasons: I the researcher am ambushed by whiteness within wider societal white supremacy. I am troubled by the question of what is effective anti-racist action and whether it can be done in an academy dominated by and perpetuating whiteness. Finally, I am ethically and politically uneasy at profiting from the newish academic field of 'Critical Whiteness Studies'. The submission of this thesis only took place when I realised that the whiteness underlying the ambushes could become the subject of the thesis, loosely suturing stages of the journey together, in order to contribute to the fields I am in. The thesis is submitted with the intention that anti-racist research and pedagogies undertaken by 'white' educators can be strengthened through practices of loose suturing.

The thesis therefore resembles an official inquiry into an incident: what is *afforded or learnt* from doctoral research in art education as anti-racist action, when its legitimacy, its accountability, its claims as anti-racist action falls apart for the 'white' art educator/researcher. As in all official inquiries, a timeline of events unfolding is central to understanding. Therefore this takes the form of a *reflective practice memoir* covering four moments of falling apart.

Following George Yancy, I've adopted his term 'un-sutured' to denote the state of falling-apartness as it relates to whiteness (2015). As I will explore later, for Yancy, 'remaining un-sutured' is both a politically activist position for 'white' anti-racist people as well as an instruction to *dwell* in a state of vulnerability and humility as a 'white' anti-racist person.

There are four parts to this thesis that reflect the four attempted approaches. They are titled like this:

PART 1 – In which researching with peers racialised as 'white' is sutured... and un-sutured.

PART 2 – In which researching with peers of the global majority is sutured... and un-sutured.

PART 3 – In which expressing the research through imagery is sutured... and un-sutured.

PART 0 – In which expressing the research through letters is sutured and... un-sutured.

It is intentional that Part 0 is positioned last on that list, but numbered 0. This thesis tracks a series of un-suturings in the research chronologically, covering the period from 2016 to now. The letters in Part 0 were indeed written last, in October 2022. However, they were intended to form the opening chapters of the new thesis that at that time I thought I was about to write. This is why the *Letter to Farzana* is subtitled *fierce origin stories*. If you wish, you are welcome to read Part 0 first.

You can see from this opening that my thesis is troubled internally, and seeks an appropriate uneasy structure, a form in which learning from the trouble is best articulated.

This thesis is an experiment in memoir form but in terms of scholarship I trust you will find what you need. I thank you in advance for reading it. Thank you too for *viewing* it. I say reading *and* viewing because part of the tenet of this thesis is that it only be understood through the combination, the curation, of both words and images.

I am from art, immersed in thinking about and making visual imagery and how imagery makes meaning, makes theory. I refute the iconoscepticism and logocentrism that has a long tail in the Western academy (Addison, 2003). ¹ The visual carries huge and complex influence in this world through advertising, the news, TV and film, social media and art. This is true whether you are 'from art' or not. However, the visual is not only influential, accessible and important to those with physical ability to see through the eyes. Everyone is affected by visual culture's influence. Those who are partially sighted or blind have expansive visualising

¹ With the remarkable progress in AI-generated imagery and text, ethics in both image and word are areas of new concern.

imaginings, and how they themselves are seen and treated is created in part by visual culture.

Images in this thesis comprise original artworks by me, by others, and other types of visual material such as screenshots. They carry what I am trying to express as much as the text. I would not have been able to produce this body of research *without* the images. Arguably, the thesis only exists *because of* the images. Perhaps therefore, it is more accurate to thank you for agreeing to *experience* the thesis.

There is another fundamental aspect to this piece that I want to clarify at the outset. The thesis I've submitted is not the thesis I thought I was writing up to around ten weeks prior to submission. Then, my working thesis title was:

'Look, a White!' Racism, Coloniality and Whiteness in Art Education in England.

What and who it serves, what and who it wrecks, how it is survived, why and how it can be otherwise.

This thesis was to be based on what I had learnt from conversations with fifteen peers, participants who are artists and art educators in formal and informal settings, who are all concerned with racism and the operation of whiteness. Twelve participants were Black and global majority peers, and three were 'white'. 'Look, a White!' references African-American philosopher George Yancy's book of that title (2012).

However, now my title is:

Loosely Sutured

The memoir of a 'white' art educator's journey into the impossibilities of 'white' anti-racist research in art and design education, and what is learnt for anti-racism.

If the thesis submitted is an inquiry, it is also an inquest. It seeks the causes of what happened. This is because not only was the planned thesis abandoned at the last minute, but due to the opaque operations of whiteness, the circumstances were also suspicious.²

² I return to the uses of inquests as anti-racism in Part 0, in the Letter to Frantz Fanon.

Below I describe this shift in focus to the research process itself, as it forms the basis for the entire rationale for the submission. I relate the lived experience of being 'a white problem' in anti-racist research (Yancy, 2015), sharing what Nicola Rollock, Black British scholar of racism and whiteness in research, calls the 'behind the scenes deliberations, reflections and complexities' (2013, p.506).

< >

On 2 January 2023, with nine weeks to go before submission, I calmly decided to quit the PhD.

This arrived after a series of crises that came to a final head over new year. I am not a special case. I've heard from other students and scholars that quitting at a late stage is not unusual, even for a part-time student who remains as committed to the issues in the research as ever.

My own reasons were that I could not find a way to reconcile the contradictions I perceived were inherent in *me* undertaking *this* research in *this* setting: a 'white' middle-class cis woman researching *into* white privilege and white supremacy *within* and *taking advantage of* the white privilege of the academy and with the economic privilege of being able to self-fund, and then using all the foregoing to 'analyse' conversations with peers who are Black and of the global majority, and gain a doctorate.

Over new year 2022/23, I had re-read British-Australian feminist scholar Sara Ahmed's *Declarations of whiteness: the non-performativity of anti-racism* (2004). Here, in fifty-nine numbered paragraphs, she *dissects precisely* this problem by delineating the key "modes for declaring whiteness used within academic writing" where 'declaration' is purely a surface act. She among others is deeply suspicious of the turn to Critical Whiteness Studies as a newish 'field' that claims anti-racism as its motive: "whiteness studies will sustain whiteness at the centre of intellectual inquiry" (all 2004). Ahmed's uncompromising thinking acts as a brake to me throughout this thesis, and I will expand more on this during the thesis.

Re-reading her, it felt *once and for all* that there was no way I could avoid being part of this problem. In fact I would be *adding* to it. It bolstered my feeling that I should simply stop. I was reminded of watching British-Ghanaian artist Larry Achiampong speak angrily to camera about white privilege in anti-racist art-activism:

Sometimes the best thing that you can actually do when you're part of a problem is just stop. STOP. Take your hands away from.. like... *Stop* putting your hands on it. Just, like, leave it. Stop for a moment. And maybe there's, there's some space for you to actually think about what it is that can be done, that can be *better*. (Achiampong, 2020) ³

Below I present a document about stopping, originally handwritten in my notebook, then typed up. (Note: the formatting is as in my original Word document):

Reasons I'm quitting the PhD, 2 January 2023.

Political Context:

"Britain – as nation state – is colonialism." (from *The Empire at Home. Internal Colonies and the end of Britain*, by Andrew Trafford, 2021, p.3)

"Deepa Naik explained... 'the university isn't racist, the university *is* racism'. Her argument was that academia is not infected by institutional racism that can be overcome through the correct treatment, rather the university is a central source of producing the very racism that contaminates society. If university is the disease then it cannot be the cure."

(Deepa Naik quoted by Kehinde Andrews, in Jason Arday and Heidi Safia Mirza, 2018, p.275)

³ I examine the incident and Achiampong's analysis of how whiteness functioned in it in PART 3.

“White supremacy is not the elephant in the room, it *is* the room.”

(Nelba Marquez-Greene, cited in Vanessa Andreotti, 31 December 2022)

“But what I want to question is whether learning to see the mark of privilege involves unlearning that privilege. What are we learning when we learn to see privilege? (Of course this question reminds us that the project of ‘learning to see’ is addressed to privileged subjects.)” (Sara Ahmed, 2004, paragraph 36)

“‘Doing race’ isn’t the same as undoing racism.” (Katherine McKittrick, 2021, p.26)

“No, you must fill these spaces with black and brown indigenous working-class, queer, non-ablest ideas. It's *our* ideas, *our* contributions, *our* voices, *our* pedagogies that will make the changes, that will dismantle... and that will enable us to create a fairer and equal, not ‘diverse’..., not the diversity tickbox, but an equal and respected environment for everyone, that's the staff, the tutors, the academics, everyone,...*and the students.*” (Conversation with W, 20th June 2020, emphasis as in speech)

“Mourning and grieving for the intervention I thought I could make but am no longer interested in or capable of making *from the inside.*” (from my notes, 4 October 2022)

Finding authentic form – outside?

“The only way you can write the truth is to assume that what you set down will never be read. Not by any other person, and not even by yourself at some later date. Otherwise you begin excusing yourself. You must see the writing as emerging like a long scroll of ink from the index finger of your right hand; *you must see your left hand erasing it.*”

(Margaret Atwood, *The Blind Assassin*, 2000, my italics)

From notebook, 2nd January 2023, Sudbourne, Suffolk.

I started January 2014, University of Lincoln.

9 weeks til absolute and final deadline 12th March 2023, University of Nottingham

I have come to the end. I have no desire to write for the PhD thesis, nor to edit what I have already written for it, nor achieve a PhD.

An academic thesis is not the form in which to best surface this research.

The research process was and is amazing and fruitful. *And is being applied by me, with all the flaws, out in the world.*

My new quest is to find forms for the research which relate to and engage the people I am most interested in reaching, practitioners not theorists: art educators, art teachers, art school lecturers, social practice artists.

Academic and even liberatory theoretical texts are often alienating because of reliance on the word. I want to use artistic forms, and embodied ways of knowing, of learning together, as well as enticing verbal/literary forms.

On 10 January I met with my supervisor and told her my decision to quit, and also shared more on the personal complexity that underlaid the apparent calm clarity above.

I described my bewilderment. Every research method that I had undertaken and attempted had become 'a problem', had fallen to pieces in my hands. I asserted that images were *central* to carrying meaning, but I hadn't resolved how to do that in this PhD. I described feeling cognitively unsuited to sequencing ideas and arguments in a substantial piece of written work that had to make an 'argument'. I had also run out of time, having received every extension possible. I left the conversation feeling supported in my decision to give up on writing the thesis.

A few days later, however, I still hadn't informed the Post-Graduate Registry of my decision. I was uneasy. I must credit my life-partner who during this limbo insisted that it was important for me and for the work in the long-term to submit something, *however flawed*. It could

produce set-pieces that might stand alone as publishable work even if the whole thesis would not stand up within or outside the academy.

Surely, for accountability reasons, there was something I *must* do, while living with the warnings of Sara Ahmed around the inevitability of centring whiteness, and knowing *there was no way I could avoid complicity with whiteness* (Applebaum, 2015).

I reminded myself of the University of Nottingham's regulations on the criteria for awarding a doctoral thesis. I found some cause for optimism:

The general ability to conceptualise, design and implement a project for the generation of new knowledge, applications or understanding at the forefront of the discipline, and to *adjust the project design in the light of unforeseen problems*.⁴ (my italics)

I began searching my notes, and I returned to Tara Brabazon's helpful vlogs for research students. *Put the problem into the work* came back to me, which, tellingly, I had returned to several times since first watching it (Brabazon, 2017).

...the flaws, the missteps, the confusions are part of the research. They make it. They make it *better*. ... Ask - what are the consequences of this problem for the PhD? Put it in context, then enfold it back into the thesis... The point of research is managing surprises... When something weird happens, *it's a gift*. Write up *the problem*. Why is there a block with writing? *Pick that scab*. (Brabazon, 2017, my italics)

The block is *a scab*? The *scab* is concealing *a problem* that is in fact *a gift*? This was language that chimed for me, given Yancy's injunction to 'white' people to remain un-sutured.

Her advice also reminded me of another resource I have often returned to, this time from an art research context. *Letters to My Students* is by artist, scholar and doctoral supervisor Hayley Newman. In this piece from the journal *Performance Research*, Hayley writes a series of fictional letters to guide, reassure and usefully puzzle students during crises in their

⁴ <https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/qualitymanual/academic-regulations/qaa-qf.aspx> [Accessed 5.1.23]

doctorates in Fine Art practice. Each letter is from various 'supervisors' who, we realise, are all Hayley in different contexts with different students (2016). This time it was the letter to Peter that struck me:

Dear Peter,

We are all searching for something, but do we know what it is?
The question you had was what you thought you should be asking, rather than the question you did not know you wanted to ask.

Searching often resides in something unspeakable or abstract; a sense inspired by an image, text, experience or feeling. Revisiting beginnings in a return to the photograph, text, event or image that was the impetus to start work can focus what is being done.

Questions come out of and are answered in your artwork. They are navigated and articulated by a process of engaging with art, materials, artists, thinkers, writers, histories and theories.

The danger in searching is that you might find things you do not want to know, that challenge and confuse or complicate what you are doing in a way you had not anticipated or wanted.

Is there a way back? Sometimes not. So be it.

Love in danger,



Fig 0. Author's screenshot from *Letters to my Students*, Hayley Newman (2016, p.5)

Pivoting between quitting and unquitting, many passages in this letter resonated: "The question you had was what you thought you should be asking, rather than the question you didn't know you wanted to ask". This explained to me why I was blocked about writing to the original thesis title "Look, a White!". *There was something I was avoiding that had to be written before I could write that.* The penultimate line further penetrated the surface: "The danger in searching is that you might find things you don't want to know". This gave me courage to turn "Look, a White!" onto myself and confront my whiteness in the situation. The

last line is sobering but real, permitting 'failure': "Is there a way back? Sometimes not. So be it" (all Newman, 2016). ⁵

Revisiting Tara and Hayley, the idea formed in me that the 'problem' of a 'white' art educator *not being able to write the thesis on whiteness* was in fact the *only PhD thesis* this 'white' art educator could actually write. As in the Nottingham guidance, was this me "*adjusting the project design in the light of unforeseen problems*"? I am a sailor, and an analogy came to mind very much informed by visual work in this research: the thesis had hit the reef for the final time. It could not hold together any longer yet something could yet be salvaged if I worked at speed. The salvaged thesis would be strung together as a raft is, with urgency yet with care, from important fragments of what was to hand. The thing presented would be a series of my written and visual historical *documents*, an assemblage, or perhaps a kind of exhibition-of-the-thesis, a temporary and faulty platform from which I could share learnings about whiteness in my research process.

I talked the new route through with my supervisors. They supported me in my desire to attempt this. I assured them that I fully understood that what I produce may not pass within the academy, but that it felt more right and more accountable to try than to quit. Whatever the outcome of official examination, I would have work that represented my efforts, and which I could then do more things with. A reflective practice memoir was the only form that made any sense to me in understanding and sharing the experience.

Surely I wasn't alone? Before picking up momentum, I wondered if there was research on theses that fall apart that could help me? I entered three search terms into the University of Nottingham's online library catalogue.

This is page 1:

⁵ I will come back to the uses of the letter in research - the epistolary's unique communicability - in Part 4 of the thesis.

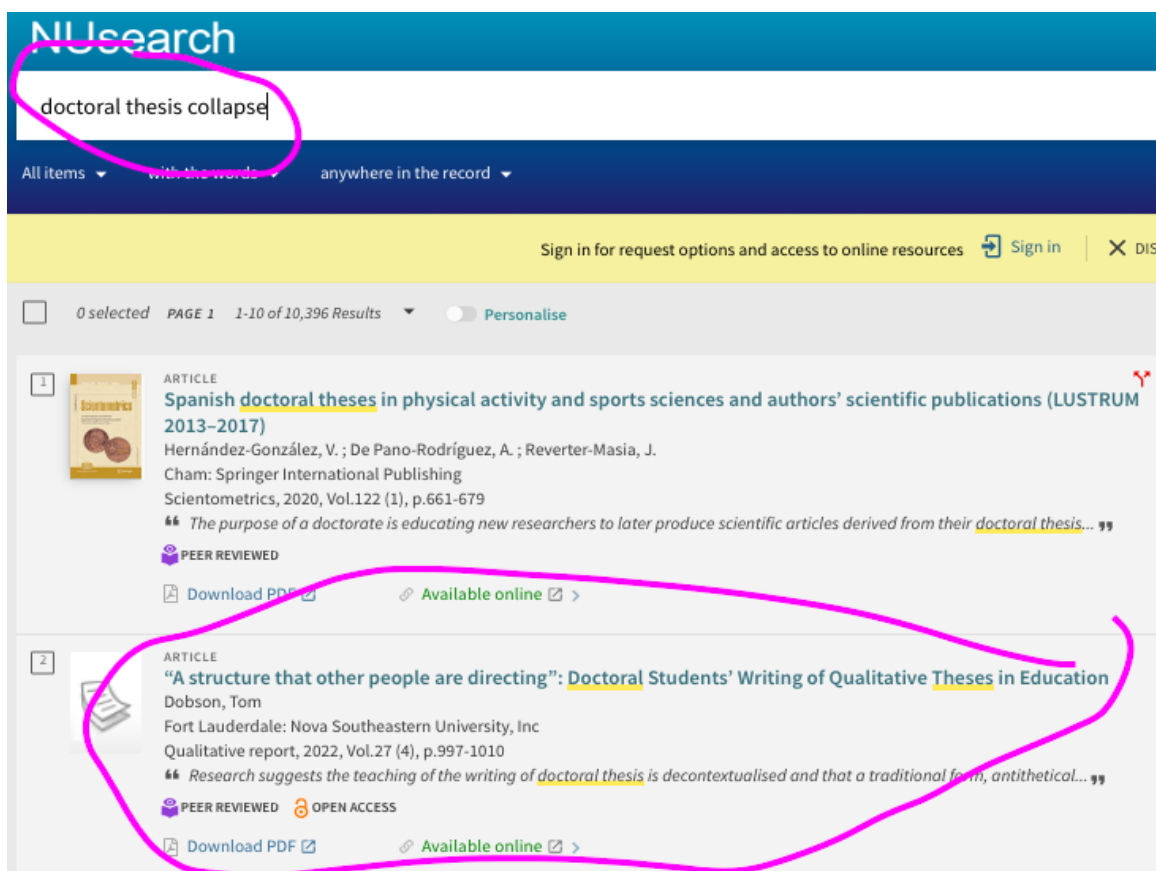


Fig 1. Author's screenshot: *from keyword search 'doctoral thesis collapse' on NUsearch University of Nottingham online library catalogue, 8 February 2023.*

I was very curious. When he wrote this, Tom Dobson was a doctoral supervisor in the School of Education at Leeds Beckett University, England with a background in drama, creative writing and social justice. In this piece, he discusses his research with eight doctoral students on their concerns about and processes in writing, but he starts with the experience of writing his own thesis.

The parallel with my situation was so striking that I quote him at length:

And then, when the two years [of fieldwork with primary children] was over, once my research journal had spilled over into almost 1000 pages of winding autoethnographic musings, I sat down and began to write my thesis. I typed:

Introduction....

Literature Review....

Methodology...

Findings and Discussion...

Conclusion...

The headings were right there in front of me. Empty containers waiting to be filled with words. But I found I could not fill them. That was as far as my first draft would go. I could not type the words that I felt were expected of me. But I still wanted to write. As Beckett (1994, p. 418) concludes, "I can't go on. I'll go on."

And so, I began to write my thesis as a play. Later I created it as a "thesis-script" (Dobson, 2017)... As so often happens with writing, the process of writing was a process of problem-solving and discovery... I was writing in this way because my research had been *messy and non-linear*... I was writing this way because *every assertion that was made needed unmaking, every argument needed a counterargument, every naming an unnamings*. (Dobson, 2022, p.998, my italics and insertion)

The serendipity of finding Dobson's article was chimed deeply with my issues of writing about whiteness within a critique of whiteness studies.

Dobson's piece, and other articles that I read as a result of reading his, heartened me (Weatherall, 2018). I was particularly gripped by *Dirty Writing* by Alison Pullen and Karl Rhodes (2008) who reference musical form in their piece. I felt kinship:

In writing with [musical] variations it is our purposeful intention to disrupt some of the assumed logical linearity that we so often feel expected of us in writing, and to replace it

with a dose more of spatiality. Gibson Burrell (1997) has served us a warning –
LINEARITY KILLS. (Pullen and Rhodes, 2008, p.242, my insertion, their caps and bold)

I *would* explore the experimental writing/curatorial task I had set myself.

I would stand by the linearity, non-linearity and iterativeness that is intrinsic to this thesis.

I would stand by the assemblage, and exhibition form, because that it is *how* the entire research process has unfolded – piecemeal, full of certainties and invalidations, intended and found objects, jettisoned and recovered ideas.

I would try to bring you, the Readers, along with me, in the spirit of “encourage[ing]...students to think about their writing practice as research rather than a neutral, depersonalised activity. To consider *appropriate forms for representation*” (Dobson, 2022, p.1008, my italics).

Research Questions

The commitment to Dobson’s ‘appropriate forms for representation’ brings me to my research question for this (new) thesis, which conjures a particular visuality, a particular *form* of representing the problem of racism *in* ‘white’ people and *for* the majority world.

The current title of this thesis is *Loosely Sutured*. The word ‘sutured’ refers directly to concepts developed by George Yancy, the African-American philosopher who writes extensively and outspokenly about whiteness and racism, how it operates in wider society and in university spaces where he is a committed teacher and lecturer (2012, 2015). The bigger question I ask is from George Yancy’s 2015 edited book *White self-criticality beyond anti-racism*. Here he asks fourteen ‘white’ scholars, who are also his allies, to address the question in the sub-title: *How does it feel to be a white problem?*

In Yancy’s introduction called ‘Un-sutured’ (the hyphen is his), he lays out a concept which I make key to this thesis. The term ‘to suture’ usually refers to the action of a surgeon in stitching closed a wound – the suture (stitch) keeps the wound’s edges together to encourage clotting, the formation of a scab, and healing. I am compelled by Yancy’s vivid conjuring of

‘suturing’ in relation to unconscious or conscious efforts that ‘white’ people put into “scabbing over... to cover over the profound pain and distress of being palpably exposed [as racist].” (2015, p.xvii, my insertion). His injunction is that ‘white’ people must “remain un-sutured vis-à-vis the realities of white racism” (2015, xvii). I will go into Yancy’s theory deeply in the body of the thesis. For now what is important to share is that I have come to suspect that my circuitous journey in finding a course, in the getting lost, the hitting of the reef, the falling apart, the jettisoning, the quitting and unquitting of successive methods in this thesis is akin to suturing myself (believing in a solution, in me as an anti-racist)... but then becoming un-sutured (I’m racist and a problem). I am heartened by a vivid conversation with one of my friends who is a lecturer at one of the London art schools. They are an artist of the global majority whose role is to address racism in curriculum and pedagogy in their discipline area, to encourage new anti-racist approaches and pedagogies. They were regaling me once more with stories of ‘white’ colleagues scuttling out of the staffroom on seeing them approach, on ‘white’ colleagues staying silent on multiple occasions. In our conversation, we revisited Yancy’s theory, and U said this: “Unless white art educators recognise the need to remain un-sutured, nothing will change”.⁶

All this led me to the question: 'How does it feel to remain un-sutured in the pursuit of this research?' While understanding that my emotions were running high for me at that time, when revising this thesis after the Viva, I felt uncomfortable about the emphasis on *feeling*. I wanted the experience to be turned outwards. I refined the research questions for the thesis as follows:

In the service of 'white' anti-racist practice, what is learnt from 'white' anti-racist research approaches that repeatedly run aground and un-suture?

Within the field of art education, what can 'white' anti-racist art educators learn from this un-suturing thesis?

⁶ Feb 1 2022, notes taken from conversation with consent.

In each part of this memoir as thesis, I select, curate written and visual documents that attempt to show and learn from the almost tidal movement between running aground and re-floating, between suturing and un-suturing: towards feeling *convinced* about ethics and accountability in the proposed anti-racist research methods within an academic setting, and then doubts over whiteness in my ethics and methods within this very academic setting. I critically contextualise these documents and reflect on the learning at the time of writing and from the vantage point of revising the thesis for re-submission.

Reflective Practice Memoir as form

Thus I arrived at the chronological *reflective practice memoir* as the form this thesis required. The memoir form could assist me to investigate the impacts on the research and the researcher of learning which, after all, took place over the timespan of more than a decade. What is afforded to research into racism in 'white' art educators including me, by such a long timespan? One observation from my experience is that being involved in the research over this period of time means it becomes daily life. I am holding close to this statement by Sara Ahmed on the need for exposure over time, and I will return to it:

To hear the work of exposure requires that white subjects inhabit the critique, *with its lengthy duration*, and to recognise the world that is re-described by the critique as one in which they live. (Ahmed, 2004, paragraph 57, her italics)

When searching the literature on methods, the term *reflective memoir* is commonly used. However I choose to insert *practice* between the two terms. This is because I want to highlight the lived and experiential aspect of the research: it is a *memoir of reflective practice*. My interest in reflective practice is based on long engagement as part of my pedagogy and work (Schön, 1991; Trowell, 2001). You will read a discussion of reflective practice, bringing in narrative inquiry, critical autoethnography, interpretive biography, in Part 1's opening document "Real, honest colleagues?". When I qualified as an art teacher in 1991, I started to keep notebooks as part of my pedagogy and work. These have formed a crucial tool for reflective practice, which in this situation led me to memoir. Memoir as a research method has

particular traction in vocational areas of research, where it is seen of great value to assist learning from practice and in practice. For example, 'social memoir' can assist teachers' development, and sharing those memoirs builds habits of peer support (Braun and Crumpler, 2004). Also, memoir can unlock new epistemological insights, such as in Mary Hartog's professional development work with women: "Stories of *how we come to know* are primarily embedded in stories of lived experience within the family and educational context, in the community and wider social context. They are *historically, socially and culturally* located." (Hartog, 2005, my italics).

In summary, what you will read here is a thesis which takes the form of a multi-modal memoir of reflective practice, where much of the learning has been through the social domain of the art educator/researcher's real events, the learning from which I now turn outwards.

How to read the thesis: theory and images

This thesis is comprised of documents and imagery selected to show key aspects of each part of the journey. Each piece also introduces theory encountered in real time, as I was coming across it, and as it was becoming important to the thesis. That's why in the first written document from 2016 that opens Part 1, while there is discussion of decolonial scholars including Frantz Fanon, there is no mention of George Yancy or Sara Ahmed's work. I first read them in 2017. This is also why significant theorists arrive 'late' in the thesis. For example, I encountered Gloria Anzaldúa's work only in October 2022, yet, as you will read in Letter to Farzana, it was crucial to the work.

For reasons I have explained, I have not presented a thesis that is theorised from start to finished, having already synthesised all the theory that I have decided is important to it. As a pedagogue I am interested in *when* my students come across ideas, and *when they are open* to new ones. As an ex-art historian and curator of contemporary art I am interested in *the timing* of artists' encounters with new ideas. I want to promote the value and impact of coming across ideas in real time. To help you navigate, each Part starts with an **Overview** and ends with a **Reflection**. The documents are introduced by **Summaries**, followed by critical

Commentaries written later. New pieces are undated. The whole thesis has been re-chosen and revised for the re-submission.

Across the thesis you will read some ideas restated and reframed. I invite you not to see it as redundancy, but as following the researcher's spirals during this learning journey.

Regarding the images, the viscosity of what I present here has a lineage. In the visual arts, art education and curating, the image is now given value in intellectual inquiry, and word/image juxtapositions have long been experimented with as knowledge-making methods. It wasn't always so. Drawing on rebellious and misunderstood work by art historians and cultural critics, I learn that 'white' art historian Aby Warburg was in his day treated as an eccentric for his now legendary work with images: his concept of the *image-vehicle*, that an image literally *carries meaning* across time and cultures; his concept of the *nachleben* of images, the after-life, the way they haunt memory and influence visual culture over time and across space (Ohrt and Heil, 2021) broke all the rules in art historical scholarship of the 1920s-40s. In 'white' philosopher Walter Benjamin's multi-volume, unfinished, visually saturated, text-bricolage *Arcades Project* developed in the 1930s and 40s, he confounded peers and critics: the "method of this project: literary montage. *I have nothing to say. Only to show.*" (Benjamin 1991: 572, 574). 'White' author and artist John Berger's *Ways of Seeing* of 1972 (2008) revolutionised how watchers of his popular TV series understood and read the power of images. 'White' feminist art historian Griselda Pollock's *Encounters in the Virtual Feminist Museum* (2007) and Avery F Gordon's *The Hawthorn Archive* (2017) deepen and layer how images and visual documents can power understanding. African-American poet and writer Claudia Rankine's *Just Us: An American Conversation* combines screenshots of text messages, adverts, artwork, photography, social media posts, emails, dialogues, held by written narrative, towards a unique re-understanding of racism in the USA (2020).

Inspired by this tradition, I invite you to tarry and linger with the imagery I present, and zoom in to see details, to engage more deeply, to see how they work on you and for or against the thesis. Part 3 is where I explore how image-making became central, and I ask you to take time with the images there as in an exhibition, to understand how the large wall-based piece I

now call 'Sail' came into being, eventually embodying some of the ambushes of whiteness central to this thesis.

Timeline of events – mine and world

In this reflective practice memoir, I have included a timeline in two colours. In the same way that timing in learning is crucial, the *context* of learning and what I learned from events is also crucial. **Blue font** is for my own selected talks and publications, and **orange** is for selected world and UK events. I chose the events most directly connected to the issues in this thesis, where a particular issue arose that is germane to the ambushes in the thesis. Through this I show how I was attempting to manifest understandings in the research process in public, to live out the theory as action.

The UK and world events that I have selected are ones that particularly altered the thinking in this thesis. I also periodically highlight how my ongoing paid work with art-activist-research group *Platform:London*, and with the Black and global majority, youth-led programme *Voices that Shake!* affected the thesis.⁷

Contemporary context: Art and Literature Review 2018 - 2024

I enrolled onto the PhD programme in January 2014 and am resubmitting nearly eleven years later. As a reflective practice memoir, the theses' four Parts track this period although with different intensities. For example, Part 1 takes you from 2016 to the end of 2017, and Part 0 covers only a three-month period in late 2022.

Throughout the four parts you will read of the unfolding contemporary context in England, in terms of racism in relation to art education, art education itself, through government policy and changes in the artworld. You will also read of artists, art educators and others pushing back and making visionary work within, against and side-stepping this. In this introduction, therefore I am not going lay out the contemporary context in any depth. I understand this is

⁷ <https://platformlondon.org/>; <https://voicesthatshake.org/> [Accessed 10.12.24]

unusual, but because of the compiled and chronological nature of this thesis, and in the service of not over-repeating myself, this is the decision I have made.

What I will do here is to share two contextual aspects between 2022 and now. 2022 was the year before I submitted the thesis, and the first aspect below is that of the heightened visibility of UK-based Black and global majority artists that year, through exhibitions and honours in the UK and beyond. Following that, I look at literature on racism in the field of art education 2022 to now. You will read of earlier histories in Part 1 and Part 2's opening essay.

2022 was a very significant year in relation to anyone committed to equity and anti-racism in art education and in the artworld, and also anyone committed to its intersection with anti-sexism. This year saw major institutions hosting high-profile exhibitions and giving awards to many pioneering Black British artists who started out in the 1980s and 1990s, and who have inexorably pushed through racism's glass ceiling and laid the ground for the next generations. I use the term Black British artist in the way it was used by artists and communities in the 1980s/90s, where 'Black' meant politically Black: an alliance of post-colonial artists who were marginalised by and pushing back against Britain's racism (Owusu, 1988; Sulter, 1990; Powell, Bailey, Archer-Straw, 2005; Chambers, 2014). Below I outline their remarkable and long-overdue recognition in 2022.

In 2022 we saw one-person exhibitions by Sonia Boyce, who was selected to represent Britain at the Venice Biennale, Italy, and whose work was honoured with the top Lion d'Or prize; we saw Lubaina Himid's major solo exhibition at Tate Modern; *Lumen*, a new film and a major retrospective of the work of Sutapa Biswas was launched at Baltic (Newcastle upon Tyne) and Kettle's Yard (Cambridge); Ingrid Pollard's one-person exhibition *Carbon Slowly Turning* at Turner Contemporary (Margate); and a pioneering exhibition at Tate Britain *Life Between Islands. Caribbean-British Art 1950s to Now*, co-curated by David A Bailey and supported with two significant monographs. The major international exhibition *In the Black Fantastic* at Hayward Gallery, London, brought together artists from across the African diaspora in a powerful afro-futuristic paradigm across film, sculpture, animation, installation, painting and costume, curated by Ekow Eshun. What is also significant here, aside from the tenacity and genius of this generation is that major institutions *programmed* these artists and

curators, which shows a shift within the artworld that intensified after the global Black Lives Matter (BLM) uprisings of 2020. I note here that there have also been critiques of institutional 'declarations' of anti-racism post-BLM which I talk about in Part 3 of the thesis.

In 2022 in the international arena, the massive five-month *Documenta 15* art festival in Kassel, Germany was curated by *ruangrupa*, the Indonesian collective. This was an unprecedentedly bold curatorial appointment: a collective not a 'name', from Indonesia, a place not associated by a Eurocentric artworld with 'contemporary art'.

Ruangrupa describe their approach to the opportunity of Documenta:

We want to create a globally oriented, collaborative and interdisciplinary art and culture platform that will remain effective beyond the 100 days of documenta fifteen. Our curatorial approach strives for a different kind of collaborative model of resource use—in economic terms but also with regard to ideas, knowledge, programs and innovations. (ruangrupa, 2022)

Ruangrupa invited dozens of other collectives from the majority world who are routinely ignored by the 'white' Western-dominated artworld or who have no interest in that artworld. These collectives then invited other artists, a truly devolved model. There was much that was controversial for the 'white' artworld here. The collectives made work alongside each other, across dozens of venues, learning from each other and with audiences/participants. The reason I mention this here is that completely *other futures, other ecologies, collective practices* for art and art/learning were mapped in this event: anti-individualistic, decolonial, non-artworld, self-teaching, and organised through decentralising collective principle of 'lumbung'.⁸ Another world is happening, right now.

⁸ Lumbung translates as a 'communal rice barn', 'a practice of collective decision-making to share the harvest. '...'resource building and equitable distribution are pivotal ... and impact the entire process—the structure, self-image and appearance of documenta fifteen'. (ruangrupa, 2022)

Art Education Literature

The second aspect of I want to address is that since 2020's uprisings, there has been an upscale in publishing on racism, coloniality and whiteness in art education in Britain. In Part 2, in the piece "Real honest colleague?" I review the literature current at that point (to end of 2017). Here I will present and overview from 2018 in a broad overview.

When I started the PhD in 2014, 'diversity' and 'inclusion' was still the dominant language in UK art education literature. What existed that explicitly named racism, coloniality and whiteness in art education was mostly initiated by Black and global majority artists, students, educators and writers. In the UK, *Shades of Noir* (SoN) brought out authoritative empirical and experientially-evidenced research reports, in a beautifully designed series titled 'Terms of Reference'. These were overseen by Aisha Richards, SoN's founder, and created by researchers, lecturers and art students who are Black and of the global majority at University of the Arts London (UAL). The three-hundred page *Peekaboo we see you: Whiteness* is an unparalleled resource (Shades of Noir, 2018). Their subsequent reports on disability (2020), race, sex and class (2020) are equally authoritative and compelling. Shades of Noir's report *Inclusive Practice: Alchemy - Transformation in Social Justice Teaching* marks a decade of SoN's transformatory learning programmes for artists and lecturers at UAL and is required reading.

2018 also saw the founding of the Decolonising Arts Institute, University of the Arts London (UAL) under the leadership of artist and Professor susan pui san lok. This landmark institute itself emerged from the *Black Artists and Modernism* research project, initiated by Sonia Boyce, and funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC, UK). In this year, 'White' scholar Fiona O'Rourke's chapter on *Race, whiteness and the National Curriculum in art: deconstructing racialized pedagogic legacies in postcolonial England* was published (O'Rourke, 2018), pioneeringly applying critical race theory to the secondary curriculum in art.

In 2019, the book *Inclusion and Intersectionality in Visual Arts Education*, edited by leading 'white' scholar and anti-racist educator Kate Hatton, was published (Hatton, 2019). This

followed up on her previous edited book *Towards an Inclusive Arts Education* (2016). Also in 2019 we saw two editions of the hard-hitting zine *Decolonising the Art Curriculum*, produced by Black and global majority students and staff at UAL (UAL, 2019).

In 2020, British-Kenyan artist, educator and curator Sylvia Theuri published *Who belongs at art school?* (Theuri, 2020). We also saw the launch of *A Particular Reality – art, racism, education*, a student and staff collaboration between *Kingston School of Art* and *Goldsmiths* (Goldsmiths, 2020); Filmmaker and curator Jemma Desai published *This work isn't for us*, an anatomisation and decimation of tokenism and racism in UK art institutions (2020).

In 2021, *The White Pube's* interventionist curatorial and critical agenda gained huge popular following such as Zarina Mohammad's *Can white people ever be radical?* (Mohammad, 2021). Lucy Panesar, one of the UAL Decolonising zines' co-editors, published *Troublesome knowledge and conversations: Learning how to talk about race at UAL* (2021). The *National Society for Education in Art and Design* (NSEAD) published their *Anti-racism in Art Education Checklists*, arising from Black and global majority-led research process (2021). 'White' scholar Tyler Denmead published on whiteness and time in art education, following from his *White Warnings* piece (Denmead, 2021, 2018). Artist and researcher Michelle Gamaker Williams produced *Decolonizing Archives. Knees and Breasts are Mountains, Art School Reimagined* (Williams, 2021). My own chapter 'Closer to the skin' – whiteness and coloniality in 'white' art educators was published in *Debates in Art and Design Education* (Trowell, in Addison and Burgess, 2021).

In 2022, 'white' scholar Daniel C Blight published *The image of whiteness, Contemporary photograph and racialization* including five conversations with leading Black and global majority scholars and artists on whiteness (Blight, 2022). NSEAD dedicated a special edition of its *AD Magazine* to anti-racism, following on from the *Anti-racism Checklists* mentioned above (NSEAD, 2022).

Early 2023 saw the publication of global majority artist Jack Ky Tan's poetic and hard-hitting *AREVA report: A knowledge exchange report on anti-racism and equity in visual arts* (Tan, 2023). 2023 is also notable as the first year where a cluster of journal articles written by

individual 'white' art educators and academics in the UK, centred and named *whiteness in secondary school art and design*. This is a full five years after O'Rourke's piece on the National Curriculum. We see whiteness discussed throughout in Heather Knight and Emma Jones' *Speaking Through Silence: Embracing fear and shame in anti-racist education* (2023). For years I have tracked the UK-based *International Journal of Art and Design Education (iJADE)* to see how it is covering racism issues. Historically, iJADE has preferred 'diversity' and 'inclusion', with very few articles naming racism or anti-racism, and even fewer coloniality and whiteness. Yet in 2023, a special edition on Belonging featured several articles where *for the first time* whiteness is named and centred: in *Friction and Failure in the Secondary Art Classroom: Cultivating Decolonial Transformative Pedagogies of Hope* by Clare Stanhope (2023); also in a cross-disciplinary article *A Reflection on Dialogic Diving Boards and Decolonising School Art: The African Mask Project* by Will Grant, Malcolm Richards, Ros Stewart and Jamie Whelan (2023); in *Make First: Exploring Methods to Deliver Anti-Racist and Anti-Ableist Craft Learning*, by Zoe Dennington and Rebecca Goozee (2023). In 2024, in the theoretical domain, art educationalist and whiteness scholar Tyler Denmead's *Visual Art as a Racemaking Technology: Implications for Education* (2024) was published, proposing a vital reconceptualization of whiteness in European-descended art curricula and teaching, and what can be done.

By contrast, since 2023, in recent *institutional policy-orientated publications* that are edited by 'white' researchers, it is striking to observe a near silence in the naming of racism or anti-racism, let alone whiteness. In mid-2023, two influential reports were published.⁹ The first was *Art Now. An Inquiry into the state of art and design teaching in early years foundation stage, primary and secondary education*, arising from a three-year research programme from across the UK, commissioned by the All-Party Parliamentary Group and NSEAD, with research led by 'white' scholar of equity practices Samantha Broadhead (Broadhead, 2023). There is no mention of racism, and only two of anti-racism. The word 'white' is used once, in a brief discussion of the need to diversify the art teacher workforce. While this is primarily an advocacy document for a heavily threatened subject area, the paucity feels odd given the

⁹ Again, note that the writing of the reports would have taken place in 2020-22, in the immediate context of the Black Lives Matter uprisings and aftermath.

NSEAD's uncompromising, substantial *Anti-racism Art Education Action Checklists* mentioned earlier, which were collectively led by Black and global majority art educators with 'white' allies (NSEAD, 2020).

The second report of 2023 was the long-awaited *The Arts in Schools, Foundations for the Future. Purposes, Principles and Practice*, successor to the pioneering 1982 report of the same name, commissioned by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, edited by 'white' scholars Pauline Tambling and Sally Bacon (Tambling and Bacon, 2023). This publication, which covers all artforms, again focuses on advocacy for threatened arts subjects, preferring the terms 'inclusion' and diversity which are mentioned a handful of times, rather than anti-racism/racism.¹⁰

In 2024, *A practical guide to teaching art and design in the secondary school* was published. This is a major new handbook for trainee and early years art and design teachers in a UK context, edited by 'white' scholars Andy Ash and Peter Carr. It contains twenty chapters and twenty-six authors of whom only two authors appear to identify as Black or from the global majority.¹¹ Racism as part of entitlement and equity is frequently mentioned by contributors across the book, but, aside from one chapter, it is most often part of a list along with other oppressions to be tackled. I will return to these recent institutional publications in the In-Conclusion, where I discuss them as part of 'white' opacity to itself.

By contrast, the NSEAD's 2024 *Manifesto for Art and Design Education* offers three headlines: *Equality of opportunity for all*; A learner-centred, future-facing contemporary curriculum; and A valued, diverse subject-specialist workforce. Under Equality of opportunity it bullets *Remove subject hierarchies and dismantle harmful accountability measures that limit learner choice*. Under curriculum it bullets *shaping curricula that are equitable and accessible*, and under workforce it stresses *the need for a national strategy to recruit and retain a diverse*

¹⁰ 'Including every child' is the third of five 'core policy principles'; 'Inclusion' is the third of five 'core practice and provision principles' (Tambling, 2023, p.12)

¹¹ I looked up every contributor to learn more about their research priorities and background.

art educator workforce. While there is no direct mention of racism or anti-racism, one can see how the in-depth work of the NSEAD's *Anti-racism Art Education Action* group is intrinsic.

The new long-awaited report *Visualise: Race and Inclusion in Secondary School Art Education*, was launched at the Houses of Parliament in 2024. The two-year research was steered and created by a Black-led research team including Marlene Wylie, as a project initiated by the Freelands Foundation and the Runnymede Trust who are known for their stance on equity and race justice issues (Begum, 2024). *Visualise* names absolutely the pivotal issue of 'white' domination of secondary art education through wider ideology, curriculum, staffing and a cradle-to-cradle analysis from early years through to art school, galleries and museums and teacher education.

It remains the case that the US leads in the sheer weight of institutional publishing confronting racism and naming whiteness in art and art education, led by Black and global majority scholars. To focus purely on one year: 2019 saw the publication of the *Palgrave Handbook of Race and the Arts in Education* consisting of thirty-three chapters, majority by global majority writers, each tasked with addressing Cheryl Harris's groundbreaking concept of 'whiteness as property' in arts and arts education (Harris, 1993, in Kraehe and colleagues, 2019). 2019 also saw all three editions of the US-based *Journal of Creative Research in Art Education* (JCRAE) devoted to 'Whiteness and Art Education' edited by Black scholar Joni Boyd Acuff (Acuff, 2019). This comprised twenty-two articles, again mostly by Black and global majority writers. These publications, although US-orientated, were very useful to me, while still seeking UK-specific resources. I draw attention to one other relevant new publication from a US context: Nicholas Mirzoeff, 'white' visual culture scholar, published *White Sight: Visual Politics and Practices of Whiteness*, in which he anatomises the visibility of 'white sight' behind imagery from the COVID-19, pandemic, Black Lives Matter uprisings, the white mob's 'storming of the Capitol' in January 2017 (2023).

I end this section with another observation comparing across the Atlantic. After 2023's burst of articles by 'white' art educators and scholars naming whiteness, Britain's still resistant *art education field* must continue to 'catch up' with the USA. Our field can deepen the analysis

through key recent anti-racist scholarship based on British experience that has been published over the past eighteen months. These include recent work by British-based Black and global majority scholars Kehinde Andrews' *The Psychosis of Whiteness, Surviving the Insanity of a Racist World* (2023); Kalwant Bhopal's *Race and Education, Reproducing white supremacy in Britain* (2024); Joshua Virasami's edited volume of chapters by global-majority-led social movements in Britain: *A World without racism, Building anti-racist futures* (2024). 'White' anti-racist scholar David Gillborn produced *White Lies: Racism, Education and Critical Race Theory* (2024) as a direct confrontation with racist, ideological misinformation of the Right-wing media and government. Crossing smaller but crucial waters, French-Réunionese scholar François Vergès produced *A Programme of Absolute Disorder. Decolonising the Museum*, which takes on and takes down the Louvre, much as 'white' curator/scholar Dan Hicks did for Britain's ('British') museums (Vergès, 2024; Hicks, 2020). There is no excuse.

‘Race’, ‘white’ and the use of terms

In this section explain linguistic conventions that I adopt in the thesis.

'Race': In refuting claims for the scientific basis of 'race', I align myself with cultural theorists and sociologists Stuart Hall, Yasmin Gunaratnam and many others, and with contemporary DNA analysis. Hall, cited in Gunaratnam's influential work *Researching 'race' and ethnicity* (2003) states:

Conceptually, 'race' is not a scientific category. The differences attributable to 'race' within a population are as great as that between racially defined populations. 'Race' is a political and social construct. It is the organising discursive category around which has been constructed a system of socio-economic power, exploitation and exclusion – i.e. racism. (Hall, cited in Gunaratnam, 2003, Ch 1, p.2) ¹²

¹² I have Yasmin Gunaratnam's book as downloaded chapters, so am referring to the page numbers in the downloaded chapter.

However, as a researcher and anti-racist activist I also reckon with what Rajagapolan Radhakrishnan describes as the ‘treacherous bind’ but also a goal (in italics):

No sooner do we mention ‘race’ than we are caught in a treacherous bind. To say ‘race’ seems to imply that ‘race’ is real; but it also means that differentiation by race is racist and unjustifiable on scientific, theoretical, moral, and political grounds. We find ourselves in the classic Nietzschean double bind: ‘race’ has been the history of an untruth, of an untruth that unfortunately is our history... The challenge here is to generate, from such a past and a present, *a future where race will have been put to rest forever.*’ (Radhakrishnan cited in Gunaratnam, 2003, Ch 2, p4, my italics)

What this means is that one must reckon with using racialized language while seeking the wider goal of dis-entrenching and delegitimising ‘race’, racist and racialized language, to bring on that future where it is put to rest. Like many, I now use ‘racialized’ as an adjective to show that this action is something done to some people on the basis of their skin, by other people, and is not intrinsic to those it is attached to (refuting ‘race’ thinking).

Intersectionality: My focus is on racism, coloniality and whiteness, set within an intersectional standpoint. This concept was developed by African-American critical race theorist Kimberlé Crenshaw based on her analysis of the realities of Black women's experience in the USA. Intersectionality asserts that no one aspect of identity can explain an individual's experience of oppression: factors including social class, gender, sexuality, ability/disability all intersect with racism (Crenshaw, 1991).

‘*White*’: I use ‘white’ in quote marks to signify a person who visibly passes for ‘white’ or who, because of their skin tone, is racialized as ‘white’ under white supremacist logic. This is to acknowledge and visibilise the racialized privilege afforded to ‘white’ people within racism, but for me the quote marks also refutes the racist logic through which the category itself is created. I leave out the quote marks when white is appended to a noun signifying a condition such as white privilege, white fragility, white narcissism, white supremacy.

People of colour, Black people and people of the global majority: In the thesis I do not use the acronym BAME (Black and minority ethnic) which in the UK is commonly used in institutional and governmental settings. Apart from my own rejection of acronyms that lump together any groups of people, I learn here from my colleagues who are people who are Black and of the global majority, but also from incisive statements such as by #BAMEover (What Next, 2021). My principle is to use the person's self-identity in their heritage where they have declared it. However, my usage does change across the memoir, reflecting changes in usage among my peers of the global majority in this complex area. In 2016 I was using 'people of colour', although as a 'white' person, uncomfortably. You will see a change in my usage between 2016 and 2020 from people of colour, to people of the global majority. People of the global majority reflects a numerical reality that whiteness, white supremacy, and racialized capitalism is enacted by a small minority of the world's people who have gained disproportionate influence through colonial violence. In 2020/21, to visibilise the specific violence against Black people, along with many I chose to use the phrase 'Black and global majority'.

Black: where the person uses this term, I have used this term. I do not use Black in the inclusive 'politically Black' sense it was used in Britain in the 1980s, except when referring to that era.

Anti-Black, anti-Blackness, anti-Black racism: Later in the thesis after around 2021, I start referring to anti-Blackness, aligning to new consciousness after the global Black Lives Matter movements in 2020 brought the terms 'anti-Black' and 'anti-Black racism' into common parlance. Scholars Janvieve Williams Comrie, Antoinette M. Landor, Kwyn Townsend Riley and Jason D. Williamson define these as 'the systematic denial of Black humanity and dignity, which makes Black people effectively ineligible for full citizenship' (Williams Comrie and colleagues, 2022, p.74). They also point to its global dimension beyond and also caused by whiteness: '...anti-Black racism is not just about the racial oppression of Black people by whites, but by other racial and ethnic groups as well, all of which have themselves been

heavily influenced by white supremacy' (Williams Comrie, Landor, Riley, Williamson, 2022, p.75).

'Fieldwork': my inclusion of quote marks around 'fieldwork' denotes my uneasiness with the term, on grounds of colonial histories of research in the 'westernized university' where 'fieldwork' has often been extractive and often harmful. You will also see that by midway through Part 2 I stop using the term 'data' about material gathered from the contributors during the 'fieldwork'. This comes from the same uneasiness.

Peer-participants, peer-informants... to contributors: related to the previous point, you will read a move from 'peer-participants' to the term 'contributors'. I stopped using 'participant' when I it was clear this wouldn't be participatory research (from Part 2 onwards). For a while I considered the term 'informant' to describe Black and global majority contributors, but I felt that it didn't sufficiently conjure up the aspect of exchange in the conversation. I was seeking a term to suggest the gifting of insights to someone who would be trusted to hold them, although the ethics of this is complicated. I chose the term 'contributor' to remind me of that responsibility because etymologically, 'tribute' means 'gift'.

Sutured / un-sutured: This term is at the centre of the thesis and comes from African-American philosopher of racism and whiteness, George Yancy (2012, 2015). He uses it explicitly and metaphorically around the need for the *wound* of being produced as racist to be kept opened. I am mindful that there are people living daily with excruciating physical pain and real wounds that do not heal, or who are carers. I acknowledge that this metaphor may be difficult for some readers, but I have found it a crucial ontology for 'white' anti-racist action.

< >: I recognise the impacts on the body of theory, information, ideas, imagery, ...the news. I have placed this sign at particular moments in the text to indicate where I myself needed to take a deep breath in, hold... and breath it out.

PART 1 – In which researching with peers racialised as 'white' is sutured... and un-sutured

Rhodes Must Fall

Black South-African students topple a statue of British imperialist Cecil Rhodes, igniting a global decolonial movement against institutionalised racism and white supremacy in universities and society

University of Cape Town, South Africa

9 March 2015

Overview

In January 2014, aged 51, I started as a part-time doctoral student on the PhD programme at the School of Education, University of Lincoln, UK. Within three months, seismic global protests had been catalysed by Black students in South African universities which are central to the contradictions explored in this PhD: the long-held charge that Westernised universities are racist, colonial and oppressive to non-white peoples, sustaining white supremacy.

Part 1 of my thesis covers the period between 2016 and autumn 2017, which came after a two-year Doctoral induction and research period. Below I select and critically contextualise five 'documents' written or made by me which demonstrate the suturing and un-suturing of my original conviction about working with 'white' peers for the 'fieldwork', and what contribution, methodologically, visual and art-making processes can offer.

In terms of events, after the liberatory activism of *Rhodes Must Fall*, I will draw attention to four nationally shocking racist events which took place in the UK during the same year. These enacted whiteness in its physically violent form, and they directly influenced the evolution of this thesis.

In terms of my own events, I introduce a book chapter that I wrote on failure and hope, partly arising from the PhD process, and partly in response to the political context.

Part 1 opens with a major milestone in the PhD journey. This is my official MPhil Transfer essay titled: *"Real, honest colleagues?" 'White' arts educators committed to social justice confront coloniality in our practices.*¹³ It proposed a methodology of working with 'white' participants on their/our whiteness. It was submitted in March 2016, and examined by Viva that July.

I then present and discuss two key images from 2017. The first piece I made for a Post-graduate Study School 'poster' event at the University of Lincoln. It is significant in that it was the first time I felt able to speak about my research. The second piece is an artwork by Gambian-British artist Khadija Saye. I encountered *Dwelling, In this space we breathe* in July 2017, and the wider societal context was pivotal to changing my understanding of the direction of the research.

The self-developmental piece of writing that follows Khadija Saye's work is titled *On so far failing to do a PhD as activism*. It was compelled by the conflagration of the Grenfell Tower residential block in June 2017, in London. Over seventy people lost their lives, mainly people who were Black and of the global majority, perishing in an inferno which authorities had long known was a serious possibility and had done nothing to address. In the piece written in the wake of Grenfell's violence, I question the effectiveness and validity of my 'white' activism in relation to the PhD. The writing was assisted by the shock of a recently discovered photograph of me from forty years ago. Part 1 ends with an analysis of why, fully un-sutured, I moved away from working with 'white' peers for the 'fieldwork'.

¹³ In some UK institutions the MPhil Transfer is called the Upgrade.

“Real, honest colleagues?” ‘White’ arts educators committed to social justice confront coloniality in our practices. March 2016.

MPhil Transfer essay, School of Education, University of Lincoln

Summary

In this essay, I work with decolonial theory and reflective practice methods to frame research into the roots, operation and disruption of whiteness in ‘white’ educators, including myself. The goal was to strengthen the anti-racist practice of arts educators from any artform towards becoming “real, honest colleagues” (Dillard 2000, p.668). I set out why participative and collective ‘fieldwork’ with ‘white’ peers, using reflective biographical methods is appropriate in the service of anti-racist research practice. I also make a case for ‘white’-led anti-racist work with ‘white’ people as a method to address racism. I passed the Viva examination.

Coloniality survives colonialism. It is maintained alive in books, in the criteria for academic performance, in cultural patterns, in common sense, in the self-image of peoples, in aspirations of self, and so many other aspects of our modern experience. In a way, as modern subjects *we breathe coloniality all the time and every day*. (Nelson Maldonado-Torres, 2007, p.243, my italics).

I am looking for real, honest colleagues. Colleagues who are comfortable enough with their own constructions of their own communities to respect mine. Who aren't scared of talking about the ways that racism, or classism, or sexism, or homophobia shape our decisions about policies and programs within education. Folks who know that those are the very *conversations that will breathe life into an academy that thrives on reproducing privilege and inequality at every turn*. (Cynthia B Dillard, 2000, p.668, my italics)

First Retreat, Then Advance.¹⁴

¹⁴ *First Retreat, Then Advance!!* was a peer to peer artist's development project on critical thinking, self-reflexivity and dissent hosted by the *Institute for the Art & Practice of Dissent at Home*.

Summary

This research starts from the premise that “as modern subjects we breathe coloniality all the time and every day” (Maldonado-Torres, 2007, p.243). Starting from here, no-one is unaffected, including those who claim to work for social justice.

As a 'white' arts educator who works with explicit social justice intent, I am interested in my and 'white' peers' navigations of coloniality. I am interested in how we think the “logic of coloniality” was produced in us, how it damages others through our practices despite our social justice intentions, and how we might face up to it in a lifelong “project of decolonization” (Walter Mignolo in Maldonado-Torres, 2011, p.6).

Using methods from 'interpretive biography' (Norman Denzin, 2008), including the 'critical genogram' (Iva Kosutic and colleagues, 2009) and 'currere' (William Pinar, 1975, 1994), the qualitative research will bring me together with a small group of 'white' peers to undertake 'cooperative inquiry' into our social, political and pedagogical construction (Peter Reason and Kate McArdle, 2004, p.114). I wish to test whether such cooperative, autobiographical methods can help move us into becoming “real, honest colleagues” (Cynthia Dillard, 2000, p.668).

My overarching political aim is to generate new knowledge and practices for challenging structures of power within arts pedagogies that currently perpetuate coloniality.

Context

Puerto Rican scholar Ramón Grosfoguel defines coloniality as follows:

I use 'coloniality' to address 'colonial situations' in the present period... I mean the cultural, political, sexual, spiritual, epistemic and economic oppression/exploitation of subordinate racialized/ethnic groups by dominant racialized/ethnic groups with or without the existence of colonial administrations. (2007, p.220)

In the context of Britain, the “dominant racialized/ethnic group” is 'white' people, with all the social class and regional nuances that exist within that. Despite the high-profile critiques and interventions of many British-based artists and cultural theorists of colour¹⁵ over the last fifty years,¹⁶ 'white' graduate-class arts educators still swamp the field and dictate the 'norms' in both formal, informal and policy settings.¹⁷ Grofoguiel's charges of “oppression”, “exploitation” and “subordination” should concern us even (or especially) as we attempt to resist the increasingly neoliberal contexts of the institutional settings we operate in.¹⁸

The arts and culture are political and value-laden: they reflect, challenge or support power hierarchies in society. They can be elite, alienating, oppressive; embracing, mobilising and elevating depending on context, on who is experiencing that art, and who has the power to decide which or whose art is 'good' or worthwhile. How much do 'white' arts educators question the politics of curriculum and resources, in terms of which arts, artists and methods - which cultures - we encourage engagement with? Who are our students, participants or

¹⁵ I am using 'people of colour', over 'Black', 'Black and Brown', 'Black, Asian and Minoritised Ethnic (BAME)'. While 'of colour' as a term is still problematic, it can be argued to be less problematic than 'Black', 'Black and Brown' etc, where the intention of using the phrase is to indicate all people affected by 'white' supremacism and racism. <http://www.blackgirldangerous.org/2013/03/2013321whats-wrong-with-the-term-person-of-color/> [Accessed 13.6.2016]

¹⁶ A sample from my field of visual arts: Naseem Khan, 1976; Rasheed Araeen, 1984; Kwesi Owusu, 1988; Maud Sulter, 1990; Sunil Gupta 1993; Olu Oguibe, 2004; Richard Powell, David A Bailey and Petrine Archer-Straw, 2005; Eddie Chambers, 2014; Sorryyoufeeluncomfortable, 2016. In 1984, the internationally acclaimed art and critical theory journal *Third Text* was founded by artist Rasheed Araeen, now funded by *Arts Council England*.

¹⁷ In 2013, in the compulsory educational sector, 87.5% of all teachers including teaching assistants in England's schools were 'white' (DfE, 2015a, 8). In the same year, numbers of children in primary and secondary school from minoritised ethnic groups stood at an average of 28% (DfE, 2015b, 6). In 2013, out of 347 art and design PGCE students offered places to study, 319 identified as 'white', 5 identified as Indian, and 13 were categorised as 'unknown'. Out of 18 self-identified applicants of African descent, not one was offered a place (GTTR, 2014, 27).

¹⁸ This research takes place in an era characterised by neoliberal reform: swingeing cuts to state-funded education the marketisation of education through audit-driven evaluation and public-private partnerships (Apple, 2005); increased xenophobia, surveillance and 'informing' as required by PREVENT (Khaleeli, 2015); marginalisation of arts education in the UK: the E-Bacc exclusion of the arts in secondary schools (Richens, 2015); arts and humanities' teaching subsidy abolition in Higher Education, ensuring exclusionary hikes in fees which re-elitise the arts (Morgan, 2010; Preston, 2015). One can see these moves as extending the “logic of coloniality”.

colleagues, and how does that affect our choices? Who, in fact, are 'we' in the first place, and how did we even get here? ¹⁹ How has the daily 'breathing in' of coloniality operated on pedagogy of 'white' arts educators for social justice and caused oppression? Secondly, can we 'breathe it out' of ourselves to come closer to what African-American scholar and educationalist Cynthia B Dillard calls “real, honest colleagues” (Dillard, 2000, p.668)?

However, 'decolonizing' research that is premised on 'white' arts educators' self-investigations runs the risk of what Sara Ahmed terms “ego inflation”, “narcissism”, “white anxiety”, “fantasies of transformation or transcendence” and above all “recentring white power” through the very act of studying our 'white' coloniality (Ahmed, 2004, 2016). ²⁰ It will be crucial to monitor ourselves, to repeatedly hold on to where real change is happening as a result of our investigations. As African-American writer and artist bell hooks insists: “individual struggle to change consciousness *must be fundamentally linked to collective effort to transform those structures* that reinforce and perpetuate white supremacy” (1989, 119, my italics). This research process needs to be collective, accountable and, to use Kate Derickson and Paul Routledge's framing around scholar-activism, 'activist' in intent (2015).

Research Question

How can 'white' arts educators confront coloniality in our practices for social justice such that a lasting “project of decolonization” of ourselves, our field, and wider society can be catalysed?

¹⁹ A note on 'we', 'our' and 'us', and my assumed readership. Because I include myself in the problem and in the research, I will use 'we' and 'us' to indicate me and 'white' arts educator peers. This is not done to exclude any reader who does not identify as a 'white' arts educator. It is also not an attempt to universalise from my/peers experience, or to generalise across my networks of peers or the wider field. At this stage in the research it is done to place myself as having the problem, along with 'white' colleagues who also have the problem.

²⁰ The accusation of narcissism has a parallel in some criticisms of the research methodology called autoethnography, a collectivised variant of which I hope to deploy in this research: “There are those who view autoethnography's focus on “self” with deep suspicion and scepticism, accusing the genre of flirting with indulgent, “navel-gazing” forms of autobiography.” (Allen-Collinson, 2013, p.1) There will be much to monitor.

Contributions to knowledge

From reviewing the literature so far, there is much around coloniality and whiteness in social justice education (in which I include studies of race, class, gender etc oppression through and in education). However, literature both in arts education and in social justice arts education that features coloniality and whiteness appears to be scarce especially coming out of the UK. I aim to understand and analyse this gap and contribute new insights to help bridge it. I'm also applying the group and individual research methods of the 'critical genogram' (Kosutic and colleagues, 2009) and 'currere' (Pinar, 1975) within the arts education sphere which I believe is has not been done before, therefore extending knowledge of how these social justice methods operate in a new field

Personal Stake

I am a London-born feminist educator in the arts, with over twenty-five years' experience of working with explicit social justice intent.²¹ However, recently I stepped back from this work – I “arrested” myself, in William Pinar's words (1994, p.45), becoming what one educator has called a “teacher on hiatus” (Aubrey Hanson and colleagues, 2014, p.5). I did this because of growing doubts and self-suspensions about how coloniality in me might be damaging my students, participants and also colleagues, especially those dealing with systemic marginalisation and worse – people of colour; those materially less secure than me; those less formally educated than me; less able-bodied; from non-heteronormative sexualities (and the intersections between these). The doubts arose from cumulative incidents where I suddenly felt or was made newly aware of my part in perpetuating the thing I say I'm against: coloniality. Although I have been working in interracial settings for years, this awareness coincided with co-initiating '*Voices that Shake!*', a youth programme around arts, activism and

²¹ My background is in visual arts – art, craft, design education. I trained as an art teacher, and have taught in schools, art schools and universities, museums and galleries; alongside these institutional contexts I work in informal, self-initiated, community and social movement/protest settings. I have also worked with colleagues in theatre, music, spoken word and live art, and for this research I am interested in arts educators from any artform as what is important is the investigation into the logic of coloniality across European-influenced artforms, rather than any specific artform's histories in coloniality.

race,²² and being introduced to theory around coloniality/decolonization by a new younger colleague of colour.²³

However, since starting the PhD, I've been convinced by Daniel Bar-On's phrase about the value to research of "trying to understand what one is afraid to learn about" (Bar-On, 1991, p.32).²⁴ One method in this research is autoethnographic: to reflect on what underlies my doubts and self-suspensions, in the hope that through reflection I will learn better how to challenge coloniality in my pedagogy and in the field I'm in, especially in my role as teacher-educator.

Reflective cooperative inquiry with peers

Through writing and discussion over the past two years, I have experienced what Pinar calls "release from arrest" and "release into movement" once again (1994, p.45). The "hiatus'd" educator started imagining the research impacts of collaborating with arts educator peers who share similar concerns. In the activist mode mentioned earlier, I've situated the peer cooperative element of this research as movement-building.²⁵ This references Malcolm X's recommendations for how 'white' activists should work in the context of civil rights struggles:

Whites who are sincere should organise among themselves and figure out some strategy to break down the prejudice that exists in white communities. This is where they

²² Shake! was initiated in 2010 by Ben Amunwa, a colleague in Platform. Given my background in art, education and commitment to anti-racism, Ben invited me to work with him and artists of the global majority on the pilot course, as well as fundraising. His vision was to resource a new generation of artists and activists of colour, as well as to disrupt Platform's own reproduction of whiteness. <https://voicesthatshake.org/> [Accessed 5.3.23]

²³ My colleague Farzana Khan introduced me to the concept of 'coloniality' (as distinct to post-colonialism) in 2014.

²⁴ Israeli psychologist Bar-On's research was into the territory of perpetrators of genocide: in 1985, he undertook field work in Germany to study the psychological and moral after-effects of the Holocaust on the children of Nazi perpetrators. Fittingly for my purposes, Bar-On's chapter *Trying to understand what one is afraid to learn about* is from Donald Schön's 1991 book *The Reflective Turn: Case studies in and on educational practice*.

²⁵ I am building in three public research gatherings to share and critique findings between 2017–2020. I believe I am well-placed to do this not only through academic mechanisms, but also through extensive networks I have gained in my education work and campaigning with arts-activist social justice group, *Platform* www.platformlondon.org [Accessed 13.6.2016]

can function more intelligently and more effectively, *in the white community itself...*
(1969, p.20, my italics)²⁶

To do this, I will offer what Linden West terms “a reflexive learning space” where the 'white' community of my peers and I can identify and reflect upon how coloniality was and is produced in us, and test how reflective biographical processes affect or 'decolonize' our daily practices (West, 2010, p.1). Donald Schön's influential theories on “educating the reflective practitioner” assert that:

The reflective turn is... a kind of revolution. It turns on its head the problem of constructing an epistemology of practice. It offers, as a first order answer to the question, 'What do practitioners need to know?', reflection on the understandings already built into the skillful actions of everyday practice. (1991, p.5)

I have located ‘cooperative inquiry’ as conceived by Peter Reason and Kate McArdle, as a relevant method of action research, where “a small group of peers work together in cycles of action and reflection to develop both understanding and practice in a matter of mutual concern” (Reason and McArdle, 2004, p.114). Cooperative inquiry into “what...practitioners need to know” about our coloniality may build community which could then have multiplier effects in our field.

Interpretive Biography - Stings and Epiphanies

I've found Norman Denzin's method of 'interpretive biography' particularly relevant to my research aims as it focuses on social justice goals. This is an autoethnography through writing that “disrupts conventional narratives and conventional histories... to better understand how racism and social injustice have been seamlessly woven together” (2008, p.119).²⁷ As

²⁶ There are critiques of how 'white' activists have interpreted Malcolm X's call for 'white-on-white' anti-racist/civil rights work. For example, in Kevin Rigby Jr. and Hari Ziyad's polemic *White People have no place in Black Liberation* (Rigby and Ziyad, 2016).

²⁷ It's relevant to art educators that this extract is from Denzin's chapter for the *Handbook of the Arts in Qualitative Research* (Knowles and Cole, 2008)

“critical autoethnographers” he invites us to explore “epiphanies” in our past (2008, p.120) and the more painful “stings of memory” (Ulmer quoted in Denzin 2008, p.123), and then crucially to connect them with wider “cultural history and social structures” (2008, p.121). By authoring and then collectivising our stings of memory and epiphanies 'white' arts educator peers and I can potentially locate the systemic roots of our coloniality and in so doing change how we confront it. Through collectivising our “personal stories [we can] create calculated disturbances in social, cultural and political networks of power.” (Stacy Holman-Jones, in Denzin and Lincoln, 2005, p.763, my insertion)

Conceptual framework – Why coloniality

I have found the concept of 'coloniality' to be the most acute in helping me structure the framework for this research in a number of ways.

'Coloniality' was developed by liberation philosophers in central and south America including Peruvian Anibal Quijano, Argentinian-Mexican Enrique Dussel and Cuban Sylvia Wynter (Quijano, 2000; Dussel, 2000; Wynter, 2003). It and its sister 'decolonization' emerged theoretically here, based on a critical analysis of the political, social, cultural and economic legacies of the genocidal conquest of the Americas by European traders and settlers. Working with coloniality re-centres critical theory, and moves it away from the global dominance of western European and US theorists (Grosfoguel, 2013, p.74), although it is still male-dominated. Through coloniality I understand that neoliberalism (a European-descended, expansionist global 'free-market' capitalist power structure), and the European-defined project of 'modernity' (with its belief in progress and the designation of the 'non-modern' and indigenous as underdeveloped, exploitable, disposable and exterminable)²⁸ are inseparable from and dependent on coloniality. This triad of coloniality, modernity and neoliberalism is the political backdrop to my study. Coloniality also helps me to remember to position 'white' British perpetration of coloniality within 'white' imperial European histories, as well as 'white' settler-colonial histories (Eve Tuck and Wayne Yang, 2012).

²⁸ The emphasis of modernity as a creation of coloniality has bearing on the arts. For 'non-modern', read non-western, non-European-art-history-influenced arts.

I will work with two concepts within coloniality. Firstly, following Argentinian decolonial theorist Walter Mignolo, I want us to inquire into what he terms “the logic of coloniality” as it has been “breathed” in by us (in Maldonado-Torres, 2011, p.6). Maldonado-Torres states that to the “logic of coloniality” we must add the “project of decolonization” (2011, p.6).²⁹ This, I suggest, is an out-breath, an expulsion. However, we will need to empty our lungs repeatedly as the logic of coloniality will confront us in every domain.

The logic of coloniality

- through control of knowledge, knowers and who can 'know' what

Theorist Boaventura de Sousa Santos claims that “there is no global social justice without global cognitive justice” (Santos, 2007, p.xix). “Global cognitive justice” is the recognition of the equal rights of different forms of cognition outside elite Eurocentric norms. Santos speaks of an “epistemic blindness” in privileging European-descended canonical knowledge, an invisibilising or wilful ignoring of other knowledges (2007b, p.407).³⁰ Santos and others speak of “epistemicide”: in the case of coloniality, the willed or collateral destruction of non-European knowledges or ways of knowing and being, sometimes through intentional or unintentional genocide (Santos, 2015) to which others highlight the suppression of women's knowledge (Grosfoguel, 2013). There are related precedents within Europe, but the scale cannot be compared to the genocide/epistemicide involved in the colonisation of the Americas, Australasia or transatlantic trade in enslaved African people. Imperial Britain competed within European expansionism in the hierarchising of knowledge that privileges that of the ruling 'white' male. Britain along with other European empires then exported this model worldwide, and social media groups such as *Why is my curriculum white?* and *Decoloniality London*³¹ are part of an urgent response to this.

²⁹ The full quote “I suggest that we use that which Mignolo offers between the rhetoric of modernity and the logic of coloniality, alongside which we also need to add the category of the project of decolonization.” (Maldonado-Torres, 2011, p.6)

³⁰ I am also interested to explore how this relates to educational theorist Basil Bernstein's work on 'symbolic control' - the European Classical tradition of fragmenting knowledge into separable 'disciplines' which are then hierarchised in worth. (Bernstein, 1996)

³¹ <https://www.facebook.com/groups/WIMCW/>; <https://www.decolonialitylondon.org> [Accessed 13.6.2016]

How can 'white' arts educators and pedagogies undo this 'white' patriarchal Eurocentric canon and relearn what knowledge in the arts is or could be, in the name of epistemic justice?

- through whiteness

The concept and study of 'whiteness' is both problematic and key to coloniality. Whiteness 'racialises' people with 'white' skins. 'White' people's consciousness of our own whiteness means becoming visible to ourselves as gaining privileges based on our skins alone (regardless of other intersecting oppressions), and benefiting materially and bodily from coloniality, whether we want to or not. African-American scholar W.E.B Du Bois' groundbreaking 1920 work *The Souls of White Folks* characterises - even caricatures – white privilege thus:

...silently but clearly, I am given to understand that whiteness is the ownership of the earth forever and ever, Amen. Now what is the effect on a man or a nation when it comes passionately to believe a dictum such as this? (Du Bois, 1920/2003, p.45)

The US Civil Rights movement followed by many including African-American writers bell hooks and Audre Lorde has consistently anatomised white power (hooks, 1989; Lorde, 1984). However, it was a full seventy years after Du Bois that the concept of 'whiteness' began to gain traction with 'white' scholars such as US-based Peggy McIntosh's *White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Backpack* (1992), the work of Richard Dyer (1988, 1997), Ruth Frankenberg (1992, 1997), and David Roediger (1991, 1994, 1999).³² Since then, 'Critical Whiteness Studies' has become its own field in academic study. Just this year in the UK a new academic journal *Whiteness and Education* was founded by a Black British scholar Nicola Rollock, with an agenda to "destabilise and disrupt [whiteness's] structured normality" (2016, my insertion).³³ However, many scholars such as Zeus Leonardo and Sara Ahmed

³² In the context of the UK, studies such as Vron Ware's book *Beyond the Pale - 'white' women, racism and history* (1993), John Preston's *Whiteness and Class in Education* (2007), and Katherine Tyler's *Whiteness, Class and Legacies of Empire* (2012) will be useful to me.

³³ The founding editor of *Whiteness and Education* Nicola Rollock's full quotation: "Much of the power, privilege, pervasiveness and violence of whiteness lies precisely in its casual and unremarked normality. It is my intention

find whiteness studies problematic, even as re-centring 'white' power (Leonardo, 2002; Ahmed 2004, 2014).

We should not rush too quickly...identifying 'what 'white' people can do', by describing good practice, or even by assuming that whiteness studies can provide the conditions of anti-racism. (Ahmed, 2004)

- in 'white' educators for social justice

From the literature so far, there is strong evidence that confronting coloniality in 'white' social justice arts educators is a murkier task than for 'white' educators who make no claim to engage in social justice work. I will outline some symptoms and causes of this seeming paradox.

One factor is what Ahmed calls “progressive racism”:

“when anti-racism becomes part of an identity for progressive whites, racism is either re-located in a body over there (the racist) or understood as a blow to self-reputation of individuals for being progressive.” (2016)

Thus, difficult conversations can often be blocked because of what art teacher-educators Amelia Kraehe and Emily Hood call “discourses of offence” (2015, p1) - in other words, a shocked 'you can't mean me??' - where the hurt feelings of the well-intentioned 'white' teacher effectively shuts down criticism. Critical pedagogy theorist Nicholas Burbules claims that those of us who “try to be most open about their implicit commitments and prescriptions may be for that very reason more difficult to diagnose in terms of their blind spots and, hence, more difficult to resist” (my italics, 2000, p.271).

that *Whiteness & Education* contributes to efforts to destabilise and disrupt this structured normality.” (Rollock, 2016)

Canadian Janet Mawhinney has done research into how “white people maintained and (re)produced white privilege in self-defined anti-racist settings and organizations” (quoted in Tuck and Yang, 2012, p.9). She found that consciously, subconsciously or unconsciously 'white' people in such settings often developed “strategies to remove involvement in and culpability for systems of domination” (Mawhinney, 1998, p.17). She memorably calls these strategies white “moves to innocence”, and goes on to outline a typology (1998, p.17).

There are also the daily ongoing 'polite' 'white' behaviours that are so toxic for people of colour (DeAngelis, 2007) partly because the 'white' person's intention is so clearly unconscious and therefore difficult to counter. Harvard African-American psychiatrist Chester Pierce characterised these as 'microaggressions' (1970), which Derald Wing Sue and others have sub-categorised further into 'microassaults', 'microinsults' and 'microinvalidations' (Sue, 2007, 2010).

Racial microaggressions are the brief and everyday slights, insults, indignities and denigrating messages sent to people of color by *well-intentioned white people who are unaware* of the hidden messages being communicated. (Sue, 2010, my italics).³⁴

I've also become concerned by 'dysconscious' behaviour – a term coined by Joyce King in the context of racism to mean “an uncritical habit of mind (including perceptions, attitudes, assumptions, and beliefs) that justifies inequity and exploitation by accepting the existing order of things as given” (1991, p.134). This may seem a ludicrous proposition: how can we 'white' people who are for 'social justice' at the same time “justify inequality and exploitation” and “accept the existing order”? I will explore with peers the taboo of 'dysconsciousness': that even when espousing the rhetoric of 'social justice' and decolonization, the educator may shy away from the concrete systemic change that such justice would imply, as this would mean us actually sharing or giving up some or all of our power and resources.

³⁴ In 1993, US writer Naomi Wolf used the acronym WMWP to stand for well-meaning 'white' people (1993, p. 43). This has been taken up further by Barbara Trepagnier (2010) in her book *Silent Racism, How Well-Meaning 'white' People Perpetuate the Racial Divide*.

- in 'white' arts educators for social justice

Social justice arts educators passionately claim to want to dismantle inequalities and foster equalities through our arts teaching, facilitating, and alliances with social movements. There has been a boom in arts or creative activism in recent years in the UK and elsewhere, triggered by protests against the race/class/gender injustices of neoliberalism, devastating impacts of 'credit crises', climate change, and locally, cuts to the welfare state including the arts. This is reflected in popular compendium books on arts activist practices such as *Beautiful Trouble: A Toolbox for Revolution* (Andrew Boyd, 2012), or influential artists' manifestos like *A User's Guide to Demanding The Impossible* (Laboratory of Insurrectionary Imagination, 2010), art theory such as Boris Groys' *On Art Activism* (2014), or the New York-based training and web resource the *Center for Artistic Activism* (C4AA, 2016).³⁵ There is a parallel boom in social justice arts education, written about by mainly 'white' female authors emerging from the USA. The tenor of this recent field tends to be advocacy: they include *Arts for Change, Teaching Outside the Frame* (Naidus, 2009), *Activist Art in Social Justice Pedagogy* (Beyerbach and Davis, 2011), *Art and Social Justice Education* (Quinn, Ploof and Hochtritt, 2011), *Social Justice Art - A framework for Activist Art Pedagogy* (Dewhurst, 2014). The field I'm in – at least the 'white'-dominated part that has the privilege of resources - appears to be growing in visibility yet how much is the coloniality or whiteness of educators and their contexts being discussed? It is notable that in all the publications mentioned above, I have not found explicit discussion of coloniality, nor of race/whiteness of artists or educators. I have found little in international journals.³⁶ Searching within my own visual art specialism in the UK-based high-impact *International Journal of Art and Design Education (iJADE)*, I have not yet found anything at all discussing coloniality nor whiteness, although plenty on multiculturalism and more recently diversity.³⁷

³⁵ It is interesting that these examples now in the mainstream are dominated by 'white' cis males, aside from the *Lab of Insurrectionary Imagination*. There are also detractors of art as activism such as 'white' Australian artist and theorist Alana Jelinek in her book *This Is Not Art – Activism and other 'Not-Art'* (2013).

³⁶ So far, from the USA, I have found the article cited earlier which is useful (Kraeche and Hood, 2015). Also from the USA, I have found *Decolonizing Art, Education and Research* (Deborah Barndt and Laura Reinsborough, 2009) and *The Failure of Whiteness in Art Education* (Sunny Spillane, 2015) which latter interrogates the 'white' educators' own race and intersecting positionalities in relation to social justice intentions.

³⁷ On 17/18 June 2016, the *National Society for Education in Art and Design (NSEAD)* which publishes *iJADE*, is holding its national conference under the following alarming title: *Inclusion, innovation and diversity: How*

I will diagnose the reasons for this glaring epistemic blindness, and through the field work consider how that blindness operates within me and peers and can be redressed. A starting point will be Mignolo and Rolando Vázquez's article on art and aesthetics *Decolonial AestheSis: Colonial Wounds, Decolonial Healings* (2013).

Research Design

This research sits within critical and decolonial paradigms, using 'interpretive biography' (Denzin, 2008). It is designed to test the hypothesis that solo reflective autobiographical inquiry orientated around 'white' construction in coloniality, when shared cooperatively with a group of peers with common concerns, can start a 'project of decolonization' in our beings and arts pedagogies such that we can better confront coloniality in 'white' educators including ourselves in order to dismantle it. The hypothesis is based on existing research using these methods in fields outside the arts: 'currere' and the 'critical genogram' mentioned previously. To my knowledge these methods have not yet been used within the arts.

Firstly, the 'critical genogram' (Kosutic and colleagues, 2009) is an autobiographical visual and graphical mapping technique. 'Currere' (Pinar, 1975) is an autobiographical freewriting and discussion process. I am not aware of them being used together before, but they share activist motivations: each was developed (in non-art 'disciplines') to help practitioners – social workers, family therapists, educators of whatever background – explore critical consciousness of their social and political construction in order to change how they act for social justice. Each was devised to pivot between solo, private inquiry and the deepened knowledge that can be yielded from sharing solo insights with a supportive, cooperative group of peers. The strengths in using both of them is that they appeal to different kinds of intelligences and ways of knowing beyond the written/spoken, and this could yield richer results.

*outstanding art, craft and design education can significantly lead on **British values** and the development of the spiritual, moral, social and cultural dimensions.* (NSEAD, 2016, my bold)
<http://www.nsead.org/cpd/conference.aspx?&id=414> accessed 10.6.2016

Critical genogram – three cooperative sessions

At the opening of the whole eight-session process with a small group of 'white'-only peers, I will introduce 'coloniality', and the reflective frame of Denzin's 'epiphanies' and Ulmer's 'stings of memory' which aim to prompt my and peers' memories (both in Denzin, 2008, p.120/123). Then peers and I will test using a variant of the 'critical genogram', originally developed by Iva Kosutic and colleagues to draw out in their family therapy trainees an “awareness of interlocking forms of oppression together with action aimed at dismantling oppressive practices,... what we refer to as critical consciousness”. (Kosutic and colleagues, 2009, p.153).³⁸

I will ask us to focus our thinking on coloniality in arts pedagogical influences (family, schooling, other formal and informal contexts, social movements), but also layer it with how our identities, values and attitudes as educators with social justice intent have been constructed, including attitudes to race, gender, class positionings. We will agree basic joint symbols, timeframes in advance, and then work alone to map/draw out/connect epiphanic and stinging episodes.³⁹ I tried out a draft version of this with a group of four PhD colleagues in February 2016 and I gained insights for the model's evolution.

There will be three x 3-hour genogram sessions: one to introduce the overall process and start the genogram, and the second to finish it and the third to reflect together on what we learnt through it.

³⁸ The Genogram process is credited with being established by Monica McGoldrick and colleagues (2008). I myself have been taken through a Genogram process by social work professionals. I experienced a profundity of knowledge about things long hidden from me that was yielded through its visual and graphical methods, and talking it through as we went. As a result of my own experience, I started exploring how it has been used in different research contexts, and this has convinced me of its potential adaptation for art educators addressing our coloniality.

³⁹ I will work out a pilot version bearing in mind elements from other genograms such as by Darcy Granello and colleagues (2000) and Julia Halevy (1998).

Currere – five cooperative sessions

In Clare Robson's book *Writing for Change, Research as Public Pedagogy and Arts-based Activism* (2012), I came across her reference to William Pinar's work. Pinar "advocates for a study of interiority as a way to understand what the 'cover stories' hide" (2012, p.5). The potential to 'unhide' through 'currere' interests me in relation to Ahmed's critique of 'white' fantasy and her concerns at the recentring of whiteness through whiteness studies mentioned earlier.

'Currere' is a 4-stage method that invites educators to reflect on their construction through retrieving memories, but crucially towards future-thinking and acting. Curriculum theorists Pinar and Madeleine Grumet (1975, 1976) proposed transforming the term 'curriculum' from static noun to active verb 'currere' – the Latin for 'to run a course'. Currere asserts that an educator's whole life forms a curriculum, and that educators engage in an ongoing "project of self-understanding in which one becomes mobilized for engaged pedagogical action" (Pinar, 2004, p.37).

These are Pinar and Grumet's four stages (my application of it in italics):

1. Regressive (reflecting on the formation of *coloniality* in one's past)
2. Progressive (speculating on one's future – *the future of our decolonization*)
3. Analytical (past and future brought into relation)
4. Synthetical (the now – *the project of decolonization and the wider field*)

Currere is based on 'freewriting' - a form of unselfconscious, continuous, unsurveilled writing usually within a timeframe.⁴⁰ Freewriting is not interested in spelling or grammar or volume of words for its impact and value, so is an unpressured process in terms of literacy.

There is much evidence on the effectiveness of currere's challenge to conventional methods of educator development in social justice (Hanson and colleagues 2014; Wang, 2010; Wang

⁴⁰ The technique, commonly used in creative writing workshops, is to follow the flow of thoughts in whichever way the flow suggests, without self-censorship. This freeflow encourages a truthfulness in its unselfconsciousness.

and Olson, 2009). According to these scholars, the regressive stage (into the past) inevitably tends to provoke the most writing, and subsequent stages all build on the regressive towards 'synthesis' – change in the now.

The process I will facilitate will take five sessions: four to go through the stages, and one to reflect as a group on the whole process.

Why both processes in sequence?

My speculation is that the 'genogram' will be appropriate to start with as we will not have to think linearly at this point. Peers and I can choose what to share from the genogram in the peer conversation, prompted by the symbols or drawings. Many revelations can also remain private, or not yet articulable. My plan is that the genogram process builds trust, and its method could also put visual and graphically-minded people (artists) at ease. For those peers who want to continue, my speculation is that we will go into currere more deeply and quickly, selecting from their genogram 'epiphanies' and 'stings' as starting points, or moving into other episodes that were not nameable or sharable at the time of making the genogram.

Timescales

The pilot comprises eight sessions (critical genogram plus currere), each session taking place once every two/three weeks in autumn 2016, taking four/five months. This will be with five peers, followed by one-to-one conversations/interview, and a review three months later. Each session we will make space for a reflection on not only how the last session's work was for us, but also how the realisations that emerged affected our practice that week, in the mode of action research.

Based on this experience, I will redesign for 2017, and run it again with a target number of nine new participants from my peers.⁴¹

⁴¹ I choose groups numbering 5 and 9 as, together with me, they make even numbers which enables pairwork to take place with me as participant/observer.

Finding and inviting peers for cooperative inquiry

I have already been in conversation with over twenty colleagues about the area of this research and believe that finding five to commit to the pilot is realisable.

Ethics of peer 'insider' research

For the pilot I will be looking for 'white' peers whom I know reasonably well, for whom I know already that coloniality is an issue, and where they know my own concern.⁴² As for my peers, I have already roughed out a genogram which tracks my epiphanies and stinging moments in relation to people (and institutions). This will help me decide on the invitations.

The reason why I judge this 'insider' approach as appropriate relates to what John Hockey calls the “relative lack of culture shock” in that we already believe we have overlapping concerns and politics.⁴³ Hockey claims a “possibility of enhanced rapport and communication” as insiders; the potentially greater “ability to gauge honesty and accuracy of responses” because of prior relationships; and the “likelihood that respondents will reveal more intimate details... to someone considered empathetic” (all 1993, p.199).⁴⁴

However, there are limitations: 'white'-only work can potentially lapse into narcissism and 'white' recentring (Ahmed, 2016): this will need serious monitoring. Another is what Michael Connelly and Jean Clandinin call “the illusion of causality”, the difference between “the events as lived and the events as told” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p.6). This relates to one of

⁴² I will be absolutely clear with peers that I am part of coloniality and that I am also on this research journey to be changed by it. However, I will not claim equal risk given the months of research done in advance of my peers: I will track the risks I feel I am taking through journalling, and consider where there are co-vulnerabilities, and where not. Identifying who is 'white' through skin colour is deeply problematic as many people who appear visibly 'white' may not identify with the coloniality of 'whiteness' (being of mixed heritage backgrounds for example), even if they are treated as 'white' by people of colour.

⁴³ I am under no illusions that some of us will find out that we're very different to each other.

⁴⁴ Against this Hockey warns of the disadvantages: “Over-familiarity... Taken-for-granted assumptions... Large amounts of impression management may be required (my italics)... Relativity... Partialness of their insider knowledge... Wary of assuming that their views are more widespread or representative than is the case” (1993, p.199). 'Impression management' even among the small pilot group may well be the biggest factor in terms of the unconscious, subconscious and dysconsciousness already discussed.

Hockey's main disadvantages – that of “impression management” or managing how we want to be seen by others (1993, p.199), which relates to Ahmed's “progressive racism” (2016). Another limitation is that the elements which peers and I share may not be the most significant impacts for us, either at the time (depending on vulnerability of material), or longitudinally over time. Heather Richmond's work on 'narrative analysis' with communities will also be helpful to me here (2002).

In inviting peers, I will present an abstract of this research paper; the key concepts of the 'logic of coloniality' and the 'project of decolonization'; an outline of the two methods we will use to learn from epiphanies and stings of memory; the timescales and stages; and consent forms.

After cooperative research – one-to-one 'warming down' conversation

As Sally Denshire states in relation to autoethnography: “making opportunities to de-brief after dealing with confronting materials is important” (Denshire, 2014, p.841). An ethics of care is needed in this process as there will be effects: relationships may be tested, revelations (including my own) may need 'holding'. Therefore I will offer a 'warming down' space not only for ethical reasons, but also to engage in critique of the process, as well as generate further reflective data around the research question. I will plan for each of these warming-down conversations to take roughly two hours and to take place within four weeks of the cooperative phase ending.

Cooperative reflection after three months

Peers will be invited to come together again to ask together how the experience looks or impacts on our practices now? I will also share tentative findings. This modest longitudinal approach will yield further data on the effectiveness of the 'project of decolonization'.

Data - recording and its analysis

From the pilot, there will potentially be seven main kinds of qualitative data:

1. my field notes/journaling of the experience of convening and facilitating the genogram

and currere processes, and reflecting on my (and others') reactions to the processes and discussions throughout.

2. emailed responses to my invitation to participate, including rejections/regrets and failures to respond
3. six critical genograms (including mine)
4. six sets of 'currere' writing (4 stages each)
5. peer discussions of genogram and currere processes
6. five one-to-one 'warming down' conversations
7. after three months, notes from reconvening the group to hear their own thoughts and share preliminary findings with peers

My ethics form (passed in March 2015) underpins consulting with peers about methods of recording, anonymity, and right to withdraw etc. As peers' continued participation throughout the pilot is not guaranteed, the analytical process here has to be emergent, framed within what Kathy Charmaz calls "grounded theory": that is, it will be "inductive, indeterminate and open-ended" and allow me to "pursue unanticipated directions of inquiry". Due to the vulnerabilities and uncertainties involved, I am persuaded that grounded theory is "well suited for studying uncharted, contingent, or dynamic phenomena" (all Charmaz, 2008, p.155).

There will be two main themes in the pilot's qualitative data to reflect on:

- evidence (graphical, written, oral, behavioural) from peers and myself on the effectiveness of the two methods to confront the logic of our coloniality;
- evidence (graphical, written, oral, behavioural) from peers and myself on how the project of decolonization is emerging (or not) in us and in our education work as a result of those methods.

In order to select analytical methods that can derive the most insightful knowledge from this rich data I will need to establish with participants which of the seven types of data I am given permission to use (aside from mine). I will then need to scope out what within that is of value

in relation to my research question. Then I will need to select methods appropriate to data type. Firstly, I will deepen my understanding of the range of ways in which previous genogram and currere-based research data were analysed. Secondly I will deepen my knowledge of analysis of data arising from 'narrative analysis' and 'interpretive biography' (Richmond, 2002; Denzin, 2008). Thirdly, I will try out 'coding' the data (Saldaña, 2015) using key themes and terms that emerge from scoping the material, particularly around Mawhinney's 'moves to innocence' (1998), dysconsciousness (King, 1991) and the real risk of recentring whiteness outlined by Ahmed (2016, 2004).

Evaluation of pilot

Following the pilot, I will reflect on the process, the feedback, and the data. I will discuss preliminary findings with the peers, and redesign the process for use with the larger group. It may be that I will reach data-saturation from the pilot and that the second round will not be necessary.

Commentary: 2 October 2024

I re-read the Transfer essay today. I see there is more awareness of paradoxes and pitfalls than I had remembered. I do not dismiss the value to research and practice of the proposed 'fieldwork' and analysis. I stand by the tenet that 'white' people need to do the work, not burdening or putting labour and trauma of schooling 'white' people onto the shoulders of people who are already subjected to racism. I see myself here very much as an apprentice scholar. Thus I can still feel amazement that only a year after working so hard on the Transfer, I had invalidated this fieldwork as research to be done by me in the academy.

Next I outline two shocking UK events which showed a growing confidence in nationalist, racist and populist sentiment in Britain. Written in this national atmosphere, I follow with a personal event in the form of publishing a chapter, on educating hope.

Following these events, the next documents and commentaries explore how first big un-suturing of the research, and what that journey suggests for 'white' anti-racist research.

Jo Cox MP, a 'white' cis-female, is shot and stabbed to death, Leeds, UK. 16 June 2016

Cox was known for her humanitarian work in support of refugees and asylum-seekers. While attacking her, 'white' 53-year-old Thomas Mair was heard saying: "This is for Britain", "Keep Britain independent", and "Britain first" (Cobain and Taylor, 2016).

Brexit Referendum, UK. 23 June 2016

The vote for Britain to leave the European Union wins by a narrow majority. This results in an emboldening of the anti-immigrant Far Right and a significant spike in xenophobic and racist acts by 'white' people towards others (Booth, 2019).

Embracing failure, educating hope: some arts activist educators' concerns in their work for social justice

Book chapter based on insights from nine peers, four of whom are from the global majority. In: *artWORK - Art, Labour, Activism*, by Paula Serafini, Jessica Holtaway, Alberto Cossu (Eds) (2017).

Reeling from Jo Cox's murder and Brexit-stoked racist violence, I was driven to underpin this chapter on the concept of 'educating hope'. I was reading compelling new books on this in the context of education by my supervisor Sarah Amsler, and in the context of autonomous social movements in South America by Ana Cecilia Dinerstein, both referencing philosopher Ernst Bloch's key work on hope (Amsler 2016; Dinerstein 2016).

Learning from peers' priorities, my chapter proposes three 'cherishings' that can support embracing failure in order to educate hope: Cherishing theory, Cherishing courage, Cherishing time. In cherishing theory, I name coloniality and I task 'white' activists as having particular responsibilities: "For *white* arts activists and educators – who because of structural inequalities of coloniality still dominate the arts, education and NGO/campaigning in England – embracing our coloniality in why things fail is urgent work" (Trowell, 2017, p.197). I point at contradictions that must be lived with: "Embracing failure means confronting the conditions under which colonial, unjust and sometimes abusive power relations are reproduced or

embodied by us, *even as we claim we are working for social justice*. This is where theory meets practice” (2017, p.197, my italics in original). It is significant that my research on failure and cherishing theory, courage and time in educating hope emerged when it did, both in the national context and my own journey. Only months later I was to cherish new theory to take courage and take the time to arrest myself from implementing the planned fieldwork.

Meanwhile, in autumn and winter 2016, during the upsurge in racist abuse, crowing and ‘white’, particularly English triumphalism that had been further encouraged by the right-wing rhetoric around the Brexit Referendum, it felt starkly obvious that, even more than ever, ‘white’ people needed to examine and act on the coloniality underlying how we had come to this point in an ongoingly violent racist history. I still felt keenly that my research with ‘white’ colleagues could contribute something valuable on how this happens within my field of art education.

I researched, planned and tried out the full eco-mapping technique, firstly with myself. I found it useful, often startling, always humbling. It surfaced incidents, stings, epiphanies and nuanced insights in the creation of my racialised understanding of the world by my family, socio-economic setting, schooling etc. In Part 3, I share one of the many deeply embedded childhood incidents that formed both my racism and anti-racism. I noticed that in work and life the eco-mapping led me to be able to spot my gut programming more quickly, shut my mouth in advance, arrest my body, and *think* about what I had been about to say or do. It enabled me to more regularly ‘see’ the racism that others do, and to rehearse and practice interventions.

I reviewed the ethics documents, approached and piloted the eco-mapping with two ‘white’ educator colleagues who were interested in volunteering. I transcribed the audio, selected and established analytical codes, identified and grouped evidence from the audio and visual work using these codes. I sent the transcripts to my colleagues and invited comment. I wrote

extensive notes on the process and on the participants' feedback. I journalled on what it brought up for me when I imagined doing this process with groups for the doctoral fieldwork. I sensed I had doubts aligned with Ahmed's indictments, but many remained opaque to me. I had sutured myself to this route. The institution had ratified it and was expecting this 'fieldwork', and I surely must do it. I would address any doubts in ethics as intrinsic to the work.

Poster for 'Real, honest colleagues?', 25 February 2017

Doctoral Study School

5-minute presentation of thesis and poster to peers in the School of Education.

By February 2017, I still had not shared my research in a peer or public forum. I was finding myself mute, unsure how to begin. I put this down in part to the challenge of 'learning to talk about whiteness', and in part to an undoing of confidence that many doctoral students report in the early years of research. Yet it also felt at odds with a personal pledge to share the work as public pedagogy, and also as anti-racist activism. A Doctoral Study School was coming up and students were invited to create and submit posters to which they would speak for five minutes. 'Poster' instantly said 'imagery' to me. For the first time, I felt I might be ready to share my research with PhD peers because I could work through the visual to assist the conveying of ideas and feeling. With trepidation common to students on their first peer outing of the thesis, I made the poster 'Real, honest colleagues?'

Despite over thirty years of teaching and public speaking I was nervous about this presentation. Yet I trusted in the fact that imagery communicates (to those with physical capacity for sight) where verbal language cannot. I trusted that, as it is in my teaching, my confidence would be assisted by the fact that imagery would prompt my planning of what to say. Yet even two days before, I was not convinced about which resonant imagery to use that could best 'speak' about my thesis in this context. There was a STEM emphasis in the School, and my mostly 'white' East Midlands peers often expressed friendly surprise that I

was studying art education, and in Lincoln when London had so much art to offer.⁴⁵ I felt exposed in my southern middle-classness in relation to the subject 'art', yet contending with class was exactly why I did not want to study in London or the south-east.

Then it struck me. In summer 2016, I'd received my subscription copy of *Tate etc* magazine. At the time I was struck by the #OMG advert which promoted *Tate Britain* and BP's sponsorship. The imagery was disturbing to me, but I couldn't yet articulate the disturbance.

The advert features a young Black child wearing a typical blue school jumper. We are to assume that they are in Tate Britain, staring up at framed historical European paintings. The child's raised eyebrows, slightly open mouth, wide-eyed upwards gaze could be read as expressing awe, fascination, surprise, perhaps slight worry. There is no-one else in focus in this photograph. The sponsors BP tells us they are proud to be 'Connecting societies with the arts'. (Are we to presume from this that this child's society doesn't otherwise have or do 'arts'?) The image and text of the advert irked me, and after some time, I realised that the way the child was posed by the photographer in relation to the framed artworks brought to my mind, unbidden, a historical image.

⁴⁵ In the UK, STEM stands for science, technology, engineering and mathematics.



Fig 3. Author's scan of advert for BP's sponsorship of Tate, from *Tate etc Magazine*, Summer 2016.



Fig 4. Anthony Van Dyck, *Princess Henrietta of Lorraine accompanied by a page*, 1634.
[Oil on canvas, 213.4 x 127 cm.] Kenwood House, Hampstead, London.

This is a portrait by famous portraitist Anthony Van Dyck. The 'page' is a kidnapped and enslaved African child dressed in sumptuous velvet, carrying a bowl of roses, depicted looking up at an imposing 'white' noblewoman in a long black silk dress with an under-dress of white silk, with extensive lace-edging. She stares at us while her right hand presses on the child's left shoulder. This painting is eight feet tall: she is a giant figure. Such stolen Black children were commonly portrayed as status symbols and possessions in European aristocratic portraits of this time. I wondered at the *echoes* of this image, the unconscious transgenerational reverberations of racist imagery in the minds of Tate's marketing department, BP's sponsorship department, and the photographer, disguised as encouraging and 'performing' diversity. I wondered at it as one of Warburg's 'image-vehicles', conveying a powerful 'nachleben' or 'afterlife' in contemporary imagery (Ohrt and Heil, 2021).

The position and expression of the child in Tate's #OMG advert has a deep historical echo. As in the Van Dyck painting, under the hand of whiteness, the child in Tate Britain was not 'free'. If they wandered off from the group or walked too close to a roped-off picture, they would be treated differently from a 'white' counterpart doing the same thing. In such rooms as the one in the advert, there are invisible 'white' hands behind the winking technologies of surveillance, and in the pedagogical realm.⁴⁶ In this fictional set-up, outside the frame, was most likely a well-intentioned 'white' teacher or 'white' gallery educator, whose hand was indicating elements in these pictures, encouraging (controlling?) the child's look of awe, fascination, surprise.

I decided to create my poster pairing the advert and the painting, adding a new portrait for the enslaved boy by 'hanging' his portrait into the actual gallery where portraits of Black children are never to be seen unless to amplify/glorify white superiority. I pasted in the abstract taken from my Transfer paper (please enlarge it to read). Under each image, I wrote a provocation suggesting the historical parallels:

⁴⁶ There would also be a steward, the majority of whom in Tate and many national museums are Black and of the global majority, whose job is to protect the 'white' paintings from those who don't know how to behave, from miscreants or from accidents.

(for the painting)

**The transatlantic trade in enslaved Africans
enabled these power relations.**

(for the advert)

**The transatlantic trade in enslaved Africans
enables these power relations, endorsed by BP.**

'Real, honest colleagues?'

White arts educators committed to social justice confront coloniality in our practices.



Princess Henrietta of Lorraine, attended by a page
By Anthony Van Dyck, 1634. In Kenwood House, London

The transatlantic trade in enslaved Africans
enabled these power relations.



#OMG

Connecting societies with the arts
Be inspired by some of Britain's most stunning artworks at the BP Walk through British Art displays at Tate Britain. Open all year round. Admission is free.
tate.com/arts

bp

Tate magazine, summer 2016

The transatlantic trade in enslaved Africans
enables these power relations, endorsed by BP.

"Coloniality survives colonialism. It is maintained alive in books, in the criteria for academic performance, in cultural patterns, in common sense, in the self-image of peoples, in aspirations of self, and so many other aspects of our modern experience. In a way, as modern subjects *we breathe coloniality all the time and everyday.*" (my italics, Nelson Maldonado-Torres, 2007, 243).

Summary
This research starts from the premise that "as modern subjects we breathe coloniality all the time and every day" (Maldonado-Torres, 2007, 243). Starting from here, no-one is unaffected, including those who claim to work for social justice.

As a white arts educator who works with explicit social justice intent, I am interested in my and white peers' navigations of coloniality. How do we think the "logic of coloniality" was produced in us? How do we learn to face up to it in a lifelong "project of decolonization" (Walter Dignolo in Maldonado-Torres, 2011, 6). My overarching political aim is to work with peers to generate new knowledge and practices for challenging structures of power within arts pedagogies that currently perpetuate coloniality.

Methodology
Within a framework of 'interpretive biography' (Norman Denzin, 2008), I will invite a small group of white peers to undertake 'cooperative inquiry' into our social, political and pedagogical construction within coloniality (Peter Reason and Kate McArdle, 2004, 114). We will explore tools such as the 'ecomap' (Hartman, 1978) and the freewriting of 'currere' (William Pinar, 1975, 1994). Can cooperative, autobiographical methods can help move us into becoming "real, honest colleagues" (Cynthia Dillard, 2000, 668).

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Jane Trowell, PhD researcher, University of Lincoln

Fig 5. Jane Trowell, "Real, honest colleagues?", 25th February 2017.

[Poster, 59.4 x 84.1 cm, & digital version]

When it was my turn in the Poster Session, I started by inviting peers to move in closer to compare the images for themselves. I gave them some moments to talk to each other, and then offered my short thesis. I pointed out parallels in the behaviour and stance of Henrietta and how in the advert it suggested the invisible middle-class 'white' female art educators who dominate gallery and museum education. In the moment of expressing myself to these mostly 'white' peers, I had the creeping realisation that in my London-centric middle-class education, culture and teacher training, I had actually been raised to 'be' Henrietta in her whiteness, her class superiority, her calm entitlement and accomplishments, regardless of me not being of noble birth, regardless of my claims of fierce critique of and activism on racism, colonialism and classism.



Fig 6. The author's face montaged in to the #OMG advert and the Henrietta portrait, February 2017. [digital versions only]

After the session was over, I felt the importance of this realisation for skewing the research, for skewing the 'fieldwork': that regardless of my politics, when I walk into a room associated

with education or other humanities contexts, before and after I open my mouth, from my appearance and stance people will assume (subconsciously, resentfully, bored, whatever) that the 'white' middle-class Southern confident female believes she has the right to be there, knows the space, has authority and control over what happens there and who gets to feel comfortable, invisible or abused there. This specific experience of my class and regional privilege - let alone intersecting with whiteness - led me to understand that I was even more problematic as a researcher than I had previously thought. Again, this was regardless of my research into whiteness and claims to insights into the operation of white supremacy. "Real, honest colleagues?" I began to reconsider my response to Dillard's search for colleagues, but this time in the *singular*.

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"Push against the vile xenophobia and trash headlines", Khadija Saye (2017)

The Stansted 15 stop a Home Office mass deportation flight, 28 March 2017

Human rights activists prevent the Home Office boarding sixty migrant people for deportation to Sierra Leone, Nigeria and Ghana.

Before crew and any people had boarded they locked themselves to the plane's wheels at Stansted Airport, England.

The protestors were arrested under the Aviation and Maritime Security Act 1990 and unprecedentedly for non-violent protest they were charged with terrorism-related charges. In

winter 2018, the high-profile court case was tried over ten weeks.

Three colleagues were among the 15, one of whom is of the global majority.

I become part of defendant support for my global majority colleague from the time of the arrests in 2017, to the trial and conviction in 2018, to the dropping of charges on appeal in 2021.

The conflagration of Grenfell Tower, London, 14 June 2017

The Grenfell Tower is a 24-storey council-run residential block of social housing in North Kensington, containing 127 apartments. During 2015/16, it was renovated by Kensington and Chelsea Borough Council (KCBC). The building was directly managed by Kensington and Chelsea's Tenant Management Organisation (KCTMO).

The majority of people living in Grenfell Tower were from ethnically diverse, immigrant, low income and working class backgrounds.

On June 14th 2017 an electrical fire caused by a faulty fridge was able to take hold in one of the lower storey flats.

The fire rapidly spread upwards through the building due to inadequate and absent fire safety mechanisms, encouraged by cost-cutting exterior cladding which was inflammable.

The ferocious blaze took the lives of at least seventy-two residents trapped in the building and injured at least seventy more.

Some families lost three generations in one night.

It has devastated survivors' mental and physical health.

Many of those living in similar accommodation across the UK are traumatised and live in fear.

The conflagration was "the deadliest residential fire in Britain since World War Two" (Reuters, 2023).

Despite sustained public pressure and organised outcry by Grenfell survivors and supporters, many surviving former residents and families are still seeking justice, and are still living in temporary accommodation in 2024.

In the Grenfell Inquiry, the Conservative government's post-Brexit "bonfire of regulation" in the construction industry was highlighted as one of the structural causes of this murderous inferno (Apps, 2023).

It was in the context of the avoidable catastrophe of the loss of life in Grenfell Tower that I first saw *Dwelling: in this space we breathe*, an artwork by Gambian-British artist Khadija Saye.

Dwelling is a series of nine photographic self-portraits, often exhibited online in one composite, as seen below. Saye made these striking works in 2016 and early 2017. The dreadful connection is this: Khadija Saye and her mother Mary Ajaoi Augustus Mendy lived on the twentieth floor of Grenfell Tower where they both perished in the inferno. In the days and weeks after the shocking racist, classist destruction of dozens of lives, there was public commemoration of her work as an artist. Thus it was because of her passing that I first encountered her work.



Fig 7. Khadija Saye, *Dwelling: in this space we breathe*, 2016/17.

[9 silkscreen prints on paper from scans of wet collodion tintypes, each print 61.3 x 50.2cm.]

Here I provide some context about the artist which shares why it contributes to un-suturing the conviction behind my proposed 'fieldwork' with 'white' colleagues.

In 2017, at the age of twenty-four, Khadija Saye (also known as Ya-Haddy Sisi Saye), was being hailed as an emerging young Black artist of extraordinary promise. This was evident through the selection of six works from her series of self-portraits *Dwelling: in this space we breathe* for inclusion in International Curators Forum's prestigious and groundbreaking Diaspora Pavilion, at the 2017 edition of the international art festival, the Venice Biennale, Italy. Khadija attended the opening of the Pavilion in May 2017, then returned home to the Grenfell Tower.

Khadija was born in West London in 1992 to Gambian parents. She was a practising Muslim and deeply interested in spiritual practices from her Gambian heritage. She went to her local state secondary school, Sion Manning. Due to her academic and artistic achievements and through the agency of the NGO IntoUniversity, she was offered a rare scholarship to join the 6th Form (from 16-18 years) at Rugby School, a historic fee-paying institution. From Rugby, she undertook her degree in Photography at the *University for the Creative Arts (UCA)*, Farnham, England from 2010-13. By the age of 22, Khadija had experienced many extremes of cultural experience as a young Black woman in the UK: the push and pull of diverse inner London life and schooling; at Rugby, exposure to overwhelming whiteness, class privilege and 'elite' tuition; and at the art school, the very 'white' context of suburban and rural Surrey.

At UCA she developed a:

deep interest in postcolonial theory and identity politics... She was inspired by [cultural/art theorists] Stuart Hall and Kobena Mercer, and later informed by Black History Studies. (Kubicki, 2017, my insertion)

The self-portraits in *Dwelling: in this space we breathe*:

reference both The Gambia and religious faith as sources of strength in the face of trauma – which, for Saye, included the experience of racism in Britain. As [Khadija] wrote: “In these questionable times we need positive imagery to push against the vile xenophobia and trash headlines”. (Wallace and Sesay, 2021)

To create the positive imagery for *Dwelling* that she wished to put out into the world, Saye chose a very early European photographic technique from 1851. The process is “laborious, involving the use of glass plates and unstable chemicals, and its results are unpredictable”. As a result the portraits are sometimes gauzy, with hovering spectral elements, evoking “a particularly atmospheric quality” (all from Wallace and Sesay, 2021). Saye wrote about this process:

...Image-making became a ritual in itself. [In] making wet plate collodion tintypes no image can be replicated and the final outcome is out of the creator’s control. Within this process, you surrender yourself to the unknown, similar to what is required by all spiritual higher powers: surrendering and sacrifice. (Saye in Wallace and Sesay, 2021)

These words and her beautiful prints take on deeper painful truth in light of the artist's death. Khadija Saye had said of her work:

Whether it’s now or ten years down the line, I have this idea of *opening doors* – like previous artists of colour... I feel I have the potential to do the same. (Saye quoted in Wallace and Sesay, 2021, my italics)



Fig 7. Khadija Saye, *Toor-Toor* (Sprout, grow), 2016/17.



Fig 8. Khadija Saye, *Kurus* (Prayer beads), 2016/17



Fig 9. Khadija Saye, *Ragal (Fear)*, 2016/17.



Fig 10. Khadija Saye, *Tééré* (Amulet), 2016/17.



Fig 11. Khadija Saye, *Sothiou* (Chewing-sticks/toothbrush), 2016/17.



Fig 12. Khadija Saye, *Peitaw* (Cowrie shell(s)), 2016/17.



Fig 13. Khadija Saye, *Nak Bejjen* (Cow's horn), 2016/17.



Fig 14. Khadija Saye, *Limon* (Lemon), 2016/17.



Fig 15. Khadija Saye, *Andichurai* (Incense pot), 2016/17.

On so far failing to do a PhD as activism, 10th July 2017.

Summary

The following self-developmental piece was written shortly after the conflagration and desecration of lives in the Grenfell Tower and in the aftermath of the Stansted 15 action. I was truly haunted by Saye's poised and spiritual imagery as symbols of the personhood of each and every one of those seventy-two people and their loved ones. Responding to the power of Saye's imagery and what it suggests for every human marginalised and abused by whiteness, and becoming more informed through my involvement with the Stansted 15 about the lives of those under threat of deportation, I was occupied by questions of 'white' accountability and 'white' action in my research. Who was I to listen? To whom I should I listen? Whose testimony should I be centring and amplifying in the research?

Being close to the issues from the Stansted 15 trial enhanced these thoughts. Because of the draconian charge of terrorism levelled against the 15 by the Crown Prosecution, their trial would end up as a fierce legal fight to ensure the state should not describe peaceful protest as 'terrorism'. Owing to this, despite the best efforts of the defence lawyers and defendants, the suffering and rights of the sixty detained people who were to be deported, and the challenge to the very legality of the Home Office's racist mass deportation flights, was rendered less visible in the public eye than the issue of peaceful protest.

These events and the thinking/feeling that they brought up for my research were taking place a year after the Transfer Viva. According to my PhD timeline, I was supposed to be creating focus groups with 'white' colleagues for the 'fieldwork'. Underpinning everything above was new theory that I was immersing myself in, which I first read in spring 2017. This was theory on whiteness by African-American philosopher George Yancy (2012, 2016) and British-Australian sociologist and cultural theorist Sara Ahmed (2004, 2016), theory that became central to the thesis' conceptual ethical basis.

The piece below I wrote initially for me alone, not imagining it for inclusion in the PhD. What triggered it was the onto-epistemological turbulence created by the confluence of everything above. Another current was the re-discovery of a personal photograph of me at my desk in my late teens that, to me, was stark with my whiteness and my class, resonating with the image of me as Henrietta of Lorraine, and me hovering over the child in the #OMG Tate Britain advert: the problematic, well-intentioned 'white' female art educator who, even when they de-centre themselves, lurk outside the frame, still framing everything, but from there.

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PhD Title: 'Real, honest colleagues?' A 'white' arts educators committed to social justice confronts her coloniality ~~in our practices~~

Waiting for theory to enflesh?

Prelude, 10th July 2017, but written last.

#1

How to write a PhD on coloniality after the structural racist, classist violence that is Grenfell?

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How... or is it Why?

< >

I must get this done. I must find the form that will release me to get this done.

To open doors, get it out there, and to put it to work. Be accountable.

I am a practitioner. An educator, in and through creativity/arts.

Realisation - I think I can write this if I behave like an artist doing a practice-based PhD.

I've been holding at bay the desire to write from my own experience. I've been privileging the feeling of ethical responsibility to write in service to other peers' priorities. This is my educator's gene – to make spaces where the creativity of others flourishes. But it is also fear of visibility, plus feeling incapable of treading the ethical path in peer-to-peer research.

If I frame this as an artist-educator investigating her practice it feels better, more real, more honest.

I need to write it from my own experience, and find the courage, and grapple with the multiple dangers of re-centring whiteness, the 'white' ego, through doing this.

The work with peers can happen outside the PhD.

It will come out of gaining courage and skills to confront myself.

#2

What if I've already written it?

104,000 words of developmental writing (of which 8000 are for Lincoln such as the MPhil Transfer); images, screenshots, video, audio.

It's a job of fleshing out and curation now? This speaks to me.

#3

Return to the image

The revelation of the Poster session at Lincoln was that I can drive the thing through images, using my background in art history/critical studies. The images will do so much of the talking.

#4

My body throughout.

There must be the sensory, the felt, Audre Lorde's politicised 'Erotic' throughout (1984, p. 53). "A gut has its own intelligence" says Sara Ahmed (2017, p. 27). Coloniality's capacity to intentionally or unintentionally brutalize others comes from mind-body split.

On waiting for theory to 'enflesh' (Yancy, 2015, p. xxii)

This research started from the personal motivation of wanting to find ways to transform my practice as an arts educator who is committed to social justice in order to act – in this case 'educate' - more effectively and integrally for social justice.

I seek transformation because a number of years ago I stopped myself from teaching, educating, facilitating because of doubts about my validity to claim social justice intentions in my work. These doubts were based on a deep questioning of the colonial bases of myself-as-educator, the epistemologies and methodologies I operate through, and how to be active on social justice in the world given who and how I am, how I am positioned, and how I am received. I am halfway through a part-time self-financed PhD, title as above, notice I have struck through the plurals.

I am a 'white' middle-class middle-aged mostly heterosexual cis woman brought up and operating in England. I did a very traditional degree in music (European classical) and history

of art (European) followed in 1990/1 by undertaking teacher training to qualify as an art teacher in a sector then and now dominated by 'white' middle-class women. Since then I have worked in many different contexts including primary and secondary schools, art college, adult education, community, campaigning and activist settings. In the context of social justice, I'm fascinated by how, why and which people become 'educators', facilitators etc. I have attempted critical and engaged pedagogies for many years, through teaching art, and through teaching on Post-Graduate Certificate of Education (PGCE) and Master's (sic) courses in Art & Design Education at the Institute of Education, University of London.⁴⁷ I have also worked for nearly thirty years with *Platform:London*, a group of horizontally organised artists, activists, researchers and campaigners for social and environmental justice which has been deeply influential in shaping my ideas and practice. For example, given the increasing control by government of schooling, further and higher education in England, with Platform I've initiated independent courses for artist-activists and educators to enable our co-development as creative people who act to make change happen both inside and outside state structures. These include six experimental iterations of the course *The Body Politic: Social and Ecological Justice, Arts, Activism*. I have frequently identified myself as an 'activist' arts educator, attempting to signify through this that I am committed to education as a politicizing act towards concrete change.

However I have recently been experiencing a lot of complicated feelings around what it means to act. This hasn't only manifested itself in stopping teaching, but also more generally. In fact I've never felt more complicated about 'acting'. To act is all about the body. It's about muscles, tendons, fat and bones. It's about whose body is acting; when, where, how and for what. About who feels they have the right to act, in what way, and on what issues and grounds. It's about who is policing that body in action. It's about who is funding or supporting that body's existence, and who is hampering access to sustenance, shelter, resources. It's about how cultural signifiers such as clothing, hair, and body language act and are received in any given context. It's about which skin we're in. And who assumes what about that skin; who will accept me, who will bestow favours and who will prohibit me because of my skin. Who – or which structures - will violate me because of that skin.

⁴⁷ The PGCE is the standard UK teaching qualification resulting from university-based teacher education.

My skin is 'white'. Well, actually it is kind of 'white'-pinky-creamy-beige-red depending on the time of year, the weather, and which bits we are talking about. Regardless of actual hues but within the binaries of Eurocentric racist consciousness which must make a desirable opposite to the undesirable 'black', the ex-Empire culture I live in wants me to consider 'whiteness' as dominant, valuable, and superior to other hues. It wants all people are who are raised in Britain to think this (and wherever Europeans have settled and dominated, and anywhere else for that matter), regardless of their skin colour. This whiteness assumes therefore that all people who are swarthy or dark or have different physiognomies are 'others', somehow beyond the pale of a certain image of Northern, North-Central or Western Europeanised 'civilization'.

It gets complicated. 'Pale' is my skin but also 'the Pale' is a coloniser's boundary. The Pale' – 'An Phail' in Irish – was the part of Ireland that was directly under the control of the occupying English government from the late Middle Ages. 'Beyond the pale' is now slang for something disgusting, uncivilized or out of control. This is because originally, 'beyond the Pale' was where the unruly, swarthy, and made-poor Irish seethed and plotted freedom. Vron Ware's groundbreaking book *Beyond the Pale: 'White' women, racism and history* is based on British histories and herstories and powerfully dissects both the formation of whiteness in skin and psyche (1992). For me, Ware's book has been what Sara Ahmed calls "a companion text" since I first read it in 1999 (Ahmed, 2017, p. 16). One reason I am doing this research is Vron Ware.⁴⁸

My research is driven by wanting to investigate how or if I can live and act beyond the pale and beyond the Pale. Reading this again, I realize that I also want to know how to live and act within the pale, and within the Pale, as that is where I also am: I am in my 'white' skin, and I am operating within something called Britain that is increasingly nakedly surveilled and militarized by its own government. Specifically, I am concerned with what the implications are for arts educators constructed within whiteness.

How might I take my skin off, the skin of whiteness? I know I physically cannot and anyhow whiteness is not (only) about skin. But deeply immersing myself in Frantz Fanon and his

⁴⁸ Note in November 2024: I have since read Ware's new book *Return of a native: Learning from the land*, a journey, inspired by her combination of memoir with site-writing on the formation of the 'heart of whiteness'. (2022)

antecedents' and legatees' writing on the construction of 'white' and 'black' within the European colonial frame, I've continually been struck by the provocative binary vividness of Fanon's title *Black Skin, White Masks* (Fanon, 1986).

I have been casting about these past months, stuck on the PhD, grumpy, and looking for a thread. I've been yearning for something powerfully sensory to pull me through the urgent ideas in this research. I realized on a gut level that there was not enough art in my research. I've been ignoring it in the past two years, and concentrating on reading around race, coloniality and pedagogy. But however poetic some of the reading has been, part of me has not known how to deal with the inexpressible, the mind-bending, and the gut-churning new insights, the non-verbal body-knowledge. In *Teaching to Transgress*, bell hooks, the African-American writer, artist and educator wrote "I came to theory because I was hurting" (1994, p. 59). The theory I've been seeking and encountering has had impacts at the level of my and others' bodies and this needs to come through in the research.

I have noticed in my reading on race, anti-racism, coloniality and whiteness that many writers of colour put their body very much at the centre of their work. Given the violent impact of racism and coloniality on the body, this is perhaps hardly surprising, but no less powerful for that. Yet what is more complicated is that I have rarely read writing on race, anti-racism, whiteness or coloniality by 'white' writers where they make their bodies central. The fact of whiteness is often mentioned, but the 'white' bodily experience of the 'white' researcher is left out. Why is this when our skins precede us as we walk into any room, along any street? I suspect it stems from a fear of centring and privileging 'white' confusion and pain, when our stated goal is to address racism. For me there is a problem with ignoring the body in confronting whiteness. It perpetuates the separation between mind and body – more, the hierarchizing of mind over body – that lies at the centre of the European 18th century so-called 'Enlightenment'. The philosopher René Descartes' "I think therefore I am" has dominated thought since his *Discourse on Method* of 1637 (1968). But in *The Uses of the Erotic*, African-American activist and poet Audre Lorde counters with this: "The 'white' fathers told us: I think, therefore I am; The Black mother within each of us - the poet - whispers in our dreams: I feel, therefore I can be free" (1984, p. 38).

I would like to explore how to put our 'white' bodies back into 'white' anti-racism, 'white' social justice activism, as I suspect it is partly this split that keeps us from becoming the “Real, honest colleagues” that African-American educationalist and writer Cynthia B Dillard seeks, that I foreground in my title.

Coloniality Gasp #5219

It's 2003 and on behalf of Platform I am co-creating an weekly course for adults called *The Body Politic – Ecological and Social Justice, Art, Activism* that we run once a year til 2009. We wanted to provide a space where ‘activists could slow down’ and ‘artists could wake up’.

This was based on several years of working with arts students yearning for politics, and activists who were burning out. My ('white') colleague and I decide that each week's session will be framed metaphorically around a part of our bodies such as Outer Ear – Listening to a community; Hands – Collaboration & Solidarity; Lungs - Stamina. We're excited about the imaginative and politicising potential of this. However, the course was created at the request of the Lifelong Learning Faculty of *Birkbeck College, University of London*, and this context may be another factor behind the fact that we attracted mainly 'white' artists and activists, and mainly graduates. As the convenor/facilitator, every aspect of The Body Politic was both compelling and always troubling, never settled. My notebooks from each session bulged with questions and ideas. I held nothing up as fixed apart from working through body themes. Depending on what each cohort fed back, we changed the format, length of the course, and the parts of the body/metaphors for the next course. We frequently discussed race and social injustice, and the reading list featured many writers/artists of colour.

As I look back nearly ten years later, I observe that only once in six cycles of this average 12-session course did I/we programme the largest organ of our bodies: Skin

A few weeks ago, quite by chance, my sister found the photo below, scanned it and sent it to me. I reproduce it here, enlarged. This was uncanny timing. This is also complex.



Fig 16. Catherine Armstrong. *Jane masked at her desk*, c1985. [Photograph]

I was arrested by seeing the set-up for the photograph. We remembered that it was for one of my sister's art projects at college, and that she'd directed me. I look at my younger self, just graduated I think, sitting assertively at my desk with my books and 'interesting' titbits on the

wall, and that high, high ceiling. I remember that some weeks before the photo, I'd made the mask out of plaster-soaked bandage. I also remember I chose not to leave holes for the eyes nor mouth. As I sat there waiting for the plaster to dry on my face, I breathed through straws in my nose as a fleeing person might use hollow reeds to breathe, while hiding under water. For a reason I don't remember, I didn't want to give the impression that I had sight, although I remember I later pricked pinholes to be able to see out. Unable to see, unable to speak, but not unable to hear, and definitely still able to smell and breathe. In the 'whiter-than-white' mask I was apparently turned inwards, but they say that hearing becomes particularly acute in the sight-impaired.

Seeing this photo again after so many years was somehow symbolic of my current state. Some three decades later I still sit at my desk surrounded by books, albeit a bit more doubtfully, not that this would come across through a masked face. To the outside viewer I am 'white' middle-class woman doing a PhD which is hardly revolutionary for someone of my background. To the person of colour, to the social justice activist, unless I visibly act, I will be assumed from my 'white' mask to be unable to see oppression, and to be silent when I could be stepping up and speaking out against oppression. "It's not about being a 'white' woman, it's about being thought of as a 'white' woman", is a distinction that Vron Ware draws our attention to (1992, p. xii). It's also clear from my mask that I can breathe, I can choose to hear or not, and I will silently benefit from 'white' privilege without effort. However, my lips are plastered shut, so I will have to lower or puncture the mask to sustain life: I am yet human. 'White skin, white mask'? A mask usually hides the truth, but also masks can reveal the truth.

I began to think of working with the idea that this mask is a metaphor for the social construct of whiteness and therefore it can be deconstructed. Ironically, the mask is also about anonymity. It is also about hiding or releasing desire. What might I become when I unmask myself, unmask my whiteness, or take off my socially constructed mask? Could thinking and feeling through the act of masking and unmasking could provide a useful method through which to come to insights that can affect change in practice?

There are those who can see behind any mask, through the 'white' mask. African-American intellectual W.E.B. Du Bois speaks of penetrating sight in his foundational text from 1920, *The*

Souls of White Folks. I will quote Du Bois in full:

Of them I am singularly clairvoyant. *I see in and through them*. I view them from unusual points of vantage. Not as a foreigner do I come, for I am native, not foreign, *bone of their thought and flesh of their language*. Mine is not the knowledge of the traveler or the colonial composite of dear memories, words and wonder. Nor yet is my knowledge that which servants have of masters, or mass of class, or capitalist of artisan. Rather I see these souls *undressed* and from the back and side. I see the working of their entrails. I know their thoughts and they know that I know. This knowledge makes them now embarrassed, now furious. They deny my right to live and be and call me misbirth! My word is to them mere bitterness and my soul, pessimism. And yet as they preach and strut and shout and threaten, crouching as they clutch at *rags* of facts and fancies to *hide their nakedness*, they go *twisting, flying by my tired eyes* and I see them *ever stripped*—ugly, human. (2004, p. 44, my italics)

Du Bois' visceral phrases – 'I see in and through them', 'I am...bone of their thought and flesh of their language', 'undressed', 'rags...to hide their nakedness', 'twisting, flying by my tired eyes', 'stripped' – put *the reader's body* in his own body's position. People with whiteness come to see ourselves as we are seen. We come to see ourselves grappling with what Zeus Leonardo calls in his own essay that picks up on Du Bois', "the daily fears associated with the upkeep of whiteness" (2002, p. 31).

There's another aspect to this. In Du Bois' narrative, the wearer of the mask knows that their mask is penetrated by the very people – in Du Bois' case African-American people - who they purport to be in utterly superior to, and this makes them more eruptive and violent. Leonardo underlines the *performed* aspect of whiteness, which I connect to the risk of being un-masked.

In so far as whiteness is a performance (Giroux, 1997), 'white' [people] possess a *vulnerable persona* always an inch away from being *exposed as bogus*. Their daily 'white' performance is dependent on the assertion of a false world *built on rickety premises*. (2002, p. 31, my italics)

W.E.B Du Bois' analysis of the tension between 'being seen' and 'white' rage emerges from a particular story of racism that comes from USA's brutal history of enslavement of African-Americans and its oppressive and often murderous present-day legacies. However, across European and European-settler colonised countries, the everyday lived experience of thousands of people 'beyond the Pale' of whiteness would attest to it.

There is, however, another kind of wearer of the mask of whiteness. This is one who is enacting a role that they are not conscious of, nor that would they dream that they would ever play. This might well be the case for well-intentioned, self-avowed 'anti-racist' people, such as 'white' social justice arts educators like me. In another key text for my study *White Self-Criticality Beyond Anti-Racism*, George Yancy states that 'white' people "are embedded in a systematically 'white' racist social matrix" (2015, p. xxii). He suggests that "the 'white' self is a site of 'white' racist opacity that does not know the limits of its own racism", which opacity I link to the mask as a paradox of knowing and not-knowing (Yancy, 2015, p. xxii). Whereas Du Bois sees through the mask and the 'white' mask-wearers become furious once they know they are being seen, for Yancy, wearers of the mask aren't aware they are operating behind one. Yancy proposes that

because they do not recognize the various ways that they have been constituted as 'white', which preceded their emergence, it will require them to move far outside of what they know themselves to be in order to be aware of who they are as 'white' and as a problem (2015, p. xxiii).

This act of moving "far outside of what they know themselves to be" is what Yancy calls "finding one's 'white' self at a great distance" (2015, p. xxii).

Outside. At a great distance. I find these spatial concepts tremendously resonant for this PhD. On the one hand I need to get away from my 'white' self in order to see whiteness in operation. One way to do this is to immerse myself in the writing and thinking of others who are not in the skin of whiteness. On the other hand, I need to be absolutely in my body to connect theory and politics to everyday being and acting, to stop the mind-body split. I am struck by Sara Ahmed's assertion "theory can do more the closer it gets to the skin" (2017,

p.10). So, theory can help me both move a great distance away, and bring me closer to the skin in order to re-see, re-visualise, re-member the dis-membered and split 'white' self, which in turn must be enlarged to become action towards undoing racism. As Toni Morrison asks us to consider "The trauma of racism is, for the racist and the victim, *the severe fragmentation of the self*" (1988, p.21, my italics).

My interest in the mask as a central metaphor for self- and group-knowledge and action in this research is how consciousness of the mask may lead us to get a distance on the 'problem'. Through that distance, we may be able to describe it, lower it, discredit it, even destroy it. A mask is fragile after all. By deliberately holding up the 'white' mask, and viewing myself from outside, might I come to see and find myself in a new way in order to better tackle the social injustice and crimes of 'white' coloniality? Might I come to change how to inhabit my skin, and to encourage others in our pedagogic work? More, can it help me 'enflesh' the politics, the political theory that I yearn to embody? Can it actually help create new ways of being both beyond and within the pale and the Pale?

I'm going to search the loft to see if I kept the original mask. I try to imagine its potential for coming to consciousness - Paulo Freire's 'conscientization' or in Portuguese 'conscientização' (1970) - of holding up the mask to my face; of lowering it; both as self-reflexive practices towards change.

[The next day I found the mask almost at once. Uncanny again. But I'd forgotten: the mask has changed. I'd collaged over it with political content from newspapers, sometime in 1993.]

Coloniality Gasp #7501

I started this piece of writing with a title:

On so far failing to do a PhD as activism – waiting for theory to 'enflesh'.

'Enflesh' is not my term. I had thought it was when I initially wrote it down without quotation marks. I remember feeling rather clever. I read out the piece to my partner and he very much liked 'waiting for theory to enflesh' so then I felt even cleverer. But, then I re-read for the third

time Yancy's absorbing introduction to *White self-criticality beyond anti-racism* and saw it right there, on the second page: "I am inspired by Frantz Fanon and his ability to *enflesh* the conceptual terrain vis-à-vis race as lived" (Yancy, 2015, xii, emphasis as in original). Yancy's very opening to the book states his aim "to craft a style of writing where the *words become flesh*... engaging the absolutely *messy* process of racialization as this process is *lived*" (2015, xi, emphasis as in original). I was humbled, and struck by how I had internalized and taken possession of this word *enflesh* that was previously unknown to me. I immediately added in the quote marks and I'm explaining this appropriation now. On the one hand it could be seen as a measure of the resonance of the term within me, of his writing gaining traction within me.

On the other, it (and my feelings of cleverness) reveal an extractive act coming, probably, from coloniality.

Yancy insists on writing about race through enfleshedness. For the past few months I have found my body blocked, unable to act on the PhD. I've been able to read. I've been able to do filing, sort out e-heaps, and do PhD admin. But despite my passionate and extensive reading, I have not written the literature review, nor taken any action to get the 'fieldwork' started that I was so passionate to do. Even making space to think has been hard, and I have started wondering again if the form I have chosen for this inquiry into coloniality – a PhD – is deeply flawed and contradictory. I am inside the 'Master's House' after all, to paraphrase Audre Lorde (1984, p.110). I knew this was a risk before I started, but it has re-emerged. I've even considered giving up the PhD (completely normal I know), and at first I experienced a huge sense of adventure and liberation at the prospect. I would be able to act without the constant weighing up of all this complexity. I could even do the PhD as art, in a creative and poetic way.

But then I felt the amputation, the loss of what is an opportunity to connect deeply with at least two deep thinkers, pedagogues, and activists (my supervisors) on the violence and abuse that has gone on in my (our) name, which continues to benefit me (us) and destroy the lives of millions of others including the more than human. To sweat through the deep connecting in order to transform. Just maybe, this PhD is the most profound opportunity for

me to make personal and political change happen.

I'm versed enough in creativity theory to know that blockage and hiatus is necessary and teaches us many things if we're willing to listen. No great act of creativity comes without the fallow periods: the time spent bored, frustrated, is, with the right attitude, time spent in gestation.

But I've a strong feeling that the causes to the recent blockages are intimately to do with confronting coloniality, of grappling with the mask, of trying to en flesh theory. It's important to explore this.

Urgency and reflection

Firstly, I don't think it's a coincidence that my inaction on the PhD is timed with very dramatic political events that have directly impacted on many people's bodies and souls who are on the physical frontline of being subjected to racism.

Like many others, I have been experiencing shock, anguish, terror, righteousness, rage and insomnia at the recent upsurge in racism, xenophobia and islamophobia in relation to massive upscale in oppression and inequality driven by many global factors. The scale of brutality and inequality on our doorstep is unmasked to those of us, usually 'white', who would prefer to avert our eyes. Just to focus on a few: the harrowing experience of 10s of 1000s of people trying to emigrate to Europe through crossing the Mediterranean in inadequate boats, the appalling lost of life, the often racist treatment by the European border forces on arrival, the humanity of those rescuers and local people who try to shelter and soothe; the 2016 Brexit referendum unleashed a tidal wave of hateful xenophobic and racist behaviour in England among 'white' people, of which the fascist assassination of MP Jo Cox was issued as a warning to 'white' 'allies', and the upsurge in daily attacks on people of colour a hideous fact; the UK government's commitment to creating a 'hostile environment' for immigrants and refugees; the shock election of President Trump and his succession of draconian 'executive orders' aimed at reversing gains in social and environmental justice in the USA and increasing power and wealth differentials in the USA and beyond; several devastating terrorist

attacks took place in France in 2016, followed by horrendous attacks in Manchester and London in 2017; the murderous fire in Grenfell Tower has exposed shameless shortcuts in installing safety measures for social housing. The fight against the unhumanity of mass detention and mass deportations of immigrants. The ongoing genocidal war in Syria with its suffering and destruction that is beyond imagining.

Yet on another front, in the same period running up to the 2016 US election, there was the most extraordinary resistance from indigenous peoples of the Lakota Sioux against the proposed Dakota Access Pipeline, supported by global outcry. The June 2017 General Election in the UK saw the unexpected rise of the Left in the form a socialist Labour Party's resurgence which caused a surge of hope among many, especially young people, struggling against the rise of the Right and neoliberalism. There has been a rollercoaster timeline of protests, calls, events, and rallies, through a number of which my body has expressed itself in public spaces, many of which I have tried to help amplify using social media, sitting at my desk, succeeding and failing, with my 'white' mask lowered, and often without me knowing, replaced.

The urgency of this period of heightened abuses and extreme politics is not a new situation – we have been here before, and many, especially people of colour, would argue it is only the visibility that has been heightened, not the fact. “I like my empire naked” said one activist arts educator of colour whom I work with. But, as for me, I am feeling my role in it in a new way and am questioning more than ever before my use of time, the use of my body. When do I hide, when do I unshield?

And so I find myself troubled about the time spent on the act of studying for a part-time self-financed PhD, which, in the way I am doing it so far, feels like such an internal private act. When I entered the PhD, I was very vocal about wanting to share my research via public pedagogies and positioning myself as a ‘scholar-activist’. But I find I am not yet acting upon either of these intentions. I find myself feeling self-conscious, mumbling when people ask me what I’m studying.

By ‘acting’ – being activist - within the PhD space, I think I meant any number of things:

convening learning spaces however informal; speaking with colleagues and friends, or sharing ideas online. I also include public speaking and public writing. I used to blog a lot for work on issues related to the PhD. Now I only occasionally feel I can contribute. I don't know where to begin, what to say, and blogs and articles for journals frequently remain 'draft'. I used to be a confident speaker, but in three years I haven't put myself up to talk about the PhD research, a silence broken by the five-minute 'poster presentation' this February.

On the other hand, privately, I have written well over 90,000 words of developmental writing, only 8000 of which were for official PhD milestones. I have filled seven notebooks with journal-style reflections on the process of the PhD. There's a lot going on in me, but I'm not yet able to speak out within PhD-land or about the actual issues I'm addressing in the PhD. I can't yet make theory flesh.

Three years ago, when I came across the work of educational theorist William Pinar, I was helped by his words in relation to me stopping teaching:

The aspiration for [currere] is release from the past, release from arrest, release into movement. (William Pinar, 1994, p.45, my insertion).

After three years of study, reading thousands of words, I thought I'd be more public by now. Is self-arrest in fact the topic, not action?

Is an 'art way of researching' – the mask as metaphor and device for example - a way out of arrest and into movement?

Coloniality at work

I sense that my PhD inaction has also been influenced by a particular conjuncture between PhD and daily life in my paid work with *Platform* and *Voices that Shake!*. Over the past dozen years I have had the experience of working closely and non-hierarchically with much more diverse colleagues than in any previous era of my life - people of colour, Muslim, queer, and transpeople, many who are twenty to thirty years younger than me. This is converging with the deeply reflective process of the PhD.

Or to put it another way round, the yearning for the reflective, theoretical space represented not unproblematically by the PhD, has been partly triggered by the deep self-questioning that has arisen from working closely and non-hierarchically with much younger colleagues, collaborators and allies of colour, Muslim, queer and transpeople.⁴⁹

For all the reading I have done about arts/culture, colonialism and oppression - racism, sexism, classism, heterosexism, able-ism etc - and all the teaching I have done in interracial settings as a channel for individual and collective action on these abuses, in the context of my newer colleagues I have found myself compelled to reconsider the relationship between theory and my practice; theory and generationality; theory and me enfleshed.

'White' French philosopher Jacques Rancière's statement on equality is a constant companion these days:

Equality is not given, nor is it claimed; it is practised, it is **verified**.

(Rancière, 1991, p.137, emphasis in original)

The biggest impact has been that I have become super-aware of my physical body and mindset in a newly politicizing way. In attempting to deeply hear colleagues and allies on their experience of the routine abuses, the daily neglects, microaggressions and invisibilisings - the racist or other oppressive exchanges on the street or in a shop, online, in our workplace, from me or other colleagues – and in particular how they analyse that structurally, I find myself made more starkly aware than ever before of what goes on every day, *of how 'white' bodies* impact others without any thought, including mine. Also, I cannot avoid witnessing what I am *not subjected to* as a mostly heterosexual, middle-class cis woman inside a 'white' skin, inside the 'white' mask. Through my paid work, listening, holding and tarrying with what I hear about racism from colleagues of colour is becoming a practice. 'White' scholar Barbara Applebaum speaks of 'white' people having “the privilege not to listen...the privilege to flee the discomfort of difficult knowledge” (in Yancy, 2015, 8). At work, I cannot, I will not. Is this existing practice suggesting a future for the research?

⁴⁹ Since its founding in 1983, *Platform* has been a flat organisation. New members of staff have an equal say in the running of the organisation as everyone else. *Voices that Shake!* was initiated as a *Platform* project in 2010.

One aspect of this experience is that I have found myself ascribing more authority to other researchers on the basis of their direct experience of oppressions by way of racialization, class, sexuality, religion. *I have found myself delegitimizing my ability to contribute, delegitimizing my knowledge because what I know about most is privilege.*

I was in all sorts of ways raised to operate as a perpetrator of whiteness and coloniality – as an educator, as activist, as woman, as urban-centric, as 'white' British southerner. I know about this, from the inside. If I can share insights into how that was constructed in me (and therefore in others), and moreover, *ways to work to undo it*, this could assist others in the wider undoing, the greater unmasking that is required.

I'm beginning to understand that at the heart of this whole inquiry is ontology. I need to know what I am and how I've been produced before I know what I'm capable of becoming within the social fabric. As I've experienced through *Platform* and *Voices that Shake!*, listening and holding racialised others' truths about whiteness and other oppressions involves commitment to continual learning. In listening, taking in and taking on, in having the issue of privilege thrown into the spotlight, I begin to practice re-orientation, towards acting otherwise.

11th July, 8.43am

Realisation: Can I 'enflesh' this PhD as a work of becoming, of walking, as a continual practice of seeking, finding, and not finding, of doing and undoing, listening, failing to hear and listening again, and through these cycles become an unmasker of whiteness and, maybe, 'educate hope'?

Commentary: October 2024

On re-reading On so far failing..., I see that, precisely because it was written freely and privately, it afforded liberating conceptual, political and onto-epistemological development for me as a 'white' anti-racist researcher. This underscores the value of personal writing within research. However, I propose that its major contribution to the thesis lies in how words for me were released by images. The troubling photograph my sister had found triggered

metaphorical thinking, motivating me to articulate about whiteness and (in)action. Through emotional reactions to imagery I became un-sutured: the child and me in the #OMG advert, Henrietta and me, Khadija Saye's exquisite work and her and others' needless deaths,... the photo of me at my desk. Ideas began to surge. I found a writing voice and shared the unedited version with supervisors. They were supportive of my new trajectory of writing theory via imagery. Later I re-worked On so far failing... and it became the basis of a chapter 'Closer to the Skin', Whiteness and Coloniality in 'white' art educators that I had been invited to contribute to the book Debates in Art and Design Education (Trowell in Addison and Burgess, 2021, pp.123-140). In Part 2 you will read a personal and deep critique of that chapter by Y, a Black friend and educator colleague, in an email exchange I titled "What's it got to do with me?".

Below I share the final document for Part 1. I describe how piloting the proposed 'fieldwork' methods with myself and two 'white' peers turned my misgivings into a certainty that I must abandon the research design of working with 'white' arts educators.

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On moving away from 'white' peer-participants.

Written September 2020 reflecting on decisions made in autumn 2017.

Affirming that there will never be an innocent starting point for any ethico-political quest, because 'we' are always/already entangled with-in everything, and yet that this primary implicatedness is not bound to melancholy or resignation, which for too long has been preventing us to think-practice difference(s) that really might make a difference. (Kathrin Thiele, 2014, p.213)

My thesis is driven by Cynthia B Dillard's demand for 'white' people to become "real, honest colleagues" (2000). Long-term, as an educator and facilitator, I am dedicated to evolving processes that assist those of us who identify as 'white' art educators to attempt to step up to

Dillard's challenge. How do 'we' get there and how do 'we' keep ourselves there, remaining 'un-sutured' to our racism (Yancy 2015)?

I now share the journey that took me from a dedication to work with peers who identify as 'white', to the decision that the politics of the research, coupled with my positionality as researcher, demanded that I work with peers of colour. I want to make transparent the entangling evolving questions that leave the 'white' researcher never 'innocent' (Thiele, 2014). I show the impacts on me of opening to that which is not innocent, that which is opaque in its whiteness to its whiteness.

To refresh: my fieldwork would trial and reflect on facilitatory methods of working together as self-identifying 'white' arts educators to confront the roots of our racism in order to better tackle our racism.

One method I wanted to pilot would derive from the family-orientated 'critical genogram' (Kosutic, 2009) and wider social contextual 'ecomap' which I later came across (Hartman, 1978). Because of its use of drawing and mind-map making, I felt it would be appealing for arts educators.

As second method I would trial William Pinar and Madeleine Grumet's 'currere' process – a way of biographical writing backwards and forwards in time towards our self-development as anti-racist educators (Pinar, 1975, 1994). Both of these would be undertaken after preparatory work on white fragility and white narcissism (DiAngelo, 2019; Ahmed, 2004). Ethically and politically, I was coming from the position that 'white' people must do the work for ourselves; that people of colour should not have to do the emotional labour of schooling, of supplying research data or educating 'white' people.

In winter 2016, I piloted the ecomap process through three one-to-ones: I did it with myself, then with two 'white' peers. I formally approached them about the process, and they agreed to volunteer. Each ecomap session took about ninety minutes. It went deep and generated a wealth of visual and audio material.

After each ecomap session, the participants and I discussed how it felt to do the process. I made notes, and invited them to send me further reflections. I transcribed the audio and sent the transcriptions to each participant. I buried myself in the visual elements of the 'maps' which my participants and I had drawn and annotated. One thing I realized from this pilot that inviting peers to deepen further through the currere writing process was perhaps appropriate for a self-organising group, but would generate too much material for this academic research.

Reflection on the pilot led me to identify areas of concern around ethics, the data, validity and scope of this approach:

Ethics

- Harm. Some of the testimony shared was from painful or shameful moments from the formation of racism in participants' younger lives or from family members. How would I support peers in the emotional/psychological impacts of the sessions on them.
- Extractivism. On a personal level, despite our 'race' equality, despite the alertness to coloniality in me as researcher, I felt invasive and extractive.
- Forced intimacy. As I was a peer yet had not equally shared my own journey, I felt the ecomapping forced a one-way biographical intimacy which did not sit well. I was alarmed when, before we began, one participant said with a half-laugh "Will you respect me afterwards?" I felt hesitant at probing with questions beyond a certain level. Could I handle knowing more? This would have been different with self-selecting strangers.
- Class and region. Before one session, a participant who is a 'white' self-identified working class man born and bred in Liverpool said "[Coloniality in art educators] is the thing that needs addressing, hence, ...the sense of danger with you coming today, weaponised on the train from the south. Do you know what I mean?" (*Italics mine*). Yet the 'joke' of England's north-south divide is not a joke in economics, resources and cultural equity.

Data

- There was deep complexity in the material that were uncovered by the ecomapping. The intersectional, familial, societal and culturally specific dimensions of our experiences left

me feeling undertheorised in term of conceptual and sociological analysis.

- Where I had been excited at the multi-modal nature of the data - the field notes; the audio itself; the transcript and coding; the ecomaps as visual data etc - after the pilot I felt overwhelmed by the multimodel analysis I had set myself.
- I felt daunted by what was generated by just three people. I could not imagine the task, responsibility and accountability of analysing testimony from groups of eight people.

Validity

- In doing my own ecomap, I became starkly aware of the choices I was making in what to map in and what to leave out. It was clear some things were harder for me to disclose to myself, let alone disclose to anyone else. How reliable would this data be?
- Discovering how much I myself edited and dissembled, I began to doubt my capacity to be able to 'see' how coloniality operates in 'white' colleagues. If I am part of the problem then how can I know that I will 'see' it in me or others particularly peers who I have a stake in supporting.
- After the pilot, I lost the belief that with enough striving, enough practice of alertness to ambush, I could avoid 'progressive racism' or white narcissism; and would I even be able to spot it?
- How could this be done with rigour, when I am the convenor, it's my research, and where, by definition, knowledge and institutional authority is ascribed to me.

In summary:

- I had previously thought that researching with 'white' peers was the most effective method to address how to become "Real, honest colleagues".
- I did not fully foresee that I would feel invasive, holding myself back, fearing an abuse of power that would interfere with our relationship.
- When I imagined me initiating these processes with groups it began to feel even more problematic.
- Regardless of my decolonial intentions, I was still the 'white' middle-class southern cis female researcher to whom information and feelings are disclosed, who would 'do' the

analysis and who would 'write it up'.

- What I had planned was inappropriate for this doctoral research by this particular researcher.

Context is key: I felt strongly that, with caution, eco-mapping and currere are potentially powerful methods towards 'white' self-development towards anti-racist action. In 2017 I felt I could offer these *outside* of an academic research context as part of a self-organising, co-developmental practice, sharing learning and processes towards anti-racist movement-building. I still intend to do so. Yet for now, I knew I needed to listen to others, not 'white' people, in order to reach my research aims.

These losses of faith, underlined by the extreme national events of 2017 described earlier, led to an un-suturing that halted me for this 'fieldwork'. For this research, I needed to continue and deepen the listening practice that my workplace was encouraging.

In order to establish the rationale *towards* the new 'fieldwork', I revisited W.E.B. Du Bois' concept of clairvoyance, etymologically 'clear-seeing':

Of them I am singularly clairvoyant. I see in and through them. I view them from unusual points of vantage... (2004, p. 44, my italics)

I connected this to Sara Ahmed's advocacy that critique of whiteness must begin with Black critique:

Whiteness studies, that is, if it is to be more than 'about' whiteness, begins with the Black critique of how whiteness works as a form of racial privilege, as well as the effects of that privilege on the bodies of those who are recognised as black. (Ahmed 2004, my italics)

If I brought together Du Bois and Ahmed with Yancy's observation on the opacity of racism for 'white' people, I was seeking 'fieldwork' methods that

- invested in the critical *clairvoyance* of art educators of colour on the operation of whiteness in 'white' art educators.
- would avoid the depletion and extraction of 'being researched' or talking into the void, especially at the hands of a 'white' researcher.
- uncover 'white' art educators' opacity to ourselves; the opacity of whiteness for 'white' art educators.

I concluded that I would:

- centre the critical writing, thinking, and practices of scholars and art educators of colour, both those who operate from within and beyond western epistemologies and ontologies

To address and investigate processes for me as researcher to remain un-sutured, I would need to

- seek a reflexive research method that focuses on the nuances of keeping uncovering, unmasking, un-suturing the wound, while avoiding narcissism
- also, rise to the challenge of using autoethnography to explore my own embodying of whiteness and attempts at un-suturedness.

To build in ethics and accountability, I would need to

- understand - and communicate that I understand - the emotional and political risk to Black and global majority peers of disclosing experience to 'white' me.
- recognise that many of harms and misgivings of the ethics of working with 'white' peers above could doubly as intense.
- understand - and communicate to peers that I understand - that I will be alert to my white fragility, and that I will 'get it wrong', that I cannot but be extractive and erasive in some dimension, that I invite feedback. That I am in the 'white' academy (Grosfoguel, 2013).
- devise diverse support and ethical methods to keep the research and me accountable.
- consider creative and 'art' approaches to help build accountability mechanisms: the use of freewriting, imagery and artwork throughout the PhD

I sought a research process where I, through whiteness, could attempt to learn from their 'clairvoyance' (Du Bois 2004) through centring 'Black critique of how whiteness works' (Ahmed 2004). While acknowledging the opacity of my whiteness and racism to myself (Yancy 2015), I would practice remaining opened to 'counter white axiological and embodied iterations, epistemic fissure, and white normative disruption' (Yancy, 2015, p.xv). Having learnt something about these from the journey in Part 1, I would be open to ambushes of whiteness, to expect previous assumptions about 'knowledge' to fail, to hold on to my experience that if I *suspect* I am 'fitting' with the normative 'white' academic path (sutured), I probably am and the research ethics unravels.

Reflections: on becoming singular

The Transfer 'fieldwork' positioned me as one who necessarily 'knew' more about whiteness than the other 'white' participants and who was qualified to research them. Through making the Lincoln poster I was ambushed into the disturbing revelation that I was raised to be Henrietta which made me falter. The 'white' murderous violence of Grenfell silenced the research, then a photograph shocked me into action, writing the piece 'On so far failing...'. This piece further ambushed me, leading me to question my authority but also the appropriacy in the 'fieldwork'. In the same period, I came to acknowledge the massive influence of my workplace, the practice of listening horizontally, with younger, queer, trans and Black and global majority colleagues. I realised that I still had work to do on myself *before* claiming to be skilled enough to research with groups of 'white' people wanting to become "real honest colleagues". I needed to build on my listening skills, not facilitating.

Therefore, for the new 'fieldwork', I would take a step back and learn with a group of people who know far more about whiteness than me. I needed to become a "real, honest colleague" *singular*. Similarly, to simplify art disciplinary understanding, I would also focus down from arts educators from any artform, to my area of visual art.

I would prioritise peers of colour, colleagues of mine who are artists, arts educators and art students. I would *not* invite them to create ecomaps, undergo the currere process or work in groups. The conversations would be one to one with me, loosely structured around how they experienced whiteness and coloniality in their own art education in England, from children to adults. To honour the huge reward of creative practice, I also wanted to know what - despite the whiteness of their art education - enabled them to thrive and enabled their joy.

The validity of the research would rest on peers' trust in me and their belief in my capacity to 'see' them and hear their lived experience, even while they would filter for a 'white' listener. I would practice 'tarrying' with what I hear and learn in the interviews, including about my 'white' self. I would practice remaining un-sutured, making a space for the speaking of truth to power, the 'white' researcher as a stand-in for 'white'-dominated art field. Through critical reflection on the testimonies with participants, I would share the learning enabled by peers'

clairvoyance, attempting to see whiteness in art education through their eyes, and in so doing learn better how 'white' educators can confront it. In thinking about the relationships with contributors, and to the colleague I myself was aspiring to become, I was attentive to what Shona Hunter and Christi Van der Westhuizen, 'white' scholars of whiteness, describe thus:

What would it look like if subjects racialised as white were to be able to begin to speak, act, write, edit *through* whiteness rather than about it? Where 'speaking through' is not an endorsement, but an acceptance of the lived experience of the struggle to become more fully humanly connected to the world, and a rejection of the anti-relational divided self of global colonial whiteness. (Hunter and van der Westhuizen, 2021, p.19, emphasis in original)

PART 2 – In which researching with peers of the global majority is sutured... and un-sutured

Overview

Part 2 covers the period autumn 2017 to July 2020. I present a major new visual work and four chronological written documents that track and analyse the newly sutured state of conviction about the new 'fieldwork' with peers who are Black and of the global majority. In this period I undertake and transcribe fifteen interviews.

Firstly, I present an assertion of the new research design taken from my application to transfer my studies from Lincoln to the University of Nottingham. Secondly, I share a major evolution of visual work that emerged from making the poster in Part 1. This is the slideshow *Henrietta, Britannia, Victoria and other art educators*. I made this slide sequence for a conference, to propose the origins of three key racist behaviours in 'white' women educators who form the overwhelming majority among art teachers in secondary schools and in museum and gallery education. It emerged from the work on Henrietta previously described. In retrospect, I understand that this slideshow led towards the major visual research piece in Part 3.

Next I share a journal entry supported by photographs entitled *Epistemalanche*, which describes a domestic incident that I interpreted as an ambush and warning on my whiteness despite assertions of allyship. This is followed by a document outlining the criteria for inviting Black and global majority peers and my initial responses to the experience of the interviews and first 'analyses' of the testimony. Finally, I share and reflect on a generous and deeply critical commentary from Y, a Black colleague, on reading my draft of a book chapter titled '*Closer to the skin*' *Whiteness and Coloniality in 'white' art educators* (Trowell, 2021).

Part 2 also covers the period when I held myself to account to be more public with the research. I made three conference presentations in white-dominated art education contexts and I co-ran a workshop on whiteness and racism with a Black colleague in their workplace. I

reflect on striking and suggestive reactions from audiences. I describe a chapter I was commissioned to write on what participants valued from the *Free University of Liverpool*. The form of this chapter is relevant to this research.

In this Part, I highlight three world events that had particular impacts on the research that I will explain: the corruption and state anti-Blackness underlying the the deportations of the Windrush Scandal; the global cultural phenomena of the Black-centred superhero film *Black Panther* and the pop video *APESHIT* by The Carters (Beyoncé and Jay-Z) which was filmed in the Louvre in Paris.

“Real, honest colleague?” A 'white' art educator committed to social justice confronts coloniality in her practice.

From application to School of Education, University of Nottingham, November 2017.

Summary

My main supervisor had taken up a new role at the School of Education at the University of Nottingham. As I wanted to have continuity in supervision I applied to transfer my doctoral studies. The timing was useful. Through writing the application I had to re-articulate the goals of the research, the conceptual basis and new direction for the ‘fieldwork’ with Black and global majority peers. I also foregrounded statistics on racism in Initial Teacher Training. Nobody reading the application would be aware I had previously been pursuing a route with ‘white’ peers.

The Problem, Context, and Personal Statement

My research springs from a tension in my professional life that has implications for other art educators and the wider art field.

I am a 'white', middle-class, heterosexual, able-bodied, neurotypical, cis-female arts educator who has worked in the field of arts education, specifically visual arts, for nearly thirty years, mainly in London. I claim a commitment to social justice, and have dedicated myself to trying

to deliver critical and engaged pedagogies in and through art (Freire, 1970; hooks, 1995). I worked initially as a secondary art & design teacher. Mostly I have taught in Further and Higher Education; on an MA in Arts Policy; and as a lecturer in teacher education (on PGCE and MA in Art and Design Education). Additionally, I have taught/facilitated and curated in informal sites for learning such as museums, galleries, and in arts and social justice organisations.

The tension is that increasingly, I have become aware that while striving to be part of the solution to inequality and social injustice, it is also structurally impossible for me not to embody the problem in terms of race, class, gender, (dis)ability, sexual identity and sexuality.

This is because the educational field I work in – art education - is numerically dominated by 'white', middle-class, female educators (also cis, heterosexual, able-bodied and neurotypical), as I will show. This gender/race/class bias represents significant power in the hands of few and does not reflect the demography of this country.

I am challenged by African-American educationalist Cynthia B Dillard, who writes:

I am looking for real, honest colleagues. Colleagues who are comfortable enough with their own constructions of their own communities to respect mine. Who aren't scared of talking about the ways that racism, or classism, or sexism, or homophobia shape our decisions about policies and programs within education. Folks who know that those are the very conversations that will breathe life into an academy that thrives on reproducing privilege and inequality at every turn. (Cynthia B Dillard, 2000, p.668, my italics)

Firstly, here is some data on the dominance of 'white' female art educators and the reproduction of ourselves, across sectors. Note that I am not yet able to compare year-for-year and exact like-for-like, nor is there intersectional analysis. Yet what is revealed here substantiates what William Boyle and Marie Charles call a 'crisis of representation' (Boyle and Charles, 2016).

In 2014, 13% of the UK's 64 million people and more than 40% of London's population were black and minority ethnic (ONS in Cox, 2016).

How does this relate to schooling overall?

- 7.6% of teachers in state schools in England are people of colour' (DfE in Robbins and Newman, 2016)
- In 2016, 31% of children in UK primary and secondary school were from minority ethnic backgrounds (DfE, 2017b, p.8), while London averaged at 72%, with inner London at 81% and outer London at 56% (GLA, 2017, p.25).
- Schools need an extra 68,000 BME teachers to reflect the population (Rhodes, 2017).
- 73.9% of UK primary and secondary teachers in 2017 are female (DfE, 2017, p.7).

I have recently been informed by the Department for Education that I can only access the subject-specific statistics on ethnicity and gender of art teachers by Freedom of Information request. Meanwhile, data on art & design teacher education is helpful:

- In 2013, out of 347 art and design PGCE students offered places, 319 identified as 'white', 5 as Indian, and 13 were 'unknown'. Out of 18 self-identified applicants of African descent, none was offered a place (GTTR, 2014, p.27, *my italics*).
- Over the past twenty-five years, I have so far only located one lecturer in art and design education in the UK who identifies as a person of colour, now retired: Paul Dash (2000, 2002, 2010).

Next I turn to art & design pupils in secondary schools. Arts provision in secondary schools has been undermined since the introduction of the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) which controversially excludes arts subjects, plus other factors such as budget cuts and new performance measures (Johnes, 2017, p.9; Bacc for the Future, 2017; Richens, 2015). This is mirrored in HE by the recent abolition of teaching subsidy for arts and humanities degrees which has devastated the sectors (Prince, 2010; Morgan 2010; Brown, 2015). One result of cuts in schools appears to be a heightened feminisation of the arts in what was already a female-dominated school subject at Key Stage 4 and 5. Another is what I will call the 're-white'ning' of the already 'white'-dominated arts:

- In 2016, 64.7% of girls took at least one arts subject, compared with 42.5% of boys (Johnes, 2017, p.11)
- In the 2017 art & design GCSE exams, there was 4% decline in the number of candidates, continuing a downward trend. However males dropped by 5.2%, as against females by 3.4% (NSEAD, 2017)
- The proportions of pupils from Bangladeshi, Black African, Chinese, and Indian backgrounds with at least one arts entry at GCSE declined notably between 2007-16; the 'white' British group dropped by only 1.2% (Johnes, 2017, p.50).

Turning to Higher Education, Equality Challenge Unit data from 2014 shows:

- Just 330 (5%) of UK art & design academic staff are from Black and ethnic minorities, while 6275 'white' staff account for 95%. (ECU, 2014a)
- Gender is oddly more balanced than in schooling, with those HE staff identifying as female accounting for 49.6% (ECU, 2014a)

Yet:

- Of the student body accepted onto 'Fine Art' courses in 2016, 10% identified as Black, Asian or mixed race, a 3% increase on 2007 (UCAS, 2016).

In their influential report *Art for a Few*, Burke and McManus studied staff who interview prospective art students applying to HE, and found that they favour students who could reference the expected European/North American middle-class canon, and who reflected this both in the work in their portfolios, and in their cultural tastes. They concluded that “the art and design academy has a deeply embedded, institutionalized class and ethnically biased notion of a highly idealized student against whom they measure applicants” (Burke and McManus, 2011, p.7).

Is it any surprise then that, along with the crisis of representation and European-canonical content in teaching, not just recruitment but retention is affected:

- In the 2010/11, 6% of 'white' students failed to complete their degrees compared to 9% of Black British Caribbean, 13% of Black or Black British African, and 10% of 'other' Black backgrounds. (Finnigan and Richards, 2016, p.5)

Given the foregoing barriers to learning, the cycle of 'white' domination plays out in the arena of work. Dave O'Brien and Mark Taylor find that:

- Fewer than 7% of employees in the Creative and Cultural Industries (CCIs) are members of black or minority ethnic groups. Just 4% of those working in design, and 5% of people in crafts across the UK are non-white. (O'Brien and Taylor in Cox, 2016)

Finally, this trajectory impacts audiences and the economy.

The Warwick Report of 2015 hit the headlines, describing

“arts audiences as overwhelmingly middle-class and 'white'.... [T]he wealthiest, best educated and least ethnically diverse 8% of society make up nearly half of live music audiences and a third of theatregoers and gallery visitors.” (Brown, 2015)

To summarise:

1. The arts in state-funded schools and HE are undermined by current government policies, radically reducing entitlement to arts for all our children and young people.
2. The arts pedagogic 'offer' is dominated both bodily and at least at the level of interpretation of policies, curriculum, and syllabi by the epistemologies, ontologies, and methodologies of 'white' middle-class art educators, and, at pre-degree level, predominantly female. Yet nobody talks about it.
3. This 'crisis of representation' is impacting on who goes on to study arts subjects for GCSE, A Level, and BA, and who will 'become' an artist, art teacher, and/or audience for the arts.

O'Brien and Taylor assert that the arts currently “contribute more to maintaining social divisions in the UK than to breaking them down” (O'Brien and Taylor, 2016, my italics).

I suggest that, given numerical supremacy, 'white' middle-class female art educators have a particular responsibility to consider how they are – how I am - reproducing social division and

race/class and other supremacies in and through the subject of art & design, and the field of art education.

My research questions are:

- How is art education systemically gendered, raced, and classed, resulting in the predominance of 'white' middle-class female art educators and resultant exclusionary pedagogic practices that reproduce inequality.
- On the ground, what methods or practices can be developed for existing 'white' middle-class female educators to confront our embodiments of social injustice.

Theoretical Context

Two key concepts underpinning this research are 'coloniality' and 'whiteness'.

With regard to the first, I'm working with definitions put forward by decolonial scholars emerging from Latin America:

Coloniality survives colonialism. It is maintained alive in books, in the criteria for academic performance, in cultural patterns, in common sense, in the self-image of peoples, in aspirations of self, and so many other aspects of our modern experience. In a way, as modern subjects we breathe coloniality all the time and every day. (Nelson Maldonado-Torres, 2007, p.243, my italics).

Starting from here, no-one is unaffected.

Puerto Rican scholar Ramón Grosfoguel clarifies how coloniality is distinct from colonialism:

I use 'coloniality' to address 'colonial situations' in the present period... I mean the cultural, political, sexual, spiritual, epistemic and economic oppression/exploitation of subordinate racialized/ethnic groups by dominant racialized/ethnic groups with or without the existence of colonial administrations. (2007, p.220)

As a 'white' middle-class female art educator, I am interested both in the structure of coloniality in which my (our) labour and epistemologies are reproduced, and in how the "logic

of coloniality” was constructed in us as socialised individuals. This quest is part of a lifelong “project of decolonization” (both Walter Mignolo in Maldonado-Torres, 2011, p.6).

I find coloniality critical for this research as it refers both to a colonial history directly based on land grabs, enslavement of peoples, and colonial government, and its pernicious legacies on a structural, ontological level. This latter relates to the work of Martiniquan-French psychologist Frantz Fanon, whose ideas heavily influence coloniality scholarship (Fanon, 2001, 1986). My research is emerging during increasingly loud calls for decolonization within education, catalysed largely by the Rhodes Must Fall protests in South Africa which has spread to Oxford and elsewhere (Chaudhuri, 2016). These include the *Decolonise Our Minds Society* at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS, London); *Why Is My Curriculum White?* movements at University College London (UCL), Sussex, Bristol, Cambridge, London School of Economics (LSE) and others (Hussain, 2015). We also see demands around the shockingly low number of Black academics in British universities in *Why isn't my professor Black?* (Okuleye, 2014), and in the work of Adams (2017), Kennedy (2017) and Morgan (2016).

Within the context of schooling, it is important to note that some believe that compulsory schooling is state control – arguably a form of coloniality – put forward in the 1960s and 70s by scholars, notably Ivan Illich (1971). However, I argue that even if we accept this view, social justice and equality must be fought for within the system. Similarly, in order to work towards a demographic shift in terms of democratic entitlement in who teaches art, to whom, and who becomes an artist, what art is made and shown, we must address what to do about the existing largely 'white' middle-class female body of educators in art classrooms and HE studios who are self-replicating power.

Coloniality is also key to apply to the wider field of visual art. Museums, galleries, and the international art market successfully export the European/North American model around the world and their staff are overwhelmingly dominated by 'white' people (Museum Detox, 2017). The economic and epistemological domination of this model ensure that London's art schools are increasingly filled with not just elite home students (for which read 'white' and middle class) but international students - those whose parents or governments can afford the fees -

seeking an education in Eurocentric notions of what art is and can be, because that is where the power and the market is (Sutton, 2014).

Coloniality includes the oppressions embodied by 'white' middle-class and often feminist educators that is central to my research. There is a long literature focusing on 'white' middle-class women's complicity in racism by scholars of colour including Audre Lorde (1984), bell hooks (1994), Sara Ahmed (2004, 2016, 2017), as well as by educationalists such as Cynthia B Dillard (2000), and Heidi Mirza (2009) who was one of the UK's first Black female professors. The research will also be informed by 'white' women's research into 'white' women's racism, such as the lineage stemming from Peggy McIntosh (1990), Ruth Frankenberg (1992) in the USA, and in the UK, the work of Vron Ware (Ware, 1992; Back and Ware, 2002).

'Whiteness' is the other key aspect to the theoretical framework, intersecting with the foregoing. This is a not unproblematically burgeoning field of study where anti-racist 'whites' have been criticised for profiting from race privilege (Ahmed, 2016; Rigby and Ziyad, 2016). I will centre my reading on a genealogy dating from African-American scholar W.E.B Du Bois' *The Souls of White Folks* (1920), through Fanon, Lorde, hooks and Ahmed mentioned earlier, to scholarship by African-American philosopher George Yancy (2012, 2015). Yancy's thesis is that 'the 'white' self is a site of 'white' racist opacity that does not know the limits of its own racism' (2015, xxii, my italics). Yancy proposes that:

because ['white' people] do not recognize the various ways that they have been constituted as 'white', which preceded their emergence, it will require them to move far outside of what they know themselves to be in order to be aware of who they are as 'white' and as a problem. (2015, xxiii, his italics)

Yancy calls this "finding one's 'white' self at a great distance" (2015, xxii), and methods towards finding this distance is a guiding rationale behind my methodology.

Literature on coloniality and whiteness in art education in the UK

A search on the keywords of 'coloniality' and 'whiteness' in art education shows that these terms are being made current in HE, led by scholars of colour, but not yet in the context of

schooling. There is a long literature on 'multicultural' art education in UK schooling since the 1970s of which Rachel Mason was a pioneer (1988). There are Arts Council England reports on 'multiculturalism' and 'diversity' in the arts and audiences dating back to the 1970s and 80s (ACE, 2016). There is much literature both by and on Black and ethnic minority artists in the UK, and the institutional barriers they face and overcome (Khan, 1976; Oguibe, 2004; Chambers, 2014). There is considerable material on 'white' middle class teachers (Power, 2006).

In the context of the USA, I have found literature that closes in on specific keywords of coloniality and whiteness, including by art educators-scholars of colour Amelia Kraehe (2015), Dipti Desai (2010), Wanda B Knight (2006), Beverly Naidus (2009), and self-identified 'white' female art educators Laura Reinsborough and Deborah Barndt (2009), Sunny Spillane (2015), Jessica Kirker (2017).

In the UK, such literature that uses terms such as 'colonial' or 'whiteness' is mostly set within an HE context. Aisha Richards at University of the Arts London (UAL) initiated the Shades of Noir project in 2009, and co-wrote the influential report Retention and Attainment in Art & Design with 'white' colleague Terry Finnigan (Finnigan and Richards, 2015). Sylvia Theuri has written about Critical Race Theory and art education in HE the UK (2015) and the experience of art education in HE for art students of African heritage (2016). Kate Hatton has written a great deal over the years on multiculturalism, racism and inclusion in art education mainly focusing on HE (2003, 2013, 2016). Dipti Bhagat and Peter O'Neill (2011) have reviewed the 'widening participation' agenda in HE art and design, and art lecturers Alison Jones and colleagues have written about an initiative promoting diversity on their Fine Art BA at Goldsmiths (2015). British-Barbadian artist and renowned teacher Paul Dash is a pioneer in his research and writing about African Caribbean pupils' experience of racism in art education in school and what can be done (2000, 2002, 2010). This year, the national conference of 'Engage', an influential body for museum and gallery educators in the UK, is focusing this year on diversity: 'The Whole Picture' is programmed by two Black curators and it is notable that they have programmed sessions on whiteness and decolonisation (Engage, 2017).

However, the Rhodes Must Fall movement has inspired student-led organising in the context of art education. For example, at the University of the Arts London (UAL), students with staff of colour are at the forefront of pushing for root and branch changes to teaching and curriculum: of who lectures and teaches in the studio, and who makes up the student body/who is excluded. Art students of colour organised the '#UAL So White' twitter campaign (UAL, 2016), where students shared shocking testimony on their everyday experience of racism and whiteness in UAL.⁵⁰

Pen Dalton (2001) and Margaret Etherington (2013) have theorised art and design as a gendered subject in school and more widely. However, it is notable that there is still little on social class and art & design in the UK (Broadhead, 2016), but I would argue that Paul Willis's pioneering work on social class still applies (1990).

Methodology

Alongside a theoretical analysis of literature and existing data through the conceptual lenses of coloniality and whiteness, I propose two strands of 'fieldwork' through which I will gather qualitative data with art educators. While quantitative data can usefully show the numerical starkness of the inequalities, qualitative research with educators will enable access to rich, narrative data that will add layers of insight from lived experience to the research findings.

Following Yancy, if whiteness is opaque to the 'white' self, and, conversely, the racialised 'other' has the epistemological and ontological insight about the whiteness they are forced to daily contend with, then I will start from a position that it is not me (nor others like me) who knows most how coloniality and whiteness operates through my body as an art educator.

I therefore propose to invite one-to-one conversations, a form of 'narrative inquiry', with a number of peers of colour who are artists and art educators (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990). Through this, I will attempt to gain the 'distance' that Yancy speaks of (Yancy, 2015), and to make a space for the speaking of truth to power: the researcher as a stand-in for 'white'-

⁵⁰ Earlier testimony from National Student Surveys (NSS) can be found in Vaughan and Yorke (2009).

dominated art field. I will invite four or five people with whom I have worked closely who work within the field 'art'. The reason I am proposing peers is that there is a level of pre-existing trust and this could mitigate against a well-founded suspicion of exploitation against 'white' researchers who are researching racism (Chicago Beyond, 2019; Rigby and Ziyad, 2016). Through this goal of centring voices of people/artists/art educators of colour, I aim to amplify their analysis, although I will need to be wary of 'opacity' in my very ability to amplify.

The second strand responds to a different call. The first person that needs to try to penetrate the opacity, to uncover her 'logic of coloniality' is the doctoral researcher herself, that is, me. Norman Denzin's method of 'interpretive biography' feels particularly relevant to my research aims as it focuses on social justice goals. This is an autoethnography through writing that "disrupts conventional narratives and conventional histories... to better understand how racism and social injustice have been seamlessly been woven together [in the self]" (2008, p.119, my insertion). As "critical autoethnographers" Denzin invites us to explore "epiphanies" in our past (2008, p.120) and the more painful "stings of memory" (Ulmer in Denzin, 2008, p.123), and then crucially to connect them with wider "cultural history and social structures" (2008, p.121). Mapping these epiphanies and stings will form data around the potential of self-re-education, self-re-emergence, from which could be extrapolated pedagogic processes towards group work with 'white' art educators that I want to explore after the PhD.

Impact

My goal is that in centring the voices and lived experience of artists and art educators of colour, with research into my own coloniality as a case study, I will offer the field of art education new theory, insights and data to conceptually and practically challenge the current gulfs that exist in entitlement to art education across society, gulfs which are currently and tacitly perpetrated and perpetuated by 'white' middle-class female art educators.

Henrietta, Britannia, Victoria and other art educators

15 November 2017

10-minute Soapbox for **The Whole Picture: Rethinking Diversity**, curated by Dawn Cameron and Derrick Armstrong, the Annual Conference of Engage, National Association for Gallery Education. held in Hull, UK.

Abstract:

I am an art educator and PGCE tutor who is currently researching how coloniality and whiteness are constructed in art educators (including me). My soapbox will explore subconscious and conscious legacies of coloniality for teaching styles, methods, and content, particularly for 'white' women educators. I'm going to do this through pedagogically inhabiting three historical paintings where relations between ruling class 'white' women and people of colour are depicted by 'white' male painters.

Summary

From notes and reflections on my presentation for 'Engage', written July 2020

The 10-minute Soapbox was fuelled by my research into the dominance and behaviours of 'white' women in art education and in gallery/museum education, including me. For this presentation, I wanted to address the 'white' cis-females in the audience, whom I suspected would form the majority.

My basic premise was that 'white' cis-female art educators in education institutions, in galleries and museums – regardless of claims to espouse learner-centred liberal pedagogical values – unknowingly and knowingly perpetuate allegedly benevolent, actually oppressive racism and coloniality. I would suggest how deep this runs through examining the transgenerational legacy of behaviours embodied in three historical portraits of iconic ruling-class female figures in British cultural history, one from the 17th, one from the 18th and one

from the 19th centuries. I would counter these historical portraits with work that I suggest speaks back to power, made by contemporary Black and global majority artists. The historical paintings depict whiter-than-white women in positions of power over Black and global majority 'others'. In the slideshow, I highlight the gazes that the 'others' throw back to power. From visual evidence in these portraits, I speculate on how 'white' women educators' behaviours live on through the paintings' afterlife - Warburg's 'nachleben', - and how they are glaringly seen and understood by those racialised by them. I think about this in two temporalities: the time the portraits were painted, and living legacies now. All three paintings were commissioned from 'white' male artists, and reveal how patriarchy wished to foster 'white' womanhood, propagating values and endorsing behaviour. I have used all the paintings in the slideshow repeatedly in my teaching as starting points for discussion and to 'flip the script' on whose gaze we focus on (Yancy 2015). In the conference, I spoke to the slide sequence, but here I present only the images as I believe they stand alone in making an argument. I invite you to linger over the slides, noticing connections and objections you make to my visual-textual 'thesis'.

< >

Fig 17. (Below) Jane Trowell. *Henrietta, Britannia, Victoria and other art educators*, 2017
Slides from slideshow for Engage conference 2017: *The Whole Picture: Rethinking Diversity*.

Henrietta, Britannia, Victoria and other art educators

For Engage Conference soapbox, Hull, 2017

“For me, what the real democratic
teacher has to do is, just, make
clear to the students
the impossibility of neutral
education”

Paulo Freire (1995)

Warning:

"Coloniality survives colonialism.

It is maintained alive in books, in the criteria for academic performance, in cultural patterns, in common sense, in the self-image of peoples, in aspirations of self, and so many other aspects of our modern experience.

In a way, as modern subjects *we breathe coloniality all the time and everyday."*

Nelson Maldonado-Torres (2007, 243).

Warning!

**These images are dangerous for your
racial self-esteem.**

Endebted to Wole Soyinka.....
From Nobel Lecture 1986

Henrietta

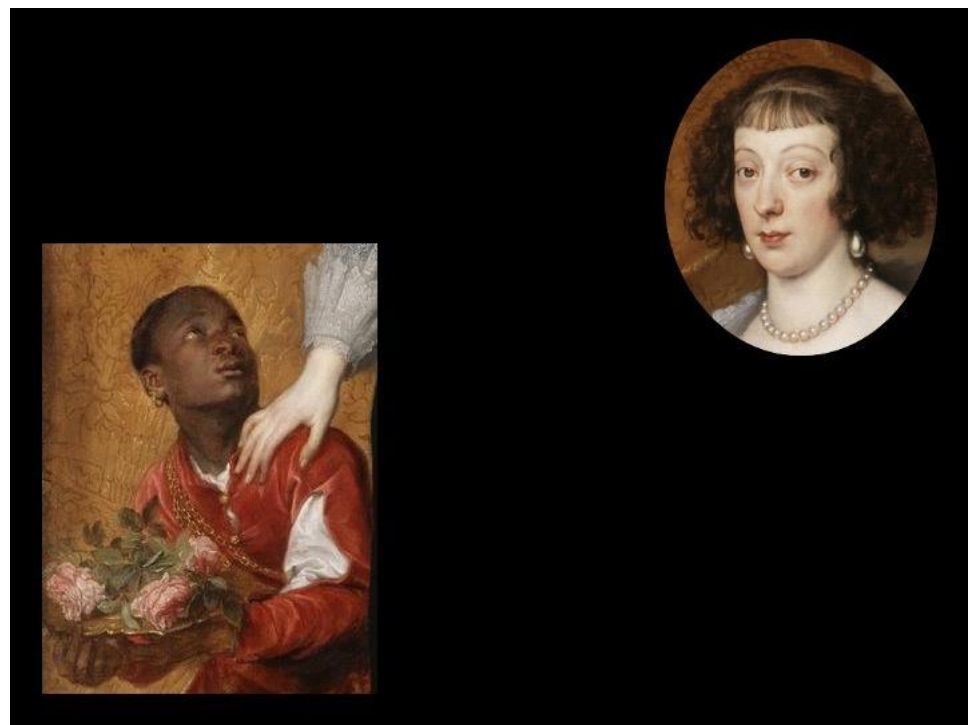
Henrietta of Lorraine, Anthony Van Dyck, 1634
Kenwood House, London



Henrietta = Control

Henrietta of Lorraine attended by a page, Anthony Van Dyck, 1634
Kenwood House, London







Name him



A young girl with dark hair in braids, wearing a blue shirt, is looking up at a gallery of paintings. The hashtag #OMG is visible in the top right corner. The BP logo is in the bottom right corner.

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Britannia



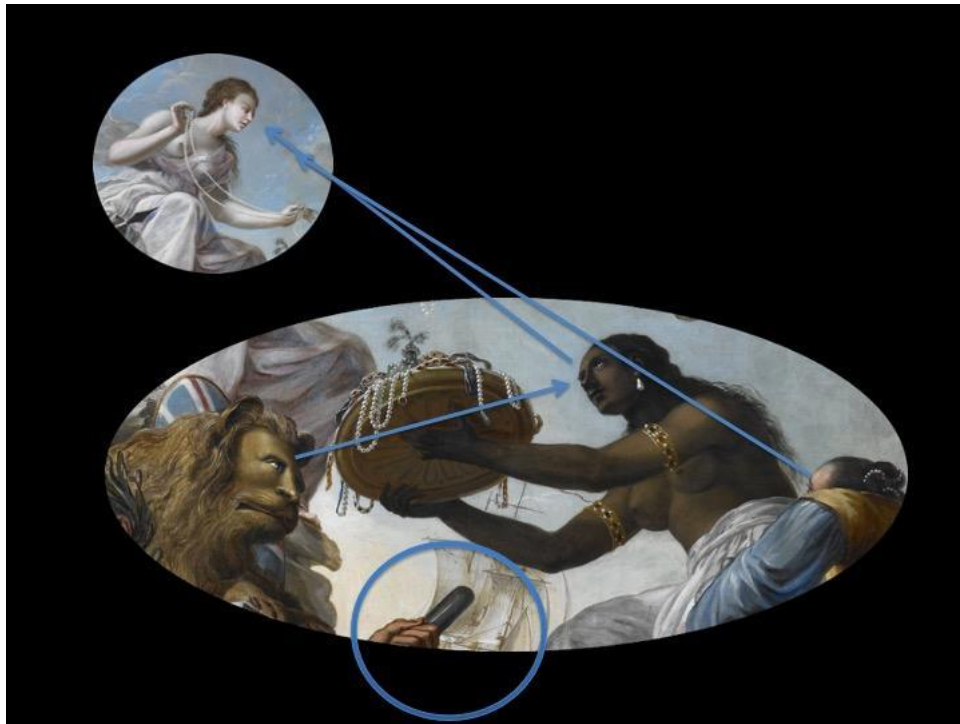
The East offering its riches to Britannia, Spiridione Roma, 1778
Foreign and Commonwealth Office, (formerly India House), London

Britannia = Self-Delusion



The East offering its riches to Britannia, Spiridione Roma, 1778
Foreign and Commonwealth Office, (formerly India House), London





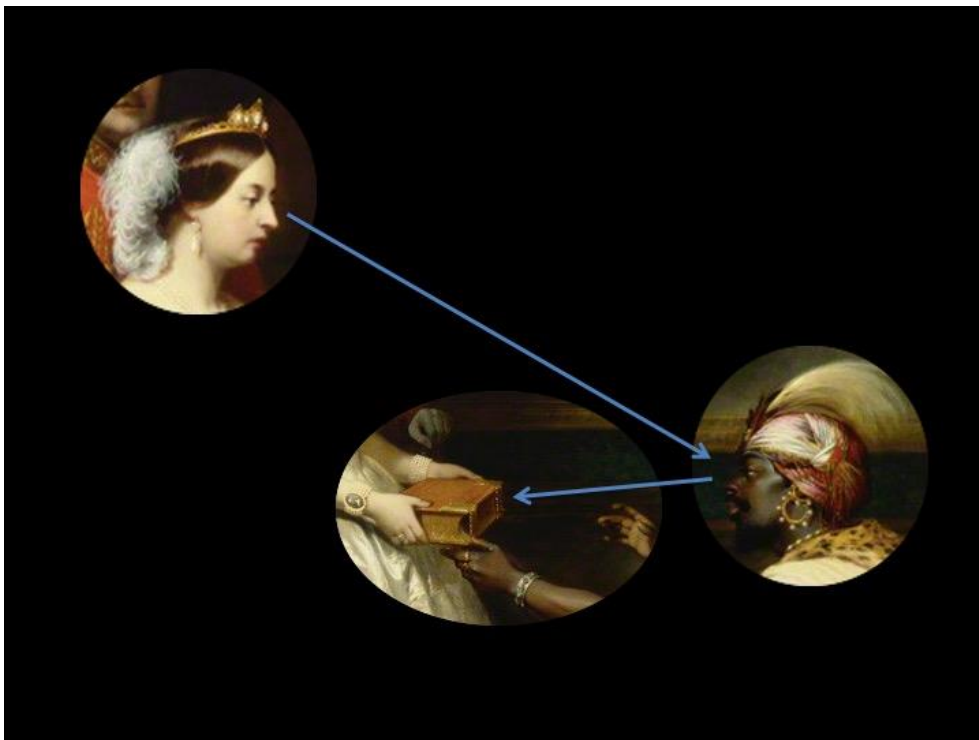
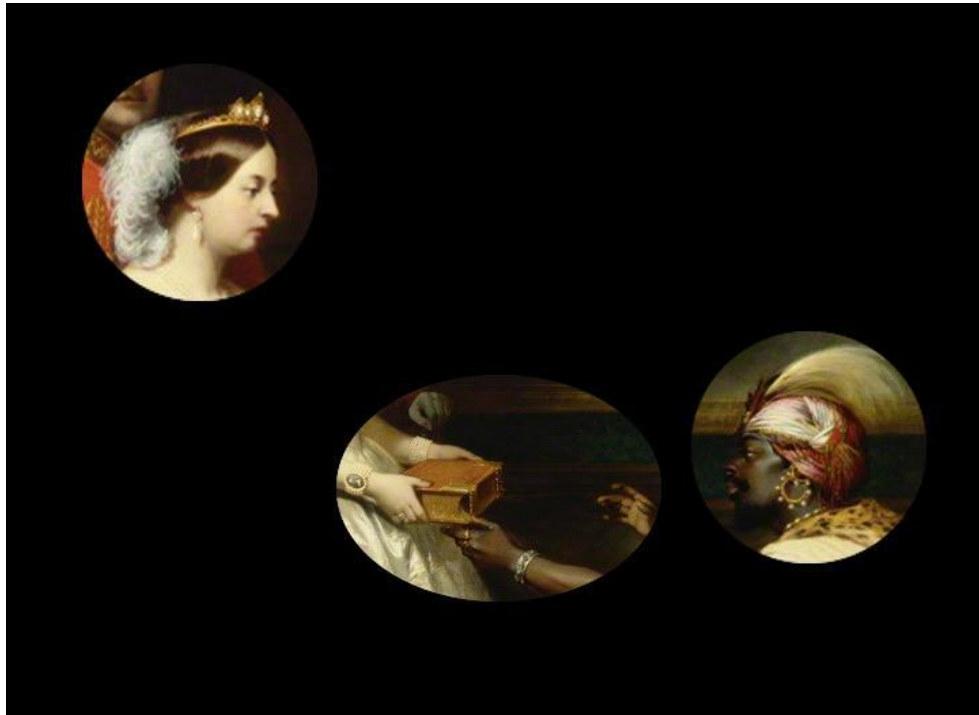
Victoria



Victoria = White Knowledge Supremacy



The Secret of England's Greatness, Thomas Barker, 1863
National Portrait Gallery, London





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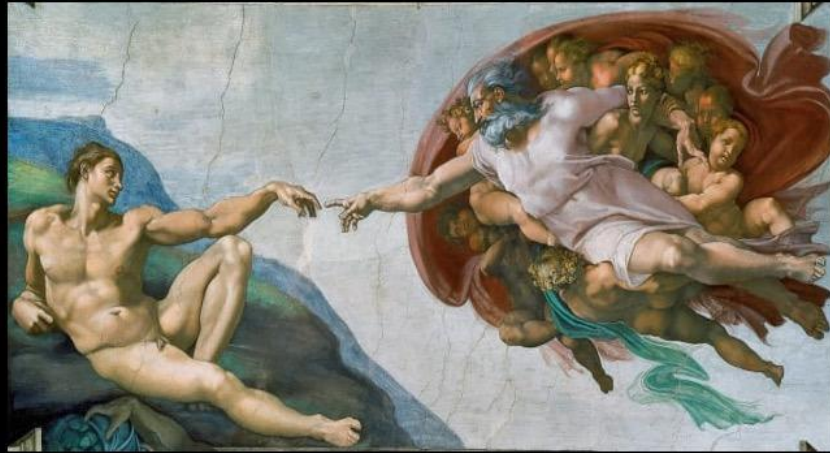


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British Museum 'Teachers' webpage, accessed 8th August 2017



The Creation of Adam, Michelangelo Buonarroti, 1508-12
Sistine Chapel ceiling, Vatican, Rome



The Creation of God, Harmonia Rosales, 2017

Refuse

White Knowledge Supremacy

“theory as liberatory practice”

bell hooks (1994, 59)

“one must be prepared to *linger*, to remain, with the truth about one’s white self and the truth about **how whiteness has structured and continues to structure forms of relationship that are oppressive to people of colour.**”

George Yancy, *White Self-Criticality beyond Anti-Racism* (2015, xv)

“To be unsutured, is to be linked to *losing one’s way*, is dispositional and aspirational.

As such, **being unsutured involves the continuous process of renewal and commitment.**”

George Yancy (2015, xvi)



“I must teach you that
I have nothing to teach you.”

Jacques Ranciere (1981/1991, 15)

Commentary

In advance of the event, I had predicted the whiteness and femaleness of the event based on data and long experience of being in a monochrome sea of 'white' women in art education. However, given the theme and the politics of Dawn Cameron and Derrick Armstrong, the Black curators of the conference, there were many more speakers and participants who were visibly Black and global majority than is usual, based on my experience. Afterwards, I enquired by email to *Engage* as to the breakdown of conference participants. They told me that, of those who chose to disclose:

[at the conference]...we had 86.5% female attendance, 12% disabled attendance and 7% BAME.

This compares to their membership data from March 2017 which I also asked about, again given data from those who chose to disclose:

91% of our members were 'white', 5% BAME and the rest declined to provide data. 5% of respondents considered themselves disabled. (both Engage: email correspondence 27th March 2018).

So, in the Soapbox, I was indeed addressing mostly me and my kind - the 'white' cis-female women art educators - to name and confront our role in perpetuating and reproducing oppression. I remember the adrenalin pumping through me before, during and after: what reactions would I need to handle, including from art educators of the global majority? While there was no Question and Answer time attached, I expected some response, pushback or allyship, especially given the issues we were there to tackle. The reality was different: almost total silence.

After returning to my table after the presentation, one 'white' woman thanked me and said "It's a real problem" but didn't hang around to talk. In the break, a young Black man, a curator on internship at a London gallery, came up to speak with me. "No-one talks about this", he said. He added he was glad I had put it out there so graphically, and thought the historical imagery juxtaposed with contemporary worked well. He shared some observations from his own experience. We kept in touch. What is it about whiteness that so loudly silences itself?

Black Panther, blockbuster superhero film centred on a black cast is released in UK

13 February 2018

By March 2018 it has become the highest grossing superhero film to date.

A particular scene makes a striking intervention into museological history:

Killmonger cross-examines the 'white' middle-class female curator in the 'Museum of Great Britain' about precious objects which, in real life, were stolen from the Royal Palace in Benin (Nigeria) when sacked and razed to the ground by the British in 1897. (Hicks, 2020)

The depiction of the 'white' female curator politely 'explaining' why the objects could not be returned was a behavioural trope straight from (art) history.

The criteria for selecting and inviting peers for the 'fieldwork'.

Written September 2020, reflecting on the process of 2018-2020, edited 2024.

In 2018, I was conceptualising the 'fieldwork' with peers of colour. I decided to re-read literature which was pioneering in amplifying artists of colour in Britain, seeking also material on 'white' women's roles in encouraging or hindering their work (Sulter, 1990). As part of this, I was well aware of fierce critiques of second wave feminism (1960s-80s) as succeeding in serving 'white' women by invisibilising women of the global majority (Lorde, 1984; hooks 1989). Among my re-reading, I opened once more *Visibly Female, Feminism and Art Today*, an anthology of already published texts, edited by 'white' feminist art historian Hilary Robinson (1987). I specifically wanted to look at how Robinson edited the anthology in relation to 1980s racism and representation of artists of the global majority. I'd originally read it in 1991, and it was through this book that I first encountered the painting *Housewives with Steak-knives* (1983-5) by Sutapa Biswas, which Robinson featured as the cover artwork. An interview with Biswas is reproduced in the book and *Housewives* is a piece that I have introduced to waves of students over the years as its memorable imagery centring the all-powerful Kali yet titled 'housewives' generates much discussion. Later in my PhD process Biswas' *Housewives* was to become central among imagery that I worked with to express the

research.

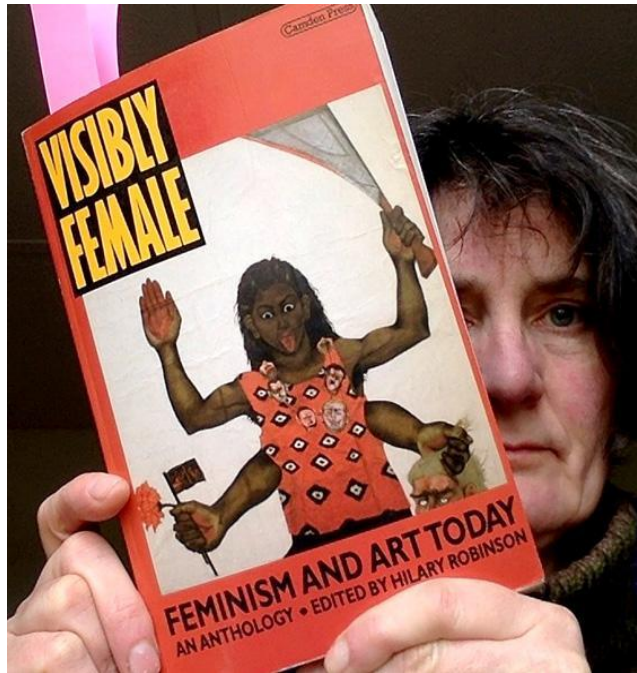


Fig 18. The author holding *Visibly Female*, edited by Hilary Robinson (1987), 2018.

[Digital photograph] Personal collection

Nearly thirty years on, I re-read Hilary Robinson's introduction from the viewpoint of my current study. I saw that Robinson framed the political issues around feminism and art that she wished to address in the anthology by referring to the destruction by 'white' feminists of figurative nude sculptures by Zena Herbert, an artist of British-Algerian heritage. Herbert's account of the destruction of her lifesize ceramic women, *The Dancer* and *Heat*, was originally published in feminist magazine *Spare Rib* (1986). It forms the very first piece in *Visibly Female*.

Zena tells how in 1983 at the age of thirty-nine, she'd enrolled on a BA Fine Art degree at Leeds Polytechnic. For her second-year show, she created nude and jewelled figures of Algerian-Kabylie women, inspired by her experience of visiting her father's village in Algeria. She had conceived them as icons of women's power, body-autonomy and self-determination.

She describes how, upon installation:

some women tutors complained my sculptures were sexist and racist. They had never spoken to me and I was stunned by such kneejerk reactions by academics...The next day my women were in smithereens... I felt sentenced, unheard, by a self-appointed executioner-judge. (1987, p.11)

In the article Zena describes that after the opening, women broke into the exhibition, using hammers to destroy her and some others' 'offensive' work. They were arrested and put on trial. She doesn't talk about the context for the violence. She does talk of the 'Women's Movement' which had 'originally impressed' her in the 1960s (1987, p.10):

The hammer pre-empts dialogue... If it is thought right that some women have dictatorial jurisdiction over other women, I have misunderstood the whole aim of the Women's Movement. (Herbert in Robinson, 1987, p.12)

Thinking of 'white' women's racism in art education and Zena's heritage, I investigated the wider situation around the attack on her sculptures. The destruction took place in the context of women's and feminists' rage and ongoing activism against male violence, including police inaction, after the vicious sexual murders of thirteen women between 1975 - 1981 by Peter Sutcliffe, the man dubbed the Yorkshire Ripper. Movements such as *Women Against Violence Against Women* were using direct action, smashing up porn shops and mobilising massive *Reclaim the Night* marches across the country. These movements were particularly strong in Leeds, West Yorkshire (Leeds Libraries, 2019). Anything that was construed as 'pornographic' and inciting male violence was seen as a target for activism, and 'white' women and 'white' feminists were the pre-dominant presence in these mobilisations.

It was prescient for my new 'fieldwork' to come across Zena Herbert's account of having her cultural heritage seen, read and judged through a 'white' feminist anti-pornography gaze.

Nearly forty years ago, in the context of Herbert's ordeal, Hilary Robinson asks questions in

her introduction that I would argue are still needed today:

Issues of racism. How do 'white' women, in a country that has colonized so many others, react to work that arises out of a different cultural heritage to their own?...

Issues of art education. Are colleges able to provide appropriate tutoring for women, for mature students, for Black students and students of colour?...

Issues of imagery. ... Is the work done by feminists on the meanings of images of women simply leading to new puritanical orthodoxies...?

Issues of context. Where do we want to show our work, and why? Would [Zena Herbert's work] have meant something different if exhibited in a show of women – or of feminists – or of artists from non-British cultures? (Robinson, 1987, p.8/9)

Having immersed myself in Zena Herbert's bitter experience, I felt even more keenly the vulnerability and trust that would be needed by participants in my 'fieldwork' who daily experience racism at the hands of 'white' people, and given the disproportionality, at the hands of 'white' women in their art education. They would need to feel confident in their relationship with me, including feeling ok to express concerns, to call me out, to call me in. I sought people with whom I felt I'd built trust through working together, through overcoming difficulties together. I scanned my relationships for people I'd got close to through teaching and through collaborations with artists of colour through art/social justice projects in *Platform*, mainly in *Remember Saro-Wiwa* (2004-6), *Voices that Shake!* (2010 - now) and *Action Saro-Wiwa* (2014-16). I also realised that some close peers might vouch for me with associates of theirs with whom I did not have an existing relationship, a 'snowball' approach if needed. I aimed to work with a small number of twelve to fifteen people, for in-depth semi-structured conversation of between one to two hours. I would seek peers who had experienced formal art education in England from secondary school onwards, including further and adult education, and degree-level.

In order to ensure a range, I compiled an initial spreadsheet of peers, with columns for artform, teaching/educating/facilitating experience, and experience of formal art education, columns for, where known, age, class, cis, trans and non-binary identities, sexualities, age,

heritage, known/disclosed (dis)abilities, cognitive diversities; art teacher, art lecturer, artist, curator, artist-facilitator; plus their institution if affiliated. Some of this was fact, and some was speculation.

Already it did not feel good: a 'white' woman with a spreadsheet with names and speculative 'data' on 'people of colour'. Which dodgy history of clipboards and tick-sheets was this part of?

I persisted, in the “always/already entangled” reality of attempting this work, work with people who I believed had, after all, some trust in me (Thiele, 2014, p.213).

I focused on peers based only in England, mainly because policies and curriculum for art education in primary, secondary and tertiary is specific to each country in the UK.

I wrote down fifty peers of colour, seventeen of whom are cis men, thirty-three of whom cis women. I was 99% sure there were no transpeople in the group. In terms of sexuality and identity, there were at least six queer or non-binary people.

Underneath the list was a further group of seven artists of colour, all cis women whom I didn't know but if vouched for by a common friend/colleague, might agree to participate.

I also felt that it would be important to have the engagement of a small number of 'white' peers on their experience in art education, whom I know claim deep commitment to anti-racism. What do they/we see? What can they/we see? I wrote down seventeen names of 'white' peers and ended up focusing on four from across a range of art educational experience in art teacher education, HE, adult and community education and gallery/museum education.

In the end I identified a group of sixteen people whom I wanted to approach - eleven peers of colour and four 'white' peers, eleven cis-female, five of whom are cis-male, four who identified as gender-queer. I was only aware of one peer with a physical disability. Another peer was

public about dyslexia; another public about Asperger's Syndrome; another disclosed privately to me about ADHD. One peer openly discloses on social media about their ongoing mental health struggles.

This is the opening of my invitation email:

Invitation to participate in my PhD research: Racism, coloniality and whiteness in art education: art educators' and artists' perspectives.

As you know, I am engaged in doctoral research at the University of Nottingham, within the School of Education. I am investigating where and how racism, coloniality and whiteness is perpetuated in art education. As a 'white' middle class art educator, I am heavily implicated in the 'problem' of the research and this will also form part of the thesis.⁵¹

All sixteen people I approached wanted to participate. One 'white' peer agreed to take part, but was unwell due to COVID followed by pressures of work under COVID and didn't feel able to participate as a result. Therefore, I will account for fifteen people: eleven peers of colour and four 'white' peers.

Among the peers there is a good age range: three artists are in their 20s, three in their 30s, three in their 40s, three in their 50s, two in sixties, and one in their 70s. In terms of heritages of the peers of colour, they include parentage of African-Caribbean, of African heritage, and African-Caribbean/European heritage; of Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi heritage, and Chinese of Hong Kong heritage. Of the 'white' peers, one peer is of continental European parentage, based in England for thirty years; two are of 'white' English heritage; one is of 'white' Jewish parentage, raised in settler-colonial Rhodesia now Zimbabwe.

⁵¹ See Appendices for the Ethics Form and approval, full letter and Information Sheet, consent letter and script for conversation.

Across the group, five peers are trained secondary school art teachers; five are art lecturers in HE, twelve identify as practising artists/creatives, ten as artists who facilitate learning/social spaces; three identify also as curators.

I was mindful in the conceptualisation of my questions that I would be talking with artists/art educators who had *succeeded* despite whiteness, often at great personal cost. I was keen to frame the questions in acknowledgement of that success and the cost: the labour it took them and the influence of significant others on their journeys. Thus I framed the questions in an open way, making space for the expression of joy in art-making, in learning, in being taught, as well as the experience of racism in their education. I also wanted to invite their comments on the structural context as well as their personal experience of individual educators. For this reason, I asked about *what* enabled them to thrive and *what* hindered them, and *who* enabled them to thrive and *who* hindered them.

I wanted to pilot the interview process and already had the agreement of U, my friend and former MA student who has a stake in the research as a doctoral student. U is a lecturer of colour at one of the London art colleges, and their research is into anti-racist education in their discipline area. U and I tried out the research questions, and listening to U's acute experience of whiteness in their art education - with the hesitations, the rushed recollections, the sometimes anger, sometimes shock, sometimes mockery, sometimes grief - stirred me deeply. U is a very positive person, yet I was struck by how much U had survived, stepped over or found their way around, in order to get where they are today. I left feeling viscerally aware of my responsibility for this painful, insightful and inciteful material as a 'white' listener, as a 'white' human, let alone a 'white' researcher. Afterwards, they gave me feedback on what it felt like for them to do the conversation, the range and purpose of my questions.

The most acute observation U offered on the process and experience of our conversation was on the problematics of a 'white' person interviewing a person of colour - even when a peer and in this case a good friend. This is the race-of-interviewer-effect that Yasmin Gunaratnam and Nicola Rollock discuss (2003, 2013). I quote U in full, with U's hesitations kept in:

U - I suppose that the tension in the interview, erm, of you being 'white' and asking me about my experiences of not being 'white', and that slight tension, I suppose that slight tension of just thinking, does,..you know,..is it offensive to you to hear those things? I can imagine some people might feel,.. might feel that they might not want to offend you...

Jane – yesss.

U – or may not be comfortable, or may feel that it's just sensitive, or just feel, erm, ..yeah, just feel a discomfort maybe. It'll be interesting how honest people genuinely can feel, talking about that topic. Because being in a space where there isn't a 'white' person, there is, there is, ...erm,... in all honesty, there is a slight kind of sense of relief. But you know, I feel that with you because I trust you... So there's.. I'm not, I'm not the best person, you know,... I, I wouldn't know, but I can imagine with your interviewees, possibly... If you've got anybody that you don't have a bond of trust with already, how does one...? When there is that power dynamic already there, can one genuinely get an honest set of answers from someone? (from interview with U, 2018)

U's cautious thoughts made me pause. I had thought about this before, so what could I do about this. In the preamble to the conversation and in a follow-up email, I would foreground that there may be things that I say, or they say, that later they or I don't like or feel uncomfortable about. I would foreground that I am learning, that we are learning to do this conversation. And of course, that they could withdraw from the research at any time.

Before We Begin: Whiteness and Coloniality in Art Education

Paper presented at conference session *Critical Pedagogies: What constitutes 'critical' pedagogy for art and art history today?*

Association for Art History International Conference, held at Courtauld Institute and Kings College London, 4 April 2018.

Abstract:

There is currently much talk in England of 'engaged' and 'critical' pedagogies in art education, in formal, informal and/or community sites for learning (hooks 1995, Freire 1970). The term 'activist' is increasingly used by educators, by artists who work in social contexts, by art students, and by mainstream arts through their education/interaction programmes and curatorial choices. While there is a long tradition of critical pedagogies in art, the apparent recent mainstreaming has grown exponentially because of the draconian education cuts of 2010, a fightback against stark inequalities and social injustices arising from the marketisation of our schools, colleges, universities, funders, and arts institutions.

Yet ours is a sector overwhelmingly dominated by white middle-class women. So who are the 'we' that claim to deliver these pedagogies? How did 'we' get to be where we are? Who endorses 'our' knowledge of art and social injustice? How do 'we' embody the disruption to the inequalities we say must be confronted?

This paper proposes that art educators should be wary of claiming critical or engaged pedagogies for social justice, unless we accept that 'as modern subjects we breathe coloniality all the time and every day' (Nelson Maldonado-Torres, 2007, 243). White middle class female educators in particular should remain - to borrow African-American philosopher George Yancy's term – 'unsutured vis-a-vis the reality of white racism' (2014, xvii, my emphasis), while also acting against it in ourselves. Too, I will reflect on the narcissistic dangers of white self-criticality, drawing on Sara Ahmed (2017).

Commentary

My slides for this included the portraits of Henrietta, Britannia and Victoria and new research I had done on the Courtauld Institute, looking at the domination of images depicting 'white' women teaching on its website. The session's audience numbered around twenty-five people, the majority 'white' women, with two women of the global majority. There was time for questions after our session of three provocations, but no questions were addressed to me. After the session there were small group breakouts, and five women joined me, four 'white' women including the session organiser, and a Black cultural producer. The main discussion

was around the reluctance to name this problem because it would suggest a mass stepping-back from roles and power in the arts when many 'white' women felt they had fought hard to get into power - the rewards from second wave feminism's whiteness. The session organiser later commissioned me to curate and facilitate a series of workshops on racism with their arts educator membership organisation. The Black producer later invited me to collaborate with them on a training session on whiteness in their organisation, using the portraits. I share this because although in the full session, the work appeared to be greeted with silence, deeper work emerged from the small-group conversations. Yet the incidence of public silence on whiteness and specifically 'white' women's implicatedness increases.

The 'Windrush Scandal' fully breaks, UK, April 20 2018

Hundreds of Caribbean-British people who had arrived in late 1940s/1950 as fully entitled Commonwealth citizens, many as children, who had settled and made lives in Britain, have since at least 2013/14 been subjected to state violence through challenges to their British status, suffering trauma and injustice through night-time raids, illegal detention and illegal deportations. Their children who were born here have also been violated. This is revealed as part of British government policy on creating a 'hostile environment' to deter and end 'illegal' immigration.⁵²

Epistemalanche. 4 June 2018

At work today, my partner told me some unusual news. While I was away over the weekend, some bookshelves in my room by my desk had collapsed. There are eight shelves, floor-to-ceiling. My partner had thought of clearing it up, but then decided not to touch anything as he felt I should see it for myself. As my room was about to be decorated the timing intrigued me.

⁵² The Hostile Environment Policy was introduced in 2012 by Theresa May, the then Conservative Home Secretary. "The aim is to create, here in Britain, a really hostile environment for illegal immigrants". See Amelia Gentleman for the way the news 'broke', although African-Caribbean communities had been protesting and resisting this for years (2018).

But I wasn't surprised. The erection of those shelves had been my own handiwork. I'd put them up maybe twenty years ago and had been in an impatient mood, using the wrong-sized screws for the rawlplugs. I had built in precariousness.

On the train home, I considered the shelves in question. There I keep my lifelong texts that nourish and guide me, and I hope will keep me honest, what Sara Ahmed calls "companion texts" (2017, p.16). There are many crossovers and intersections between them all. To give a general picture, here are books by Black, brown and 'white' women, womxn, and feminists, people-of-colour-authored novels, poetry and books on race, racism, history, imperialism, nationalism and resistance, queer culture, decolonial futures; books on education and radical pedagogy, climate change, and on political, activist and ecological art and artists. These have formed a big part of my 'radical' identity.

As I walked from the station, I suddenly worried about possible damage to the books. Once inside, I raced to open my bedroom door.

< >



Fig 19. JT. *Epistemalanche (right)*, 2018.



Fig 20. JT. *Epistemalanche (left)*, 2018.

From their distribution across the room I saw that these shelves had not just collapsed.

They had burst out, ...been thrown, catapulted, jettisoned.



Fig 21. JT. *Epistemalanche (struts)*, 2018.

What was the weakness that finally caused the catapulting?

Why now?

Was any book badly damaged?

Which books were flung the farthest?

Which books will I put back, surviving the jettisoning and which will I take to the charity shop?

I had that eerie feeling when randomly stumbling across books or passages in books that speak to something immediate in my life. I mused that there should be a term for what we divine from how and which books fall from a shelf.

But these catapulted books were not just any books but *my companion texts*, texts for keeping me accountable. Why should *these* texts be catapulted? I came up with a name for the collapse: an 'epistemalanche'.

Q: What might this story tell me about my doctoral research into whiteness and coloniality in art educators and how to challenge it?

A: That the radical analysis that I like to feel I 'know' is a) not fixed and b) up for grabs and c) only known by me 'through whiteness'.

A: That intellectual or pedagogical structures built by 'white' antiracist racists may be rickety and should be approached with caution.

Here you can watch the 1-minute video of the epistemalanche:

<https://youtu.be/NkjYEJkCV-M> ⁵³

APESHIT music video is 'dropped' by The Carters. 18 June 2018

The video features *Beyoncé, Jay-Z and dancers in the setting of the Louvre Museum, Paris, in front of famous works often featuring Black people.*

For several shots, Jay-Z poses in front of the *The Raft of the Medusa*, a large-scale painting by Theodore Géricault (1818).

This reclamation by sophisticated Black artists of a gallery which is an iconic space of whiteness and coloniality was arresting: they shrugged the hand off the shoulder, reversed the assumptions behind who is giving gifts, and utterly took back the knowledge.

⁵³ The book that was flung the farthest was *Americanah*, by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (2013).

Is it because I'm...?

Staff workshop on whiteness, power and privilege, co-designed and co-facilitated with TL, Executive Producer who is Black. Part of XX Theatre Staff Development programme, with 12 staff of whom 8 Black and global majority; Chief Executive and other senior positions are occupied by 3 'white' people and TL. Workshop commissioned by TL. 1 August 2018.

This was a collaboration between a Black and 'white' facilitator, initiated by the Black producer in a theatre well-known for its groundbreaking diverse programming and with diverse staff, but only one (TL) in senior management positions. Our intent was to model and share ways in which conversations about and across 'race' and on whiteness can be held. My contribution was to be a one-off, whereas TL would hold and make space for repercussions.

Immediately after the session, TL felt it had gone better than she had hoped, a solid if intense experience.

Commentary

For this thesis, I want to focus on what happened *as a result* of the workshop.

Some months later, TL and I met to reflect. TL shared that while their staff development programme continued "Things weren't the same afterwards. The men closed ranks, including men of colour - it's patriarchy at work. Many people remembered the portrait [of Henrietta with my face]. A lot of people of colour are moving on... " TL said: "It was a failure in that the 'white' people shut themselves down. But it was a gamechanger for Black people." TL fed back that 'white' colleagues' "didn't like being seen as 'white'. They rejected the idea they had that in common, that there was some kind of community around that." The session had visibilised something unmentionable and unlivable with, and revealed how under certain conditions, patriarchy can win out over racism. We talked about the usefulness, another time, of having more sessions with the 'white' facilitator, or offers of one-to-one debriefs. The one-off (for me) meant that the 'white' colleagues who 'shut themselves down' would have to be addressed by TL, which could be exhausting and inappropriate for TL.

However, in 2019 the 'white' CEO who had been in role for twenty years stepped down, and by 2024, all bar one senior management and artistic director position is held by Black or global majority staff.

Coloniality at work: Who's 'including' whom in the name of liberation?

For iJADE Conference: Creating Spaces. Inclusivity, ethics and participation in art and design education, held at Goldsmiths, London, in partnership with Glasgow School of Art, 22 February 2019. (iJADE – International Journal of Art and Design Education.)

Abstract:

The conference asks art educators to question our actions in the context of 'reactionary and authoritarian trends', and to consider our work as 'sites of resistance'. Yet who are the 'we' who are addressed by this? How do 'we' embody the changes we say we demand? In a sector dominated by white middle-class women, this paper proposes that we cannot claim art education as an emancipatory practice without examining structural power relations embodied in the educator, in their epistemologies and in their methods, which may be perpetuating oppression.

Commentary

The annual conference of *International Journal of Art and Design Education* is organised by the *NSEAD*, a UK-wide membership organisation and resource to support art educators, with an emphasis on schooling. It is the 'trade' conference for researchers in art and design education in the UK, and the journal has international reach. I saw the call for papers and submitted the above abstract. In our session of three scholars (all 'white') I read from a written paper accompanied by a slideshow which was another iteration of 'Henrietta...' above. There were maybe twenty-five people in the session, gender-wise mostly cis-female, with two or three people visibly of the global majority. There was a paper on class given by a scholar from University of Haifa, Israel, and another about marketisation by a scholar from University of Warwick. In the questions, there was fascination with the international scholar's work. After the session both the Warwick scholar and I intuited a fatigue in the room about UK issues, but still I was struck by the absence of questions to us. Later, I was in another session *Decolonising the Arts Curriculum: Perspectives on Higher Education* presented by Rahul Patel & Lucy Panesar, both scholars of the global majority from University of the Arts London (UAL). Here there was a fractious exchange between an older 'white' female lecturer at UAL who accused the speakers of not seeing the progress made, and irate that they seemed to be

insisting that 'white' lecturers should abandon their subject knowledge, or even resign? I offered some thoughts on whiteness, the question of 'white' allyship, and who gets to call something 'progress' which was received with a snort. I tried to find the lecturer after the session to no avail. I remembered U and her 'white' colleagues (who probably think of themselves as anti-racist), scuttling out of the door at her approach.

Still Live: The Free University of Liverpool, 2010 – 2013

Chapter for **Agency, A Partial History of Live Art**, by Theron Schmidt (ed), Live Art Development Agency and Intellect Books, 2019.

In 2018, I was invited to write about the Free University of Liverpool (FUL). FUL was a protest against the Westminster government's education cuts of 2010. It took the form of a radical horizontal creative 'university', and was initiated by artists in live art and performance based in Liverpool. The group that gathered to make FUL was nearly all Liverpool-based and nearly all 'white', although of mixed class affiliations. I had been an inspired yet occasional 'remote' participant, aware of the many internal and ideological tensions over the three years of its operation, most of which were around class.

Commentary

I include it in this thesis because the piece I produced presages an aspect of the un-suturing of the task of analysing the 'fieldwork' with peers of the global majority. It also presaged questions of a non-colonising textual form to express the research.

As a participant in FUL, I emailed other participants and invited them to share reflections through semi-structured prompts on what was most uplifting or challenging in their experience of FUL five years after we closed it down. How had it affected their politics and practice? I wrote my own reflection. Eight out of twenty (all 'white') participants who had been involved from the start to finish sent me thoughts. Receiving these riches, I wrestled with how best to serve the testimony, some of which was very raw. And how to do this in a FUL way?

A few of us had been part of the FUL Reading Group on Jacques Rancière's *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* (sic). We were jolted by Rancière's provocation for educators around 'explication' - that most formal education is based on the knowing educator placing themselves as translator (explicator) between the raw material of the thing to be known (knowledge) and the learner who is assumed to be unknowing and not capable of knowing without the educator (Rancière, 1991, p.4). And how this 'stultifies' and depresses the learner who spends time trying to satisfy the educator who intercedes between them and the knowledge, rather than approach the knowledge for themselves (1991, p.7).

I decided I would not 'explicate' the FUL testimony with written commentary, but attempt to share the material in what could be called a visual-textual explication. I would indeed 'explicate' in the sense that from their responses I drew out prevalent themes: Politics, Ecstasy, Ambivalence, Learning, Criticism, Impacts. However, I cut up, grouped and colour-coded quotations under these themes, making it clear that these were my framings and that quotations could be interpreted under several themes including ones I had ignored or hadn't seen. I shared the piece with the contributors. I got feedback and consent, one of them writing: "feel free to take what you need/want from [my testimony], without having to satisfy 'my truth' - which is changing anyway" (in Trowell, 2019, my italics). I persuaded the publishers to include the colour-coding in the hard copy version. The question of 'explication' came back to me when thinking about how to 'interpret' the testimony.

“What’s it got to do with me”?

Feedback from Y on ‘Closer to the Skin’, Whiteness and Coloniality in ‘white’ art educators.
Draft book chapter, September/October 2019

Summary

*The chapter under discussion was written by me for the book *Debates in Art and Design Education* (Trowell in Addison and Burgess, 2021, pp.123-140). Its roots were in *On so far failing...*, the developmental piece featured in Part 1 of this thesis.*

Y is an educationalist and a friend since 2007. They are Black and we have a history of sharing writing and ideas dating back to when Y undertook a doctorate on social justice in education in the 2010s.

Very shortly after this exchange, I copied and pasted the entire thread with Y into one document and highlighted it, remembering the experience of working with the reflections from FUL. Yellow highlight denoted Y’s passages that struck me at that time, and green denoted Y’s challenges or questions that cut much deeper. The purple draws out Y’s desire beyond this, and the frustration of yearning for that. I share an extracted version below, and will reflect at the end on my reactions then, and now, and what the implications were and are for the research.

On Sun, 29 Sep 2019 at 09:55, jane trowell <XXXXXX@gmail.com> wrote:

Hi Y,

How are you? How is everything going for you?... I have a favour to ask you. I was invited to write a chapter for a new book ‘Debates in Art and Design Education’ based on my PhD research.

It’s called ‘**Closer to the skin**’ – whiteness and coloniality in ‘white’ art educators.

And starts and ends with a photograph from my life as I am putting myself in this picture. I am working with George Yancy, Du Bois, Sara Ahmed, bell hooks and others, that 'white' people are not ever able fully to see the operation of their whiteness.

I would dearly value to have some thoughts about my effort, from colleagues and friends, especially those of colour.

The piece is 5700 words and is I guess 97% there.

I'm not asking for detailed feedback, track changes, insert comments etc. More if you would be interested in reading it and noting anything that jars or doesn't work, or that does work for you. Also, lines I should pursue, paths that are red herrings.

If you have the time and it feels right for you, I would love to have a conversation with you, or if it suits you better to do it by email, in the next two weeks by 14th October?

Thank you for considering this, Y. I deeply appreciate feeling able to write to you with this request.

very warmly as ever,

Jane

On 30 Sep 2019, at 13:18, Y <YYYYYY@gmail.com> wrote:

Hi Jane,

I'm totally cool to help out with this in whatever ways would be most helpful to you, no problem at all...

Speak soon

Y

On Tue, 1 Oct 2019 at 09:45, jane trowell <XXXXXX@gmail.com> wrote:

hi Y,

Thank you very much for this. I attach the piece. Depending on what you feel works for you in terms of your reflections, we could meet or Skype, or email...

very warmly,

Jane

On Mon, 7 Oct 2019 at 15:43, Y <YYYYYY@gmail.com> wrote:

Hi Jane,

Just finished reading your piece...

What to say, hmmm. This might be easier in a direct conversation. Having said that, I'm going to just 'pour out' my reaction. The piece if I understood it correctly comes down to **you dissecting your race privilege specifically within the field of art education in relation to social justice,** and trying to figure out **how you can best contribute to addressing the racial inequalities that exist within the field...** Your writing is accessible, your ideas clear, and your predicament highlighted. There's part of me trying to work out **what this has to do with me.**

I don't mean that in a dismissive manner; it's more, **what does your discomfort have to do with me.** You feel **uncomfortable about the privilege afforded you by your 'whiteness',** I and people of colour on the other hand, we live with and are impacted directly by the privilege that is **just something you are discussing.** **On some level, this is an academic exercise for you,** and it's **great that you are choosing to examine your position** and how you can best engage other 'white' people in recognising their privilege and how things are set up to suit them often without them realising it. So again, **I say, good on you for what you are doing,** **but what's it got to do with me?** Other than knowing that there are 'white' people engaging with this issue, and advocating for other 'white' people to do so, which is good in the grand scheme of things, **how**

does that affect me **in the here and now?** I still have to get up and navigate the world where overwhelmingly as a person of colour I am disadvantaged on a racial level. I have my own privileges - education, gender, class, etc - but when I walk into a room, my race trumps that.

I guess you're sharing your experiences in a public forum, and that may cause other 'white' people to reflect on their position as well as showing to people of colour that 'white' people are actively acknowledging and addressing the status quo. I guess I felt like... you know, I'm in a bit of a 'strange' place at the moment, have been for a while. One in which I'm trying to figure out what to do with what I know, especially in the face of many people not agreeing, knowing or prioritising this type of information that relates to politics, society and social justice. How to reach beyond the converted or already concerned, that's what I'm thinking about. I guess for your piece, I'm left wondering how you're going to 'reach' other ('white') people who aren't already sympathetic to what you're saying. How do you move beyond a gut spilling 'exercise to change?' That's probably unfair for your piece as no piece can represent all situations and do everything. I guess recently, I feel like in many aspects of things, people are stating stuff I already know or suspect, and I want to get beyond that to inhabit spaces where my mind is being blown by revelations or ways of looking at things. That's me, and for many people, what you're saying will have that effect, so it's probably more that I'm not the target audience for your piece? I'm not going to reread what I have written here as there's a good chance that I'll end up editing this or maybe not even sending it and I want to be open with you, which means sharing my half-thought out ideas, and not thinking too much about how I'm coming across. I want you to have my unvarnished, unpolished reaction, whilst accepting that where I'm coming from is also informed by where my head was at before I even sat down to read your piece.

Speaking to you directly might be more useful to you as that way you can ask questions about specific aspects of your piece, and I can focus on what might be most useful to you rather than going off on tangents. Let me know when suits you best and we'll fix something up.

Sorry for being, I'm not entirely sure I know what I'm being right now... I'll have another look at your piece and this email again later on. I do think what you're doing is valuable, and I hope

you know I think highly of you Jane and what you do, and I've got nothing but great affection and respect for you.

Speak soon

On 7 Oct 2019, at 18:53, Y <YYYYYY@gmail.com> wrote:

Okay, returning to my reaction and your piece...

On my initial reaction, I guess that's me coming to it as a reader of colour without taking into consideration what your piece represents for you. In this email, this is me approaching your piece as your friend and as a critical friend to you from an academic and writer's perspective, not about what it means for me as an individual. I hope I wasn't being mean, and I genuinely apologise if I came across that way.

I guess this sentence is key - [How are people like me reproducing our privilege, behind the mask?]. The truth is, we try our best not to be guilty of 'reproducing our privilege', knowing that we'll have some successes and failures, however the key thing is to keep trying and striving to be worthy of the values we hold dear. As Oprah says, in relation to our past mistakes, 'know better, do better'. In interrogating your whiteness, how do you want that process to contribute towards addressing the situation you have identified?

In relation to this [So why do 'white' anti-racist scholars writing or 'white' educators teaching so often invisibilise their own body's visceral experience, reluctant to 'enflesh'] I suspect that on some level, discounting for ignorance, the unpleasantness of the experience may unconsciously inhibit people's willingness to tackle their privilege. Also, always being present to one's 'collusion in oppression' can be paralysing, preventing us from taking any action, so sometimes in the interests of survival, we push to the back of our minds awareness of certain situations.

So, this is what you're doing in your piece [Accepting these complexities, I attempt to put the 'white' body in plain view in this chapter.]. And then later on you clarify this by asking [In a time of resurgent white supremacy, I am questioning more than ever before my use of time,

the use of my 'white' body. When do I hide, when do I unshield; when do I credit, when do I appropriate?]. It's important to remember that no system is, or can be, perfect, much as we want that to be the case.

I guess my question to you is, what do you want this piece to achieve? For you? In the wider world?

Recently I had a conversation with a 'white' English woman who works in prisons on art projects, and saying that even though I am black, through her expertise she has far more right to be in prisons running projects with men of colour than I do. I explained to her that I struggle with people thinking that just because I'm black, I have an automatic understanding of the experiences of colour. My socio-economic class and the circles I move in, both socially and professionally, mean that I'm often the only person of colour in a space. How does that distance me from the experiences of black people from poorer socio-economic groups? Sure, walking down the street, I'm just another black person, but due to my education, confidence and understanding of structural inequality, when I'm directly (or indirectly) confronted with discrimination, my reaction is informed by everything that I am. I am not a million miles away from you, professionally/ academically, and I have no way of knowing how much my race has impacted my progression. Would I be further along my career if I was 'white'? Would I see the world that differently from you if I was 'white'? I don't know. My point is that, yes we should acknowledge and highlight discrimination, but we should also recognise that other forms of privilege also modify how we perceive and whether we experience/feel 'oppression'.

When you talk about the curriculum [Indeed in the UK there are strident demands for decolonisation and challenging white supremacy in education in general], I find myself wondering about your decision to pull back from Voices that Shake!. Are 'white' educators performing a similar role in the campaigns you highlighted in relation to the curriculum? Do they know how to comment in a way that doesn't get them into Jordan Peterson territory even when they have the best intentions at heart? How much does modern society allow space for people not impacted by an oppression to engage in the discussion? How often do we shut down voices of outsiders? There are times when outsiders make valuable contributions and

ask significant questions, and it's important to find a way to include those perspectives in way that doesn't take away from the experiences of the 'oppressed' (an admittedly tricky balance to strike).

[Power is enacted by the bodies of those over-represented majorities who are maintaining the status quo, however committed to defending the subject 'art' and 'art and design' they might feel on a day-to-day basis.] - an undeniable truth. In this situation as in many other comparable ones, it's easy for people to 'treat' the symptoms as opposed to the causes, in part because the latter can be harder to identify, can out our collusion, and is more complicated to address. [What are the systemic reasons that not one of 18 have a portfolio or a degree of a quality that was acceptable to a PGCE interviewing tutor?] is a point in case. I would be interested in finding out about the socio-economic backgrounds of the applicants of colour as well, and if any of them were private school educated. It's alarming that none of them made it onto PGCE art courses, and your analysis is striking. I think your case would be strengthened if there was a way to dig deeper into the differences that might exist between them and their 'white' counterparts. I did my PGCE at Cambridge University, and was the only black person on my course and the fact that I had an engineering degree from a 'prestigious' university like Edinburgh as well as the fact that I had spent one afternoon a week during my sixth form volunteering as a TA [teaching assistant] at a local primary school probably strengthened my application. My socio-economic background enabled me to have these opportunities and have the 'freedom' to indulge them. Exceptions like me, do not change your analysis, but unpicking what makes us the exceptions might shed further light on how the art education system operates; I know you making a passing mention to middleclassness as intrinsic to the field. The data and research on the lack of professional progress of black academics might be worth touching on in your piece when you talk about black staff on PGCE art courses.

[Finally, as I review [The Body Politic course] nearly ten years later, mask down, I also see that only once in six cycles of this average 12-session course did I/we programme the largest organ of our bodies: Skin] - I have to say that for me personally, at the time the references to the body didn't make of an impression to me, I tended to see it as more of a framing device

than anything else. I would have to dig out my notebook from back then but I recall references to race and it as a dimension featuring during the Body Politic.

In your final section you raise a number of questions [What is the task for 'white' art educators who claim commitment to social justice? What is the ongoing work of becoming 'real, honest colleagues' in an art education field that dominant culture and capital would keep structurally racist, classist, sexist, able-ist, neurotypical, gender-binary, heteronormative?] and I think you could do more to address this. I know you do so in the subsequent paragraphs, however having spent the preceding pages analysing your position, and that of 'white' people in general, to a significant degree, the ending feels a bit short? I guess, how does one create a space for what you propose to happen [I suggest that our bodies end and begin in the repeated effort of real, honest conversation, Dillard's (2000) conversation that will breathe life – breathe action - into the academy.]? What might the barriers and challenges be? What might the academy struggle to hear? How might people of colour be involved in this process, or should they even be part of it? Is this just about the 'white' community of educators speaking to the academy? I'm reminded of the Extinction Rebellion criticism I shared before.⁵⁴ [If I can remain un-sutured to how it is constructed in me, and above all help foster this enquiry in others, it could assist in a greater undoing, the continual unmasking of white supremacy and coloniality in art education that is required.] - all good and well in theory, I am curious about how you can do this on a practical level and how healthy it is to be attempting to do this all the time.

I really enjoyed reading your piece, I did, I thought you came across well. See what you make of the points I raised above, and please feel free to ignore anything you think is unhelpful. Hopefully there's some stuff in what I said that is helpful to you in some way, happy to chat more on the phone and in person.

sending you much love

x

⁵⁴ See Wretched of the Earth (2019).

On Mon, 7 Oct 2019 at 21:20, jane trowell <XXXXXX@gmail.com> wrote:

hi Y,

I just texted you saying thank you so much in advance.

I have read your emails and I have much, much to think about - you have been so full in your response - more than anything I expected - and this will take a lot of digesting.

Very briefly, I'm so relieved you decided not to edit the first arresting email and trusted me with that response although none of this research is comfortable nor should it be - 'What's it got to do with me?' Yep. who am I writing for and what is the change, what difference will it make on the ground, to which lives? I feel you are more than generous to write the second.

Y, I can't do more now til later in the week. I feel that meeting would be useful, but also let me know if that now feels too much of your time on my research etc etc. Although I would love to catch up with you anyway.

with great respect, Y,

Jane

On 7 Oct 2019, at 23:29, Y <YYYYYY@gmail.com> wrote:

Hi Jane,

Totally cool to chat in person about your research/ chapter when you have time. My schedule is fairly flexible these days so probably easier to work around yours.

I think I have shared this with you before [about Kathryn Bigelow, 'white' director of the film 'Detroit']... there's a section from it that is worth repeating:

“This is a 'white' woman telling the truth as much as she can on film about racial injustice in America (...) That will resonate very powerfully with 'white' folks. What better way to use your 'white' privilege than to undermine it, raise questions about it, leverage it on behalf of black and brown people who usually don't have a voice in the matter at all.”⁵⁵

catch you later

Commentary: October 2024

Before I reflect on the impact of Y's major contribution, in this period, I also received briefer responses from other peers who were interested. A 'white' reader of the chapter is a lecturer in fine art. They felt that "every 'white' colleague in their department should read it". Its approach would sober them, halt them in their certainty, make a space for a profound rethinking, "put the work back on them" (from my verbatim notes, 2019).

Another reader was a friend who is a lecturer of the global majority in a London art school. At the time I approached them to read, they were undertaking a PhD into racism and education in their discipline and we were close PhD buddies. They fed back to me that they found it useful and interesting. They made the remark I cited earlier: "Unless white art educators recognise the need to remain un-sutured, nothing will change." However they were not satisfied by the ending. They wanted momentum: recommendations and practical steps for 'white' colleagues to take. While I took this feedback in, it felt in tension with I was attempting which was to explore Yancy and Ahmed's priorities of dwelling and not seeking fixes. George Yancy cites an exchange with a 'white' questioner during an event:

"You leave us with *no* hope."...

⁵⁵ <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/02/movies/kathryn-bigelow-mark-boal-detroit-police-brutality.html> [Accessed 7.10.19]

I responded, "Why do you want hope? My objective here is not to bring white people hope, to make them walk away feeling good about themselves." (Yancy, 2012, p154, his emphasis)

And later Yancy cites Sarah Ahmed:

I firmly believe that whites ought to possess hope, "for without hope, the future would be decided and there would be nothing left to do." But I am critical of forms of hope that "rush to 'inhabit' a 'beyond' to the work of exposing racism, as that which structures the present." (both Ahmed, 2004) (in Yancy, 2012, p157)

How could I square the circle between arresting whiteness, instilling a will towards an ongoing practice, not offering 'white' people superficial hope while also necessitating their anti-racist action. This comes into sharp focus with Y's response.

Audio note to myself, on reactions to Y's emails

*The complexity...wondering whether I'm actually harming people of colour. ...you know,... hearing Y's [...pause] **anger** really, with me about the Debates chapter.*

*I found that difficult, [...pause] that a friend, a thoughtful peer **who knows my work**, of African descent, could [...pause] feel a **lack of emotion** in me in that chapter. "This is an academic exercise for you". [Pause] Also that it was nothing to do with him, or at least he asked the question, "What's this got to do with me"... **three times**. "Gut-spilling..." So shocked by that. It shows I have not persuaded him of why deep introspection into familial roots of racism is key to change.*

Shocking [...pause] and very useful... because Y's response made me think about readership, and I must put readership - who I'm addressing - It must be placed in this piece, much more centrally...

But...there is no way that my writing won't be provocative or difficult for another reader, be they 'white' or brown or black or whoever, so there is no way to do this, Jane.

Wake up.

There is no way to do this isn't painful and difficult for someone. There is no painfree path to be found, but there are alerts and warnings to the readers that I can make much more visible up front. There will always be... pitfalls, subconscious linguistic tropes that betray and ambush myself. And, and that's part of the work. So wake up Jane.

This is just how it is.

(Extract from transcription by Otter software, September 2020, my bold)

From this vantage point I re-read Y's two emails and recall the learning from the other readers to reflect on their impact on my approach to analysing the 'fieldwork' with Black and global majority peers.

It is to be expected that in doing 'fieldwork' with any peers, because of the existing relationship and prior assumptions/hopes/fears about the friendship/allyship, critique and emotion around the research can cut deep for each party in unexpected ways.

However, when a 'white' anti-racist researcher provokes, lets down, angers or exhausts a Black or global majority colleague or friend, it places extra burden on and depletes energy for that colleague/friend in the same old racialised, colonial, extractive way. Consider Y's intentionally "unvarnished, unpolished" language in the first email when he describes himself speaking as "a person of colour": "it's just something you are doing", "what's your discomfort got to do with me", "move beyond a gut-spilling 'exercise' to change?"

Stunned, I bite my lip and mutter, "but he knows me well!"

Precisely. I am reminded of Du Bois' clairvoyance: "they go twisting, flying by my tired eyes and I see them ever stripped—ugly, human" (Du Bois, 2004, my italics).

In my chapter I poorly communicated who my intended readers are - this is white-on-white work - and why the approach I take is necessary. I worried about Y being debilitated and disgusted: "My. 'White'. Friend. Is. Never. Not. A. 'White'. Problem."

I also know that in this situation, because we have trust between us, I can act as a conduit for many pent-up frustrations with whiteness building up far beyond the frustrations with my chapter. I am tasked with holding it and sitting with it. By 'it', I mean the transgenerational trauma of racism which still leaks from me, which benefits me at terrible cost to others, including Y, in which Y and I attempt to exist and thrive.

When Y gifted me a second email in self-declared role of 'critical friend', I agree with their point that social class needs more articulation in the analysis. I am challenged again when they ask what change I want this research to make in the world and who's doing the work: Y asked: "How might people of colour be involved in this process, or should they even be part of it?" Again this question of how to collaborate, or under what conditions. I also sense suspicion of power-hoarding in Y's sentence "Is this just about the 'white' community of educators speaking to the academy?"

I say to myself that I don't know how to collaborate yet, that the work is to disrupt a 'white' antiracism that seeks quick solutions, "to recognize the complexity and weight of the current existence of white racism, to attempt to understand the ways in which they perpetuate racism, and to begin to think about the incredible difficulty involved in undoing it" (Yancy 2012, p.158).

My final reflection is what exactly are we rehearsing in such conversations? In a situation where the 'white' anti-racist racist researcher is interviewing the racialised other on their experience of racism, both are in rehearsal of the practice of talking about racism and anti-racism together. Both are learning in the knowledge of the considerable risk of racism surfacing from the 'white' to the 'other', and the dire unequal toll that could take. In light of this un-suturing exchange with Y, I became very concerned about the 'fieldwork' exactly as I was beginning to undertake it intensively in this period. It would feel wrong to extract from Y's emails, to delete my responses, to explicate meaning from the spontaneous train of thought and emotion, or from the considered critique. The train of thought and emotive language in testimonies - the pauses, stutters, re-phrasings, the moments of frailty, humour, nervousness and confidence - are the humanity of the interlocutors. How could I respect and hold the testimony offered through the 'fieldwork' in a non-extractive, non-explicatory way? Is that ever

possible when the whiteness starts with the privilege of being in a position to issue invitations in the first place.

On completing the 'fieldwork'

By July 2020, influenced by and cautious from my experience with Y, I'd undertaken fifteen conversations. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, many took place online. This resulted in 230,000 words of transcription. In my transcribing of the audio, I also took care to note the emotions in participants' and my modes of utterance and silence: the pauses, sighs or intakes of breath; chuckles and guffaws; interruptions; nervousness; moments of rushed speech; moments of anger or emotion in the voice; iterations and repetitions. I brimmed with their insights, and what I'd learnt about myself as 'white' interlocutor.

I sent the audio file and transcription to each peer for their comment and comeback if desired, and for their records. In advance of the process I had not formally integrated asking for their reflections on the *experience of the conversation, of whiteness in the conversation*, which I had done with U. I had been concerned that this would lead the research down the road of re-centring me as 'white' researcher. I also decided that this meta-level of consciousness of our relationship in that space would require additional emotional labour for contributors in choosing what to say to me and how to say it. I made the feedback voluntary but later I regretted not finding a formal way to do this. I now suspect cowardice on my part. There were five instances where such a follow-up / checking-in took place for re-telling, for clarifying or to share an uneasiness. Three of these were checking-in initiated by me; another through a Black participant wanting to explain more about a particularly painful racist moment in their education, and another where the Black participant wrote to me to add some nuances to what they had said about their Englishness.

Across the summer, autumn and winter of 2020 I started analysing the conversations using codes and themes. It was potent and humbling work, often evoking awe in me at the participants' sheer grit and skill to survive in a system of whiteness structured to insult, alienate, thwart and exclude; often evoking disgust or rage in me at re-hearing experiences of

the humiliations of racism, the mental health toll, the moments of absolute despair and giving up, leading to flashbacks of when I myself had been that 'white' humiliating educator.

Because I asked questions about thriving, there were also moments of joy: the sheer love of making art, of the role of family and friends in boosting belief and confidence; the ecstatic moments of meeting new artistic, politicised kin, self-organising and rising, making new futures together. Several participants shared stories of 'white' female and some male art educators/curators whom they felt they had been deeply 'seen' by. These 'white' educators had absolutely opened doors, and enabled them to access intellectual and artistic resources and practical opportunities, to embark on whole new artistic journeys, although not without complications of whiteness and class, or on occasions suspicions of credentialising in other aspects of that person's behaviour.

I compiled, analysed, reflected, digesting. I knew that I, the 'white' researcher, had been entrusted with these insights and the emotions behind them. The contributors had signed consent forms and knew it was my role to make sense of, to offer an understanding of their experience, through my whiteness.

At the same time I knew very well that, outrageously, none of the testimony about racism in their art education was 'news'. Volumes of such testimony could be found in #UALSoWhite, *Peekaboo we see you: Whiteness* and any number of books, magazines, exhibitions, and countless reports going back sixty years.

It became clear that for some, including me, that the most painful part of the interview was towards the end when I read out to them the damning qualitative data on black and global majority recruitment onto Initial Teacher Training (ITT) in relation to whiteness in the art teacher workforce (see end of Script for conversation, Appendix C). I asked about their strategies to disrupt this. As one participant said very quietly and tiredly: "*It's just the fact that I'm a non-white female, I disrupt the space already.*"

What was the contribution that that my 'analysis' of this 'fieldwork' could make? It seemed to me an extremely murky task, potholed with ambushes of 'white' extractivism. One path appeared to lie in working with the testimony to reveal the thing which had been confirmed through the events where I had presented my work, *the thing no-one wants to talk about*: that 'white' middle-class cis female anti-racist art educators and curators including me are transgenerationally inhabited by 'whiteness', dominate the job market, occasionally and only with ongoing commitment are able to operate as 'real, honest' anti-racist racist art educators (Dillard, 2000). But a whole doctorate on 'white' women as a problem in art education? Was that an effective or ethical use of the hours of invaluable testimony about Black and global majority experience, gifted to me in trust? Isn't that focus drenched with the risks of re-inscribing 'white' women's power and narcissism inside the academy? Isn't that better done through my activism outside the academy?

Reflections: on not wanting to explicate

In Part 2 I have shared the methods I used in the attempt to 'see' whiteness in art education through the eyes of those affected, those abused by it, surviving and thriving despite it or because of side-stepping it. I have shown how my efforts to go public with the research through workshops and presentations revealed how much 'white' silence, denial and offended rebuttal surrounds the question of whiteness in general, and whiteness in (art) education. I have explored how the pivotal experience of my shock at Y's responses to the book chapter stirred up doubts on the validity of the task of my 'white' self presenting an 'analysis' of contributors' testimony. I learnt from researching and writing the *Free University of Liverpool* piece that I have also become resistant to being the 'explicator' of 'white' people's testimony, with the halfway house of thematic bricolage of their testimony rather than a sequential argued textual analysis (Rancière, 1991).

It feels useful here to relate an uncanny encounter that took place in this period which further destabilised my suturing as researcher in relation to analysing 'fieldwork', not only but particularly in relation to Black and global majority peers. In January 2019, I was fully ambushed by a namesake, another 'white' female art teacher, but operating in a colonially

governed context. While burying myself in the newly published and compendious *Palgrave Handbook of Race and the Arts in Education*, I came across a chapter titled *Margaret Trowell's School of Art or How to Keep the Children's Work Really African*, written by British-Ugandan artist and researcher Emma Wolukau-Wanambwa (in Kraehe, Gaztambide-Fernández, Carpenter, 2018, pp. 85-101).

Open-mouthed, I learnt about the school that my namesake, a 'white' English art teacher, had founded in Makerere, Uganda in 1937. Today it is called the *Margaret Trowell School of Industrial and Fine Arts*, and the website proudly hails it as 'the oldest and most celebrated Art School in East Africa'. Margaret studied Fine Art at *The Slade School of Art* in London, and in 1926-7 undertook teacher training in art at the *Institute of Education (IoE), University of London*. After moving to Uganda with her medic husband, Margaret took an interest in the artists around her, started to teach art, which led to her fundraising to found the art school. She went on to publish many articles, several books, and hold many exhibitions 'championing' African arts and crafts, particularly East African, and 'how' best to 'teach' them to Africans, and preserve them from 'foreign influence'. Some fifty-four years later I had done my own PGCE in Art and Design at the IoE, and gone on to teach art in extremely diverse Hackney, miles away from the 'white' middle-class suburbs of my upbringing. While we are not blood-related, the reverberations beyond a shared surname are instructive.⁵⁶

I located Emma Wolukau-Wanambwa's PhD thesis: *Margaret Trowell's School of Art – a case study in colonial subject formation* (Wolukau-Wanambwa, 2014) and realised that Margaret could well have been a case study in Vron Ware's *Beyond the Pale – White Women, Racism and History* (Ware, 1992). Emma proposed that

...despite [Trowell's] extensive and sophisticated knowledge of the material cultures of East Africa, and *despite her emancipatory intentions*, the vision that underpinned her approach to art education was one aiming at the extension of colonial governmentality into the aesthetic realm. (Wolukau-Wanambwa, 2014, my italics)

⁵⁶ Margaret Sifton married Dr Hugh Trowell. I've looked into whether my dad's side of the family had a relative of that name, born Bexley, Kent in 1904. We do have relatives in Kent, but I can't find Hugh.

For the PhD, I had read around 'white' missionary and formal education in British colonies and their legacies (Chalmers, 1999; Dash, 2002; Achebe, 2009; Hall, 2018; Burshtein, 2021). Yet in Margaret Trowell, fate seemed to be offering me a timely doppelganger. The incident further convinced me of the value of my investigation into transgenerational behavioural and attitudinal legacies that I was exploring with Henrietta, Britannia and Victoria. Surely Britannia's legacy, as depicted by Spiridione Roma and interpreted by me as self-delusion, was coursing through Margaret: a 'good' woman; 'naturally' superior in her dazzling whiteness and position; encouraging, appreciating and receiving marvellous artworks from artists, and charitably boosting them, gently 'improving' them, while receiving plaudits for her innovation. If I had I been born in 1904, one of a minority of 'white' female art students at The Slade, who had trained as a passionate and ambitious art teacher, who had met and married a man who was destined for colonial service as so many were, how would I have deployed my skills once stationed 'abroad'? What was Hackney to me if not 'abroad'? Margaret Trowell considered herself a zealous supporter of Africa and authentic 'African' creativity. Yet George Yancy would prefer that as 'white' people, we would think of ourselves as intrinsically racist, or 'antiracist racists' (2012, p.175).

Wolukau-Wanambwa's research speaks back to all Margaret Trowell's pedagogical descendants who overly gush or conversely cast doubt on the cultural 'authenticity' of a racialised student's work, or who suggest to a brown-skinned young artist in a hoodie that they could make work about gangs. Her research acts like an inquest, strengthening the understanding of the systemic depth and scale of work that needs to be done to undo centuries of injustice both in the UK today and in European-influenced systems globally, in this case surfacing through art education.

So while I entered into summer 2020 utterly inspired and motivated by the interviews, my uneasiness at undertaking analysis had been further deepened by encountering my namesake. Becoming the 'white' one who stands between the testimony and the reader - who explicates - was feeling increasingly illegitimate.

PART 3 – In which expressing the research through imagery is sutured... and un-sutured

Overview

Part 3 covers the period January 2020 to September 2022, a period which, for reasons I explain, overlaps with Part 2's chronology. As just described, by end of July 2020 I'd finished the interviews with contributors. I'd transcribed and immersed myself in their testimony. Over that summer, in reaction to this immersion, to the undercurrents of unease at 'analysing' or writing up 'findings' from the testimony, and to the wider dramatic social and political context, my unplanned visual work emerged as a vehicle to contain my reactions to the testimony.

It is significant that this happened in 2020. This was a year of unprecedented national and global tension through events pertinent to this thesis: the UK finally left the European Union; the COVID-19 Pandemic; and massive international anti-racist uprisings took place aligned with Black Lives Matter in response to another 'white' police murder of an African-American man: George Floyd. As I will discuss, these events and the right-wing rhetoric and government policy pushing back against protest heavily influenced a deep turn to the visual in my research. I present this turn through images and journal notes unfolding over three summers 2020, 2021 and 2022, towards a final artwork that I called *Sail*. I invite you to immerse yourself in these images and verbatim developmental notes, as if in an exhibition.

Over 2021 and 2022, political events in the UK became even more extreme. In 2020, Black Lives Matter had brought a rise of public visibility of white privilege, white supremacy and even critical race theory, which the Conservative government, right-wing media and scholars organised to discredit (Badenoch, 2020; Sewell, 2021). The government also announced horrific measures to deter immigration such as the Rwanda deportation plan of 2021.

The major theoretical document that I offer in Part 3 was written in the turbulent context of 2020. That autumn I wrote *The 'Opened Wound' and the Wounded Researcher* which I shared with supervisors. It deepens into the methodology of visually-driven writing while also

advancing a method in developing stamina in anti-racism: I explore my childhood inculcation into racism, yet also anti-racism, through an incisive, disturbing experience in my own young life. I propose that through such an exploration a person can come to understand the structural whiteness that created their racism, and through that understanding, work more sustainedly against their own, others' and societal racism. The writing of this piece was only made possible by a flow between three things: the unique conditions and urgency of 2020; working deeply with imagery of racist 'white' women; a timely encounter with theory by Robert Romanyshyn on the value of 'the wounded researcher' to social research (2013).

In terms of PhD-related events, I reflect on painful learning from an online presentation and workshop on whiteness and art that I gave in summer 2021, where, during the event, one participant of the global majority was publicly vociferous in calling out racism and harm.

I share how my paid work supporting the production of a Trilogy of *Shake! The System* publications for the youth programme *Voices that Shake!* impacted belief in the PhD thesis.

After the exchange with Y about the chapter discussed in Part 2, I accept an invitation from Y to work together at the University where he works to develop a programme on whiteness in staff.

At the end of Part 3, I critically reflect on the making of the artwork *Sail* as part of this thesis, what it offered, and what is problematic, also reflecting on feedback on it from Black and global majority colleagues W and U.

UK exits the European Union after 43 years. 31 January 2020

After forty-three years in the EU and four years of chaotic negotiations, Brexit took place, the triumph of the bitter and xenophobia-fuelled Brexit Referendum of 2016 which itself harnessed decades of seething 'white' nationalism disguising unprocessed mourning for lost empire, and lost white supremacy (Gilroy, 2004; Gunaratnam, 2022).

COVID-19 Pandemic and first lockdown hits UK, March 2020

The virus has “disproportionate impacts on Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities in the UK...Racism and discrimination suffered by [these] communities has been noted as a key factor behind the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 in the UK, although this has been downplayed.” (BMJ, 2020) ⁵⁷

The murder of George Floyd by police, USA, 25 May 2020

On 25th May 2020, the world witnessed on screen the horrific murder of an African-American man, George Floyd, by a 'white' policeman Derek Chauvin. Floyd had been apprehended by police in Minneapolis, and pinned to the ground with Chauvin's knee pressed to his neck for over eight minutes while other policemen watched.

In this agony, George Floyd protested twenty-seven times that he couldn't breathe.

His murder was captured on camera by Darnella Frazier, a young African-American woman, who shared it on social media. The footage went viral and later helped convict Chauvin. In an ongoing violent racist history,⁵⁸ Floyd's death by the police ignited a renewed surge of Black Lives Matter protests. This protest went truly global, mobilising millions of peoples everywhere against state violence towards those of African descent, including in Britain. ⁵⁹ 2020's outrages and the global resistance also brought the term 'anti-Blackness' into everyday lexicon.

Statue of Edward Colston is toppled In Black Lives Matter protest, UK

In solidarity with George Floyd, and echoing *Rhodes Must Fall*, this statue of a Bristol trader in enslaved Africans, whose philanthropy had benefitted the City of Bristol, was hauled over and toppled by a crowd into Bristol's Floating Harbour. 7 June 2020.

⁵⁷ COVID-19 Disclosure: during lockdown, my paid work was the kind that could move online. I was privileged in working from a home that was resourced, with access to natural environment, and where I had emotional support.

⁵⁸ By August 2020 alone, 164 Black men and women had been killed by police in the USA (Cohen, 2020).

⁵⁹ Black Lives Matter was initiated in 2013 by Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometi in direct response to the acquittal of 'white' George Zimmerman, who had shot and killed 17-year old African-American Trayvon Martin while walking along a street in Florida.

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Bristol George Floyd protest: Colston statue toppled

By Jack Grey
BBC News

7 June

George Floyd death



Protesters in Bristol pull down a statue of slave trader Edward Colston

The name Edward Colston looms large over Bristol, with streets and buildings named after the 17th Century merchant and slave trader.

On Sunday, protesters at an anti-racism demonstration in the city toppled a statue of Colston and dumped it in Bristol Harbour. The BBC's Jack Grey witnessed the statue's fall.

Thousands of people attended the demonstration in Bristol, one of many in the UK sparked by the death of George Floyd while he was under arrest in Minneapolis in the United States last month.

Fig 22. Author's screenshot, *Bristol George Floyd protest: Colston statue toppled*, (2020, 7 June) [BBC news online].

Statue 'A Surge of Power, (Jen Reid)' is installed on Colston plinth, 15 July 2020

A few weeks after Colston's dethroning, a statue of Jen Reid, a Black Bristolian and #BLM protestor was cast by 'white' artist Marc Quinn with Reid's full collaboration, and installed as an intervention. Quinn had approached Reid from seeing a photograph of her at the protest.⁶⁰ The international art market star, who made his name in the 1990s as a controversial artist, paid for the fabrication and installation (Quinn and Reid, 2020). He was decried by many for exerting careerist white privilege.



Fig 23. Marc Quinn and Jen Reid, *A Surge of Power (Jen Reid)* (2020), with protest placard, July 2020. [Digital photograph - Getty Images]

⁶⁰ For more on Jen Reid, see *Who is Jen Reid, The Black Lives Matter activist whose statue replaced Edward Colston's in Bristol* (Dray, 2020)

Larry Achiampong, Black British artist, takes down *A Surge of Power* (Jen Reid) (2020)

His Twitter video is released the same day as Quinn's installation, 15 July 2020.

(Achiampong, 2020)



Fig 24. Author's screenshot of Larry Achiampong on Marc Quinn, (2020)

[Still from Twitter video, now X]

Transcription (by me):

Yeah, I don't really give a shit and you can disagree with me, whoever reads this, hears this, whatever. The situation with the Marc Quinn sculpture is,...is sad. It is a sad joke, one that is not funny. The point of all of this is about the redistribution of equity, of

power. So, by simply just putting up a sculpture that, yes, looks way better, is not enough. Who is being given the opportunity? Who's being given the chance? You know,...even if it's all simply from Marc Quinn's own money that still kind of doesn't matter. Why not actually support some young Black artists to make something and to put something up there, to give them time, to give them space?

So let's be honest, because I think as much as there are some white people who are doing the work and are genuinely doing the work and I see that, a whole lot of you, you're just taking this moment as a fucking festival. You're taking it as a fucking festival.

So yeah, you know, "Notting Hill Carnival ain't fucking happening. Um, so we're gonna in the kindness of our little white hearts, we're going to go and do...." Get the fuck out of here. Get the fuck out of here. Like, just stop for a second. Seriously, just stop. Sometimes the best thing that you can actually do when you're part of a problem is just stop. Stop. Take your hands away from.. like... Stop putting your hands on it. Just, like, leave it. Stop for a moment.

And maybe there's, there's some space for you to actually think about what it is that can be done, that can be *better*. (Achiampong, 2020)

The next day *A Surge of Power* was removed by Bristol City Council.

Marvin Rees, Bristol's Black Mayor, stated that the statue was 'the work and decision of a London-based artist. It was not requested and permission was not given for it to be installed' (Greenberger, 2020).

2020 and beyond: Imagery in the context of Brexit, COVID-19, Black Lives Matter.

In the tumultuous period described above, many millions of people died from the virus, many were terribly ill, many bereaved. Many were unable to isolate due to financial need; or forced to isolate at home. Many were suffering from loneliness or enforced proximity, with frustrated children, anxiety about loved ones, misinformation and deep fear/anger. Lockdown restrictions and not being able to 'see for yourself' or chat in person, led to a situation where online imagery was more influential than ever.

People were glued to imagery through social media, TV, the internet. After Brexit, there was photographs/footage and testimony of racist and xenophobic violence - threats, attacks, vandalism and other hate-crimes, as well as a wealth of imagery documenting the toppling Colston from his plinth and into the water; from COVID-19 we saw nations in lockdown, hospitals in crisis, frontline staff enduring and collapsing, systemically under-served racialised communities and families in mourning and rage; and in June, in response to George Floyd's murder, there was widespread coverage of the global anti-racist surge of outrage and activism at police violence. All these interrelated to create a highly visual, politically and emotionally charged context, and a violent 'white' backlash. As stated by 'white' visual culture theorist Nicholas Mirzoeff in his recent book *White Sight*: "In 2020, everything happened at once. The COVID-19 pandemic unleashed the furious violence contained in the cultural unconscious of whiteness. It made the visual politics and practices of white sight and white reality starkly visible..." (2024, p.227).

Another impact of Black Lives Matter uprisings of 2020 was a liberal 'white' rush to the barricades of anti-racism, one example of which is Marc Quinn's statue of Jen Reid. Many 'well-intentioned' 'white' people and white-dominated liberal organisations across all sectors were troubled by the visibility of racism that Brexit, #BLM and statistics on the inequalities of COVID-19 were forcing into 'white' consciousness. Many issued public statements attesting to anti-racism, issuing solidarity statements with #BLM, pledging allyship, some committing to confront internal policies and practices. Websites and resources on anti-racism were deluged with visits. Anti-racism workshops and organisational training proliferated. Books on whiteness, rewiring the 'white' self, tackling white supremacy were flying off the shelves, both by 'white' and by Black and global majority writers. In arts and culture, Black and global majority people called out many performative gestures including the British Museum's #BlackLivesMatter statement, 'white' cooption of anti-racism at the Institute of Contemporary Arts, and racist treatment of staff at the William Morris Gallery (all in London). ⁶¹ Many waited, not holding their breath, to see if 'white' allyship would endure and effect actual structural change beyond this heightened moment where 'white' institutions and individuals wanted to

⁶¹ <https://news.artnet.com/art-world/british-museum-black-lives-matter-1882296> [Accessed 24.11.24]
<https://artreview.com/black-staff-at-london-galleries-claim-systemic-and-structural-racism/> [Accessed 24.11.24]

be seen as allies. In autumn 2020, there was clear evidence that Black and global majority people in arts organisations, and organisations *led by them* were disproportionately hit by the economic impacts of COVID-19, and BLM had done nothing to address that (Olah, 2020). In summer 2021, *Barbican Stories* was published, a comprehensive online resource detailing first-hand accounts of racism and xenophobia towards global majority staff at the Barbican Arts Centre (London) dating back to 2016 (Barbican Stories, 2021).

Alongside this, in academe, tensions abounded: universities were denounced by many including the network *Revolution or Nothing* for their tokenistic hand-wringing post-BLM and post-COVID-19 (2020), yet 'critical whiteness studies' was growing in a period when I felt less and less that I could articulate my research in words, and felt very uneasy about 'white' ethics and intentions behind that growth. In retrospect, it is not surprising to me now that my large-scale visual expression in and of the PhD became important that summer 2020. At that point, my academic task was to submit 50,000 words to my supervisors in October in order to be granted an extension to my thesis deadline. Yet, over that summer I found it difficult to adequately convey issues around racism, coloniality and whiteness in *art and design education* compared to the wider racist turbulence of testosterone-charged 'white' Brexit Britain, racialised COVID-19 and the extraordinary fightback of Black Lives Matter. I became convinced that visual expression could be an *equal driver* of the thesis for which my words could never do enough. In this period of heightened 'white' backlash, racist terror tactics and political extremism, I realised that visibility around whiteness was becoming *the way to structure and to express the thesis*.

Curation begins. Summer 2020

Figs 25 - 33, and 37-39. Jane Trowell, *Curation work in progress*, June – July 2020.



Fig 25.

This way lets the ineffable lead. It gives interpretative agency to the viewer. It is a version of a story, transparently. It becomes an exhibition before it is a sequential narrative in prose.

[illegible]

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Fig 27.

F's great question: "How do we make a space where the future we are longing for to happen, can happen".



Fig 29.

The continual re-curation of everything because of slumping off the wall in the heat.

The knowing that I could talk about P here, here and here.

The tenderness with which I carried the piece of paper that had R's name on it. Literally cherishing it, feeling for their experience.

The bewilderment at M's paper. What did I learn? How does it fit?

J – I know she's part of this, but what it is, is slightly out of my reach. I will write to her.
The breakthrough of the contemporary – wonderful realisations that everything is here.

2.7.20

I did the last peer conversation today, with S. Very emotional for them and for me.

Can't bear to look at those 'white' women anymore.

Doing my head in. Centuries of normalisation of violence.

Even when I confront them with Biswas, Saye, Rosales.

Re-centring – emphasis must be on the people of colour in the paintings.

Going to mask the white women off with paper. Including me.

Not sure about the mirror and my mask AT ALL.



Fig 30.



Fig 31.



Fig 32.

Found an old sheet to cover this whole thing up. **It should never be normal.**

Totally uncertain about the mirror and my mask.



Fig 33.

8.7.20

This morning I woke early – 4am – and heard paper then another paper falling off in the heat or humidity.

A perfect metaphor for the uncertainty of 'white'-led enquiry.

The contingency.

The diffusive nature, a fugitive study.

A feeling I now have to re-curate. Starting from the 15 people, the peers – what I am receiving, what they are trying to tell me?

10.7.20

Because of having run out of coloured ink all the print-offs are in b&w. Only European Male art history is in colour, aside from Harmonia Rosales, Artemisia Gentileschi, Tan Che Qua. Ha! Couldn't make it up.

14.7.20

THE MOTLEY CREW – Hope?

5.06am

Bursting into tears as I realise there is a motley crew in my midst. An unlikely crew of rebels I have assembled. I have, yes I have. Take responsibility Jane.

They don't know each other. I invited them and they said yes but *not to being in this curation together*. They probably would start fighting in different combinations, but they are some kind of crew, washed onto the raft of my PhD. A raft which is lashed together from the fragments of hope and faith and love.

21.7.20

Yesterday I finished the last transcription checks.

I am stunned by what I've been entrusted with.

Some of them feel sacred even. In the sense F meant.

How can I touch them?

23.7.20, 4am

I'm in the dream state – waking in the night thinking PhD

I want to sew a sail for the motley crew. From Wall to Wail, from Fixity to Fluidity.

I masked the images – to conceal them from me. To get rid of. Only look at impacts.

I want to make a cover for the wall. Hooks in ceiling?

I could use the washed and recycled table-cloths from our River Birthday party.

A cosmology – of peers, of loved ones, of rivers, of London, of the Thames valley, the estuary, and out into the world....

Bloody hell – the 'Remove blemish' function in iPhoto is amazing. I Quicktime'd myself doing it. Incredible. What is the blemish here? Normally, the tool exists to get rid of spots and wrinkles... Using it on these art images - it tries to do the same, taking samples from the surroundings. Very unpredictable eerie results.



Fig 34. Jane Trowell, on left: *The Child (Blemish Removed)*, July 2020. [Digital artwork]
On right for reference: original by Anthony Van Dyck (1634)



Fig 35. Jane Trowell, above: The East (Blemish Removed), July 2020.

[Digital artwork]

Below for reference: original by Spiridione Roma (1778).

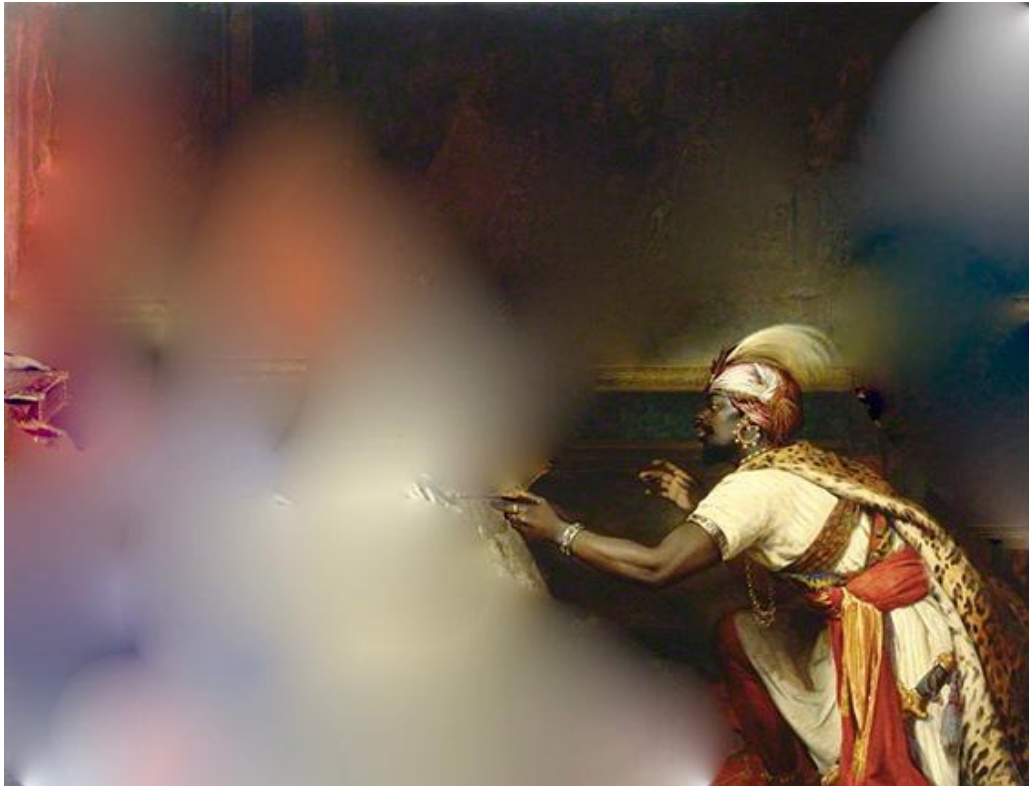


Fig 36. Jane Trowell, above: *The Envoy (Blemish Removed)*, July 2020. [Digital artwork]
 Below for reference: original by Thomas Jones Barker (1863).

24.7.20

Early morning convo with JRM.

- the masking takes whiteness away leaving those impacted by whiteness, but this is also a problem, as JRM pointed out, invisibilising coloniality.
- the legacy, the ontology. My idea of having interlocutors, accountability guides: the woman on *The Raft*, Tan Che Qua in Zoffany's *Royal Academicians*, the child in *Henrietta*.

The idea of PhD as exhibition. Each room a chapter or section. D suggested a Prezi?

Last night I showed JRM the 'blemish removal' paintings, including the Quicktime videos of the screen as it happens. He was blown away as I was. And it's not because I'm clever. It's completely random. I love it.

JRM – "Look, No 'white'!" Except, not.

But is this helping me/us see whiteness 'from a great distance' (Yancy)?

Or is it just a distraction?

27.7.20

Day #1 **Writing Bootcamp** for my application to extend the thesis submission deadline.

Reorganising the wall for filming to send to supervisors.

- the challenge is that the wall is too small
- how to show divisions? themes?
- how to honour the centre
- use of numbers?

From an email to supervisors, August 2020:

This summer, in order not to have the three historical paintings of whiteness dominate the space unchallenged, I attempted to defuse and topple them through juxtaposition with three

contemporary artworks that I feel speak back to them, sidestep them, defeat them, overwhelm them:

Dwelling: In This Space We Breathe, by Khadija Saye, (2016/7), silkscreen print on paper, each image 61.3 x 50.2cm.
(Escape Control)

Housewives with Steak-knives, Sutapa Biswas, (1983/5) Oil, acrylic, pastel, pencil, 'white' tape, collage on paper mounted onto stretched canvas. 2450 x 2220mm
(Puncture Self-Delusion)

The Creation of God, by Harmonia Rosales, (2017), Oil on linen, 48" x 60", from series: B.I.T.C.H. Black Imaginary To Counter Hegemony.
(Refuse 'White' Knowledge Supremacy)

I am part of the problem so I also selected three photographs of myself that I feel I have been ambushed by. I used the themes of power identified from the historical paintings:

Me as The Modulator (Marseille, 2014)	Control	Henrietta
Me Masked (London, 1985)	Self-delusion	Britannia
Epistemalanche (Kent, 2018)	'White' Knowledge Supremacy	Victoria



Fig 37.



Fig 38.

5pm. Covered the whole wall with the stitched-together rivers' sheets. Works perfectly. Leaving just *The Raft of the Medusa*, by Théodore Géricault, 1818/19], and Walter Benjamin: "Thinking means....: setting sail".⁶²

⁶² Note written March 2023. I just checked this reference in *The Arcades Project*, and the precise quote is "Thinking means for him: setting the sail." (Benjamin, 1999, 473). I remember deciding to omit "for him" [him = the dialectician, assumed male]... but I don't remember deliberately taking out the word 'the' from 'setting the sail'. Speaking as a sailor, the 'the' makes all the difference. For a sailor, 'setting the sail' means adjusting the position of the sail itself to maximise the efficiency of the wind in relation to the direction you are trying to sail in. In common parlance, 'setting sail' means simply 'starting the journey'. Both of these are important for this thesis, but I am curious as to the omission of the 'the'. I think it shows my deep impatience to get going, to leave the mooring.

In the video of the installation, I said to supervisors I didn't want to look at 'white' people, but I want to be fresh, not inured, not normalised. See 'us' again, from a great distance.

29.7.20

Feel very productive after yesterday.

I didn't write 5000 words but I wrote a chunk on visual methodologies, and got everything filmed and sent off.

[*The Creation of God* peels off the wall as I type]

Revelation – I've got loads of good writing and imagery in Creative PhD folder.

30.7.20

JRM just told me a line he'd remembered from a song by Jim Morrison:

'I love the friends I have gathered on this thin raft.

We have constructed pyramids in honour of our escaping'.

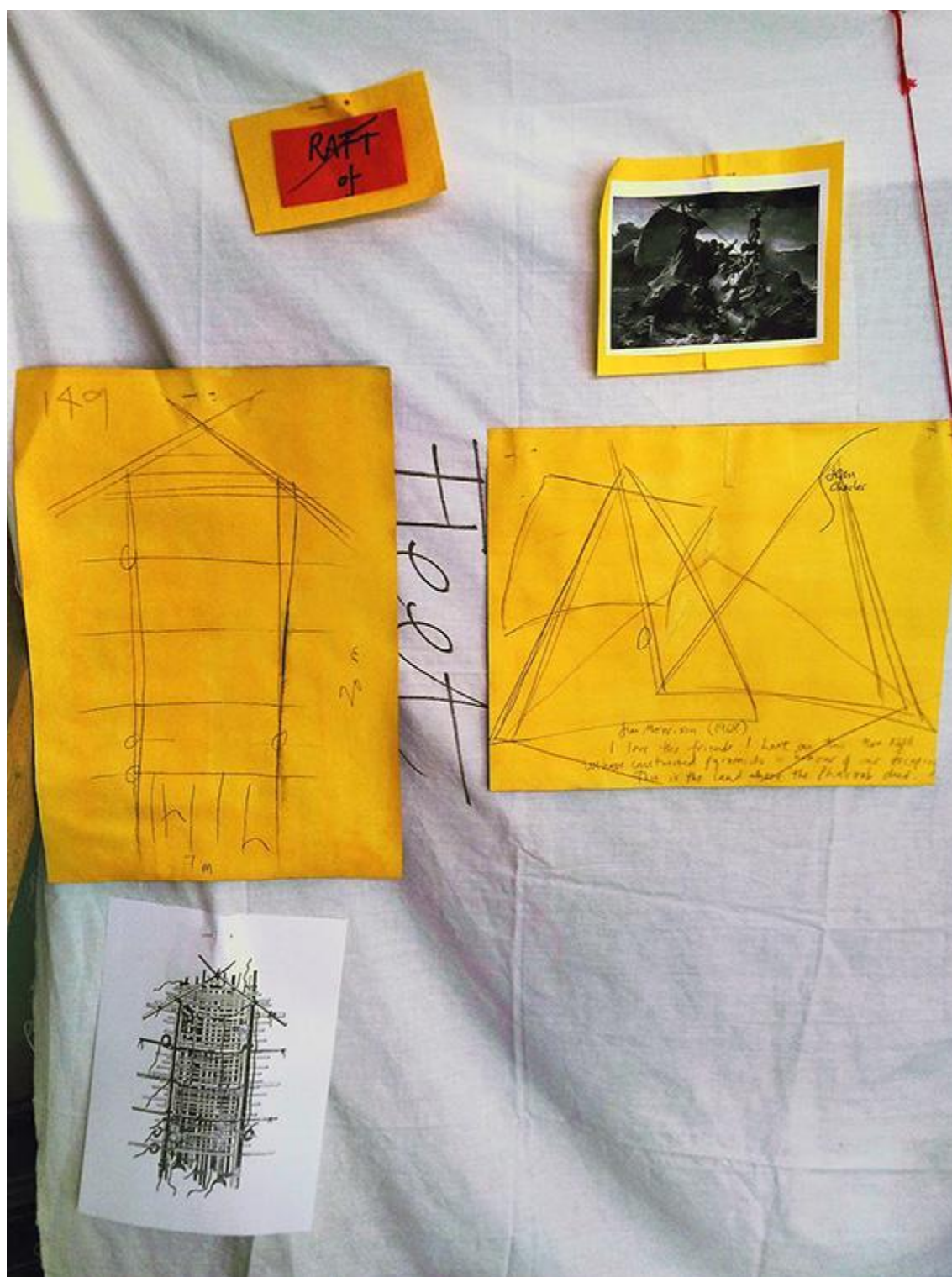


Fig 39.

31.7.20

Problem of centring French 'white' male painter Géricault. Hmm. Find out more about him.

OK – **ambush alert.**

Why have I lavished 3 hours on and not on a female or artist of colour?

Yes I want to know if The Raft analogy is going to work. If it is going to add up. What the problems are with it. I do understand how contentious it is.

But also the story is completely compelling. It throws up so much:

- Britain/Senegal/France
- Fact and Fiction
- Artist as researcher and reporter
- Race and gender
- Art's place in anti-slavery struggle
- Self-initiated
- 100 years after *Robinson Crusoe* (Defoe, 1719)
-

How is Géricault not exploiting sensational news?

PYRAMIDS - TRIANGLES – trade. Triangular trade...

EPISTEMALANCHE again??

- Everything is falling off the wall
- bad masking tape
- heat
- rickety struts

1.8.20

I might be centring *The Raft* compositionally but I *visually* I am centring Sutapa Biswas's *Housewives with Steak-knives*. Kali is fiercely taking care of all of it.

All of us. She's been keeping me in line since the 1980s.



Fig 40. Sutapa Biswas, *Housewives with Steak-knives*, 1983-5. [Oil, acrylic, pastel, pencil, collage, tape, house paint on paper mounted onto stretched canvas, 274 x 244cm.]

I borrowed Fi's projector. Have to project it at night cos of light interference. Suddenly completely obsessed with what it can allow for this research and for unblocking what I'm trying to say.

3.8.20

Raft – intro

Rafting up – conclusion

Rafters – roof struts

How am I going to complete this PhD?

4.8.20

Middle of the night revelations, 4am.

I suddenly realise that projecting the image of The Raft isn't about The Raft. It puts the viewer on The Raft with its motley crew, like the painting does.

The new motley crew is all the artists. And me.

We are on the fucking raft together.

I'm on The Raft with the artists, with everyone...

The arms are waving, not drowning.

Me on The Raft. How dare I? The breakthrough was when I accused myself of fitting with Le Corbusier's *The Modulor*.⁶³ I emotionally burst out with D: "But I do fit!", meaning, I can never

⁶³ On a visit to Marseille, France, in October 2014, my friend and photographer Helen and I went to see the world-renowned housing development L'Unité d'Habitation, (La Cité Radieuse). It was conceptualised and designed by Swiss architect Le Corbusier with Nadir Afonso, and completed between 1947-1952. Into the building's exterior fabric, 'The Modulor' figure is inscribed in stone. It is Le Corbusier's own extension of Leonardo da Vinci's idealised 'Vitruvian Man'. The Modulor was drawn to the 'golden section' proportions that Corbusier claimed would ensure his buildings 'fitted people', underpinning all aspects of his building design. I remember my dad's copy of Le Corbusier's book *The Modulor. A Harmonious Measure to the Human Scale Universally applicable to Architecture and Mechanics* (1961). As a student, I was fascinated by Le Corbusier's drawings, his anecdotal style and almost rhapsodic theory on how his building design could create ideal community and harmonious social organisation. Could human conflict, needs and desires be solved through building design and town planning alone? Back then I liked that The Modulor was fairly abstract, male-ish but not totally MAN unlike Leonardo's Vitruvian Man. Back then I was not yet thinking about the politics of 'universal

not be inside European consciousness and 'white' supremacist epistemological, ontological grooming. But then, the gesture, set literally in stone,... Could it maybe be a wave? Maybe I'm waving. I'm not set in stone.

Maybe I'm measuring up as in challenging, calling out?



Fig 41. Helen Sheehan, *Jane as The Modulator*, (2014) [Digital photograph]

Taken at L'Unité d'Habitation, Marseille, France: architect Le Corbusier.

applicability' or the 'ideal' body with 'ideal' proportions and how that flowed out of Europe's oppressive and history of judging and condemning whole peoples by 'white' male standardised models of beauty and body shape. By the long-awaited visit of 2014, the Modulator experience was complicated by my new critiques.

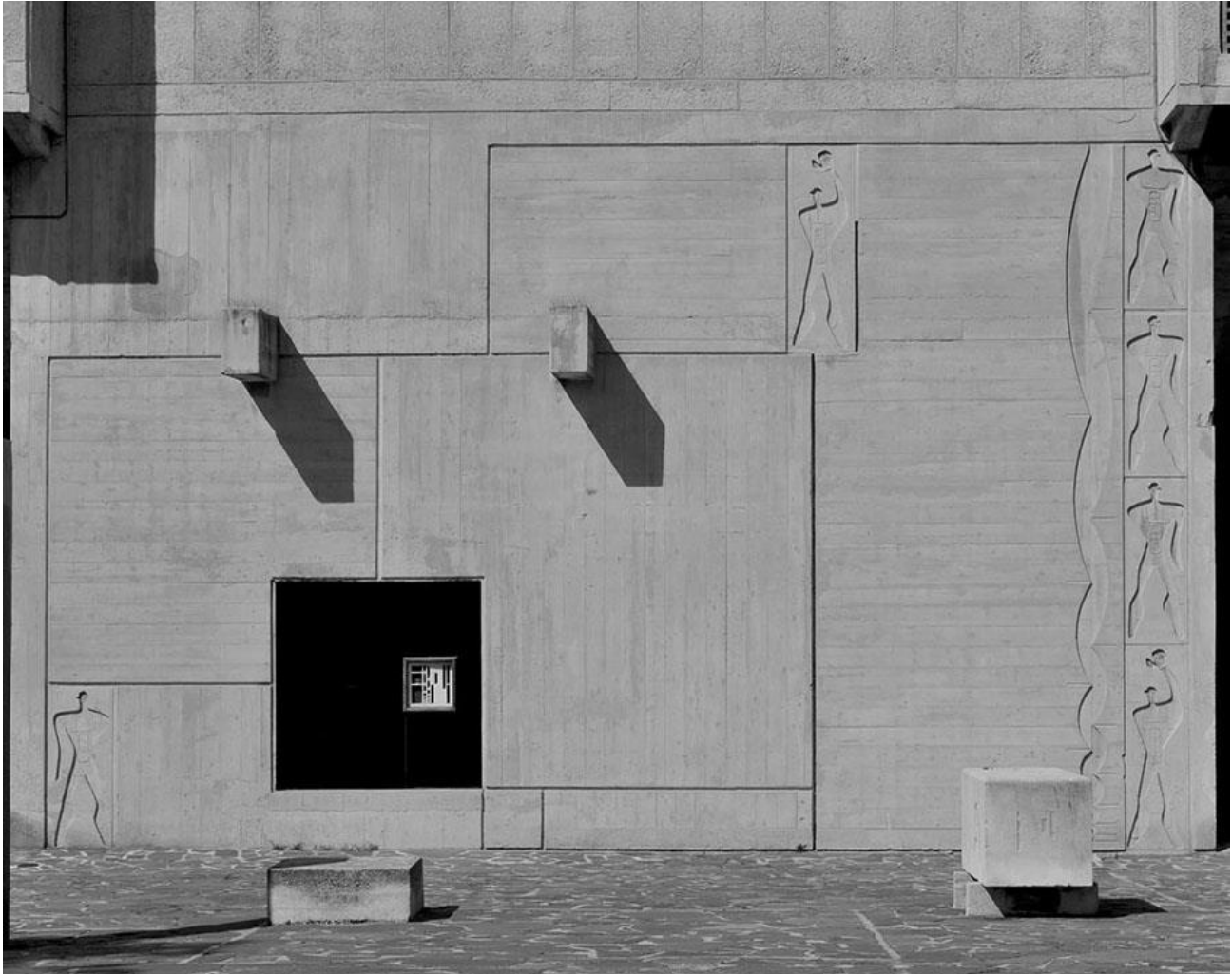


Fig 42. Helen Sheehan, *Detail of facade of L'Unité d'Habitation, Marseille, France*, 2014.

[Digital photograph]

The wavers - hands

In Géricault - the swarthy man at the apex, the man to his right, a couple of others indicating...

Me - calling out Modulor

Kali in Sutapa Biswas's Housewives – not waving

But halting

Holding threatening weighing asserting celebrating

Henrietta – downward hands, the put-down

Rosales' *The Creation of God* – connecting, honouring, solidarity

Britannia – weighing, vaunting, withholding.....Father Thames – threatening without effort

Khadija Saye

- weighing deep faith
- clawed fingers
- bringing to mouth
- bringing to ear
- holding up a sheaf



Fig 43. Jane Trowell, *Work in progress: sketching The Raft*, August 2020.

[Digital photographs]

The order I did it in after roughing in The Raft's pyramids

Me – Modulor

Géricault's crew

Kali

Henrietta

The Creation of God

Britannia

Victoria

Khadija Saye

Rosales – *Virtuous Woman*

Zoffany's *Royal Academicians* – Cosway detail

Went to sleep

The triangular form...trade

Rosales – *Virtuous Woman* – state of grace

Zoffany – Cosway's patriarchal stabbing at pudendal mound

Victoria – 'giving' and 'receiving'

– Prince Albert – hand on cudgel

And then I realised in the night that the stitched-together river sheets at the centre are the rivers Walbrook and Tyburn.

The City and Westminster.

Seats of Britain's imperium.

Amazing. What is going on? It's running through me, whatever it is.

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15.8.20

I woke up thinking about rafts. We are on this raft, looking for others, looking for rescue, looking for the reckoning.

PhD postures on the Raft –

- the thinker
- the hailer
- the woman quietly giving up behind the mast
- the one despairingly clutching head
- the alert one
- the perished one, with head under the water

10.9.20

U and me in PhD buddy conversation. U tells me about ‘Mummy Brown’ oil paint – the horror of its fabrication by Europeans, from *actual Egyptian mummies?*

There are no words.

Reading Gina Wisker and Maggi Savins-Baden on writing. I like the title so much I want to write it down: *Priceless conceptual thresholds: beyond the “stuck place” in writing* (2009). I like the depth of recognition, and the creativity in the content:

(1) Ontological insecurity: stuck moments.^[L]_{SEP}]

(2) Levers through the conceptual threshold: ...(c) **the vision of a possible movement through a portal.** (2009, p.241)

This summer’s visual work?: “Writers often move on by... stepping back and seeing the pattern.” (p.244)

The Raft wallpiece as pattern-seeing, vision of possible movement, as a portal towards writing?

The wallpiece as a stitched-together sail enabling movement, an attempt, a try-out, momentum, enabling thought?

Sail... A Sail... Assail... Assay... Essay...

From typed up notes, early August 2020

I've begun to conceive of the thesis' chapter structure as reflecting the themes extrapolated from the three historical portraits of elite 'white' women. It's important to me that the five-hundred-year history of white supremacy with its present-day impacts is structured into the architecture of the piece. My proposal to supervisors is to bring together the contributors' testimony under these three big chapter headings:

[Escape] Control - Henrietta

[Puncture] Self-delusion - Britannia

[Refuse] White Knowledge Supremacy – Victoria

Notes after supervision in August 2020

My supervisors understand where my thinking behind this structure is coming from but have concerns that it won't support me in addressing the goals of a PhD as an exercise in demonstrating that I can do research at this level. They suggested that because this summer I have turned even more towards the visual, I conceive of the structure according to an arts practice-based PhD, even though it isn't.

They suggest something like:

1. The Problem
2. What this meant for me and how I went about it
3. What I did - the contributors and the visual practice
4. Results - what I found
5. Conclusion

I'll try to work with this.

Commentary: November 2024

I remember the sinking feeling after that supervision, and I see from my journal notes that I felt low and unmotivated. Having been so motivated over the summer, it was tough. However,

to get the extension, in October 2020, I managed to submit to supervisors 30,000 words utilising their structure for chapters 1 and 2.

My supervisors' response to my submission for the extension was muted and cautious. After the profound experience of conceptual flow in the summer, after picking myself up from the disappointment at their advice **not** to work through the three big chapter headings based on the visual material/concepts, and after my grinding efforts to write under the suggested headings above, I was disheartened. *Why couldn't I do this?* Why wasn't the work fitting into the structure? I felt again lost in what I was trying to achieve - a poetico-visual communication of research findings combining the theoretical and life experiential with the ineffable - and again I felt I couldn't operate. I did not like much of the 'extension writing', although it had cost me such a lot to do it. However the next piece is one that I did value. I include it here because it combines the significance of the visual for learning to confront racism with my growing understanding of the need to confront the disturbing depths of whiteness inculcated through familial nurturing of a 'white' child, in this case me, as a means to **deeply sustain my confrontation** of my and others' and structural racism.

I include it here to encourage other 'white' antiracists to dig deep into disturbing biography, which is what I was intending for the 'fieldwork' in Part 1, which then felt inappropriate for my academic research. As Black psychologist and anti-racism facilitator Guilaine Kinouani states:

...to learn to tolerate race-based discomfort and challenges to their sense of self, without engaging in retaliation, psychic collapse or intellectual short-circuits. I continue to believe this is one of the most transformative and socially transgressive skills any white person seeking to dismantle whiteness can develop. Without learning to bear the 'internal' disturbances caused by the structural disturbances of whiteness and consequently managing associated emotions and fantasies, structures of power cannot be disrupted. (2023, p.8)

Kinouani's book *White Minds. Everyday Performance, Violence and Resistance* (2023) is

about disrupting and 'dethroning white-centredness'. Her goal is the 'liberation and resistance of those whose bodies look like mine' (2023, p9), and her context, usefully, is the UK. I'm grateful that through it, I come to understand better how longevity in my evolving anti-racism has also been fostered through enquiry into a childhood episode triggered by imagery, as evidenced in the document I share below. Kinouani exhorts us to:

explore the relationship of whiteness to **time and space**, how it moves, how it shifts and how it continues to be performed on a day-to-day basis, so as to support resistance. Particularly, resistance by those who are racialised as white who want to understand their complicity within this **pathogenic and traumatogenic structure they were born into** - which shapes us all - so as to attempt to reclaim their humanity. (2024, p3, my emphasis)

The reference to toxicity, to the generation of trauma, the overall need for a psychological and time/space dimension in understanding whiteness and racism has been alluded to throughout this thesis. For me, William Pinar's process of 'currere' and the eco-mapping techniques discussed earlier are rooted in this. While my whole conscious life I had been aware of the episode I describe, it now seems significant that I was only able to write about it in the period after I had been working intensively with images, including of Black children, where too, I suddenly saw myself in Henrietta, Britannia, Victoria and their sisters and daughters.

Theoretically, I am also helped here by 'white' English psychotherapist Helen Morgan, who, in her book *The Work of Whiteness, A Psychoanalytic Perspective* asks of whiteness:

Why [does the white psyche] have so little **stamina** for grappling with this powerful and pervasive dynamic? ...how disavowal in regard to racism operates within the white psyche, and the dead, silent place that is created between the two dividing screens that form the vertical split of the defence... (2021, p.xii, my emphasis)

It appears that working through images precipitated a state where I could no longer 'screen'

myself off or remain 'silent' about my own early inculcation into normalisation of racism. The episode involved my 'good' parents: so another factor in coming to voice is breaking a taboo: betrayal of my parents' racism, which betrayal, in some senses this thesis also represents.

This particular outbreak of Yancy's 'crises' was unleashed through imagery, yet, I contend, when the crisis is held by supportive theory, it also breeds *stamina* for the work of anti-racism. I later drew deeply on this understanding in holding, sitting with and responding to acute criticisms of whiteness in my public anti-racism work that happened in two events in 2021 and 2022 which I investigate later.

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The 'Opened Wound' and the Wounded Researcher. Written September 2020.

This summer I've been curating images together on a wall where everything keeping falls off. I've been making a 'sail' from second-hand, stained and stitched-together cloth. I will keep the cloth unhemmed so it gently frays around its edges. I use pins to temporarily attach images. I make incisions and cut holes in white paper to mask images. Sutures are surgical stitches, for holding together a wound so it can heal. A scalpel makes an incision, in flesh, in paper. I'm struck how George Yancy's concept and practice of remaining with the 'un-sutured wound' (2015) keeps reverberating and multiplying in its applicability to this thesis.

I need to review.

For him, the original wound that 'white' people bear is "the reality of white racism",

the realisation that their embodied existence and embodied identities are always already inextricably linked to a larger 'white' racist social integument or skin which envelops who and what they are. Their 'white' embodied lives have already been claimed; there is no 'white' self that stands *above the fray*, atomic, hands clean.
(2015, xvii, my italics)

He invites 'white' people "to cultivate the practice of remaining with *the opened wound itself*, of tarrying with the *pain of the opening itself*, the incision, as it were" (xvii, his italics). I find it important that he refers to the wound as 'opened' rather than 'open'. I find it important that my wall-piece is frayed, stitched and patched together from stained, second-hand and worn cloth. Why?

'Opened' describes an action rather than a state of being open. This opened wound already existed and has been re-opened or is being kept open. But by whom? The cloth is not precious and it can never be 'finished', always problematic and evolving in my practice of drawing, un-drawing and re-drawing - as it were 'suturing', 'un-suturing' and 're-suturing' - the

images upon it. I look at a juxtaposition and suddenly feel it is wrong. I rub out the pencil lines. I set up the projector once more. I try again.

For Yancy it is necessary for 'white' people to do the repeated work of re-opening or keeping open. 'White' people must work at resisting "scabbing over" the wound (p.xvii). The implication is that, yes, it rightly hurts now, but more, *it must hurt ongoing*. Only by the hurt being ongoing will 'white' people maintain a profound awareness of their implicatedness in and benefits from white supremacy and racism. As part of action to confront racism, 'white' people must be vigilant to practising keeping the opened wound opened.

I highlight the word 'practise'. To practise is to assume that you work at something frequently, all the time, to deepen into it, to become it, to 'get your eye in'. If you stop practising, the muscle will atrophy, the habit will fade away. This is the difference between an ongoing process and a one-off moment of transformation. The wallpiece, the sail as an ongoing process?

So, I mustn't allow a scab to form, I mustn't seek the healing power of fixing, of stitches and patching, the wound must remain opened, unbound-up. I must according to Yancy tarry and linger with the wound, permanently. Indeed Yancy prescribes the following to assist with maintaining the openedness:

... it is important to cultivate spaces where...whites more generally, can experience crisis... [in] the sense of losing one's footing, of *losing one's way*... (2016, xiv, his italics).

I understand from Yancy that such a wound, living with or in *crisis*, will assist in keeping me opened to the 'ambushes' of whiteness, keep me alert to how white supremacy shows up in me at micro and macro levels regardless of my claims to anti-racist practices.

I realise I drawn to Yancy's work partly because he literally arrests me with the vividness of his language, so visceral, visual and memorable. I have seen him lecture live on stage where his presence was electrifying and galvanising. For me there's a restless energy in his writing about whiteness, particularly when he shares his own passionate work with 'white' and black students, and what he learns from and with them, what he wants for them; his honest disclosures and analysis on the vile, racist hate mail he receives and counters, and for the change that must happen.

I don't know how he does it, but despite the temptation to be dispirited by his blunt statement that I can only ever be an 'antiracist racist' (2012, p.175) and his injunction towards maintaining the 'opened wound', I feel a strange creativity, a curious sense of optimism. It feels do-able, it feels human, whereas striving, reaching, struggling to be simply 'anti-racist' was always, I realise, bound to fail. Waving not drowning, un-sutured, un-stitched, un-drawn, un-fixed.



Fig 44. JT, Detail: Look, a 'white'! - masked, September 2020.

My throat's been very bad - anaconda constricted - the past days. I think this is why I haven't been able to write the PhD: I can't speak. I can only make images and make music, my songs without words, Jo's song to her words. What the fuck can I say or write in a rational mode, that can possibly express any of what has been done and continues to be done [by whiteness].

(Personal email to JRM, 24 September 2020)

I woke this morning thinking that in doing this work there is not just the 'opened wound' of Yancy (2015, p.xvii) - there are at least two. Or at least two depths of wound.

Yes, one wound is the 'opened wound' as described above.

However, if this wound is universally applicable to 'white' people, to people racialised as 'white', then, over the course of this PhD, in the corner of my eye and in my heart and gut I have been aware of a second sub-epidermal layer to this wound, an incisive personal layer that I feel is important to this research and to 'white' anti-racist (racist) action. It is only relatively recently that I have suspected that this deeper, more personal wound not only created the motivation for doing this research, but also the determination to keep going with the research, while also explaining why the research has at times fallen apart for me, or I've fallen apart with it.

The creation of any self-initiated research or artwork that takes many years in the making inevitably begs the question of what is the drive, the self-generating impulse that keeps you going? What maintains that drive? What is the reason it holds and grips you, causes you to question and assert again and again why you feel you absolutely must do it although it constantly appears too overwhelming or impossible through what can seem like interminable periods of blockage and self-doubt? In short, why is the research so important to the researcher?

During 'fieldwork', peer-informant T described their feelings in anticipation of interviewing the world-renowned 'white' educationalist David Gillborn who for thirty years has researched,

written and campaigned outspokenly on race equality and racism in UK education (Gillborn, 2008). An artist-educator of colour, T told me that although they had looked at his extensive publications and his scholar-activist CV, they found themselves still thinking “Why *does* he care?” The fact that this question arises even in the face of a renowned ‘white’ ally’ speaks to concerns about the performed aspect of anti-racism for ‘white’ people. I am hoping that the depth of consciousness of the double-layered wound that I am thinking of for this section could be useful to ‘white’ anti-racists developing a deeper integrity.

However, what I explore next is possibly the most difficult part of the thesis for me to write, given the ambushes of ‘white narcissism’, ‘white moves to innocence’, ‘white credentialising’, ‘white re-centering’, and ‘progressive racism’. However it also feels the most important for me to try to be “real and honest” about. And to encourage others into the same self-reflexivity.

I will attempt to describe and analyse an incisive episode, the deeper wound that I believe has led me to be doing this research. It took place over fifty years ago when I was six. By citing an episode from early childhood I already see raised eyebrows at what I might claim to be my innocence. Yet I think this early episode is useful in looking at early inculcation into racism, but also it underlies why this research is so important to me, while at the same time I keep blocking ‘writing it up’; and why I have been compelled to work on anti-racism and my whiteness in multiple contexts over many years, through paid work, teaching, and social movements, before and during and after this PhD.

Sharing this process of self-understanding is key to the research because I have come to realise that it is fundamental to the two cautions from George Yancy and Sara Ahmed. From Yancy, I need to understand this incision to better keep opened to my racist self in whiteness and its un-suturability. From Ahmed I must first turn inwards - albeit very self-warily - as the first part of what she calls the ‘double turn’.

In other words, the task for ‘white’ subjects would be to stay implicated in what they critique, but in turning **towards** their role and responsibility in these histories of racism,

as histories of this present, to turn **away** from themselves, and towards others.
(Ahmed, 2004, my emphasis)

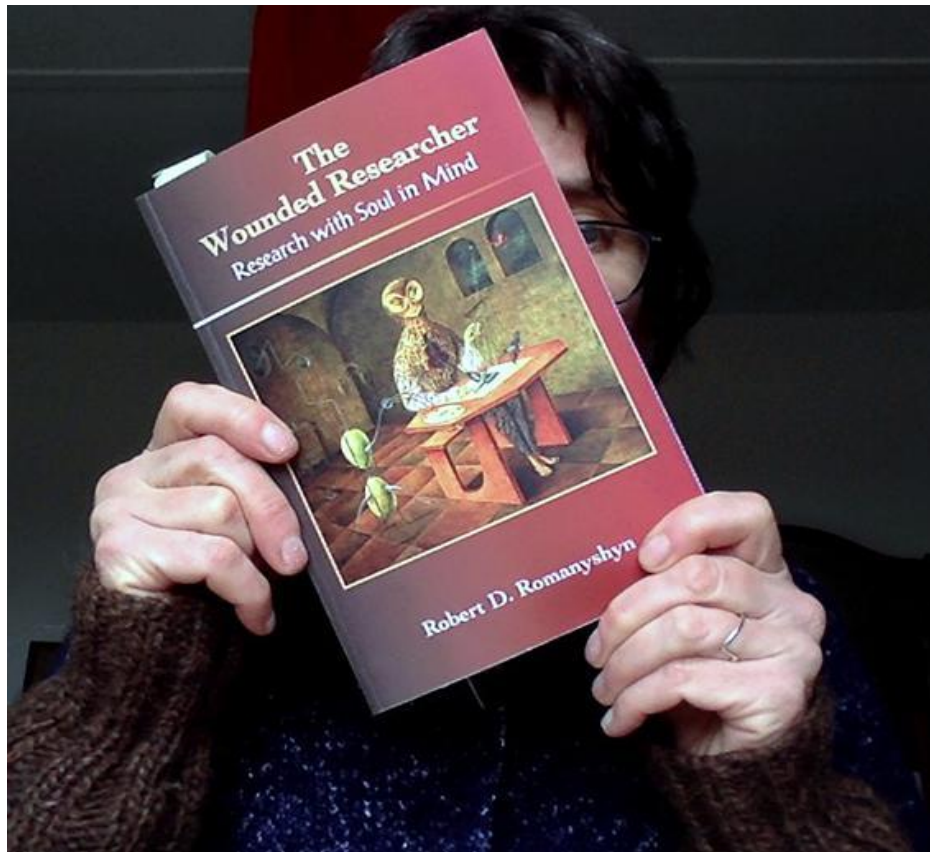
However, I won't be unassisted. I will be accompanied in the turn inwards and outwards by new theory that I was introduced to in 2018, but it has taken until now to try to write this.

My 'white' friend M is an artist, a former art therapist, and in 2018 she was a doctoral student. She and I were talking about why the content and process of our doctoral study was so disturbing at times, way beyond what a supervisor could reasonably help with. What were these turbulences that seem so antithetical to 'academic research' as constructed by the rational European 'white' male mind? She introduced me to a book on research processes which had been helping her: *The Wounded Researcher, Research with Soul in Mind* by 'white' male scholar and Jungian psychologist Robert Romanyshyn (2013).

On a gut level, the artwork on the cover of this first edition of Romanyshyn's book grabbed me. This features a Surrealist painting *Creation of the Birds* (1957) by the female painter Remedios Varo, born in Catalunya, Spain, but who lived much of her life in Mexico. To be honest, I've rarely been drawn to books with the word 'soul' in the title. But my prejudices were counterbalanced by the choice of this intriguing cover image and my urgent need for answers. The content of the image in relation to the action of *doing* the research invited me to consider something significant that perhaps I hadn't want to know about -because it might hurt too much.

Below:

Fig 45. The author holding *The Wounded Researcher*, by Robert Romanyshyn (2013), 2023.
[Digital photograph] Featuring artwork by Remedios Varo, *Creation of The Birds*, 1957.



Varo's painting shows a fantastical figure, human, with long eyelashes, but covered in feathers, seated at a table. The figure is painting with a brush that is connected to the interior of a small guitar-violin hung around the figure's neck. In the other hand, the figure holds a prism that refracts light through a window. The figure is painting the tail feathers of a bird which, receiving the prism's refracted light, becomes three-dimensional and prepares to take flight. Birds fly all around the figure. The interior is reminiscent of a contemplative chamber, a cell where religious scripts might be hand-written and illuminated.

For someone who works in art and art education, from art history and curating, and is a lapsed violinist, the icons of the palette, the desk, the birds newly created from painting, the androgynous figure immediately spoke to me. Opening the book, I was very moved that Romanyshyn opens by devoting several pages to a discussion of a painting, this painting:

how it gripped him and what it led to. I resonated with his language of “a poetics of the research process”, and my thirst for something ineffable was slaked by “such a poetics focuses on the ‘gap’ between soul and the words we use to say it” (both p.xi). I was soothed by his affirmation of art and poetics in research.

What was this book about? Romanyshyn's book emerges from his work with and methods learnt from supervising doctoral students in the fields of psychology and social sciences. He is concerned with what can often be an unknown veiled bereavement that lies underneath students' motivations. In the introduction, Romanyshyn explains the important premise: “Research with soul in mind is re-search, a process of re-turning and *re-membering what has already made its claim upon the researcher* through his or her *complex relations* to the topic” (2013, p.xi, my italics).

The idea of the research as a re-turning, a looking again, the idea that a claim has already been made on the researcher, not of their conscious volition, spoke not only to the repeated question of the deeper wound ‘Why is this research so important to me?’, but also to Sara Ahmed’s image of the double-turn mentioned previously.

Further, “Research as re-search, is a searching again for what one has already *felt as a call, perhaps long ago and now only dimly re-called.....*” and “Re-search with soul in mind, re-search that *proceeds in depth and from the depths*, is about finding what has been lost, forgotten, neglected, marginalised, or otherwise left behind” (both p.xi, my italics).

Following Yancy’s call for ‘white’ people to leave the wound un-sutured, the incision unhealed, Romanyshyn’s use of the words ‘call’, and ‘in depth’ and ‘from the depths’ had echoes of another kind of seeing oneself “from a great distance” (Yancy, 2015, p.xxii). But this time not horizontally across geographies, or vertically, across time, but ontologically across the landscape of one’s being.

Further, Romanyshyn suggests the idea, startling to me, that we do not choose our research: “In re-search with soul in mind the *topic chooses the researcher* as much as, and perhaps even more than, he or she chooses it” (p.4, my italics).

This helps me to understand the circuitous path I have taken with the research, or the re-search has taken with me - the questing, the pursuing and the abandoning. I have repeatedly not felt able to ‘instruct’ myself rationally, to discipline myself about the path and focus of this research. While being aware of ambushes of white privilege in having the resources, confidence or choice to follow a path of my own making, I have felt intuitively compelled to follow what felt authentic, insecure, gritty, messy and real. To turn and re-turn again. The guidance that I followed from deep inside did not come from the head, but the gut and the heart. Or, was it in fact, the soul?

On the point of 'white' ego, Romanyshyn's theories on the re-search leading me could assist me in navigating my being alert and accountable in the work:

There is also an obligation, an internal imperative that is *more about the work than it is about me*. There is a *vocation* in the work that requires a response... (p.3, my italics).

Vocation comes etymologically from the Latin, vocare, to call. A vocation is a calling, being hailed by something beyond the self or selfish. (Yet a vocation in research as in life is not without ego or violence. I think of missionaries.) But Romanyshyn brings in the notion of agency:

The ego as author of the work has to 'die' to the work to become *the agent in service to those for whom the work is being done*. (p.6, my italics).

This again addresses the challenge of Ahmed's 'double-turn': that this research must be about the work to end racism and white supremacy and it is only about me and my whiteness

insofar as it leads outwards through my agency. It also chimed for me with Yancy: “[they] failed to listen, *to hear themselves called from elsewhere*. They failed to tarry with the gravitas of the reality of white supremacy...” (Yancy, 2015, p.xviii, his italics).

However, in order for me to be able to work towards that, Romanyshyn suggests the researcher must explore the deep roots, the call inside them that is the reason why this work has claimed specifically me, *and keeps claiming me*. I am calling this the deeper un-suturable wound.

Another reason why Romanyshyn’s work has spoken to me, is to do with 'white' people’s action against whiteness and Eurocentricity. Following my own politics, the demands and cautions from many scholars of colour, I made a commitment that in this thesis I would centre the work, theory, and art of people of colour. So why am I allowing 'white' male scholar Romanyshyn’s ideas in, so centrally? One reason is that for me, he, a 'white' male, is refuting nearly five hundred years of the supremacy of male-driven European mind-body split and secular ego-individualism of “I think, therefore I am” (Descartes, 1968). As a Jungian psychologist, he is still a 'white' male in a 'white'-dominated and racist field, as 'white' UK psychologist Helen Morgan explores in her book *The Work of Whiteness, A Psychoanalytic Perspective* (2021). But he is privileging the very thing – the eruptive, intuitive, profound, disturbed soul – that 'white', male-dominated, European-descended, rationalist academe abhors and delegitimises. Delegitimising ‘the soul’ in research has surely, in Grosfoguel’s terms, been part of a secular-driven epistemicide (2013).

Following Romanyshyn's processes with his research students, I investigate this childhood wound below, not to demonstrate anything exceptional about me and my case, but to illustrate a way a 'white' researcher might re-member the deeper personal motivations, the deeper incisions that underlie and could foster persistence, if surfaced. This is with the goal of strengthening un-suturability towards ongoing research and action against racism. I can also now see that my early attraction to William Pinar’s ‘currere’ - the “project of self-understanding in which one becomes mobilized for engaged pedagogical action” (Pinar, 2004, p.37) - and

the ecomapping biographical techniques which I outlined in Part 1 were in many ways connected to this trajectory.

Life Notes – the wound and the wound. 24 September 2020

I was raised in a majority 'white' suburb of London by a lapsed chapel-going 'white' Welsh mum and an atheist 'white' English dad. In our earlier childhood, my mum took me and my sister to Anglican Sunday school. I have little memory of this aside from singing and sprinkling glitter on religious images. I am a non-believer.

I mention the religious background because in mulling over how to write this section, a question has just formed unbidden in my mind, and it has devastated me. I write it down exactly as it came into my head without editing. I will unpack this unbidden, unfiltered question later.

“How young is too young to discover it’s hell outside the Garden of Eden?”

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A couple of hours ago on social media, I saw a photograph of Yemeni adults and children suffering from near-death starvation **right now**, due to famine caused by the Civil War, and no doubt western interference and arms sales, and a murderous dearth of humanitarian support. Horrified once at the images, and twice by the British media’s almost complete lack of coverage of this unspeakable catastrophe, it reminded me that this afternoon I had tasked myself with writing about ‘the opened wound’ (Yancy, 2016) and ‘the wounded researcher’ (Romanyshyn, 2013).

Here is an extract from notes I made as part of a PhD journal entry in April 2014:

What about the impacts of global politics on the very young, even at second hand? I was 5 or 6 years old when I was traumatised for months by accidentally seeing footage of the war in Biafra [Nigeria] and its impacts – the thousands of dead. In my mind's eye, even now I can see the images of starving, injured, and displaced people - children and babies staring into cameras with huge eyes, bellies bloated and limbs stick-thin. I begged and begged my dad for an explanation as to why we couldn't save the babies, how any of it was even possible. An impossible question to answer, although he tried in language appropriate to my level. With hindsight, he probably should have hugged me, told me I was too young and sung me to sleep, instead of the nightly distressed conversations, enveloped in his arms.

I remember today the terrible feeling of imminence, of knowing this was happening **right now**, as I went to school, as I played with my friends, as I attempted to sleep in leafy North London in clean sheets, with material security, love, and a nourished body. I remember the feeling of frantic desperation, worrying and worrying what to do. My parents told me only later, in my 20s, that my nightly terrors went on for nearly eighteen months. They had reached the stage where they thought I might need to see a child psychologist when it began to abate. (JT PhD notes, 2014)

I reflect on this passage written six years ago [now ten years ago], six years where reading and learning through the PhD has been transformative. I now see two big things that I couldn't see before: I misrepresented a key societal and structural element in the story; and that my parents played a role in normalising white privilege and entrenching racism in me. Both of these are important to understanding whiteness in this second deeper wound. Both of these are varieties of 'white' ambush in me.

The misrepresentation is that it wasn't 'accidental' that I saw that footage from the civil war in Nigeria. It was enabled by an adult world that I and many 'white' children trusted. This was structural racism played out on children's TV.

In a now famous case, the iconic BBC TV children's programme *Blue Peter* had chosen the plight of the children of Biafra as their Christmas Fundraising Appeal for 1968. The intention was to assist with building a hospital in Biafra. To galvanise support, they showed film footage of the starving, orphaned babies and children. In my mind's eye, there were never any adults in the footage. The babies and children were depicted as utterly alone and helpless which was completely terrifying to me. I couldn't 'read' that there must be adults there otherwise who was holding the camera? However, I suspect had I known that, it would have led to other questions about the responsibilities of journalists. I don't remember thinking about race but surely in my nearly all-'white' primary school, their difference in skin colour must have played a part for me even as a child.

Blue Peter was a much-loved children's programme that everyone unquestioningly assumed was always appropriate for primary school children (5 - 11 years old). My thinking now is that it was whiteness at work that made the Blue Peter producers feel it was somehow appropriate to show these horrific and dehumanising images of Black children's suffering to an audience which they assumed, in their whiteness, was mostly 'white' children. It is unthinkable to imagine them showing the victims of a famine in this way where 'white' children were the victims – children resembling their assumed viewers.⁶⁴

It is because these children were 'other' and already - for many 'white' British viewers educated in 'white' British imperialism and supremacy - expected to be in states of utter abjection precisely because they were Black (or Brown). After all, at our dinner table and many across the country at that time we were encouraged to eat up with "Think of the starving Africans (Indians...)". Thus in post-colonial missionary mode, however condemned they were to desperate lives, it was by birth and not by the deeds of racist history and white supremacist colonial geopolitics. Indeed, Blue Peter's much-loved presenter Valerie Singleton's explanation for the war in a Nigeria whose boundaries had been decided by Britain in 1914, which had been a British colony up until only eight years previous to Biafra, was also a

⁶⁴ Note written in March 2023: In the war and invasion of Ukraine, we see echoes of this in how Ukrainian refugees who are 'white' are described and treated in the media, compared to Ukrainian refugees who are from the global majority. Read: *They are 'civilised' and 'look like us': the racist coverage of Ukraine* (Bayoumi, 2021).

dissembling and a concealment of British interests and provocation in the war: “We’re not going to say who is right or wrong [Nigeria or Biafra]. All we can say is that war is always wrong”, she said (Worker’s Liberty, 2013, my insertion).

I have recently re-read Joseph Conrad’s novel *Heart of Darkness*, set on a voyage inland on the River Congo which Marlow, the ‘white’ male protagonist, describes as nightmarish, filled with scenes of Africans in states of destitution, desperation and outrage all of which terrify him. It cannot be otherwise that the coverage of the Biafran War played very much into the discourse of Black savagery that Conrad so corrosively and indelibly put into the world. Such footage might have been shocking to uninitiated, un-innoculated (un-sutured?) young ‘white’ viewers like me, but it would be comprehensible to their ‘white’ families who were surely the only viewers and families the producers could imagine. This could not happen now in quite the same way,⁶⁵ but it did happen then and 1968’s Christmas Appeal remains one of the most successful in Blue Peter’s history.

Turning to the revelation: in my notes I appear to accept the fact that my ‘white’ dad and mum allowed the trauma to root in me for eighteen months. That is a lengthy duration for a child to be losing sleep every night in distress and panic: nearly a third of my life.

What was going on? What can that crisis illuminate in Romanyshyn’s terms of the *wounded researcher*? How can understanding this crisis assist understanding racism for this thesis, and assist others?

As a child I found my dad a very reassuring figure. However I and my sister also sometimes found him intimidating because as a lecturer in a university, we knew he must be ‘clever’. He wasn’t talkative, so when he spoke, his words carried weight. The pattern of my distress was

⁶⁵ The deployment of stark images of suffering Black children and Black adults by ‘well-intentioned’ ‘white’ people was a feature of Band Aid’s 1984 campaign, founded by Irish musician Bob Geldof, to support relief of a devastating famine in Ethiopia. Among other criticisms of Band Aid’s campaign, the use and abuse of Black lives and Black dignity through such imagery caused a blast of criticism and protest led by Black people. This did change the discourse. ‘Black Death Spectacle’ however remains a phenomenon of whiteness, as in the case of Dana Schutz’s painting of murdered African-American boy Emmett Till: *Open Casket* (2016) (Sargent, 2017).

this: having been put to bed in the early evening, I always woke in panic after mum had gone to bed, but when Dad was still up watching television. I would enter the living room in tears. Every night as he hugged me, he tried to calm me by engaging me intellectually in questions of good and evil as an explanation for the brutal actions in this civil war. He didn't talk about the reasons behind the Biafran war. He didn't talk about a country called 'Nigeria' and British interests and history there. He did not frame the 'evil behaviour' as having any roots outside Black people or Africa. In terms of my development, his explanations with *no action or activism attached*, entrenched a deep despair in his child.

Dad's role in this is an irony in that I discovered as I grew into a young adult that dad was a Leftist and hated the British Empire. However this does not mean he was not racist. He left me with a desolate sense of injustices with no explanation and no solution. My parents, by depoliticising the situation with me, pathologised me and them: I was too distressed, the direct perpetrators were evil. Rather than sharing their own concern and outrage, and explaining the situation in societal terms that took responsibility away from their troubled child, they did nothing to disrupt whiteness's business-as-usual, 'white' innocent narrative of what could now be called Black-on-Black violence, and sitting back uneasily at the 'Black Death Spectacle'.

I wrote in 2014 that during my crisis he spoke 'at my level' and 'appropriately', yet I now know that is not true. Why did I misrepresent this to myself in my private notes? This is, I'd suggest, 'white' opacity' at work in that I didn't want to record in ink what I knew deep in my heart, even to myself (Yancy, 2015). Moreover I couldn't imagine that my lovely 'white' dad and mum did not know how to take care of me, despite their love. I needed to hide both of these feelings because I didn't want to think of dad and mum as failing me, or being racist.

However this is the deeper wound: their whiteness fostered my whiteness, my acceptance of abjection of Black lives as normal (if distressing) yet nothing to do with me, my expected acceptance of 'our' historical subjection of them.

So, in terms of this personal deeper wound, and returning to my unbidden question above, Eden, for this six-year old was the largely 'white' community in the middle-class suburb where I was raised in heteronormativity by a 'white' mum and a 'white' dad, much like Adam and Eve before the fall. My Eden was safe 'white' England, 'white' Britain.

Conversely, 'hell', - which Blue Peter described to its young viewers and that my parents did nothing to reconfigure - was this place 'Africa', where an apparently inexplicable, brutal civil war between violent Black people left innocent Black babies and children to starve or die alone. Nothing to do with Britain or with 'us'.

My understanding now is that this wound acted as a philosophical, existential, ontological 'incision' in a child's consciousness, summed up in my not consciously yet undoubtedly racialised pleas to dad: how can [Black] people do this to children? How can we [good 'white' people] allow it? What can we [good 'white' people] do?

Sara Ahmed is suspicious:

But the question [What can 'white' people do?] in all of these modes of utterance, can work to *block* hearing; in moving on from the present towards the future, it can also move away from the object of critique, or place the white subject 'outside' that critique in the present of the hearing. In other words, the desire to act, to move, or even to move on, can stop the message 'getting through'. (Ahmed, 2004, paragraph 56, her italics)

Did this intense period of childhood depression and searching for action 'block' my hearing about the role of the whiteness in this situation, to work with Ahmed's terms?

While dad's philosophical approach was problematic and arguably its prolongation caused me harm, I wonder now if the nightly practice of our conversation inculcated a habit to *stay with and keep demanding* answers on injustice. I didn't stop asking and he didn't stop me. Did this

build a kind of stamina? Did this episode in fact inculcate an alertness to racism and the impulse to anti-racism?

To hear the work of exposure requires that white subjects inhabit the critique, *with its lengthy duration*, and to recognise the world that is re-described by the critique as one in which they live. (Ahmed, 2004, paragraph 57, her italics)

Half a century later, I re-turn to Romanyshyn's proposition that the re-searcher is the agent, operating on behalf of an original knowledge that they knew to be true:

Who is writing this work? This question is not merely rhetorical. Indeed, it is the central question that lies at the heart of re-search done with soul in mind. If I am less the author of this work and more its agent, who, *standing at the edge of the work, is addressed by it, then the image of myself as the writer of this book is truly to be de-centered*. (Romanyshyn, 2013, p.16, my italics)

Ironically given the theme of the deeper wound, the persistent incision, I have only scratched the surface of what Romanyshyn's work has brought to my research. However, I feel more supported in attempting to tread the anti-narcissistic path of "the agent" who is "addressed" by the work. It has been significant for me to understand not only politically but also psychologically and in terms of racism's traumas, that while, in Romanyshyn's terms, I "am being worked on, and at times being '*worked over*'" by the research process, the work itself called me, is coming through me, and yet is absolutely not about me (2013, p.16, my italics).

I plan to deepen into Romanyshyn's methods and processes for my future work with 'white' peers, outside the academy.

"The teaching of white privilege in schools as uncontested fact in school is illegal."

October 2020

This backlash to a surge in post-#BLM solidarity was issued by Kemi Badenoch, the Equalities Minister for the very right-wing Conservative government. The quote is from her announcement later backed up on her website (Murray, 2020, Badenoch 2021).

In November 2024, Badenoch, a Black cis woman, became Leader of the Conservative Party.

'Closer to the skin' – whiteness and coloniality in 'white' art educators

Chapter published in ***Debates in Art and Design Education***, by Nicholas Addison and Lesley Burgess (eds), (2021), London: Routledge, pp.123-140. (Trowell, 2021)

I know it is a common phenomenon for writers, once published, to feel they've moved on from their work, especially when there is a nearly two-year gap between drafting the chapter, and publication. How had my rapidly evolving understandings of whiteness changed in the two years since signing off the final draft? On receiving the package in January, a week passed before I felt ready to open the book and read my chapter again. While I had made changes in light of Y's and others' critique, would it be something I'd feel confident to promote and to whom? To anti-racist 'white' artists, art educators, cultural workers, scholars, activists who want to learn to see themselves 'from a great distance' and think about how to work through the ambushes, un-sutured, for the long duration? Yes. To Black and global majority artists, art educators, cultural workers, scholars, activists who want to critique how whiteness in art education is being tackled? Yes. Positioned as a 'how-to' piece on how to be a 'white' anti-racist art educator? No.

Creation and Launch of the Shake! the System Trilogy, 2021.

Anthology of Creative Movements; Shake! the System Research Report: a decade of making change 2010-2020; Shake! the System Guidebook: rituals, tools and practices. Edited by Farzana Khan, Sai Murray, Tiff Webster, Rose Ziaei. Coordinator: JT.

In February 2021, I was invited back into *Voices that Shake!* to coordinate the last stages of the Trilogy publishing project *Shake! the System*. These were publications marking ten years of the ground-breaking youth-led programme. The *Anthology* is an exquisitely designed three-hundred page book of poetry, prose, photography and artwork, showcasing Shake! young people's creativity and uncompromising vision. The one-hundred-and-twenty page *Research Report* is researched and written by young people who had themselves been Shake!rs, theorising its methods and impacts, mentored by scholar-elders. The *Report* has been heralded for breaking new ground as youth-led, non-extractive, decolonial research and a vessel for new theory. *The Guidebook* presents the key creative pedagogical and community-healing methods that young people told the researchers were central to the impact of the Shake! programme on their lives. The politics and aesthetics of these vibrant, future-orientated publications and the team that led them deeply influenced me on whose voices most needed to be heard.

The Sewell Report denies 'institutional racism', 30 March 2021

The Conservative government-backed report from the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities "seeks to sideline structural factors attached to racism" (IRR, 2021). The report rolled back advances made since the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry into the racist murder in 1993 of Black architecture student Stephen Lawrence and the role of the police and the judiciary in failing to investigate, arrest and bring his murderers to justice. The Macpherson Report into Stephen's murder brought the term 'institutional racism' into common understanding, and the Report was supported by over seventy recommendations.

The Report instigated government-backed self-examination and policy change across many sectors and set a new standard for work towards race equity (Macpherson, 1999).

Runnymede Trust issues Press Statement countering the Sewell Report, 31 March 2021

The same day, the Trust announced an emergency live online discussion, attended by over two-thousand people (Runnymede, 2021a, 2021b).

Whiteness and Coloniality in Art Education: who am I to do this work?

*Online talk and discussion for Primary's **Salon** Series, Nottingham. Weareprimary.org
1 June 2021. (Trowell, 2021c)*

Primary's *Salon* series promotes a discussion space for artists to share and develop their practice. Out of the online audience of fifteen, there were two artists of the global majority, one of whom I knew well, who had told me in advance they would need to leave before the discussion. After my presentation, on opening the discussion, the other artist of the global majority was first to speak. This artist was a regular participant in the Salon.

Commentary

He started by acutely criticising the event for there being so few people of the global majority which, he said, made him feel exposed and out of place. The 'white' event organiser who knew the speaker well, explained that the usual networks had been contacted and she couldn't explain the low turnout. I contributed that I had invited many people of the global majority who were supportive, in principle, of the research. I said I felt it was understandable, given the focus on whiteness, that even supportive people of the global majority had not wanted to attend. It could be thought of as 'white work'? He was not happy with what this answer suggested about how we work together on anti-racism. Later the artist also expressed disgust at what he felt were inadequate contributions or silence from the other 'white' participants. I understood that the only way to be with his critique was to be active and present in this very conversation. To stay with it.

The next day, the organiser emailed to say that the artist was still disturbed, and wanted to meet both of us, online. I agreed. Two weeks later, the three of us met and he aired his frustrations further. One aspect was personal: in my presentation, he was put off by my delivery, what he called my 'insouciance'. Etymologically, insouciance comes from French for lack of care or worry. I was completely taken aback, but felt I must accept it as his truth: tone of voice and body-language are in the ear and eye of the beholder, and class, whiteness and body language could be speaking *for* me, regardless of content and intention of what I

actually said. It was significant to me that he did not critique the content of my talk, but the my delivery which then became, for him, the content.

Another critique was around the premise of such events: He asked if a one-off online forum was the right way to address this highly charged topic? He had been curious enough to attend, but from the start he'd felt it was wrong. In this both the organiser and I agreed with him. I had been invited, and even though concerns about the difficulties of a one-off online event had been expressed between me and the organiser, we had decided to try. My main concern had indeed been the make-up of the group. Who would show up? What would be the majorities, minorities, who would feel comfortable to speak, who would not. Then he said something like, "But you were wedded to the event going ahead regardless of whether it was the right space, who was present, or how it was going". He called this adherence to formality a 'violent' feature of whiteness, and "I am speaking to your historical selves." It is this profound sentence that has cut the deepest. It relates to the very depth of programming in whiteness that I am alluding to in reference to the historical paintings' transgenerational impacts on being and practices today.

The experience of this event absolutely sits within the suturing and un-suturing that Yancy tasks 'white' people to sit with. It strikes me now that the timing of this event was auspicious with the development of the artwork-thesis over the next two years. With the artwork, I pencilled, rubbed out and re-drew. I painted lines in, painted them out, and painted afresh. I glued, peeled off and later re-glued. I left the edges frayed. The stamina needed in being sutured and un-sutured, shows up in *wanting to make visible* my many crossings-out, my many attempts to create or embody political-ethical relations in the artwork.

Curation continues. Summer 2021

Painting in the lines, adjusting, repositioning. Thinking and re-thinking visual power relations:



Fig 46.



Fig 47.

(Figs 46 and 47). Jane Trowell, Work in progress: painting in 'Sail', 2021.

[Digital photographs]

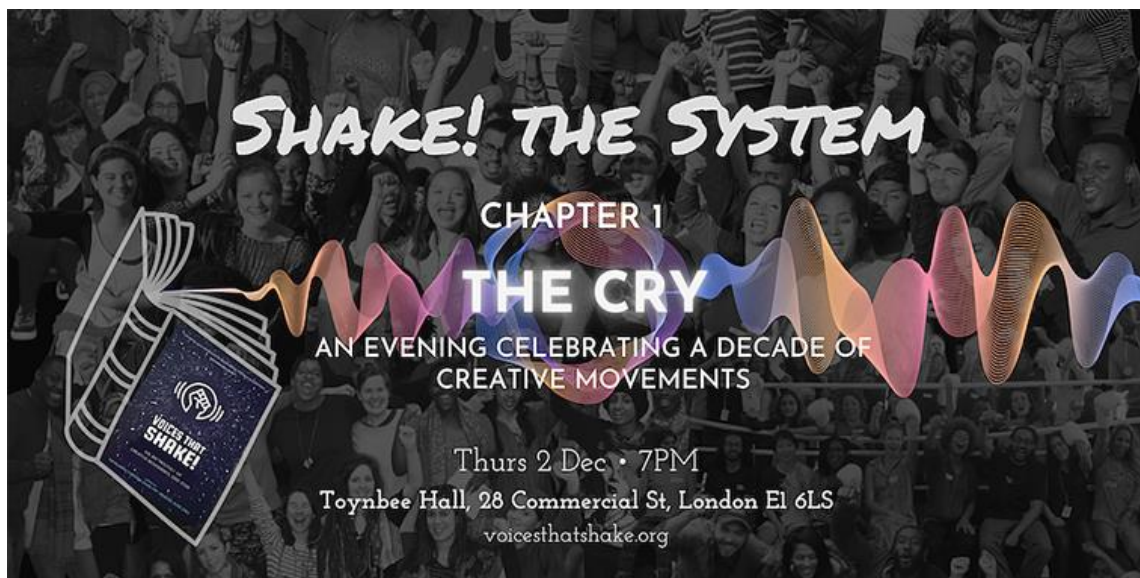
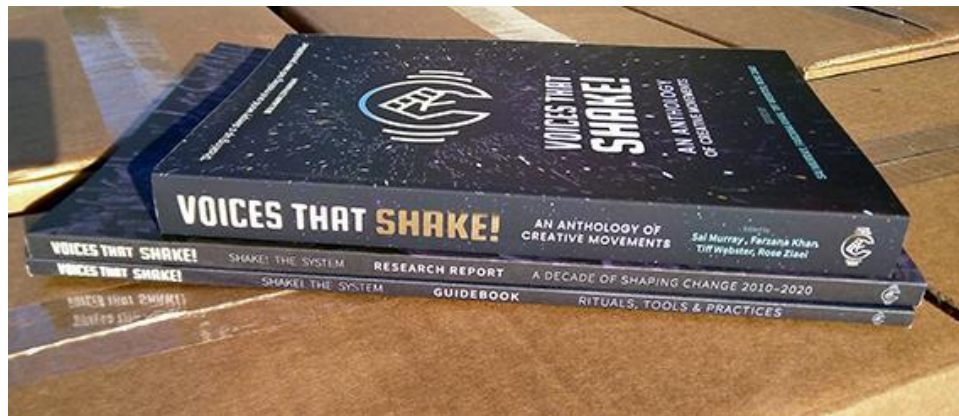


Fig 48. Previous page: JT, *Shake! the System Trilogy*, December 2021. [Photograph]

Middle: Tiff Webster, *Shake! the System Launch e-flyer*, 2021. [Digital flyer].

Bottom: Dhelia Snoussi, *Shake! team including JT and artists at the end of the Launch*, December 2nd 2021. [Digital photograph].

Rishi Sunak, Prime Minister, announces he will 'Stop the Boats', 7 March 2022

The intensification of racist and right-wing policies issued from central government continued.

Sunak held a press conference to announce a new government Illegal Migration Bill that would allow for the deportation of certain categories of male migrants to Rwanda. Sunak gave the speech at a lectern bearing a placard *Stop the Boats*, referring to people and children – assumed to be Black and global majority - seeking asylum in Britain by risking their lives crossing the Channel from France in often unsafe boats.

'Rwanda Plan' partnership launched by Home Office, 14 April 2022

Home Secretary Priti Patel launches the Migration and Economic Development Partnership between UK and Rwandan Governments, in which Rwanda would be paid by Britain to take asylum seekers whose claims are 'inadmissible' in the UK.

Commentary

Stepping back from Voices that Shake!, July 2022

In mid-2022 I was still filled with the work and values of Shake!, the hard-won publications, and the excitement of recruiting a new Programme Manager for the three-year Shake! Legacy Programme, which meant I would step back. I returned my head and heartspace to the PhD. After eighteen months of working as a team to uplift the creativity and publishing of youth pushing back against structural racism, I was suffused with the Trilogy's politics, its poetics of writing, the gorgeous visuality and design, the accessibility of its theory, the collaborative

editorial process and leadership from young people. The issues in my research were more burning for me than ever, yet the writing felt remote. By this point the Post-graduate School had already granted two deadline extensions. The absolutely final 'submission' date for me was mid-March 2023.

Staff development workshops on whiteness, University of Z, London

Co-design and co-facilitation of a series of workshops for Personal Tutors, with Y.
September 2022 - June 2023

In late summer 2022, I was approached by Y who we met in Part 2 in the email exchange 'What's it got to do with me?'. Y worked at the University of Z where his role is in staff development for student academic success. He invited me to collaborate with him to co-conceive and co-pilot a learning process for academic staff on addressing whiteness and racism as a root cause of the unacceptable 8.8% Degree Awarding Gap between Black students and others. At University of Z in 2022, 72% of staff are 'white'. 11% are Asian, 8% are other, and 4% are Black. Yet 57.8% of students are Asian (25.8%), Black (23.9%) or Mixed (7.6%). 35.5% of students are white (Sotiropoulou, 2021). I accepted the contract, and we began work on it in late August.

Commentary

We devised an in-person Pilot which ran in the academic year 2022-23 with 6-10 people. We both agreed that the pedagogical and curriculum design and Pilot offered fertile experience, from which we gained useful feedback from the committed participants. However, the institution would not mandate the training as obligatory, and therefore participation was voluntary. [Update: We reviewed the pilot in early 2024 and were funded to develop a new iteration as a (still optional) online learning programme, launched November 2024. The institution is typical of a contradiction of whiteness: 'committed' to their Access and Participation Plan, yet complicit in upholding the inequity. *Voluntarism in addressing whiteness will not change the Degree Awarding Gap.*

Curation completed. Summer 2022

Figs 49 - 52. Jane Trowell, *'Sail'* painted, montaged and adorned with pearls,
August 2022. [Digital photographs]

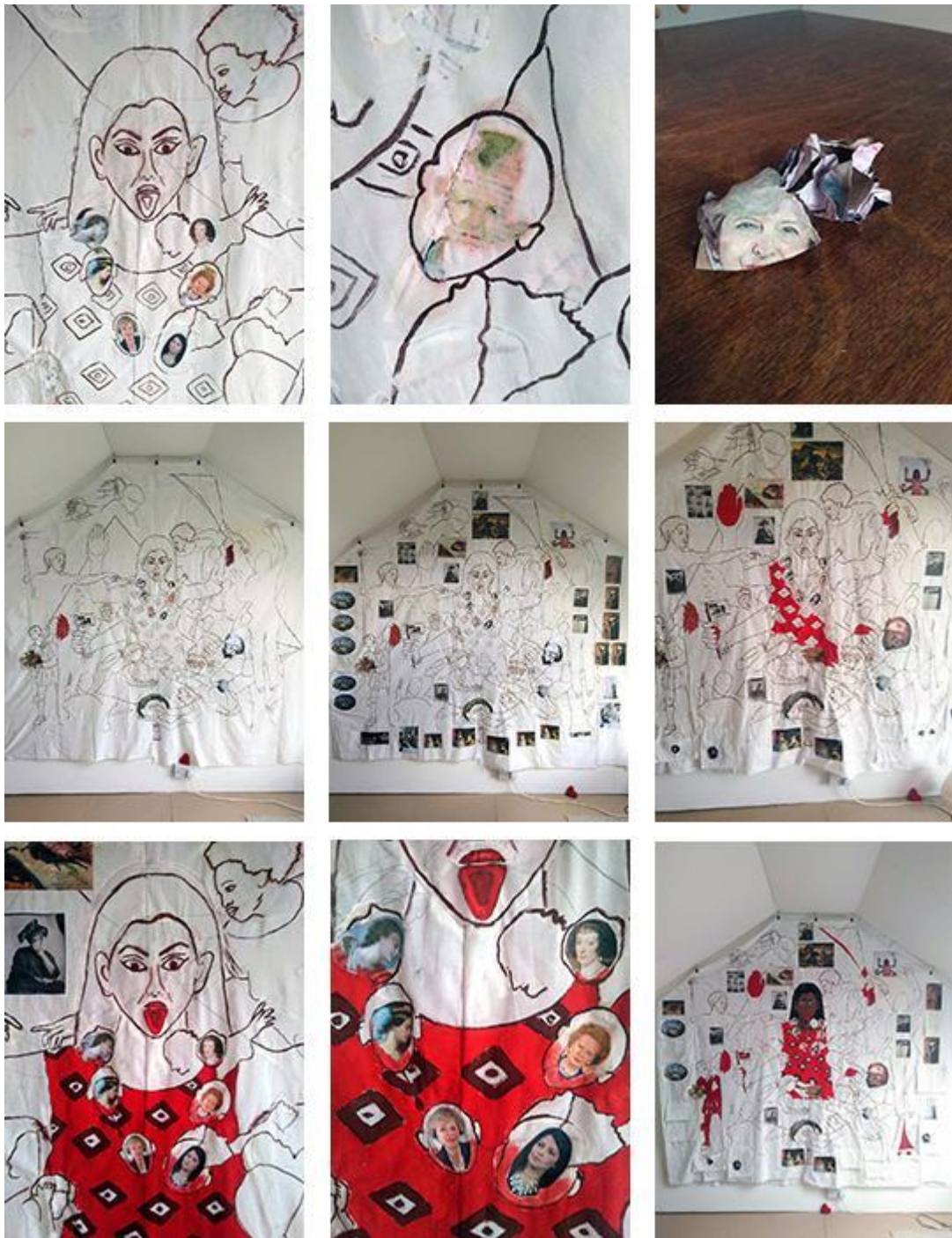


Fig 49.



Fig 50.



Fig 51.



Fig 52.



Fig 53. Jane Trowell, 'Sail' completed (October 2022)

Learning from the artwork

Part of the learning on my PhD journey on racism, coloniality and whiteness in art education, was the paradox that while operating in the field of art education, and advocating for the visual, it was easy even for me to forget the visual. As an example, it was retrospectively sobering for me to notice my logocentricity in the MPhil Transfer essay and Nottingham application. The power of the academic-convention-in-the-head is arresting. Was this the long tail of 'iconoscepticism' in academia playing out, even in me? (Addison, 2003).

As for everyone, imagery prompts different *thinking* for me to written or spoken language. It also prompts different *feeling and being*. I wanted to deepen into this. Historical visual imagery, especially depicting elite 'white' people in racialised power relations that have been made normal and genteel, once unnormalised, can't be unseen: it evokes and provokes emotional and embodied reactions that are disturbing, insightful and pedagogic. As a teacher, I also have long experience of working with images as generators of discussion, and teaching about present-day coloniality using historical paintings. Some images do the work by themselves, and some do through curatorial juxtapositions, and some with prompts and scaffolding by the teacher. This onto-epistemological, somatic and pedagogical power of selected imagery I explored with the wall-piece.

Secondly, I wanted to work creatively with images in order to reach 'white' educator colleagues who might be resistant to words (spoken or written), who are reluctant to addressing their positions, to changing their pedagogy and curriculum, to changing themselves. Written words alone won't reach those who are resistant to or don't have a habit of reading, or who are dyslexic. Many art educators can be logosceptic, believing that the rise of art theory and the demand that artists express their ideas in words has damaged the unique and ineffable power of the visual or sculptural.

Over three summers, as described in the curation notes above, I found myself working with the three historical portraits of the elite 'white' women. I wanted to defuse their power. I

speculated about curating an actual exhibition, juxtaposing these portraits with contemporary work that 'spoke back' and 'undid' them. Instead I used a wall in the loft, initially using print-offs of reproductions from the internet, curating them into different configurations. I selected and interrogated counter-images, confronting images with each other, exploring shifts in meaning and dynamics, seeing how colour, composition and scale operates, montaging and editing them. Later, once I started bringing the piece together on the cotton sheeting, I borrowed a digital projector from which I could trace lines. Eventually I made a new work inspired by and composed from the artists' works, a kind of transcription (Morphet, 2000).

Below are the historical paintings that the reader encountered before in Parts 1 and 2 but in the chronology of this reflective practice memoir I have new things to say about acts of 'undoing'.



Fig 54. Anthony Van Dyck, *Henrietta of Lorraine with a kidnapped and enslaved African child*, (1634) [Oil on canvas, 213.4 x 127 cm.] Kenwood House, Hampstead, London. (Original title: *Princess Henrietta of Lorraine accompanied by a page*)



Fig 55. Spiridione Roma, *Britannia Coercing Wealth from The East*, (1771) [Oil on canvas, 228 x 305 cm.] Commissioned by the Honourable East India Company for its London head office. Now in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Whitehall, London. (Original title: *The East Offering its Riches to Britannia*)



Fig 56. Thomas Jones Barker, *Victoria deploying the Bible as a Hypnotic, backed by Guns*, (1863) National Portrait Gallery, London. (Original title: 'The Secret of England's Greatness')

In 2022, I participated in a workshop on 'Description and Access for Anti-Black Archival Materials', facilitated by Melissa J Nelson for Art360 Foundation. Learning from this, I've proposed 'reparative re-descriptions' or 'supply titles' - as Melissa and other progressive archivists term them - because the paintings' traditional titles are lies. They normalise and hide the violence of white supremacy (Nelson, 2020). Thus I put my supply titles first, and the traditional title is in brackets.

In the summer of 2021, I realised I needed a platform or a context to do the speaking back and the undoing. I sought a resonant, wider, compositional structure to 'hold' the critique of the portraits. The final historical artwork that I referenced had long been haunting me for this thesis. It broadens the critique of white supremacy beyond Britain to its proper Western European scale. It is Théodore Géricault's giant-scale *The Raft of the Medusa* (1818/9), currently in the Louvre, Paris. The painting commemorates the multi-racial survivors of the infamous shipwreck of the flagship Medusa, off the coast of present-day Mauritania. The flagship was conveying the new French Governor and entourage to the country now called Senegal, where, amongst other duties, he was to oversee the cessation of the trade in enslaved Africans. In fact he profited from letting the deathly trade continue, as he profited from abandoning the Raft with its desperate 'lower order' passengers. I chose this painting because of the marriage between history and its contemporary relevance given the many thousands of people who still cross perilous waters in the attempt to leave lives made unliveable by capitalism, war, climate change. The Raft's survivors are particularly notable for my thesis on racism, coloniality and whiteness because Géricault depicts Black, brown and swarthy and 'white' men as equals. Indeed the man in the apex position, hailing the distance ship, a signaller for salvation, is clearly dark-skinned. As I will explore in Part 0, the depiction was radical for its time, and arguably still is now.

The Raft of the Medusa also provided me with a double-pyramidal compositional structure which I used in my piece. The two apexes formed by the mast to the left and the flag-waving figure on the right suggest the two axes of racial capitalist trade that the three historical portraits reference. One is the Atlantic 'triangular trade' that enabled Western European

powers to traffic African people and dominate lands through extraction of gold/sugar/tobacco: the triangle of Europe/Africa/Caribbean&Americas. The other is the exploitation and extortion of peoples and lands to the East: the spices/tea/fabrics and later opium 'trade' between European countries and India, South-east Asia, and China, using silver from the Americas, as seen in Spiridione Roma's painting of Britannia.



Fig 57. Théodore Géricault, *The Raft of the Medusa*, (1818/19). [Oil on canvas, 491 by 716cm.] Louvre, Paris.

While *The Raft of the Medusa* offered me a meaningful and resonant overall structure for my visual piece, I also wanted to ensure that European power, including that of liberal 'white'

male Géricault, would be de-centred, spoken back to, superceded by Black and global majority critique.

Sutapa Biswas' *Housewives with Steak-knives* is one of three pieces by contemporary artists that I made central to speaking back through the wallpiece as thesis. As with the three historical pieces, these contemporary works by Black and global majority cis women artists are ones that would not leave me, that haunt me, hold me to account, and compel me on. As discussed above I have a long association with *Housewives with Steak-knives*. I wanted Kali to govern my piece and exact justice. It was important to me that it is *Biswas's version of Kali* in this role. This is because Indian-born Biswas went to art school in Leeds in the 1980s, and was one of that era's pioneers in critiquing and challenging whiteness and racism in art. Now considered one of the iconic pieces of late 20th century British art, Biswas's Kali was an absolute assertion of presence, of history, of rights. For me this wasn't just the East speaking back to Britannia, but her diaspora daughters, and her daughters' daughters. It's significant for me too that Biswas suggests an allyship across oceans, when, in the detail of Kali's flag, she makes common cause between Kali and historical paintings of another sister avenging patriarchal violence:



Fig 58. Sutapa Biswas, Detail of flag from *Housewives with Steak-knives*, 1983-5, on which is collaged a photocopy of *Judith decapitating Holofernes* by Artemisia Gentileschi (1612).

The other two contemporary works I first encountered shortly after they were made in 2017 and immediately saw in them the power to 'speak back' to the portraits. In Part 1, I introduced and contextualised Khadija Saye's self-portrait series *Dwelling: in this space we breathe*. The power of each of these exquisite, absorbing photographs for me was their aesthetic, but also in their self-sufficiency to themselves, in Ghanaian and Muslim ontologies and spiritualities, not requiring the gaze or validation of Western eyes. That their maker had died under unspeakable structural racism/classism here in the UK, was also deeply important to my thesis. I remind us of the series here:



Fig 59. Khadija Saye, *Dwelling: in this space we breathe*, (2016/17).

The third contemporary piece is *The Creation of God*, by Harmonia Rosales (2017), one of her B.I.T.C.H series, which stands fabulously for *Black Imaginary To Counter Hegemony*. The piece claims Michelangelo Buonarroti's iconic *Creation of Adam*⁶⁶ by repainting it with bold, uncompromising Black female protagonists. I came across Chicago-based Rosales' work in May 2017 as a result of the racist furore and 'white' backlash that her loving but penetrating re-narration of classic European artworks was provoking the US, as well as in the UK (Nagesh, 2017; Laneri, 2017).



Fig 60. Harmonia Rosales, *The Creation of God*, (2017). [Oil on linen, 48 x 60in.]

⁶⁶ *The Creation of Adam* famously depicts God reaching out to a 'white' Adam: the 'white' European male as the determiner of fate. It is from the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican, Rome, painted between 1508-1512.

Over the summers of 2021 and 2022, I found myself making a big wall piece, which I came to see as a kind of sail, for a kind of raft, where my renditions of these images speak to each other across time and space, overseen by Kali. In summer 2023, I read about Sutapa Biswas' process of creating *Housewives* in her catalogue *Lumen* which had an uncanny resonance with my piece. As Biswas began painting it, *Housewives* kept growing in size, as she required more space. Biswas found herself "stitching sections of materials together in the way that a sail is made" (Biswas, 2021, p.27). More uncannily, Biswas wanted the top edge of *Housewives* to be hung 330mm proud of the wall, leaning over the viewer "lending a sense of movement in the way that a sail does" (2021, p.28). A sail meets a sail?

In terms of transcription, because one of my concerns is about 'white' women art educator's role in perpetrating and perpetuating racism, I saw a substitution I could make in *Housewives*. In considering Kali's necklace of men's heads, I found myself drawn to replacing them with the heads of women whom I see as actively driving 'white' patriarchy and white supremacy's agenda. Into the outlines of the male heads of Biswas' original I pasted print-offs of Henrietta, Britannia, Victoria, Margaret Thatcher and Theresa May. Then, as current political events unfolded, I added Conservative government ministers Priti Patel, and Suella Braverman.⁶⁷ In all of the historical portraits, I'd noticed that pearls are worn, which is no surprise as pearls were (and are) a high-status jewel and very much part of early rampant colonial trade. I was curious to see if I could find images for each of the contemporary women wearing pearls, and I did.

I wanted to indicate that white supremacy runs not just through these right-wing women, but also so-called well-meaning liberal/left and often 'white' feminist allies, on occasions including me (Herbert in Robinson, 1987). I am also in the wallpiece: on the right-hand side as Modulor; and montaged into the historical paintings.

⁶⁷ Theresa May was Home Secretary under the Conservative government from 2010 - 2016, famously heralding in the "hostile environment" for "illegal immigrants" in a speech in 2012. Priti Patel was Home Secretary under the Conservative government 2019 - 2022, leading on negotiations with the Rwanda government on deportation. Suella Braverman was appointed Home Secretary in October 2022 under the next Conservative government, determined to defeat the legal challenges to the Rwanda deal brought by human rights lawyers.

Initially I saw this visual work I was making as personal, emotional & intellectual, even therapeutic. It helped me deal with anger and outrage, disgust and grief at the violence of racism. I could explore my implicatedness and also a desire for revenge. My efforts were homemade, a rough and ready assemblage, yet also way to think through all that I was taking in and trying to understand from the contributors in the 'fieldwork'.

I had no thought of sharing the piece in any public or published way, not even in this thesis. It was only in the last-minute decision to submit the thesis as a reflective practice memoir that I realised that it could be useful to share the learning from it by featuring it in the thesis. Discoveries or suspicions of whiteness in the process of making it could say something useful about visibility as a way to theorise and understand whiteness. It could also be impactful or useful to share an attempt at, let's say, 'reparative art historical activism'. However it raises issues of ethics. I can say the piece is within the tradition of 'artistic transcription', but I have 'extracted' from historical and living artists' artworks, interpreting them and juxtaposing them to advance my inquiry. If I were ever to publicly exhibit this piece in a real space or through social media, I would inform and ask for consent from Sutapa Biswas, Harmonia Rosales and the estate of Khadija Saye. This realisation gives me pause: I think I've learnt a lot about whiteness through developing the piece but can I see my very own whiteness in the urge to make it *at all*? I return to this, with feedback from Black and global majority peers, in the Reflections on Part 3 that follow.

For now, I present it as an embodiment of a key stage in my PhD research process. It is a version of the thesis stitched together in visual mode: content, process and form.

Inspired by suggestive terms that rhyme with 'Sail', I've thought of calling the piece:

Sail, Assail, Assay, Essay

Homage to: Sutapa Biswas' *Housewives with Steak-knives* (1983-5), Harmonia Rosales' *The Creation of God* (2017), Khadija Saye's *Dwelling: in this space we breathe* (2017).

Speaking back to: Anthony Van Dyck's *Henrietta of Lorraine...* (1634), Spiridione Roma's *Britannia...* (1771), and Thomas Jones Barker's *Victoria* (1863).

In solidarity with those on board Théodore Géricault's *The Raft of the Medusa* (1818/9), and their present-day descendants on this earth's troubled seas.

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Reflections: on lowering the sail

This Part ends in Autumn 2022. After eight and a half years of study, I had six months to go until the submission deadline in March 2023. I was still brimful of contributors' testimony although had not yet found a path to express what I had found there.

Earlier, supported by Romanyshyn's work on soul, I had taken courage to confront an early childhood experience of inculcation into racism, and perhaps anti-racism. Through that, I suggested a method for working with 'white' people going forward.

The visual piece *Sail* was for me complete, although it may appear to others to be unfinished. However, the whiteness in *Sail* was haunting me. In late September 2022, I approached my colleague W, asking them if, in a paid capacity, they would be interested in critiquing it and mentoring me. W is a younger Black colleague who is an artist, filmmaker and cultural producer and we had worked closely together through Voices that Shake!. They agreed to this work, and in preparation for our session they studied *Sail*, and read my description. In our session they opened by telling me they understood that the piece "was primarily for me to express the totality of the research". They said they were intrigued and engaged by what they called the "intervisuality", the "dialogue between images".⁶⁸ Yet they had very big questions.

Before the session, I had thought that W might object to focusing on the historical portraits as reproducing them re-centres whiteness and reinscribes Black and global majority people in positions of subjection. W did not raise this however.

W's immediate concern was the appropriacy of my working with Khadija Saye's artwork, even in a private developmental piece that was attempting to honour her. Because of the ongoing anguish and lack of justice for all those who had died in the Grenfell Fire including Khadija and her mother, for those still injured, those bereaved and in shock and in temporary housing, W felt it was far too soon for a 'white' artist, even in private, to attempt to make work about the

⁶⁸ All quotations are cited from my notes taken with W's permission during the conversation, October 2022.

fire or to allude to it through Saye's art. I had been concerned about this, and respected this critique.⁶⁹

They also felt I disregarded what was an essence of *Dwelling*. This was a self-portraiture work by a Black artist that stood on its own terms, as W put it "refusing to be in conversation", refusing even to take an "oppositional gaze" towards European-ness. I said that it was those very qualities that for me led her piece to be an ultimate rebuttal to Henrietta, Britannia and Victoria and all they stood for. W responded: "But Jane, by including it you have forced the work into a conversation Khadija didn't intend."

We talked about whether, hypothetically, it would feel different if each of the pieces (Saye, Rosales, Biswas, Gericault, *Sail*, and the historical works) were curated in a real exhibition, with each work whole, taking its own space on the walls, speaking to each other in three dimensions with full consent of all living artists and their estates. We both felt that if those consents were in place, it might work better. On reflection I felt the truth in W's critique of how I had included Khadija Saye's work: I had coopted her into my anti-whiteness project, whereas at least with the other two pieces - Rosales' *Creation of God* and Biswas' *Housewives with Steak-knives* - confrontation with patriarchal white supremacy was intrinsic to the work.

W's next concern was startling: they felt I was "reproducing violence" in a lot of the piece. The 'blemish removal' portraits that blotted out the 'white' women were visually interesting to W, but they were unclear what political conclusions I was intending for viewers to understand from this. The racialised 'others' were left alone in the picture, liberated from the oppressive presence of the 'white' woman, but wider whiteness had definitely not stopped operating. W was also not convinced by my using white paint to cover up changes: "What does this 'whiting out' and erasure mean to you? It's still *erasure*." I realised that I could come across as

⁶⁹ There are powerful street-based visual tributes and murals in the area around Grenfell still today. It was only in April 2023, that the first 'commissioned' artwork commemorating Grenfell was produced. It was made with the full participation of the Grenfell Survivors group. *Grenfell* is a film by acclaimed Black artist Steve McQueen. It centres on a single-shot of spiraling drone footage of the burnt tower, and is entirely without words (Searle, 2023).

the 'white' controller, positioning conscripted participants where I wanted them, whereas, what I had been trying to do in nakedly revealing the cover-ups, repositionings and repaintings was to make visible the complexity in the ethics of racialised visual relations.

The questioned me montaging my own face on place of the three ruling women's heads: why was I so self-critical? I explained my theory of the 'afterlife' of such images in contemporary educator's behaviour. I told W about Margaret Trowell. Yet, even as a pedagogical shock tactic, W wasn't convinced of what this was 'doing' for me or for other 'white' women. W also didn't like my replacement of Kali's necklace of severed male heads with the heads of female perpetrators: what action was I actually advocating? Why had I enlisted Kali? And wasn't I letting white patriarchy being let off the hook?

I was sobered but not totally surprised by W's readings. I came to realise from this conversation how much my own anger was playing out through the imagery. The making of it had been useful, passionate, mournful, necessary and, yes, vengeful for me, but it was politically complicated. Yet, when I began to compare Marc Quinn's motivations in approaching Jen Reid to 'put her' on the Colston plinth... and my own in 'putting' people on the raft, the hairs on the back of my neck usefully stood on end. I will return to this in the In-Conclusion.

After the session with W, I fretted over the print-offs of Khadija Saye's *Dwelling* photographs that I had glued onto *Sail*. They would tear if I tried to ease them off and this would feel like a renewed harm. I decided to make covers for them, pinned in each corner. This too is not right, but it is an acknowledgment of my appropriative act and it attempts to honour Saye's non-participation in Western gazes or framings. It also served to remind me how much impact Saye's work and life has had on me.

Addendum from June 2024.

U came for a social visit. U is an artist, lecturer and PhD buddy with parental roots in India, born and raised in London. U had only seen a digital photograph of *Sail* and was intrigued as

they know Biswas' piece very well . At first glance their reaction was positive: "Love it!". Then, approaching, they immediately asked: "But why isn't it *you* in the centre? Why's Kali there?" I explained that Biswas's Kali was holding me/whiteness accountable, avenging white supremacy as perpetuated by 'white' women and women promoting whiteness. U did not miss a beat: "You need to hold *yourselves* accountable. Put a mirror there or something?"

I replied, "I did have a mirror there early on, but the mirror felt like I was centring whiteness, again. And see?! I *am* there... [pointing] here, here, here... and here".

They looked more closely at elements in the piece, chuckling as they lifted hinged flaps of fabric to look at the montaged images. They found humour, which was very different to W. U is a passionate educator and wanted to know the sequence of how the piece was made. They had ideas for more approaches to using historical imagery to understand present conditions. They concluded 'How you made this would make for a good pedagogical method with students'.

After they left, I ruminated on U's instant conceptual-political dismissal of placing Biswas's Kali in the centre of my piece. But Kali at the centre was *the whole point*. To be judged from elsewhere, an entirely different value system! To re-centre definitions of power. The East exacting justice! And it's *Biswas's Kali...from 1984!*

But, I also realised that U's almost playful comment about Kali left me much lighter about my image-making, released from a self-portentiousness. Two years after the intense and highly sensitised critique from W, I completely let go: the visual piece was a significant learning experience for me. And, with all the visible crossings-out and re-positionings, it was as problematic and contentious, full of ambushes, open to interpretation and in the eye of the racialised beholder as any written work on whiteness that I was falteringly attempting to write. It was un-suturable.

On previous occasions where the thesis had un-sutured I had felt disruption and arrest. However, this final confirmation of un-suturing felt like a blessing. A physical action was

required. I tenderly lowered the flapping *Sail* off the wall and put the blue cover over it. Knowing that paint and paper would age, crack and peel off and that's ok, I folded it up and stored it in a cupboard.

PART 0 – In which expressing the research through letters is sutured... and un-sutured

Overview

Part 0 covers the few months of this PhD between September 2022 and the submission deadline of 12 March 2023.

Part 0 can be read first or last. It can be read first because that autumn, I planned it to be the new opening for the thesis, laying the theoretical ground. However, as I wrote it last and because this thesis is structured as a chronological memoir, it is positioned last

I was in the endgame for the PhD. The learning from the visual piece had to be put to one side. I had seven months left. How was I going to release myself to write about the contributors' testimony? I realised that I was yearning for fresh interlocutors, fresh addressees. My PhD buddies had all completed, my supervisors were pressured at work and I feared they might be exhausted by me, as I was by myself. I needed a writing method urgently and arrived at the idea of letters.

I have always loved correspondence and also enjoy reading and learning from published letters. Reading theory through letters or a conversational format is an enticing and human way to compel attention, a different experience from reading theory in prose. I felt this for example in the five conversations, some done by email, between Daniel C Blight and diverse scholars in *The Image of Whiteness* (Blight, 2022). There are also powerful one-way letters: James Baldwin's seminal *Letter to my Nephew* from *The Fire Next Time* (1981), Hayley Newman's *Letters to my students* cited in the Introduction (2016), Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Dear Ijeawele, or a feminist manifesto in fifteen suggestions* (2017), or Bàyó Akómóláfé's deeply philosophical book addressed to his toddler daughter, *These wilds beyond our fences. Letters to my daughter on humanity's search for home* (2017). There are also 'open letters', often published as a provocation to challenge another, see for example

Audre Lorde's legendary take-down of white feminism in her *Letter to Mary Daly* (1984), or George Yancy's arresting, courageous *Dear White America* (2015).

Avery F Gordon includes letters and emails as part of *The Hawthorn Archives, Letters from the Margins* (2018), her textual-visual magnum opus; as does Claudia Rankine in her exquisite, disturbing, incisive *Just Us, An American Conversation* (2020).

Letters can be used in the blurry line between fact and fiction. I was gripped by Rachel Delahay's book *My White Best Friend (and other letters left unsaid)* (2020), and the impact of the hair-raising performance that I attended by livestream in 2021. Here 'white' actors opened random sealed envelopes and read out letters written by Black and global majority writers to their 'white' friends, often with difficult, scathing, loving and sometimes humorous content.

Realising how liberating this could be, I decided to write letters to others - mostly Black and global majority addressees - as a way to express theory and understandings in this thesis as well as my problematic positionality as a 'white' researcher. I wondered about writing letters to the contributors, and what that would mean or do. Everybody I told about this new letter-writing approach was intrigued. I booked precious time off work to do this. I would start, and see what unfolded.

As a liberating format, it worked: I wrote seven letters totalling forty thousand words in September and October 2022. I present three as the most crucial to advancing the thesis. The first letter – fierce origin stories - is to colleague and friend Farzana Khan, and explores moments of politicisation key to the origins of this thesis, inspired by Farzana. I have her written consent to publish it.

The second letter “What is wrong with us?” is to Martiniquan-French psychologist and theorist Frantz Fanon (1925-1961). Fanon has been present from the start of my research journey, but his influence only increased.

The third letter - thesis as Raft as thesis - is to D, a 'white' friend, artist and lecturer in Fine Art. D is a long-time thinking partner in our anti-racist pedagogical practice and also on the issues in this research. In it I disclose the breakthrough of the new overarching visually-derived structure, emerging from the Raft, for the thesis to come.

For you the reader, this Part invites a different mood. The thesis slows down. Ideas in the letters unfold differently to prose. Because I don't want to disrupt this, I discontinue the method of inserting and discussing both significant world events and thesis-influencing events that took place in these few months.

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Letter to Farzana: fierce origin stories

Suffolk

23rd September 2022

Dearest Farzana,

It was wonderful to hear your cheerful voicenote yesterday and your positive reaction to me writing a letter to you as part of the PhD process. Thanks too for the good wishes for my writing retreat away from home. Right now I am sitting in a small converted outbuilding, a one-room studio, in a garden surrounded by a wood. It's warm, quiet, cosy. A trio of robins is singing, and a warm breeze blows through the trees. Under the right conditions, you'd love it. And you'd be welcome, my hosts say.

Since the start of this PhD in 2014, you have been with me in my head and heart. In fact, you are one of the reasons I am doing research at all. In this letter I want to talk with you about that. But more, I realised with a jolt a few weeks ago, that letter-writing could be the method for getting my research out of my body and into form. For I've been stuck on writing, Farzana. This letter to you is part of a process of unblocking the flow.

The quest for form, the quest for form, for form that matches the content. Form that communicates the essence of the work. I'm drawn to writing letters as part of the solution to this puzzle, as I feel strongly in my gut that if I write my thesis as a series of letters, I will be able to articulate myself better. Imagining an actual reader feels like a liberation for my writing self. I have been totally blocked by the thought of writing 80,000 words in the context of an abstract reader, or a readership initially of two supervisors (known) and two examiners (unknown).

One reason is personal. You know I am a teacher, educator and facilitator by nature, by experience, by expertise, by desire. I've spent a life tailoring spaces of communication where groups of people can share understanding, attempting to hold settings where learning between people can thrive. I was never the kind of teacher to create off-the-peg 'universal' material, deliverable with maybe a few tweaks to whichever group comes across the threshold. I don't believe in what Paulo Freire calls the 'banking' method of education, where the learner is considered empty, and has knowledge deposited into them by the teacher (Freire, 1995).

What needs to be said by me in this thesis I want to imagine saying to someone real, or a known group. Otherwise I feel I drift off into my head, inside impenetrable language. Plus there's accountability: I can't explain it but I feel so much more capable of being accountable by addressing, imagining an actual correspondent.

The other reason for letter-writing is political. What is this history of writing a thesis (or a book for that matter) for an apparently abstract universal reader? As if there's no reader in the writer's mind, no cultural, social, ideological context which sifts in and sifts out readers, as if the language and lexicon itself is universal rather than culturally determined. As if readers are universal rather than gendered, raced, classed and determined by economic justice, literacy, access to education, geography, nationalism, market forces on publishing, censorship, translation, and, and, and...⁷⁰ The history of the 'universal reader' (and writer for that matter) is that the 'universal reader/writer' is assumed by European white supremacy to be a 'white' educated male, one of the issues I am writing about in the thesis.

So, today I am writing to you, Farzana, specifically you, because I wouldn't be here without meeting you.

⁷⁰ As an example, a French colleague told us recently that bell hooks' acclaimed book *All About Love* has only just been translated into French and published. It will come out in October 2022, twenty-two years after it was first published in English (hooks, 2000).

When we started work together in late 2012, you were twenty-two and I was fifty, a whole generation between us, as well as very different experiences of culture, class, religion, gender, structural oppression. I stood alongside and witnessed the blazing love, experience and energy you brought to the *Voices that Shake!* project, how you took it on and forward and up and out.

In and amongst many memories of Shake! but also outside Shake!, do you remember a spontaneous session on the sofa at work in around summer 2013? You were completely on fire, sharing insights and new knowledge that you'd brought back from the Decolonial Summer School you'd participated in on Critical Muslim Studies, in Grenada, Spain. You introduced me to the field of decolonial scholarship coming out of Central and South America. While you also expressed critique around patriarchy in some scholars and their ways of teaching, these theories completely galvanised us at that time.

It was from you on that sofa that I first heard the term 'epistemicide' - the killing of knowledge systems. I have considered myself a feminist educator for thirty-five years, steeped in critiques of sexism, racism and classism, and ableism, heteronormativity, gender binaries; in what constitutes knowledge and learning, and how that relates to equity in power. Yet I had never come across this electrifying term.

Following the references you shared, I started reading. One piece that arrested me completely was Ramón Grosfoguel's article *The Structure of Knowledge in Westernized Universities. Epistemic Racism/Sexism and the Four Genocides/Epistemicides of the Long 16th Century*.⁷¹ As you know, Grosfoguel states that these have led to white supremacy in what constitutes 'knowledge':

These four genocides/epistemicides in the long 16th century are: 1) against Muslims and Jews in the conquest of Al-Andalus in the name of "purity of blood"; 2) against

⁷¹ I'm using 'Westernized' throughout the PhD to include how 'universities' all over the globe are buying into, or have been coerced into Western/Northern epistemologies and pedagogies, as Boaventura de Sousa Santos explores in *Epistemologies of the South* (2014).

indigenous people first in America and then in Asia; 3) against African people with the captive trade and their enslavement in the Americas; 4) against women who practised and transmitted Indo-European knowledge in Europe burned alive, accused of being witches. (Grosfoguel, 2013, p.77)

'Epistemicide' reflected the true scale of European patriarchal, sexist, racist capitalist domination and opened up connections for me in vast new ways.

How is it possible that the canon of thought in all the disciplines of the Social Sciences and Humanities in the Westernized university is based on the knowledge produced by a few men from five countries in Western Europe: Italy, France, England, Germany and the USA? How is it possible that men from these five countries achieved such an epistemic privilege to the point that their knowledge today is considered superior over the knowledge of the rest of the world? How did they come to monopolise the authority of knowledge in the world? (Grosfoguel, 2013, p.74) ⁷²

I find it hard to convey the impact of that particular conversation on epistemicides, the ontological and political *depth charge* I experienced.

As an educator concerned with liberatory learning, I'm concerned with how we come to know what we know, when learning happens, and who gets to know what, and why? What are the conditions that enable learning: a known or unknown hunger, a need, thirst in the person learning, in the person who is in a position of holding the space for nurture. Maybe the learning person didn't know what they were hungry for, but conditions arose or were created that enabled them to understand their situation, feed their hunger, slake their thirst.

I think that my soul as a heartbroken, angry yet always implicated 'white' human in an aching beautiful world brutally damaged by racial capitalism, was hungry to meet someone who turned out to be you. I was seeking a perhaps impossible, politicising, truth-telling, fierce

⁷² Don't you think it's curious and provocative that Grosfoguel includes the USA as 'a country in Western Europe'? I don't yet know what to make of that.

connection that I didn't think was possible because of the challenges of trust after five hundred years of colonial violence, a violence that I 'profit' from whether - as Stuart Hall puts it - I "disidentify" with it or not, I "disaffiliate" or not (Hall, 2018, p.3 & 57). I was seeking to be in deep exchange, to be catalysed to do what I can do, to collaborate and do it better, become the person I want to be, in the context of what I now can call epistemicides. And always knowing there will never not be flaws of whiteness and racism in me... always with flaws, always with learning.

I'm faltering now because what I just wrote sounds resolved, calm and certain. It's not. If we were in person I would be stuttering and stumbling, eyes flickering to meet yours. Fidgeting in my seat. How easy it is for the body's relation to soul to be concealed by the apparent certainty of typed prose.

Another stutter: when I said at the beginning of the letter that 'you have been with me', I don't mean to co-opt you or to credentialise this research by claiming your approval, or that what I'm doing is of value because I claim my association with you. I can't predict what you will make of what I finally produce. What I finally produce is my own responsibility.

As you have told me, I do know that you support my attempt to do this work, as a 'white' person, as a 'white' older colleague and friend claiming commitment to equity, liberation, arts and learning.

In another sofa moment, I remember sharing with you a quotation I loved from Jacques Rancière's book *The Ignorant Schoolmaster – Five Lessons in Emancipation*. I came across it while participating in a reading group with the Free University of Liverpool in 2014. It remains. It remains.

Equality is not given, nor is it claimed; it is practised, it is **verified**.

(Rancière, 1991,137, emphasis in original)

We were both struck by the implications of this quotation. The practice of equality is verified, made true. We've come back to it again and again. It definitely helps keep me grounded. Yet it is a quotation from a 'white' French male intellectual. It seems that we need to make some exceptions to Ramón Grosfoguel's implied edict to de-privilege 'white' male thought from five European countries.

Over the years, I have appreciated your expansive visionary mind, your fierceness, lovingness and exactingness including when it's been uncomfortable to hear. I also value your commitment to joyful, creative and decolonising ways to express knowledge and experience, as a centrepiece of your work.

On that point, I don't know if you remember this. When I started the PhD in 2014, I emailed out my proposal to a range of friends, colleagues and collaborators, inviting their opinion. Actually, you were the first person I pressed 'Send' to, mirroring the fact that you are the first person I am writing to now.

At that early point, my research was broadly into art, learning and activism.⁷³ I was concerned to do 'public pedagogy' – sharing and democratising the privileged learning opportunity of the PhD. I wanted whatever people fed back to me to steer the research, to ensure the research would meet a real need in the world.

I did an exercise recommended by Johnny Saldaña's *Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers* (2013).⁷⁴ Given that everybody whom I had emailed was known personally to me through working together in art and activism, I wrote down a 'memo' beforehand on what I predicted would be important to each person.

⁷³ PhD title in 2014: *Art, activism and liberatory pedagogies: an investigation into the potential, the dangers, and sometimes failure of art-activist pedagogies to analyse and undo inequalities and act as a powerful vehicle for social justice*.

⁷⁴ I was troubled by the idea of 'coding' people's testimony but warmed to it when I understood the breadth and depth of emotional 'data' that could be included in the coding.

According to Saldaña, writing such memos in advance, and then returning to the memo after receiving the actual feedback, would help surface the hidden assumptions existing in me as the researcher. Accordingly, on receiving the feedback, I tasked myself with noting what surprised, disturbed or confused me compared to what I had predicted.

With several colleagues I was surprised by what took priority for them. But with those colleagues who were people of the global majority (a quarter of the group), I learnt something sobering about myself. The memos showed me that I'd fully expected these correspondents – I'd fully expected *you* - to be mostly concerned with the racism/whiteness dimensions in the broad-ranging proposal.

Yes, you did comment briefly on race/racism aspects, but here's how you wrote about my interest in an artistic approach to sharing the research:

This is what I have been waiting for!

I would be so interested in this aspect... to see what other art forms you could use to convey your findings.

(F's written comment on JT proposal, 2014, my italics)

Here's what I noted down in the 'memo' after reading your feedback:

Surprised!! ...the thing she was keenest on was the practice-based and finding creative ways to communicate... CHALLENGE - I think this is going to be the most difficult thing for me, officially within the PhD. (From JT memo, 2014)

'Surprised?' Check yourself Jane.

About the challenge, I wasn't wrong.

What bothered me is I'd limited what I imagined you would or could engage with outside the dimension of racism. In my head, because of racism and whiteness, I didn't afford you the freedom to respond in any direction you chose. Again, grateful to George Yancy, I understood

this as an 'ambush' because of whiteness (2015, p.xiii). A few weeks ago I read Emma Dabiri's book *What White People Can Do Next*, and she is succinct on the particular ambush that can besiege 'white' self-declared anti-racist activists: "Black people cannot be reduced to our experiences of white racism; that's whiteness centring itself again" (2021, p.111).

I tell this story because it helps explain why I find myself thinking of you so deeply as I try to do this work: you're not to be predicted. You demand the synthesis of the theoretical, political, the visionary, the emotional, the body...*with the poetic/artistic*.

A number of years ago when I was asked to write a chapter on my research for a book on art education, I was daunted by the responsibility (Trowell, 2021a). While writing, inevitably I tried to think of what the two editors who are 'white' educationalists, whom I know and highly respect, would make of it. I had understood enough about whiteness to know that any one of us 'white' anti-racist-aligned folks could still be a problem (as above), our whiteness invisible to ourselves. However, because they were the editors, I was writing initially 'for them'.

This was in 2019, a year when you were changing your life, resting and recuperating after leaving six years of very rich, intensive work on Shake!. I was not the right moment to request your energy on my research. Nonetheless, I found myself asking "What would Farzana want me to do with this opportunity? What would she make of reading this draft?"

The thought of you reading the piece was galvanising for me. It brought up helpful physical reactions in my body as I wrote – blood rushing around, eyebrows rising, hair sometimes standing on end, throat constricting, eyeroll forming, sometimes a smile. My reactions and misgivings – reading the work as if you were there reading with me – taught me a lot about what I needed to say or show differently, what was wrong or mis-put, or deleted. I found that ambushes were revealed more quickly because of thinking of you as a reader. It also indicated to me where changes in style were needed: where the prose was turgid, where an image would lighten and open up new understandings.

It was a new experience for me, this rolling conversation with you, or at least a version of 'you' that was in my head and heart. Afterwards I did ask other colleagues of colour to read it, but in writing the first draft of it, it was your incisiveness, breadth and depth that I conjured up. I began to consider you as a 'thinking partner' and 'accountability guide' for me, even when you were physically not available or able to be engaged. More ambushes will happen, of course. A core feature of whiteness is self-delusion about what 'others' think and feel.

I don't think I ever told you this before. I didn't want you to think I was putting you on a pedestal – you who are constantly redistributing opportunity and experience, building chances for younger or less confident, less experienced colleagues to develop their skills, capacity, visibility.

You're not alone though. For that particular piece of writing I was drawn to a second person as thinking partner and accountability guide, whose work I have immersed myself in. Someone whom I definitely could not ever converse with in the flesh: Frantz Fanon. As well as re-immersing myself in his writing, I sought a visual means to keep him with me. I chose, printed and framed a photograph of Fanon, the one where he is giving slightly suspicious side-eyes to someone outside the picture. I positioned him on the wall to the right of my desk, to make him give side-eyes to me. You've seen that photo, haven't you, when you were working at my desk in 2020.

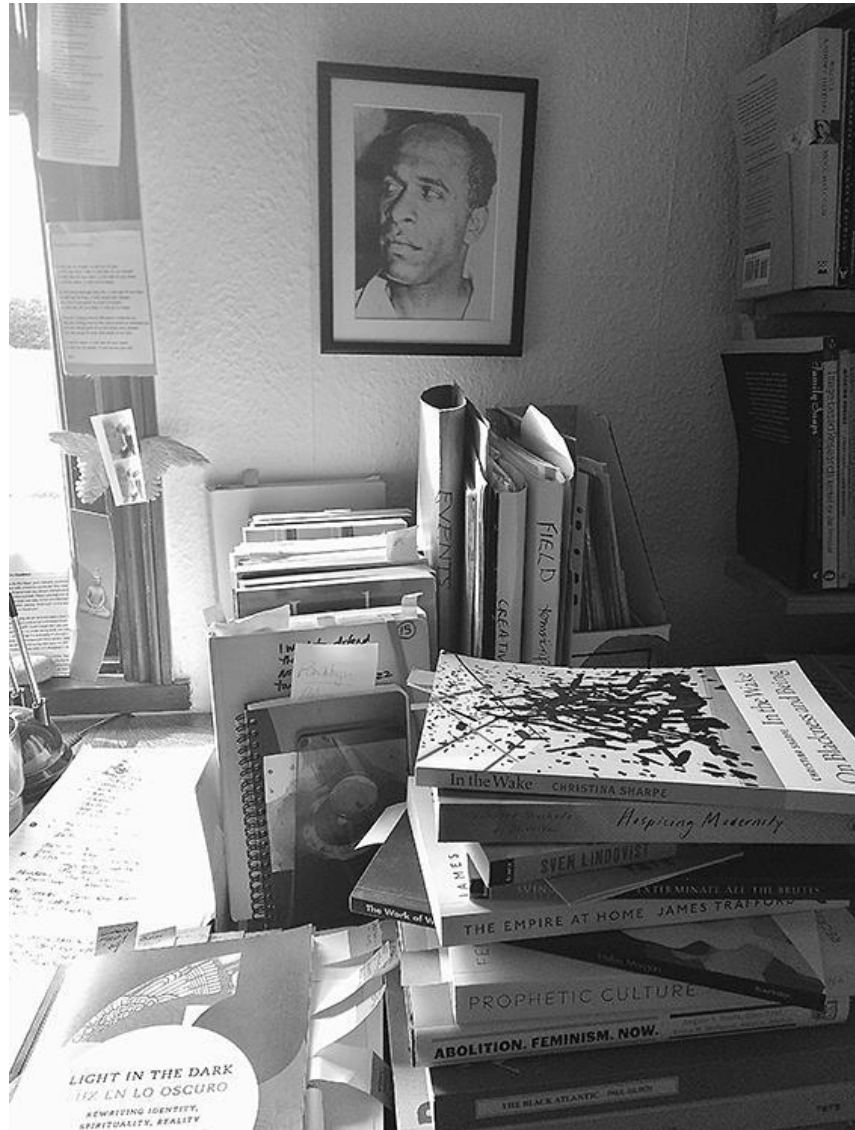


Fig 61. Jane Trowell, *Frantz Fanon, accountability guide (at home)*, 2023.

[Digital photograph] Personal collection.

I've got to tell you that this device of the photograph as overseer helped me keep my ego in check, helping me keep perspective.

Invoking you and Fanon as thinking partners and accountability guides has mobilised my courage, attention to nuance, capacity to act, to write. Under the political gazes that I ascribe to you both, I feel that I tread with greater clarity, persistence, insistence. I feel I have a better

chance of avoiding the trap of 'white' self-indulgence when writing about whiteness, a better chance of finding the path. To what extent I succeed is for others to say.

I brought the photo away with me on this retreat, to help hold me to account. As I write to you now, in Suffolk, Fanon is overseeing.



Fig 62. Jane Trowell, *Frantz Fanon (and Kali), accountability guides (in Suffolk)*, 2023.

[Digital photograph] Personal collection.

I just had a timely memory from 2015 when you were in Paris with a delegation from Voices that Shake!, As part of the mobilisations for the United Nations' Conference of the Parties on

Climate Change, you all met with Fanon's daughter Mireille Fanon Mendès-France, a leading jurist and anti-racist activist, and President of the Frantz Fanon Foundation.

Do you know, I didn't mean to start this letter with these topics. It's interesting how the mind works when writing a letter. What feels human, intuitive, and what flows.

I originally wanted to talk geography with you as my current location on this writing retreat relates to the issues in the PhD, and to an experience hereabouts that you and I had to survive.

It's time to prepare some soup for lunch. Onion, carrot, apple and a touch of garlic have been caramelising for a while, waiting for stock.

I'll pick up tomorrow.

24th September

Hi F,

Here are some threads that are about here, and you and me.

The thing is - and it's uncanny – I'm in Suffolk, only a few miles from where we visited a couple of years back. Do you remember singing our hearts out, furious, on the drive back to London?

Although this is a different place, proximity means that from time to time my skin bristles and my body is a little nervy. I can't fully shut off disturbing memories of our attempt at a retreat back in 2020. Be assured, I'm not intending to describe it, except for our reactions. But since arriving, it has occurred to me that maybe the echo of these memories assists with what I

have to write about for this thesis. The violence we experienced with our hosts relates to whiteness, doesn't it, and was an extra shock in that we had gone to the retreat for a source of light in the difficult days of the COVID-19 pandemic.

A few days ago I had messaged you that I was reading Gloria Anzaldúa's work for the first time. In your voicenote yesterday you mentioned that you were reading Anzaldúa again, giving you deep sustenance. I know you've long been immersed in her world and politics, as a 'New Mestiza' person experiencing the intersections of racism, homophobia, sexism, classism and ableism, living in the USA (1987). As for me, I'm not only a latecomer to her influential work, but also a problematic, potentially extractive 'white' reader. The book I was reading was *Luz en lo Oscuro, Light in the Dark - Rewriting Identity, Spirituality, Reality* (Anzaldúa, 2015). This was published after Anzaldúa's death, edited together from her unpublished writings by her long-term collaborator Analouise Keating. Probably you have read it?

My supervisor Sarah had recently suggested this book to me, with no explanation. I had emailed both my supervisors, nervously, about how, after nearly eight years, I needed to decide once and for all if I was going to 'submit' a PhD thesis for 'examination'. I told them I still had grave doubts. I told them I wanted to put the research out into the world outside the academic context, as a publication, and/or an exhibition, or as a pedagogical process or set of processes with people. When Sarah suggested this book by Anzaldúa, I followed the lead.

You can imagine my astonishment when, in the editor's introduction, I read that twice in her life at an interval of fourteen years, Anzaldúa had enrolled onto doctoral programmes. And that she never completed and submitted a thesis, which Analouise Keating later called her 'dissertation/book' (Anzaldúa, 2015, pp.xiv).

According to Keating, *Luz en lo Oscuro/Light in the Dark* is in fact a version of the dissertation/book.

The book has had a deep impact on me. Yet I have just deleted a lot of text where I tried clumsily to summarise why. I do feel able to say what has touched me on the point where I

am at: writing from my body about deeply damaging violent racist structures with roots that are hundreds of years deep, and how they surface in art, artists and art education.

Although I am a 'white' reader and implicated in the racist violence she describes, I am very arrested by Anzaldúa's conceptualisation of art and writing as healing, as a process of bringing back together fragments, in a deep spiritual practice. Her cultural cradle is far away from my lived experience, but her writing enables me to feel cautiously welcomed, despite my location thousands of miles away in the secular and problematic, cold, 'white' North. On page one, she invokes the goddess Coyolxauhqui, who, in Aztec mythic history, is the goddess of the moon.⁷⁵ Coyolxauhqui's fate is to be beheaded and chopped into a thousand pieces, then scattered up into the skies and down the mountain sides.

Out of this Anzaldúa creates for the artist what she calls The Coyolxauhqui Imperative.

The path of the artist, the creative impulse,... is basically an attempt to heal the wounds. It's a search for inner completeness. (Anzaldúa, 2015, p.243)

She describes her writing process of drafting and redrafting, working and reworking, weaving and unweaving, reweaving, re-constituting as central to her soul repair. Her process mirrored back at me the feeling I have for the over 200,000 words, the fragments that I have written over eight years, stored in dozens of documents in a folder titled 'Creative'. How I feel these fragments are authentic but can't be woven together to express the enormity of what I am trying to do. Yet I must trust the form to emerge.

Beyond my copious fragments, how do I honour the ethical responsibility and accountability I feel to the testimony in over 230,000 words of transcribed interviews with twelve valued colleagues of colour.

How to bring it all together?

⁷⁵ According to the glossary in the book, Coyolxauhqui is pronounced Ko-yol-sha-UH-kee (2015, p.243)

Anzaldúa describes writing for her as:

...a struggle to reconstruct oneself and heal the sustos resulting from the woundings, traumas, racism, and other acts of violation que hechan pedazos nuestras almas, split us, scatter our energies, haunt us.⁷⁶ (Anzaldúa, 2015, p.1)

Anzaldúa is writing about healing from a place of being subjected to oppression. Toni Morrison too writes about the splitting and scattering, and includes the racist:

The trauma of racism is, *for the racist and the victim*, the severe fragmentation of the self. (1988, p.21, my emphasis)

Yet George Yancy says 'white' antiracist racists must never be 'sutured' to their racism, must never 'heal', must constantly be alert to its presence (2015) and I am trying to follow him in this thesis. What then are the implications for how to write about whiteness in a way that is un-sutured, resists healing and maintains understanding that the fragmentation is ongoing?

I can't help it: writing for me is part of the quest to re-member common humanity including my and 'white' people's forgotten humanity. 'White' people must never be connected to their folk memory from a time before white supremacy, memories of a more equitable power balance, a shared home with other humans, other creatures, the more than human. Yet, in the lived reality of this PhD process, I sit surrounded by dozens of fragments, of broken attempts to write, attempts to research, attempts to visualise, each one unravelling. Do I have a thesis that intrinsically cannot hang together?

F, I know how much writing matters to you. While puzzling with my research fragments, Anzaldúa reframes and refreshes for me what the task of visionary writing can be, what its impacts can be, why it's worth the agony of birth. Take this:

⁷⁶ In *Light in the Dark*, Anzaldúa often introduces Spanish into a sentence or paragraph, providing no translation.

To be innovative and subversive, a writer must write what readers haven't yet been taught to read yet – a different and unfamiliar literary form – present an experience not yet articulated or portray a familiar one from a radically different perspective.
(Anzaldúa, 2015, p.110)

“What readers haven't yet been taught to read?” I feel an opening, experimental, the beginnings of flow, even with/between fragments. The PhD is supposed to be a space for innovation and experimentation towards the creation of new knowledge. I glimpse that I can use its form in the way Anzaldúa means, find an authentic path, and avoid the worst excesses of conscription in an epistemicidal system that will gatekeep what can be knowledge, and gatekeep ‘acceptable’ methods to communicate it.

She goes on to say this, describing the anguishes of attempting to write in new ways:

The pressure and urge to speak in new ways, to say something different, to push genre boundaries without losing the reader is as constant as gravity. You're assailed with the angst peculiar to writers – namely, that this piece is the worst you've ever written... You feel you have betrayed the piece by not writing it up to your expectations. (Anzaldúa, 2015, p.110)

Farzana, I've had a major block about making the thesis into one piece of prose that flows from paragraph to paragraph, chapter to chapter, forming a cohesive story as if I have it all sequentially sorted out. My brain doesn't seem to function like that at all, and my always falling-apart subject - whiteness remaining un-sutured - doesn't fit. If I don't feel that I fit, with all my privilege, then what about others who are systemically excluded and barred from childhood to this particular gated community?

Everything I have learnt has become true at the same time, interlinked, not atomisable or sequential, turnable into an argument. I need ten, no, twenty heads to communicate, and dozens of pairs of eyes and ears to see and feel what it is I am trying to show. I need a six-

dimensional form of transmitting knowledge. I feel the thesis should be an art piece, or a pedagogical process, not a piece or pieces of prose. Westernised expectations of knowledge-making and knowledge transmission are defeating me and my thesis.

Yet I value what Anzaldúa embraces as the 'shadow beast' in the self. The side that is negative:

...you convince yourself that you are blocked. If you invented this block you can un-invent it... This is your monster – the myth that real writing comes out perfect in a few drafts. (2015, p.114)

But I shouldn't conflate my argument with the form/context of the PhD, with my task of writing powerful work. Anzaldúa humanises the task, makes space for rage in creativity in a way that encourages me:

Face it: You've fallen out of love with it; you can't stand the sight of it. You toss the text back on the desk, feeling a sense of relief at giving up, shucking the work, and putting it away indefinitely. By burying it deep you hope your unconscious will do the work of integration...(Anzaldúa, 2015, p.112)

...let the scattered pieces turn over and over in the unconscious until they reformulate. (p.113)

She speaks of self-honesty and a letting-go of the rational mind – a mindset I have been groomed and schooled in and successful at from primary school onwards:

You know that to become unblocked something must give, something must die – your ambition, your obsession with perfection. You have to let go of the illusion that the writer exerts full conscious control over her writing process. (2015, p.114)

Something must die! Again?

I read an amazing book by Robert Romanyshyn called *The Wounded Researcher*, where he wrote:

The ego as author of the work has to 'die' to the work to become the agent in service to those for whom the work is being done. (2013, p.6)

Dying as letting go.

But then, Anzaldúa softens and blurs and frays what it means to 'finish' in a way that helps me breathe. She starts by quoting Kenneth Atchity:

...“the concept of ‘finishing your work’ is a contradiction in terms so blatant and so dangerous that it can lead to nervous breakdowns – because it puts the pressure on the wrong places in your mind and habits.”...You have to accept the imperfections of your work, accept its partial incoherence, accept that it will never attain the surface of a water-smoothed stone. Like a person’s life, all art is a work in progress.
(Anzaldúa, 2015, p.115)

I want to think of the PhD as creative writing, as art, as an artwork. Intimidating academic terms like ‘submission’, ‘defence of your thesis’, of passing with ‘no corrections’, ‘minor revisions’, ‘major revisions’, then feel alien. Why the language of courtroom and punishment? This legal/criminal framework is exactly what many art students in westernized art education feel from the typical art school ‘crit’: the crushing expectation of explaining to tutors every single, tiny move, every single, tiny motive in their artwork, and if they haven’t got a full articulate explanation, with the right theory to back it up, they are considered unworthy, lesser. Who has the right to ‘correct’ an artwork? Why not ‘edit’, advise, support, mentor.

Back to the task of writing in the Anzaldúan sense, somebody reading this might say that this advice could have come from anybody who writes about how to write. But for me, the politics

and racialised experience of where Anzaldúa is starting from gives her advice the politicizing decolonising imperative that I want this work to be suffused with.

Another aspect of her writing that I value and I know you do in your own writing, is that throughout the book, Anzaldúa invites us to be with her in real time, in real locations. The book opens at night under a bright moon – la luna; we're with her when she goes for walks along the coast path near where she lives in California; we're with her when she's managing or not doing well with her diabetes; when she's in the throes of navigating protest at a 'white'-dominated feminist conference. We the reader go with her to these carefully chosen moments and places, visiting the beach, the cliff, the ocean, the occasional footpath encounter, a conversation with a friend, a medic, the trees, the breezes, and the one special gnarly Cypress tree which gives her deep daily spiritual nourishment.

This comes particularly to life in a part of the book subtitled the *Seven Stages of Conocimiento* (knowledge), we are taken through on a psychological-theoretical journey through writing.⁷⁷ She does this by analogy with her real experience of her reactions to an earthquake (2015, p.121). To me this is such vivid embodied writing, speaking of flow and disruption, the terror of losing everything. She makes the blood heat and course through the veins, and, as safety and resolution is found, she calms us down. Locating and embodying herself and inviting us to join her there, is a form of writing that matters deeply to Anzaldúa. It works for me. I'm enticed in and magnetised by this located way of writing that says, this research, this writing comes from a real person, who refuses to separate theory from life.

Connected to this, Anzaldúa asks us to think about what impact the writer wants to have on the reader, something I have rarely seen spelled out in a 'theoretical' book before, and something I have been grappling with. The issues I'm writing about are an incendiary issue for many 'white' people who dismiss or show contempt for these concerns, seeing them as a 'woke' agenda in a culture war. Can I find a style of writing that encourages readers - other 'white' people - into the 'work' of working on themselves in racial justice? Can I do this in ways

⁷⁷ I am told *conocimiento* is pronounced in Mexican Spanish: ko-nossim-YENT-o

that don't invisibilise the emotions and complexities it can raise in me/the 'white' researcher/educator yet without being self-indulgent, and also acknowledging there are different impacts on different readers?

On one of her walks, Anzaldúa asks herself broadly:

At the edge of the foaming sea you ask: How and from what point of view shall I tell this story? What mood do I want to evoke and sustain? What emotion does it arouse in me? What emotion do I want to arouse in the reader? How much of myself should I put in the text? (2015, p.101)

This meets some of my concerns although this passage still implies a 'universal' reader: I want to reach 'white' people – specifically in arts and learning - intellectually and emotionally. It's the combination of the two that will make change. These concerns – spatial/embodied writing, speaking to an integrated whole person, brain unseparated from body – also for me relate to a central concept she describes in this book. This concept I feel reverberates explicitly with the issue of whiteness at the heart of my thesis.

I mentioned 'white' people belittling and not wanting to know. A couple of years ago, you invited me to work with you on a learning programme you were piloting with a group of mostly 'white' co-workers, addressing whiteness and racism in their international organisation. Much could be said on that, eh? But for now, what my memories of that bring to mind is the way Anzaldúa uses the Spanish term *desconocimiento*.⁷⁸

You probably know: *desconocimiento* translates literally into English as ignorance, but Anzaldúa claims and layers this word in way that is about intentionality. For me it brings a very particular lens through which to view 'whiteness', and how it manifests.

For her, *desconocimiento* is not merely ignorance, it is

⁷⁸ I am told *desconocimiento* is pronounced in Mexican Spanish: dess-ko-nossim-YENT-o

‘... the ignorance we cultivate to *keep ourselves from knowledge so that we can remain unaccountable...*’ (2015, p.2, my italics)

She continues by implicating herself in this, inviting us in to inspect it as a human condition that arises under certain circumstances – for me, you, all of us:

Grappling with (des)conocimientos, with what I don’t want to know, opening and shutting my eyes and ears to cultural realities, expanding my awareness and consciousness, or refusing to do so, sometimes results in discovering the positive shadow: hidden aspect of myself and the world. Each irritant is a grain of sand in the oyster of the imagination. Sometimes what accretes around an irritant or a wound may produce a pearl of great insight, a theory.’ (p.2)

I really want to deepen into this for the PhD, as it seems to me her concept of *desconocimiento* is a way of taking the everyday and structural manifestations of ('white') 'denial' and what Netherlands-Surinamese scholar Gloria Wekker frames as 'white innocence' (Wekker, 2016). Then dismantling, then re-mantling these dysfunctions in the interests of everyone involved, towards inter-community health, pearls of insights, of common goals, of political change that grips the desire of all parties.

I have to repeat it. When I first ever read “... the ignorance we cultivate to keep ourselves from knowledge so that we can remain unaccountable...” (p.2), I was so struck by the phrasing that I was compelled to read it aloud.

I was struck by how humanity, generosity and fallibility were implicit in her wording - that all humans can do this - yet, also the political implications for structural racism and those who support it or enact it. From those who deny the Holocaust to those who deny the transatlantic trade in enslaving African people, to those who deny human-induced climate change and the everyday global abuse that is white supremacy.

F, very early on in the research I read a lot of material around reflective practice. In that context I came across the work of Daniel Bar-On, a Jewish psychologist and peace researcher who was interviewing adult children of Holocaust perpetrators. He wrote about his inner tension in “trying to understand what one is afraid to learn about” (Bar-On, 1991, p.32).

Perhaps some of my blockage has been fear of the responsibility for what I have been trying to learn. Why wouldn't *desconocimiento* be at play in me when there are vast implications for what has to change in 'white' society, and in me.

< >

Suffolk. We have some history here, don't we, F? Some history which relates to this thesis. I remember vividly us hastening across the gravel, thankful that the luggage was already packed. We threw ourselves into the car and shut the doors, to self-jettison back towards COVID-filled London.

In the passenger seat you were tensed, coiled and sprung. We were both quivering. You said something like “Get me out of here Jane and then find somewhere to stop the car so I can *scream*.”

About a mile away, we pulled into a lay-by, and you let loose a tirade of anger, hot tears of frustration and outrage. Your analytical mind and insight into trauma had already identified so much. You articulated immediately what lay under the situation of 'white' privilege, 'white' entitlement and coercive control that we had just left and that you directly had been subjected to. I was absolutely there with you, in my own fury, my disgust and shock at how the hosts had treated you, and, separately how they had treated me. Before we'd arrived, I had done a

lot of checking in with them and vouched to you that this was a safe, honouring, light space. We were excited to go! The few days away which had been agreed with our artist hosts as offering us beauty, rural respite, a nature-filled, calming, nourishing retreat from London's pandemic intensity, ended like this. I was maddened and gobsmacked with disgust: what on earth was WRONG with them?

You vented for some minutes. I vented. We did some deep breathing, calmed ourselves. Then vented some more. We gradually felt capable of movement. I drove on, and soon we were on the A12 heading southwards. A petrol station presented itself and I suggested we needed ice cream. You understood the code: in our former workplace, in times of stress or shock, we colleagues had a tradition of soothing ourselves by sharing tubs of ice cream.

I seem to recall that we bought two ice creams each and we drove on, gulping them down. We were still making sense of it all, talking calmly, and then erupting when another memory triggered outrage all over again. At a certain point, when we were achieving some equilibrium, one of us said we could do with some music to help us. I joked that I had some karaoke CDs in the car, not really believing we were in the mood. But you went for it, and at the top of our voices we sang *Sex Bomb* by Tom Jones and other tunes nearly all the way to London, raucously barking and hoarse by the end. By the time I pulled up outside your home, we had shed much of the initial shock. The private space of the car had provided us with the 'golden hour of care' that, it is said, is invaluable in coming to terms with sudden traumatic events.

You left and I drove home, feeling expressed, but still utterly i n c e n s e d. We checked in on each other regularly over the next days. I acted on your request that I demand from the hosts an iron boundary: that they were not to contact you at all through any media, from now on. I also laid down boundaries of my own, and tried to communicate to them what had happened from my point of view. These were people who I had known for many years, creative people, politically aware, 'white' people, 'white' self-declared anti-racists, 'white' middle class cis women.

I reflect on this now, seated once more in Suffolk, but at a distance from there, two years on.

Memories, strands come together, threads twisting and forming: a rope, a string, a lifeline?

In Suffolk, do you remember that amazing lime tree full of linden flowers? It had fallen down and was growing horizontally and formed a kind of bowery cave. Before things went wrong with our hosts we communed under that tree in wonder. Recollecting that tree makes me think of Anzaldúa's knarled Cypress. She takes us to touch the tree with her, daily, at different times of day, different weather, different states of her health. I ask myself about location(s) for writing and rituals to encourage creativity. From which location(s) can I best write a thesis on racism, coloniality and whiteness in art education, and in artists and art educators? Leafy rural well-to-do England such as this part of Suffolk? Or should I be finding an urban place to stay such as Tower Hamlets, Bradford, Southall, St Pauls.

After the 2020 Covid lockdown, I remember my first trip to Stratford Westfield shopping centre in East London to meet a friend. I was overwhelmed and energised by the sheer international multicultural cosmopolitan buzz surging in the crowds of masked people. I thought "I should base myself here to write the PhD. This is where it is at, not a secluded terraced house, my home in semi-rural North Kent."

And right now I'm in Suffolk in a beautiful archetypally 'English' landscape, with robins ticking and singing, deer grazing, oak and birch forest, green lawns, and thatched cottages all around. If ever *desconocimiento* was made 1000% possible purely by location, surely it is here. Here, much more than the Daily Mail/Daily Telegraph-reading village in which I live, positioned close between the Thames estuary town of Gravesend with its established Sikh community, Eastern European community and growing African population, and the very diverse 250,000 people of the Medway Towns. At home, a racist or xenophobic comment, when it is made, is made openly in a non-middle-class way, and I find I can usually push back on it instantly. Here?

Because of what you and I went through in an extremely beautiful setting, a setting that was made by people with claims to anti-racism as providing a sanctuary, I wanted to connect with you again about a storytelling project I described to you a few years back.

I've been thinking about how when I first came to live here, I was startled to discover that when the author Joseph Conrad started writing the novel *Heart of Darkness* in 1898, he was living with his young family directly across the River Thames from me, in Stanford-le-Hope, Essex (Conrad, 1999). I was struck by where he chose to set his character Marlow's storytelling, storytelling conveying unspeakable racism, based on his own real experience as a seaman. Conrad has Marlow tell us about his journey to a trading station far up the Congo river, where the company he works for needs to find and deal with 'white' trader who has 'gone rogue'. To tell the story, Conrad puts Marlow and his listeners on the deck of the anchored ship *Nellie*, awaiting the tide to turn. They are at anchor in the Lower Hope, a reach of the Thames directly north of the marshes which lie not more than a mile away, at the bottom of our road. Why is it important that the story is told in this place in this way, waiting for a major sea voyage to begin? Being becalmed provides a pause, a hiatus, a space to think, and the location is crucial. Only a few pages in, while the characters are staring westward towards London into the dying sun, Conrad puts these words into Marlow's mouth as he indicates the metropolis:

And this, too, has been one of the dark places of the earth. (Conrad, 1999, p.5)

Visible upriver towards London is the Thames-side town of Gravesend, where Pocahontas, daughter of the Powhatan Chief is buried.⁷⁹ In 1617, soon into a passage from London back across the Atlantic, she became gravely ill on a boat and by Gravesend had perished, aged only twenty-one.

⁷⁹ Pocahontas, born Amonute, was also known as Matoaka, born c. 1596 – March 1617. She was the daughter of Powhatan, the paramount chief of a network of tributary tribes in the Tsenacommacah, encompassing the Tidewater region of the place currently called Virginia, USA (Price, 2023).

For nearly 250 years, countless East India Company ships raced up and down the Thames, via the Lower Hope, past Gravesend, back and forth to the East India Docks near where you grew up, until that disgraced mega-corporation was nationalised and the British state assumed 'ownership' of India. The unbelievable scale of land, peoples and resources that were grabbed made India (as it was then) the absolute cornerstone of the British Empire, the 'jewel in the crown'. More recently, the Port of Tilbury opposite Gravesend is where the *Empire Windrush* landed in 1948, with eight-hundred hopeful, expectant passengers from what was then called the West Indies.

I remember walking together with you that spring, on those marshes off the Lower Hope, delighting at the baby lambs.

I shared with you that as a sailor myself, I wanted to set sail from Gravesend with storytellers on board, how I wanted to becalm us at anchor in that same spot as the *Nellie*, so that the storytellers could narrate different stories that speak back to whiteness. Speak otherwise to the unspeakable, unbearable history that Conrad has Marlow tell, whose toxic, abusive legacies we still live with today.

I remember your reaction: you liked it. You could feel it. I wrote an outline for the project I called *The Lower Hope*, fleshing it out. I still want to do it as a reclamation, re-narrating, a refutation, a re-imagining. Would you still like to set sail with me?

In *The Lower Hope* I clearly lay out how the location of my home near the mouth of the Thames, its social fabric, maritime history, ex-industrial marshy wasteland relates to Europe's five hundred-year history of colonialism, extraction and racism. I'm thinking now that it is clearly both a *Heart of Darkness* in Conrad's sense, and also a *Heart of Whiteness* in Vron Ware's sense: I have recently read her powerful *Journey through Europe's Heart of Whiteness* (2019). Hearts of Whiteness are to be found everywhere where Europeans have

extracted value, dominated lives and lived well off the profits. Every 'white' person's forebears have been involved in some way or another. Nowhere and no-one is exempt.⁸⁰

But now I am sitting here in Suffolk, one hundred or so miles north-east of home, yet still in the wider Thames Estuary - the river's waters pouring out into the expanse of the North Sea. The countryside presents as tidy, green, caring, wealthy.

Here in a polite part of Suffolk, I'm finding the Heart of Darkness and another version of the Heart of Whiteness are twining. Thinking of our 2020 escape down the A12, and much more besides, I now feel it's as good as any from which to observe and make sense of the issues in my research. Whiteness is wherever we want to see it, wherever we want to know it, *conocimiento* or *desconocimiento*.

Because F, there's one more literary connection I want to think about with you. I knew that as a seasoned mariner Joseph Conrad sailed the East Anglia coast. I discovered only yesterday that he learnt English by reading newspapers in pubs in the port of Lowestoft, Suffolk, and today the Wetherspoon's pub is named after him. As a Polish immigrant, he no doubt encountered in British ports, or on British-owned ships, what we now call xenophobia, or at the very least teasing and ribbing. Maritime life was filled with 'motley crews' from all nations who would be ripe pickings for the superiority complexes of 'white' British officers and crews. Conrad's accomplishment in becoming a celebrated author of 'English literature' is, in itself, a speaking back to assumed British superiority. An eastern European man writing in English creates the ultimate novel in showing the corruption, racism, violence and exterminism of Western European colonialism, and for some readers, encouraging it. That he chose to set it in what was then the notoriously brutal, murderous and privately owned 'Belgian Congo' and not Britain is an interesting choice.⁸¹

⁸⁰ Thinking of Conrad's novel, in Toni Morrison's slim volume of three explosive essays *Playing in the Dark – whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (1992), she anatomises how whiteness shows up, embedded in the DNA of English Literature 'classics'.

⁸¹ This territory whose borders were decided by European powers as part of the European 'carve-up of Africa' at the Berlin Conference of 1884/5, was the size of Western Europe. It became privately owned by the King Leopold of Belgium who used mercenaries to enslave, tyrannise, maim and coerce labourers in the rubber trade,

But even if Conrad did not want to directly criticise his adopted home country, we know he knows. After all, his character Marlow is afloat on the Thames, and points westwards in the dying of the light to London.

Conocimiento. Desconocimiento.

This was long, my friend. There is more, always more, but for now, thank you again for all that you are and all that you bring.

Truly Luz en lo Oscuro... and, why not, Oscuro en la Luz.
The Dark in the Light.

Am I channelling Cynthia B Dillard's 'endarkened feminist epistemology'?

Do you remember, some years ago we were completely inspired to come across her coining that new term? (Dillard, 2000)

Onwards, evolving, deepening, and with love,

Jane

Letter to Frantz Fanon: “What is wrong with us?”

Suffolk, England

28th September 2022

Dear M. Fanon,

The sun lights up the brilliant green grass in front of my window. I’m looking at the well-known photograph of you that I have hung on the wall where you are glancing sideways out of the picture frame. I’m thinking of you as the jackdaws caw and the robins tick, seated here at a desk in Suffolk, England. I’m about to write to you, the third letter I’m drafting as part of ‘writing up’ my PhD thesis on racism, coloniality and whiteness in art education and art educators in England.

It’s nearly sixty-one years after your early death in December 1961, when you were only thirty-six. You died just under a year before my own birth.

I’m thinking of my mum, approaching ninety-one. She will venture outdoors at some point today to get some exercise and air. She meets with friends, and she is still engaged with the world. You were born only six years before my parents. I see that Aimé Césaire - your early mentor, writer, poet, politician and fellow Martiniquan - lived to ninety-five, leaving this world in 2008. Césaire was only a dozen years your elder.

What would you have done with all these years that were taken from you?

It’s mind-bending to think of it, given the global impact of your work over the short period of your adult life. Yet you are not gone, in that your ideas continue to sear the minds of successive generations who come across them, thirst for them, are transformed by them.

I'm writing to you for many reasons. I'm writing firstly because I can only seem to write up my research on racism, coloniality and whiteness in art education in England by having a particular reader in mind, even if they will never read it, and even is the reader is one who has passed away.

I'm writing to you because my thinking and being in this research keeps returning to your work. I should be careful: ...returning to what I think I have understood of your work.

I'm writing to you because whereas other writers' works related to this study have been companions to me for over thirty years – Audre Lorde, Paulo Freire, bell hooks, Arundhati Roy, Vron Ware - my relationship with your work is for half that time, magnetised by the geographical worldview you offer. Through your concerns I see coloniality through Caribbean/European/North African and African lenses, which I've needed even more sorely since the isolationist, xenophobic, nationalist politics behind Brexit and increasing 'white' hysteria and cruelty around migration.⁸² Paradoxically, for those of us in Britain trying to prise open and transform this sceptic and seemingly regressing isle, it is easy to be coerced by Brexit into an unhealthy insularity and self-obsession (Younge, 2018).

Although I had heard of your work for many years, it was only around 2005 that I first read *Black Skin, White Masks* (1986). Why did it take so long? I put it down to anglophone bias in me, despite your work being freely available in translation. Perhaps it was also the impact of the US Civil Rights movement on publishing: the writing of African-Americans on racism has been available and gripped me from my teens.

Black Skin, White Masks had many deep mobilising, politicising impacts on me, alongside the emotional affect. Like an autopsy, inquest or requiem, your investigation into the impacts of psychoses of racism for Black people both broke my soul, and strengthened my resolve.

⁸² Brexit is the name for the right-wing-backed exit of the United Kingdom from the European Union in 2021. The European Union (1993) was a successor to the European Economic Community (founded 1957) which you, M Fanon, would have known about.

But it was as recent as 2016 that I first read *The Wretched of the Earth*, for which your original French title was *Les Damnés de la Terre*. I was struck by how, these days, *Les Damnés* is translated as *The Wretched*...and not *The Damned*, aside from the first ever translation (I'll come back to this point later).⁸³ The book set off a politicising rocket in me.

I think I had previously only read one other book about the impacts of colonialism from a critic or writer from another European nation. That's the Swedish writer Sven Lindqvist and his short book '*Exterminate All The Brutes*' which he wrote in 1995 and I read in the late 90s (Lindqvist, 2018, speech marks as in original). Through a narrative of Lindqvist's journey across the Sahara, this short book lays out a devastating examination of the history of European imperialism, its racist brutality and exterminism wreaked on millions of people on the African continent (and millions more through their kidnapping, trafficking and enslavement in the Americas).

Can I count the novel written in English, by Polish-born Joseph Conrad, about the death-dealing racist criminality enacted in the 'Belgian Congo', through his novel *Heart of Darkness* that did so much to cement the notion of the 'savage' in the 'white' European imaginary (Conrad, 1999)? It's the atrocious line, "Exterminate all the brutes", spoken by Kurtz - the 'white' trader-turned-despot - from the end of *Heart of Darkness*, that Lindqvist takes for his own title, and which Haitian-American filmmaker Raoul Peck reclaims for his recent powerful quartet of TV films (Peck, 2021).

You might agree I can't count French novelist, essayist and Nobel Prize winner Albert Camus as a critic of colonialism, despite his left-wing politics. His most internationally acclaimed novel is *L'Étranger*, commonly translated into English as *The Outsider* (rather than the everyday French meaning of 'The Foreigner' or 'The Stranger') (Camus, 1983). Camus was himself an outsider, a foreigner - a 'white' man born and raised in French-colonised Algeria. As you know, his character Meursault is like him: one of the generations of

⁸³ The first English translation was in 1963, by Constance Farrington, an Irish woman, pro-Algerian, living in Paris (1963). (Batchelor, Harding and Kulberg, 2018)

French occupiers/settlers planted there since the French invasion and occupation of 1830. Meursault, and his creator Camus, are 'Pieds Noirs' or Black Feet (as these racist 'white' settlers were racistly nicknamed by racist 'white' French in mainland France).

Published in 1943, the story focuses on the 'casual' murder of an un-named 'Arab' by Meursault, and betrays a 'white' settler racism in the author Camus. I have a history with this book: it was a set text for my French 'A' level exam, taken at 18 years old. Yet it is only since studying for this doctorate that I have realised that an in-plain-sight invisibilisation took place in how our teacher guided us to understand that text.

Back in 1979, scanning my memory, our French teacher never discussed with us what it meant that the novel was set in colonised Algeria, that it was written by a 'white' French writer who had been raised in colonised Algeria. She never mentioned the French state's brutal colonisation and control of Algeria for over a century – and therefore how the character Meursault (and the settler-colonial French, and the writer himself) had come to be there. Not once did she bring up the seven-year ferocious anti-colonial liberatory war that erupted a dozen years after the novel was published: the Algerian War of Independence 1954-1962. This war had only ended fifteen years before we read the book.

No. The novel was taught to us with a focus on the 20th century European philosophy Existentialism and 'white' men. We discussed Meursault's alienation, his 'cold' reaction to his mother's death, and his state of mind behind the apparently random murder of 'the Arab'. We discussed his disassociated state where his actions were governed by individual moment by moment urges, his reality, his freedom to act. The novel was taught to us as if his 'Existentialist' free will was unconnected to him as a 'white'-and-therefore-superior man in relation to the expendable, colonised 'others' of occupied Algeria. One could say that the Camus' French title should be interpreted as the author implying that Meursault is indeed strange, an alien. Yet the publisher's choice of the title 'The Outsider' could foster the assumed 'white' reader's sympathy for the actions of fellow 'whites' who are hated colonials. It was a common European experience after all.

The invisibilisation of whiteness and racism in the teaching of this book to me, is part of what Gloria Anzaldúa calls *desconocimiento*, the 'ignorance we cultivate to keep ourselves from knowledge so that we can remain unaccountable' (2015, p.2). It is one example among many in my childhood, schooling, university and wider experience that normalised white patriarchal supremacy, invisibilising any other interpretations of history and society.

In 2016, having read *The Wretched of the Earth*, and prompted by that to reread *The Outsider*, I was electrified to learn about Algerian novelist Kamel Daoud's award-winning 2013 novel *Meursault, Contre-Enquête*, published in English in 2015. The title translated literally is *Meursault, Counter-Inquest*. Such a title asserts a demand for justice from the 'other' side, clearly situating the murder and perhaps even the original novel as a crime. Again the choice publishers made for the title in English is telling: *The Meursault Investigation* (Daoud, 2015).

I wonder, did the anglophone publishers think that the words 'counter-inquest' would be too blunt for an anglophone 'white' readership who would prefer that the jury was out on a cherished 'foreign' novel that was remarkable for its existentialism? I hungrily read Daoud's beautifully written book. I felt feeling of justice and relief. This was an artwork speaking back to another artwork, confronting power, delegitimising normalised wrongs, charging the protagonists. I thought of Jean Rhys' novel *Wide Sargasso Sea* which gave voice to the 'mad' Creole woman in Mr Rochester's attic - his wife no less - in Charlotte Brontë's 1847 novel *Jane Eyre* (Rhys, 2000). I thought too of how Chinua Achebe's incisive essay on racism in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* is now routinely published in modern editions of the novella, arresting 'white' readers (Achebe, 1977).

I'm also writing to you, M Fanon, because, without your permission, I have conjured you into a role in this doctorate that I'm calling an 'accountability guide'. The accountability that I vest in you is due to the combination of your psychological analysis of whiteness and white supremacy and how it dehumanises people who are 'racialised' through white colonial rule,

coupled with your analysis of the distorting and coercing impacts on whole societies, whole nations. You experienced these at first hand in Martinique, Algeria and other countries on the African continent. In *The Wretched of the Earth* you show and condemn how, post-independence, whiteness lingers, is inhabited by and corrupts Black bourgeois and military elites in a significant number of African countries, as well as in the governance, economic and cultural models of those countries. It is applicable to dozens of formerly colonised countries which is why your work is internationally acclaimed.

It's also that you share your insights into the implications of 'white' violence of 'white' perpetrators. In Algeria, not only did you work as a psychiatrist with mentally ill and traumatised Algerian people, made so by colonialism and the vicious War of Liberation from France, but also with those from the French police and military in Algeria. You, a Black man in support of Algerian liberation, listened to and treated racist 'white' men who were completely dysfunctional from their job of meting out horrific state-sanctioned torture and violence to prisoners who were deemed threats to the French state.⁸⁴

Another reason I'm writing to you is because of the style and immediacy with which you write. There's poetry and visuality in your prose, a delineation of concepts like a deft line-drawing, carving elegantly like a scalpel through clay, or incising like a silhouettist across racialised consciousness. I understand here that I'm also paying tribute to your translators.

As only one example, in *Black Skin, White Masks* you give this arresting description of the impacts of pathological internalisation of white supremacy for colonised peoples:

Out of the blackest part of my soul, across the zebra striping of my mind, surges this desire to be suddenly 'white'. (1986, 63)

⁸⁴ For other readers, in 1953, Fanon was appointed as Chef de Service at the Blida-Joinville Psychiatric Hospital in Blida, Algeria, one year before the War of Liberation fully commenced. He resigned, denouncing the French state, in 1957.

In twenty-two words you devastate the reader. From profound, self-negating soul-murder, through a strobe of hypnotising, psychotic splitting, to a tidal wave of impossible desire: the oppressor taunts with that which can never ever be fulfilled.

George Yancy, the African-American philosopher to whom I am also indebted, writes about your style on the first page of the absorbing introduction to his book *White Self-Criticality beyond Anti-Racism*. Subtitled *Un-Sutured*, he writes:

I am inspired by Frantz Fanon and his ability to **enflesh** the conceptual terrain vis-à-vis race as lived. (Yancy, 2015, p.xii, emphasis as in original).

I hope too to enflesh the terrain I am trying to traverse, to be able to better draw readers in, especially 'white' readers. I am working with text and images: artworks that enflesh the deep history of racism and white supremacy, and visual artworks that – like Daoud's novel - I believe speak back.

Finally for now, I'm writing to you because while I, like many, have attempted to worked for years in the spirit of Audre Lorde's memorable injunction to 'white' feminists and beyond - *The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House* (1984) -, you are an example of the opposite of this. You gained access to the master's tools in the form of your medical training as a psychiatrist in France. You used the tools, honed them, and made them your own through your clinical work, in your books. This was not only to help heal your clients, but also in your activism to show the illegitimacy of the power wielded by the master's house, and to bolster generations of movements towards that house's dismantlement and rebuilding. What enabled you to use and subvert these tools? Was it through your schooling in Martinique, through the mentoring by teacher Aimé Césaire, your view from *there*, leading to transatlantean if not global understanding. I want to keep you in mind and soul to galvanise me as I try to write as a 'white' person from within specific rooms in the master's house - the Westernised university, art education - both contested knowledge-making structures which

could be reinvented as sites of liberation but still promote white supremacy, excluding and oppressing the majority.

29th September, 14.30

Dear M Fanon,

As one who writes so visually, may I think with you about the use of imagery in this thesis?

There's a historical image that I have been haunted by for many years predating this thesis, which I connect to you. It's a large-scale painting made in France, depicting the raced and classed horrors of surviving state and structural violence. It was made by a young 'white' male French painter, calling France to account, yet it's also an image that speaks back to the impacts of the racist, extractive hell of all European imperialism.

The painting is now renowned as an extraordinary feat of artistry, for the abject misery, yet also subversive *hope* that it depicts. It was made at a scale and composed at an angle where the viewer feels they can almost step into the scene. Although two hundred years old, it's an image that many contemporary artists have responded to, made transcriptions of, re-invented. This is because it's an image of crisis and survival on the high seas that - with some modernising of the inhabitants' gender, costume and setting - speaks to the multiple crises of today.

You know it. It's been infamous since it was first exhibited, shocking audiences, in 1819. In French its title is *Le Radeau de la Méduse*, which in English is *The Raft of the Medusa*.



Fig 63. Théodore Géricault, *The Raft of the Medusa*, 1818/19. [Oil on canvas, 491 by 716cm.]
Louvre, Paris.

To remind you of the scale, here's a picture of it in the Louvre Museum.



Fig 64. Jane Trowell, *In front of The Raft at the Louvre*, 2020.

[Digital photograph] Personal collection

The painting shows the moment when fifteen desperate survivors of a shipwreck, on a raft littered with dead bodies, finally spy and hail a ship in the very far distance. It was painted over 1818-1819 by the 27-year old Théodore Géricault after months of self-isolation in feverish research, model-making, creating dozens of sketches.

Géricault's now famous painting broke the painterly rules of his time in several ways, and at the time was deemed a failure by critics.

Firstly, the shipwreck of the Medusa was a real, recent and not a historical event. The French ship struck disaster in 1816, hitting a reef off the coast of what is now called Mauritania in West Africa. In 1818 the scandal of the wrecking and the raft was still making headlines. At that time, for a painter to choose a contemporary event was provocative and somehow coarse: 'history painting' with its themes of classical history, mythology and the Bible was considered the noblest form of European art.

Why was this shipwreck so compelling for Géricault, aside from his ambitions to make a name for himself?

After the Medusa struck the reef on 2nd July, about one hundred and fifty people - 'lower order' officers, crew, and some passengers including one woman who wouldn't leave her husband - were instructed by those in command to take to a raft which had been made by lashing together spars and planking from the disintegrating vessel. Another one hundred and fifty who were ranked as more worthy – the senior officers, dignitaries, women and families - were given the lifeboats and other supporting craft.

The rectangular raft was twenty metres long by seven metres wide, flexing and twisting in the waves. Before the perilous vessel had even left the sinking ship it was wholly inadequate: the jettisoned, terrified people were already being thrown about, up to their knees in water. Initially the raft was towed by one of the lifeboats. Soon however, it was deemed to be a threat to the flotilla's survival.

The rope was cut, the raft and its people abandoned. The flotilla made it to shore. After thirteen days of storms, blazing heat, hyperthermia, fighting over scant provisions, raving thirst, starvation, outright mutiny, murder, attempts to destroy the raft, last resort cannibalism, insanity and suicide, only fifteen men were left alive and in a wretched state, one of whom was a Black seaman. On being rescued, five more men died including the Black man. It was fortunate that two survivors were literate 'lower order' 'white' officers: engineer Alexandre Corréard and the ship's doctor and surgeon JB Henri Savigny. Once back in Paris and restored to health, they published their detailed account. Its publication caused an absolute furore, horrifying readers, revealing the ship's bungling command and denouncing the wider political context that had led to the terrifying and murderous events (Corréard and Savigny, 1816). While the sheer visuality and drama of the events compelled the painter in Géricault, he was also in sympathy with the wider critique of Corréard and Savigny, and approached them in person in order to understand life and death on the raft.

Shipwrecks were not uncommon at all.⁸⁵ What was controversial about the fate of the Medusa was that it had occurred due to catastrophic mismanagement at the highest level. This was a

⁸⁵ There are 100 recorded shipwrecks in January 1816 alone. In July 1816, the month of the Medusa's

voyage on ceremonial French state business, not an everyday ship involved in trade: the Medusa was the flagship of a fleet of four, undertaking the mission to install a new French Governor of the country now called Senegal. Pro-slavery Governor Schmaltz was taking over British overlordship in accordance with the Treaty of Paris which was signed after Napoleon's army lost the Battle of Waterloo in 1815. Cronyism in the appointment of a long-retired ship's captain led to total incompetence in command and catastrophic failure in navigation.

M. Fanon, I spoke earlier about the significance of *The Raft of the Medusa* addressing a contemporary outrageous event, an event where the facts were well-known. Now I share a contradiction between Géricault's research for the painting, and the final piece. This is central to my thinking about the thesis. The painter worked closely and forensically with the surviving officer, the engineer Corréard. Under his guidance he built scaled models of the raft, and listened to different moments in the raft's story, creating multiple versions for his composition including the mutinies and cannibalism. He made dozens of drawings of dead bodies, using corpses he 'borrowed' from mortuaries. Yet his final monumental depiction has elements that are monumental fiction, and these fabrications are what interest me.

The monumental fiction is the 'racial' make-up of the group of survivors on Géricault's raft. In Corréard and Savigny's account, they talked of crew on the Medusa many of whom were North African and African, and such crew were among the men on the raft – these were 'lower orders' after all. Among the fifteen emaciated survivors, they mention only one 'African' man who they called Jean Charles. However, among the survivors on *his* painting of the raft, Géricault depicts half a dozen African and swarthy men. One man sits up alertly looking around him, another is face down, arm flung out, we presume unconscious or deceased. Yet another man, clearly African, stands tall by the mast in a group with three 'white' men. He clasps his hands around their upheld hands. They are together, stunned by the chance of rescue, a hopeful brotherhood in salvation.

shipwreck, there are 32 recorded shipwrecks. These records are minimal given the dominance of British, French and US ships in the log. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_shipwrecks_in_1816#July [Accessed 10.11.22]

Most significant of all is what happens at the very apex of the composition: the figure heralding salvation. There we see a dark-skinned man standing atop a barrel, hailing the far distant ship. Moreover, this man is supported by two 'white' others. Yet he too is also a fabrication by Géricault. Regardless of the near-dead state of the real survivors, preparatory sketches show that until a few weeks before he finished the painting, Géricault had painted the vigorous hailing figure as 'white'. The choice to depict a dark-skinned man as hailer and agent of rescue among a group of 'white' men, supported by 'white' men is unheard-of in this time, where absolute power and control had to be depicted as lying in the hands of elite 'white' men and women. A quarter of a century on, the painting was still causing controversy. In 1845, critic Charles Blanc wrote:

Is it not a negro who is painted on top of the canvas, running out to make signals with shreds of drapery? But what! This negro is no longer in the hold, and he will save the crew! Is it not admirable that this great misfortune has restored equality amongst the two races? (Hoareau-Thomas, 2011, p109)

Géricault's insertion of the presence of men of African heritage and other dark-skinned men on his raft, among and with 'white' men as equals in survival - as leading their survival - is striking. We know that he, along with Correard and Savigny, was an abolitionist opposed to the enslavement of Africans. But being abolitionists in those days often went hand in hand with a still racist conviction that Africans were 'savage' and needed civilising. Géricault's depiction of the raft's inhabitant as equally noble and dignified, supporting each other, is all the more striking in that in the account itself it's clear that racism and classism were at play in the hierarchies, mutinies and survival on the actual raft, as they were on board ship and in life.

What Géricault presents therefore is a *re-narrating* of the story, largely decentring 'white' experience (although not denying the historical weight in the figure of the older 'thinker'), depicting diverse people in a common fate together. What was his motivation?

It has been asserted by some art historians that this was Géricault's visual statement supporting the growing campaign for the abolition of the transatlantic trade in enslaved African people, and of slavery itself (Ryan, 1997). Géricault was also among the many French who were bordering on revolt against what they saw as the corruption and failures of the ruling Bourbon regime, of which the inept wrecking of the *Medusa* and abandonment of the raft was a tiny example.

When it was shown in the prestigious annual exhibition, the Paris Salon, in 1819, the painting's execution, composition and theme provoked a huge controversy and became notorious, additionally stirring up again the public frenzy that had surrounded the news of the original wreck. I recently read in a beautiful article called *Troubled Waters: Liquid Memory in the Wake of Disaster* by Lauren Ravalico where she cites historian Jules Michelet, who wrote in 1819: 'It is the whole French society that Géricault has put aboard his raft' (Michelet in Ravalico, 2017, p.75, my translation).⁸⁶

Whatever his motivations, Géricault's depiction of the raft deliberately refused the racialised relationships on the actual raft and of his day, hailing a different future, a different way to live and survive together: a motley crew united in an unlikely alliance that horrified 'white' French power. To use a contemporary term, it could be seen as a 'race traitorous' depiction (Ignatieff and Garvey, 1996). Among other aspects, it stoked and divided contemporary audiences in the feverish context around France's abolition of slavery after the Haitian Revolution in 1794, and its subsequent reinstatement by Napoleon in 1804.

However, after the Salon closed, his painting's reception led to a furious and depressed Géricault rolling up the canvas and taking it to London where, in part due to nationalist point-scoring and geopolitics, it was received with critical acclaim.

⁸⁶ "C'est elle, c'est la société toute entière du siècle que Géricault embarque avec lui" (in Ravalico, 2017, p. 75).

M Fanon, I want to tell you about another invisibilising that I experienced in my first ever encounter with this painting. It was during my very traditional degree in History of Art in the 1980s. The 'white' lecturer made much of the scale, the composition, the impact of the two pyramids as a structural device, the contemporary nature of the subject matter. There was much focus on the older 'white' man gazing out at us in glazed despondency, a stand-in for the ancient Greek archetype of the Thinker, an elder disappointed, ashamed and despairing in humanity. There was discussion of the fictitious muscularity of the starving survivors, Géricault's concession to 'history' painting and to showing off his virtuosic painterly skills.

There was no mention at all about the 'race' and equality of those on board the raft. My memory of how the painting was described to me is that everyone was 'white'. I myself did not 'see' who Géricault was peopling his Raft with. It was only a few years ago that I admitted that I too had 'whitened' the painting. That is the invisibilising power of 'whiteness' at work, as art historian David Dabydeen uncovered in *Hogarth's Blacks* (1987), David Bindman, Henry Louis Gates jr and Karen Dalton in the ongoing revision of the groundbreaking multi-volume *The Image of the Black in Western Art* (2010 [1979]), Griselda Pollock in *Differencing the Canon* (1999), curator Denise Murrell in her exhibitions and accompanying book *Posing Modernity – The Black Model from Manet and Matisse to Today* (2018).

It's probably not a surprise that I have taken this turn to art history after what I wrote to you yesterday about visibility in conveying meaning. This painting takes me to your work, and the contemporary relevance of your analysis.

I'm thinking of you and the ongoing legacy of the misery, degradation and theft-dressed-as-trade caused by imperial competition backed by racist 'white' supremacist religion and science. Let's consider the mercantile and imperial vying of Portugal, Spain, France, Britain, Netherlands, Belgium, Germany and Italy that's taken place over many centuries. I think of the merchant-adventuring, skirmishes, bribery of local rulers and scheming around the Molucca ('spice') Islands and Polynesia; the frenzied races to control trading around the coast of the continent of India, the literal beggaring of once thriving Bengal; I think of the string of

pearls that is the Caribbean, the genocide of the Carib and Arawak people on those islands, then forcibly settled with enslaved African people; the vast territories of North Africa harried and occupied by Italy, France and Spain; the death-dealing competition for enslavement and transatlantic trafficking of peoples from West and central Africa; of competing over Egypt, of Syria, of Iraq, of Yemen, of Palestine; of the indigenous peoples of all the Americas, of all of what we now call Australasia, subjected to death by imported disease and violence, subjected to Europeans' racial supremacist rationalisations for their expendability and land appropriation; the forcible displacement and erasure of indigenous lives and culture through white settler/occupation of what is currently called the USA, Canada, South Africa, Australia, New Zealand.

I think of the unimaginable gunboat power of the British Empire to extract wealth and control, at its greatest extent from four-fifths of the world's surface and inhabitants, human and more than human. The Empire's 'greatest extent' was just before the Second World War, only twenty-three years before my birth. No wonder that the more average 'white' Britons suffer from neoliberalism and 'austerity' cuts, the more 'white' Britons grieve at loss of status, seeking scapegoats, susceptible to holding onto or reviving an image of itself as 'greater' than everywhere else – where 'greater' means white supremacy. Here I reference Paul Gilroy's important work on Britain's 'post-colonial melancholia' (Gilroy, 2004).

I think of the environmental legacies of five hundred years of European extractive expansion and imperialism. Of industrial free-market racial capitalism, chiefly dominated by the USA, China, India, Brazil, Europe, Russia and their rampant polluting use of finite resources, learnt from white supremacist capitalism. I think of the lands, of the countries made unliveable in and uneconomic: by trade, by pollution, or by war, leading to mass migration and misery on a scale hitherto unknown.

I think about the waters of this earth. Of the at least 40,000 people and children who have lost their lives trying to cross the Mediterranean Sea northwards into 'Fortress Europe' between

2014-2021.⁸⁷ Of the desperate 10s of 1000s of people – whole families, lonely individuals, orphaned children – are effectively life-imprisoned in camps on the Greek, Turkish, Libyan, Syrian borders with no right to leave. In many camps people are kept in appallingly inadequate and often abusive conditions, camps paid for in part by the European Union who want those governments to incarcerate people to keep down the numbers of people attempting onwards migration (Amnesty, 2020).

I think again of water. Of the exponential growth in numbers over the past five years of people and children crossing the cold waters of the Channel between France and England. They hope for a better life, attempting to seek asylum in the UK and with almost no 'legal' routes to claim asylum, many have travelled hundreds of miles, putting their lives and cash into the hands of smugglers and traffickers. These people are often packed into inadequate craft completely unfit for the 25-mile crossing of one of the busiest shipping lanes in the world.

In 2018, two years after the Brexit Referendum, 299 people were recorded arriving on England's coast. This increased in 2019 to 1843 people, but in 2020 - the year Britain left the EU and its 'deals' with EU neighbour France to prevent crossings had ended - 8466 people crossed those perilous waters. Then came the exponential increase: by the end of 2021, an unimaginable 28,526 tired, terrified people had reached the shores of Kent and East Sussex. Already by the end of August 2022, 25,000 people have crossed those waters (PA Media, 2022).

I think of 'the agreement' that the UK's former Home Secretary Priti Patel struck with the Rwandan government earlier in 2022: to deport selected male asylum seekers to camps in Rwanda for 'processing'. The new Home Secretary Suella Braverman has promised to be even tougher, announcing with a smile that she 'dreams' of the front page of the Telegraph newspaper on the day of the first deportation flight (Goodfellow, 2022). As of September 2022, the Rwanda deal is held up in the courts as human rights lawyers appeal. But these

⁸⁷ The Statista website shows 22,594 people whose deaths were recorded. They estimate that at least another 14,000 people were drowned over this period, bringing the total drowned to close to 37,000 people. (Statista, 2022)

and many other inhumane moves show yet another breathtaking aspect of Britain's revival of 19th if not 18th and 17th century modes of protectionist, punitive, cruel and racist/classist deportation-based border patrol. But this time it is pushed by Conservative government ministers who are Right-wing, elite, educated women of colour, of Asian and diaspora heritage, in an unholy alignment with white supremacy, surely a variant on your thesis *in Black Skin, White Masks*?

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I stop. I take a breath. I check myself.

I think of Eve Tuck and C. Ree's extreme caution about the intentions behind passages like the ones I just wrote, taken from their piece *A Glossary of Haunting*:

Listing terrors is not a form of social justice, as if outing (a) provides relief for a presumed victim or (b) repairs a wholeness or (c) ushers in an improved social awareness that leads to (a) and (b). That is not what I am doing here, saying it all so that things will get better. (Tuck and Ree, 2013, p.647)

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May I share a moment of my learning in the French language that relates to these unspeakable politics? A couple of months ago at work, a new colleague joined us to lead our team for Voices that Shake!, a youth programme that amplifies the art, creativity, demands

and leadership of young people who are Black and of the global majority. They were born in France, with roots in Central African Republic. They came to live in London in 2014, pre-Brexit, and worked as a youth worker particularly committed to anti-racism and supporting queer, transgender, non-gender-binary and working class young people. They are bilingual English-French. I was talking with this colleague about *The Raft of the Medusa*, and asked if they knew it. "Oh yes", they said. "Everyone in France knows it. It's become an everyday expression: 'C'est le radeau de la Méduse'. It means it's a total fucking disaster so do whatever you can'".⁸⁸

The Raft of the Medusa, the facts behind it and the painting's mythology, endures. It reminds us viscerally of the power of wretched yet determined and dignified people in alliance. But not just any people. The people on the actual raft and in Géricault's painting were condemned by racism and classism, and divided by the same. The people attempting to seek sanctuary and livable lives in present-day 'Europe' are raced and classed, and often gendered and persecuted for their sexualities. They have been made wretched and damned by centuries of European colonialism, racism and coloniality, through state, economic, environmental and resource degradation, through structural oppression that also is assisted by profiteering through smuggling and trafficking, just as African profiteers procured/kidnapped fellow Africans for transatlantic enslavement.

The wretched are placed by white supremacy in impossible positions of no future, of danger and precarity. Then they are blamed for it.

From the outset of his career in the 1950s, the African-American writer James Baldwin writes and speaks about 'white' people's obsession in the USA with talking about the 'Negro Problem'. He addresses what follows to 'white' people. *Warning: Baldwin uses the word 'nigger'*:

⁸⁸ Told to me in person, which I later noted down, August 2022.

I've always known that... what you are describing was not me, what you are afraid of was not me. It had to be something else. You had invented it, so it had to be something you were afraid of, and you invested me with it.... Now, I've always known, I mean *really* always known - and that's part of the agony - I've always known I'm not the 'nigger'. But if I'm not the 'nigger' and if it's true that your invention reveals **you**, then, who is the 'nigger'? I'm not the victim here. ...

But you still think, I gather, that the 'nigger' is necessary. But he's unnecessary to me. So he must be necessary to you. *I give you your problem back: You're the 'nigger', baby, it isn't me.* (Baldwin in *Take This Hammer*, 1963, emphasis as in the film)

He returns the problem. It is re-turned: the problem is 'white' people believing in white supremacy.

Today, by extension, it is not the 'refugee problem', the problem is the rampantly debilitating racialised conditions, often originating by post-imperial geopolitics, that have led to people having their futures crushed, feeling forced to risk all, leaving everything behind including elderly loved ones, risking dying in deep waters, on unknown shores, rather than staying under unlivable conditions in the countries of their birth and culture. The people trying to reach 'white'-dominated Europe are the racialised other, made into a 'refugee crisis', yet merely attempting to access some of the rights, opportunity and wealth which was created through extraction from their lands, their labour, their forebears' lives.

I am among many in weaving contemporary stories on justice compelled by the enduring power of the painting *The Raft of the Medusa*. Some of those inspired have international influence. I think of the African-American author Toni Morrison whom the Louvre Museum invited to curate a season around one of their artworks. She chose *The Raft of the Medusa*. Morrison called this season 'The Foreigner's Home' or in French 'L'Étranger chez nous' (2006), and the irony of that title in relation to how many people find museums alienating, elitist, oppressive and hostile if you don't 'fit in' aka you are not 'white and middle class' is not lost.

Morrison situated the season in the context of the upsurge in life-threatening Mediterranean crossings by people seeking safety in Europe. In 2006 alone, the number of mainly Syrian and Afghan refugees making the crossing approached 56,000, with an estimated number of people who perished in the sea that year put at 7000 (Collyer, 2007).⁸⁹ This ongoing unspeakable disaster was very fresh in the international news and was only set to get worse. It was a political battleground: the situation was regularly being re-framed by right-wing media and right-wing politicians across Europe in the language of 'alien invasion', in vile racist terms. In this context, Morrison commissioned young and established global majority and queer artists, many from the under-resourced suburbs of Paris, who performed their work in front of the painting, with crowds - not your typical Louvre audience - freely gathered around them. "Who IS the foreigner? Am I the foreigner in my own home? Who decides?"

In 2019, the year Morrison died, a feature-length documentary film featuring Morrison and the Louvre programme was premiered called *The Foreigner's Home* (Brown and Pingree, 2018). In 2015, to amplify and widen the scope of the Louvre project, the increasingly frail 84-year-old Morrison was filmed in conversation in her own home with her chosen interlocutor the Haitian writer Edwidge Danticat, and this footage threads together this documentary.

In 2018, The Carters - superstar African-American singers Beyoncé and her husband Jay Z - released *APESHIT*, a music video filmed in a Louvre that is empty, but for their couture-dressed selves, their dancers and the artworks they had chosen as focal points around race and also class. The aesthetics they present us with, including their own couture, ooze confidence, elegance and beauty. Each choice of artwork, and their 'ownership' of the space speaks back to the white power enshrined in such museums of European supremacy. At points, Jay-Z is filmed rapping in front of *The Raft of the Medusa* - the hailing figure, the people on the raft.

⁸⁹ Warning on the source: the organisation IEMed appears reliable, but a warning that the choice of the word 'clandestine' in the title and other language criminalises and dehumanise the migrants and asylum seekers.

There is a particular trail that I now want to relate to you, relating the politicising, powerful Raft image to the politicising, powerful word. I explore this with you because it underpins a realisation that has emerged for me around conceptually structuring the thesis on whiteness, coloniality and racism in art education around learning from The Raft.

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In 2018, I read a book of essays by Edwidge Danticat who I introduced above in relation to Toni Morrison. This was *Create Dangerously, The Immigrant Artist At Work* (2010). Danticat was born in 1969 in Haiti, was raised there, and is now living and working in the USA. In these essays, she brings us into her concerns for the historical and contemporary lived realities of Haitians at home, her acute insights on the interferences of foreign politics, 'aid' and trade, and also on the stories of those who have left, many of whom in another desperate sea crossing, to Florida by boat.

Danticat's book is also about writing, and in part this is what gripped and emboldened me, given my task with the thesis. She says:

Create dangerously, for people who read dangerously. This is what I've always thought it meant to be a writer. Writing, knowing in part that no matter how trivial your words may seem, someday, somewhere, someone may risk his or her life to read them.
(2010, p10)

To illustrate this, she brings together two European 'white' male writers. One of whom, the Russian Osip Mandelstam, was harassed, arrested and internally exiled under Stalin for his work. Her choice for the other writer completely caught me out:

Albert Camus, like the poet Osip Mandelstam, suggests that it is creating as a revolt against silence, creating when both the creation and the reception, the writing and the reading, are dangerous undertakings, disobedient to a directive. (2010, 11)

Given I had been revisiting Camus and had just read Kamel Daoud, I was surprised to read Danticat take Camus' views on writing as inspiration. It further struck me when Danticat explains that she took her book's very title from Camus. 'Create Dangerously' is the title of a speech he gave and published after receiving the Nobel Prize for Literature (Camus, 1957).

In 'Create Dangerously', Camus writes: "Art cannot be a monologue. *We are on the high seas*. The artist, like everyone else, must bend to his oar, without dying if possible." (Danticat, 2010, pp.13-14, my italics)

Danticat, Camus, Camus, Danticat: a poignant rocking between worlds. Here is a Haitian-born politically activist writer, whose country Haiti was formed through the first ever Black-led bloody expulsion of a European colonial power – France - through the Haitian Revolution of 1793. And she is citing an arguably racist 'white' French male, albeit on what it means to be a writer. In an earlier letter, I spoke about Puerto Rican/American decolonial scholar Ramón Grosfoguel's concern/outrage that ideas globally are dominated by 'white' male thinkers from five countries – Italy, France, England, Germany and the USA. It's important for me to note that Danticat freely explores the ideas that she needs to do her work, including from the problematic settler-colonial writer, Camus.

"We are on the high seas", he writes (in Danticat, 2010, pp.13-14). Given the long history of people endangering and losing their lives trying to leave Haiti for Florida, by boat, and of the immigration perils once arriving in the USA, I was mindful of Danticat's choice of this vivid quotation.

Later she refers to Camus again, specifically on the uses of the visual. The words I've bolded are in fact Camus', cited without the speech marks:

Albert Camus once wrote that **a person's creative work is nothing but a slow trek to rediscover, through the detours of art, those two or three images in whose presence his or her heart first opened.** (2010, 18, my bold indicates direct quote)

Danticat and Camus are writers concerned about the power of images that create - and are created through - writing. Coming from art, I latched on to this as bolstering the argument for a visual way to tell my thesis. Since starting the PhD in 2014, I too was unconsciously on a slow trek to find the two, three, four, five key images that 'opened my heart' and my eyes, through a re-seeing, just as I re-saw *L'Étranger* through this research and reading Daoud's work. The Raft was one such image, one that is now central. There are others.

Revolting against silences, disobeying directives, attempting *conocimiento*, and crossing perilous waters: all these bring together Danticat, Camus, *The Raft of the Medusa*, my thesis on art education in England, and you.

M Fanon, I'm beginning to sense that I have found the way to structure the thesis. It's emerging at the meeting point between two visual-textual currents: my conviction that the story behind Géricault's painting and how he re-narrated it offers a framing for my ideas; and the structure and visuality in an exceptional book that I feel it among your literary and political descendants. This book was recommended to me earlier this year by a colleague, Farzana Khan, and is written by acclaimed African-American scholar Christina Sharpe: *In the Wake, On Blackness and Being* (2016).

Her central thesis is that 'the wake' in all its meanings – from the trail left by a boat through water, to keeping watch over the dead, to coming to consciousness – invokes the afterlives and after affects of the transatlantic trade in enslaved Africans and the state of enslavement

itself, its impacts on diaspora worldwide, and what survives despite centuries of such insistent violence.

Like many, I found *In the Wake* overwhelmingly powerful in its argument, in its narrative, and also deeply emotional to read. This impact for me is partly due to her exquisite poetic and visual style, her storytelling, the power and reach of her conceptual framing, but also due to the simplicity of how she frames the book's main ideas.

The book is a quartet of chapters, titled:

The Wake

The Ship

The Hold

The Weather

These two-word titles, in everyday language, with no separate introduction or conclusion is in my experience not usual in a scholarly book from the Westernized university. Its disobedient pared-down, almost poetic form gripped me.

There is a multi-layered flow of art, photography, poetry, journal-style entries, news reportage, history, and theory that Sharpe deftly, painfully and indelibly weaves us into through these four chapters. For me there is something prayer-like about this book, in the extreme reverence for the lives that Sharpe describes and holds, but also in its calm, authoritative analysis.

I want to share with you from a few of Sharpe's pages. I do this so you can understand her impact on my thinking about the PhD and I can later articulate the kind of 'dangerous' writing and thinking I aspire to.

In her chapter *The Ship*, Sharpe takes us on a devastating journey that she unfolds with grace and precision. We are invited to consider a photograph taken in 1992 depicting a troubled Haitian child who is a 'boat person' (as described in the photo credit) (p.48). The girl is standing at a US immigration desk, clutching a toy ship, looking anxiously up. The author then links the girl's situation - and the context of Haiti which Sharpe spends much time on in this book – to the history of the *Zong*, the British ship where in 1781 over one hundred and thirty enslaved Africans were thrown overboard so that the British shipowner could claim insurance on lost 'cargo'. The African people were in fact dying of thirst due to the ship running out of fresh water and had become a liability for the Liverpool-based company. This incident of mass murder instigated a high-profile court case, but not on the basis of murder, but on the basis of a charge of deliberate jettisoning of 'cargo' in an attempt to defraud.

Sharpe connects this to the still-shocking plan drawing of the *Brookes* ship, made in 1788, which indicated to traders and ships' crews how enslaved people could best be 'housed' (what word can possibly speak here?) to maximise storage space for people in the hold (p.54). She then speaks of the murders off the island of Lampedusa, Italy, in 2013, of over three hundred African shipboard men, women and children. Three hundred people out of four hundred and forty people lost their lives, people who had been packed onto a boat built to carry at most two hundred people. Their deaths were caused by an outbreak of fire from which the many souls on board were too tightly packed in to escape. The boat then capsized and those who survived fire faced drowning, and finally neglect by those who could have done much more to rescue them.

These dozen pages end with another contemporary Mediterranean mass murder: the deliberate ignoring of the plight of sixty-three African people in 2011, in what came to be called, nauseatingly, the 'Left-to-Die Boat'.

Sharpe cites a report from a newspaper article that highlights the murderous inaction of those standing by.:

...seventy-two African men women and children left Tripoli [Libya] in a crowded ship, no, not a ship, a dinghy, heading to Lampedusa, Italy. After four hours into the journey, the ship was in distress and sent out signals. The signals were received...and despite being spotted by many parties...the occupants of the ship were not rescued but allowed to drift for over two weeks until only 9 of the passengers remained alive when it landed back on Libyan shores. Rescuers and the rescued report that one French warship “came so close that the migrants – on the brink of starvation – could see soldiers peering at them through binoculars and taking photos.” (Walt, 2012, cited in Sharpe 2015, p,58, my italics)

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I think of Daoud.

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He speaks of counter-inquest.

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Led by the survivors and descendants there is the counter-inquest that has been in process for 500 years.

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Camus makes Meursault 'kill an Arab', casually, for no reason.

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Some sixty years later, it takes Kamel Daoud, an Algerian novelist, to hold the inquest.

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I think of the timidity in the English-language publishers' choice to translate counter-inquest as 'investigation'.

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Prompted by protest, NGOs and government departments hold 'investigations', 'inquiries' and produce reports into the deathly impacts of racism in state bureaucracies, police and judiciaries.

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The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry

The Windrush Inquiry

The Grenfell Inquiry

The Report into the unequal impact of Covid-19 pandemic on disempowered ethnic minority and migrant communities.⁹⁰

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Recommendations are made.

Cases sometimes come to court.

Sometimes there is a hard-won victory.

⁹⁰ <https://raceequalityfoundation.org.uk/press-release/new-report-highlights-unequal-impact-of-covid-19-pandemic-on-disempowered-ethnic-minority-and-migrant-communities/> [Accessed 25.10.22].

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Investigation, inquiry, inquest...

And then there's the counter-inquest
...of those who come long after
...and re-frame the cultural narrative.

The investigation, inquiry, inquest, and counter-inquest of art.

M. Fanon, Steve McQueen is such an artist. McQueen is an award-winning Black British filmmaker who won the Turner Prize in 1999 (a prestigious UK prize for artists). His feature film *12 Years a Slave* (2013) won nine Oscar Awards in 2014, including Best Picture. After finding his secondary schooling in London extremely alienating, Steve studied art foundation at Chelsea College of Art and Design, and went on to a degree in Fine Art at Goldsmiths,

University of London (1990-3). In 2020, his film *Mangrove* was premiered on BBC TV, one of a series of five acclaimed feature films in his *Small Axe* series. *Mangrove* describes a key moment in British judicial and civil rights history on the Black-led fight for race justice. In *Mangrove*, as Géricault, Toni Morrison and Daoud before him, the artist holds an inquest.

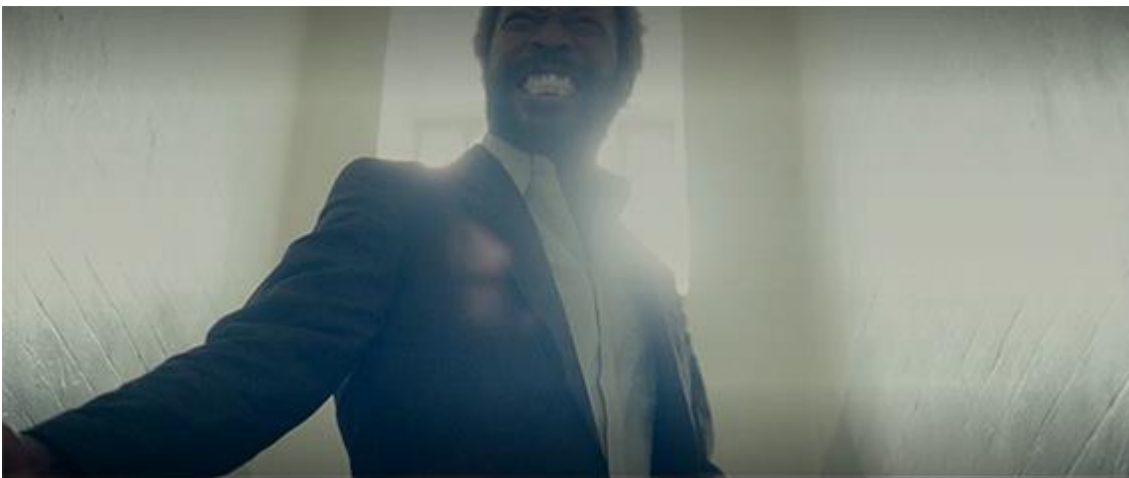
Mangrove shows the sustained police harassment and over a dozen violent raids on the popular Mangrove restaurant over 18 months across 1968-1969. The Mangrove was in Notting Hill (London), owned by the Trinidadian-British civil rights activist and restaurateur Frank Critchlow.⁹¹ The police repeatedly raided and smashed the Mangrove up allegedly 'to find drugs' which they never found. In the film we watch Critchlow rebuild his restaurant time and again after this racially motivated state-backed intimidation and vandalism.

In August 1970, around one hundred and fifty protestors from London's Caribbean community organised a non-violent march to defend Frank, defend the restaurant, and to denounce police racism. The protest was met with provocation and aggression from the police, which some protestors responded to in kind. The police escalated the violence yet claimed there was deliberate incitement to affray. They made nine arrests including Critchlow. Many of those arrested were known civil rights activists, led by Altheia Jones-LeCointe, a Trinidadian PhD researcher in biochemistry studying in London, and Darcus Howe who was training as a lawyer. Later in 1970 there was a lengthy high-profile trial where the Nine were represented by 'white' barrister and anti-racist ally Ian MacDonald. The 55-day trial acquitted them of the most serious charges, and ended with an acknowledgement of police racism. This was a landmark in civil rights struggle and British judicial history.

M. Fanon the scene I want to discuss with you in relation to counter-inquest into racism is during the trial. There's a moment in that scene where all nine of the Mangrove defendants loudly protest against the prosecution's choice of witnesses. The whole courtroom is in uproar. The judge angrily adjourns the session, ordering that not another word will be spoken, and that everyone must leave. Before Critchlow exits the defendants' box, he calls down to

⁹¹ It is important to note that the British Caribbean islands, formerly called West Indies, were in the Commonwealth, and rights were enshrined in UK law for citizens to be able to live, work and study and access resources in the 'mother' country.

his lawyer, and is immediately and roughly grabbed by the courtroom police. Darcus Howe, well-known activist, is also grabbed by police. The police manhandle them out into the corridor, and more or less throw them down the stairs into the basement of the courthouse. They resist, but each is violently shoved into their own cell, the door slammed. McQueen has brought us to a peak of unbearable rage at the naked racism of the 'white' state. The camera spies, as it were through the peephole of the door, on Critchlow's tensed, furious, distressed figure.⁹²



⁹² Figs 65-68. Author's screenshots, *Shaun Parkes as Frank Critchlow in the courthouse cell, from 'Mangrove'; policeman at the cell door*. Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/p08vy19b/small-axe-series-1-mangrove> [Accessed 8.10.22] The scene described is from timestamp 1.30.01 – 1.32.05

In the cell, we see Critchlow from a low camera angle, pacing and pacing, face severely drawn, body wired, breaths heaving. He beats the door with his hands. He raises his hand in outrage, he clutches his head wretchedly. After all we have seen him go through, surely he is going to break, to go insane.

He shouts enraged to the police and to himself: "Fight me, come on, Fight me. You are wicked. You are savages. You are wicked men. You dirty murderous menace... You are wicked. What is wrong with you? What is WRONG with you?
What is W R O N G with you?"

The script is very careful here, despite the extraordinary improvisatory performance by the actor Shaun Parkes. His shouting of the word 'savages', of the word 'wicked', "you are wicked men", "you dirty, murderous menace": these reverse the flow of racist language of many centuries.

This scene's intensity is compounded by the sound of a beat and hum pulsing low throughout, that gets louder and turns into an intense loud buzzing note that rises in pitch as the camera eventually pulls back on the seated exhausted Critchlow.

As he calms down, Critchlow's repeated question "What is WRONG with you?", becomes almost philosophical, asserting rather than asking who it is who has the problem.



The camera pans back from the peephole to the corridor.

Here we see a 'white' policeman who has been staring through the peephole at Critchlow.



“Shhhh”, he says, putting his finger to his lips.

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I think of Baldwin.

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I can't quickly move on from re-watching the traumatic scene in Critchlow's cell, from what Christina Sharpe - through indelible images and text - has laid out before me, the truths that she weaves together across time and space, the implications that her work has for my being and actions as a 'white' person, for all people racialised as 'white'.

I'm thinking of the impact of bell hooks' life work until her passing earlier this year, and Audre Lorde's before her. The impact of a mere two of your works, M Fanon, from the decade before my birth, and of W.E.B Dubois' 1920 work *The Souls of White Folk*, five years before you were born.

The policeman staring through the peephole at Frank Critchlow considered himself the all-powerful eye, with all-powerful might and Great British right (and Right) on his side. But what he is blank to, what is opaque to him is understanding that he himself is *continuously seen*.

Once again, Du Bois writes:

Of them I am singularly clairvoyant. I see in and through them... And yet as they preach and strut and shout and threaten,...they go twisting, flying by my tired eyes *and I see them ever stripped—ugly, human*.
(Du Bois, 2004, my italics)

I think about what Critchlow experienced, and Du Bois's vivid prose. M Fanon, it prompts a memory from one of the contributors to my research. This testimony below is from an artist of Bengali heritage who is a Londoner:

She just started screaming at me. She was a guest tutor in, uh, our MA, and... I was, like, "Oh, most Bangladeshis who live around Whitechapel don't go into the [Whitechapel] gallery," and she was, like, "(gasps) How dare you say that? That's untrue, untrue. That's..." She got so defensive, and aggressive! ...Then I was talking to her about Bengali cinema, and how Bengali cinema was different from Bollywood, mainstream Bollywood, which is more commercial... and then she started going on about Bollywood...as if I hadn't just spoken! And then, she started screaming at me and said, "You think I'm stupid, do you think I'm stupid?" She said that! It was just so...! And this was a high-profile [white] woman who was directing the XXXX. (Contributor M's testimony, 2020, my insertions)

What *is* wrong with 'white' people?

You yourself considered whiteness in its most sick and brutal manifestations through the last chapter of *The Wretched of the Earth* (2001). You titled it *Colonial War and Mental Disorders*

and to be honest, from the issues covered in the preceding chapters, this was not how I thought the book was going to end. You yourself seemed to predict that and address it that unapologetically:

We shall deal here with the problem of mental disorders which arise from the war of national liberation which the Algerian people are carrying on. Perhaps these notes on psychiatry will be found ill-timed and singularly out of place in such a book; but we can do nothing about that. (2001, p.200)

From this passage, I assumed you would focus on the impacts of colonial war on Algerians' mental health in their fight for freedom. Throughout the book you call them 'Patriots', and your allegiance is crystal clear.

You do focus on the patriots' suffering, beyond devastatingly. But not only.

You also offer an acutely disturbing analysis of another kind of wretch, another kind of damned person. In your case notes in this chapter, you give examples of the psychoses of men from the French police and military in Algeria who it was your job to treat. Your assessment is that their mental breakdowns and dysfunction result from their jobs which involve extracting confessions through state-backed torture techniques from Algerians suspected of organising against French rule. These torture methods were described and sanctioned in state-issued handbooks, legitimated by a 'white' supremacist mentality which is terrified of revenge, and yet creates revenge.

It is in the wake.

Once the all-out War of Liberation started in November 1954, your work at the hospital intensified. Given your allegiance to Algeria's liberation, it is difficult to consider the political tensions flowing in you as you listened to and 'treated' all who came before you, let alone these 'white' men who called Algerians 'creatures' and 'animals' and then went home to rape

and beat their own wives. However, you worked there until 1957 before issuing a denunciation through your letter of resignation, which resulted in your deportation from Algeria, although you continued to support the liberation struggle.

What you witnessed and understood about the psychosis of whiteness through your professional experience, given your politics, your own experience of racism and colonialism is unique. Although the context you were in was utterly extreme - at the boiling hot, enraged, twisted, mass-murderous end of the psychosis of whiteness - this surely is only one end of the trajectory.

Somewhere on the vile trajectory is the wider 'white' society, police and judiciary's attitude to, say, the Mangrove Restaurant's Caribbean community, to the Mangrove 9, as evidenced by Frank Critchlow's harrowing experience, an institutional and societal white supremacy that many are resisting and pushing back against still today. Towards the other end of the trajectory, but still within the psychosis, are many everyday people doing everyday 'whiteness' as other legatees of your work, Kehinde Andrews, Guilane Kinouani, and Helen Morgan explore today (2023; 2024; 2021).

These, as we heard from M, include an art teacher or lecturer in a school or college in England, or a curator in a museum or gallery, meting out a 'whiteness' that knowingly or unknowingly attempts to undermine, discredit, humiliate, invisibilise and bar the way for people of the global majority. This behaviour includes on occasions, me.

Conocimiento, desconocimiento.

M. Fanon, I need to take some time to think, rest, and simmer with these ideas; re-read your deeply disturbing chapter, and bring it alongside recent related theory, for example, in Kehinde Andrews film on *The Psychosis of Whiteness* (Nulman, 2018) or his book of the same title that he will publish (2023). Then, in the quest to understand better 'what is wrong

with us' in art education, I want to be inside the testimony of my contributors in light of wrestling with the psychosis of whiteness.

A final thought: I've spent quite a lot of time in this letter talking about derivations and translations. If we are to combine our work more effectively against oppression, It feels important to connect across languages of the former European imperium, to see how ideas and images translate literally and symbolically, or not. I'm going to leave you with one more recent linguistic discovery which is helpful to me in conceptualising how to frame the next stages in this research.

I've never typed the word 'wretched' as much as I have these past few days. It's not a word I use very often. 'Wreck' on the other hand is much more everyday. I became curious about the similarities between them and decided to look into their derivation.

In English usage, a wretch is understood as a person in a dreadful state of misery and often of poverty. The wretched are those in that state. As states of being, both a wretch and the wretched are passive states. I looked up the etymology and found this:

Wretch: Old English wrecca 'wretch, stranger, exile',
from Proto Germanic wrakjon 'pursuer; one pursued',
related to Old English wreccan 'to drive out, punish'.

Thus, etymologically, a wretch is a person who is a strange to others, or others have made them strange, who have exiled them, driven them out, pursued or punished them. Such resonances.

Turning to wreck, I also conjured wreak as in wreak havoc, and wrack, as in wracked in pain, or the English phrase wrack and ruin. I checked, and M Fanon, etymologically they are all connected:

Wreck: 'to destroy, ruin', 'drive out or away, remove'; also 'take vengeance'. [from Proto-Germanic wrekan] (see **wreak** (v.)

Wreak: 'to punish, seek vengeance, damage' [from Old English, wrecan),

Wrack: wrack, wreck, rack and wretch are utterly tangled in spelling and in sense in Middle and early modern English.⁹³

Wretched, Wreck, Wreak havoc, Wrack with pain, Wrack... and ruin.

White supremacy.

I thank you for what you bring out in me for this research, for the work that is to be done.

Jane

⁹³ All etymologies taken from https://www.etymonline.com/word/wreck?ref=etymonline_crossreference [Accessed 10.10.22].

Letter to D: Thesis as Raft as thesis

Suffolk

9th October 2022

Hi D,

I'm happy to tell you that this retreat space is working. I'm beyond relieved that the letters I talked with you about are flowing.

As you know, a few weeks ago, I had the breakthrough that letter-writing could liberate me from the stuck place. For me it's been a kind of free-writing with a recipient in mind, enabling direct personal address but also flights of thought. I feel momentum.

Do you remember the *Free University of Liverpool* (2011-13), and in particular how we loved the title of their PhD: a *Project of Hope and Desire*. They conceived of it like all their courses, as an artwork within the context of activism and protest. Thinking Hope and Desire, thinking art practice and protest, what I want to express in this letter to you is the theoretically and art pedagogically effective structure that I've arrived at for the thesis. This is a 'curation' I've been searching for that can also communicate with a wider audience.

Throughout this quest, I've found myself returning to Sylvia Theuri's work: you remember her groundbreaking doctoral scholarship anatomising racism experienced by Black African art students in art education in Britain, including her own experience, and what must be done? I follow her ongoing research into racialised power relations in art education and the artworld, and her artistic practice and groundbreaking curatorial projects (Theuri 2015; 2016; 2020a; 2020b); her recent appointment as Lead Researcher on the *Visualise* project into race and inclusion in art education in secondary school.⁹⁴

⁹⁴ Sylvia led the initial stages of the research process. The final report came out in 2024 (Begum, 2024).

Recently I revisited Sylvia's PhD thesis, and was struck by her metaphor of a journey to describe her three participants' narratives: 'a ruptured journey', 'an undeviating journey', 'an arduous journey' (Theuri, 2016, p.131-149). These words resonant with the traumatic history of the Middle Passage, but also of today, of the many of African heritage who attempt to arrive here in Britain from elsewhere, let alone those trying to get an education.

As you know, a few months ago I came to understand how to structure my thesis around the journeys of the contributors: around the metaphor of a particular water-born journey. D, you've been in the loft with me over the past few summers. We've talked at length about the Raft piece evolving up there. On seeing it over time, you reflected that making the piece was a process of conceptualisation. You encouraged me to deepen into how my reading of Géricault's *Raft of the Medusa* can frame the thesis.

The vessel of this raft feels so right for 'remaining un-sutured' (Yancy, 2016). A platform born of white supremacy, of a violent racist, classist crime against humanity becomes a platform for understanding different states of contributors' experience of - and insights into - racism, coloniality, whiteness, and anti-racism in their encounter with art education in England. It feels apt, given whiteness's preference for shiny new solutions rather than recognition and repair, that it's a temporary platform, built from what was to hand, always un-suturing, not able to last without constant vigilance. Through its precariousness, and resonances in real world situations, I feel it could hold the structural causes as well as individual experience, as gathered by me from the contributors to this research.

In my letter to Frantz Fanon, I articulated to him how, for me, *The Wretched of the Earth* connects both to the real story behind the shipwreck of the Medusa, and Géricault's fictionalised depiction which deliberately refused the hierarchical relationships on the actual Raft and in society. Like Fanon's call for revolution, Géricault's Raft hailed a different future, platforming a new equal way to live, to suffer, imagine and overcome *together*, a diasporic crew in unlikely alliance against structural violence.

I also connected Fanon's work to a book we've both read: *In the Wake* by Christina Sharpe (2016). Of course Sharpe cites Fanon: in both books, the structural causes of the wretchedness, the wrecking, the wreaking... the wreckage by what we now call white supremacy are acutely anatomised.

I'm thinking now of three wakes: the haphazard wake of *The Raft*, the ongoing wake of Fanon's diagnoses, and... *In the Wake*. Here is Sharpe:

... the path behind a ship, keeping watch with the dead, coming to consciousness - ... "the wake" as the afterlives of slavery,...

Formulating the wake and "*wake work*" as sites of artistic production, resistance, consciousness, and possibility for living in diaspora, **In the Wake** offers a way forward. (Sharpe, 2015, back cover, my italics)

These wakes' ripples are converging for this thesis. Although produced just over two hundred years apart, both *The Raft of the Medusa's* and Sharpe's *wakes* are indeed sites of 'artistic production' that meet on the same death-dealing, life-giving body of water – the Atlantic. Both are concerned with murderous injustice, racism, survival, resilience and genius in survival. Both works honour and uphold the abused and violated, suggesting possibilities for living in the future. Both works are an accusation, an investigation, and inquiry, an inquest, calling power to account, speaking back to accepted narratives. Both works move between history and the contemporary, although of course Géricault could not have known that. Both works operate poetically, visually and compositionally to haunt. Yet through using the power of art, unlike the ripples after a ship passes, *their work won't go away*.

These Atlantean works cause a permanent wake, more like a seismic rift or quake. Through them I sense depth charges sent by enslaved people from the hulls of ships that trafficked them, charges which crack open angry memorialising fissures in the very bedrock underlying the sea, mirroring the surface wake, cradling those who have been forsaken. These fissures are an accusation, an arrest. I think of African-American painter Ellen Gallagher's

overwhelming series of paintings *Ecstatic Draught of Fishes* that we both were stunned by only recently.⁹⁵

Between the wakes of Fanon and Sharpe's work, there is a *tectonic* companionship. *The Wretched of the Earth* is located on land, on the continent of Africa. *In the Wake* locates itself primarily on seas and coasts. As Fanon goes inland in Africa, Sharpe also takes us inland, to the suffocating treatment that is meted out in the wake: in the USA's immigration and detention centres.

In the Wake, of Géricault's Raft, of Fanon's work. I began to understand that what the contributors to my research had disclosed to me echoed in the structural conditions that had created the original Raft, the people jettisoned onto the Raft, the survivors of a multi-generational experience, the defiant signallers who draw attention often at a great personal cost, the re-narrators of the 'real' story that power forbids to be told.

As you remember, in her book, Sharpe gives us a quartet of chapter headings: The Wake, The Ship, The Hold, The Weather
Chapters as concepts, containers, coordinates, compass bearings.
The four corners of the earth, the four-sidedness of a Raft.

From the starkness of Sharpe's headings, I had a jolt of insight for the curation of this thesis. Five chapter headings that allude to the Raft's journey would provide spaciousness for how I can attempt to amplify the contributors' experience, while also alluding to the depth of historical 'white' violence that is perpetuated still today. I found myself drafting notes as follows, combining the true story of the Raft with the story of Géricault's painting:

⁹⁵ I don't want to reproduce them here and lose their exquisite detail.

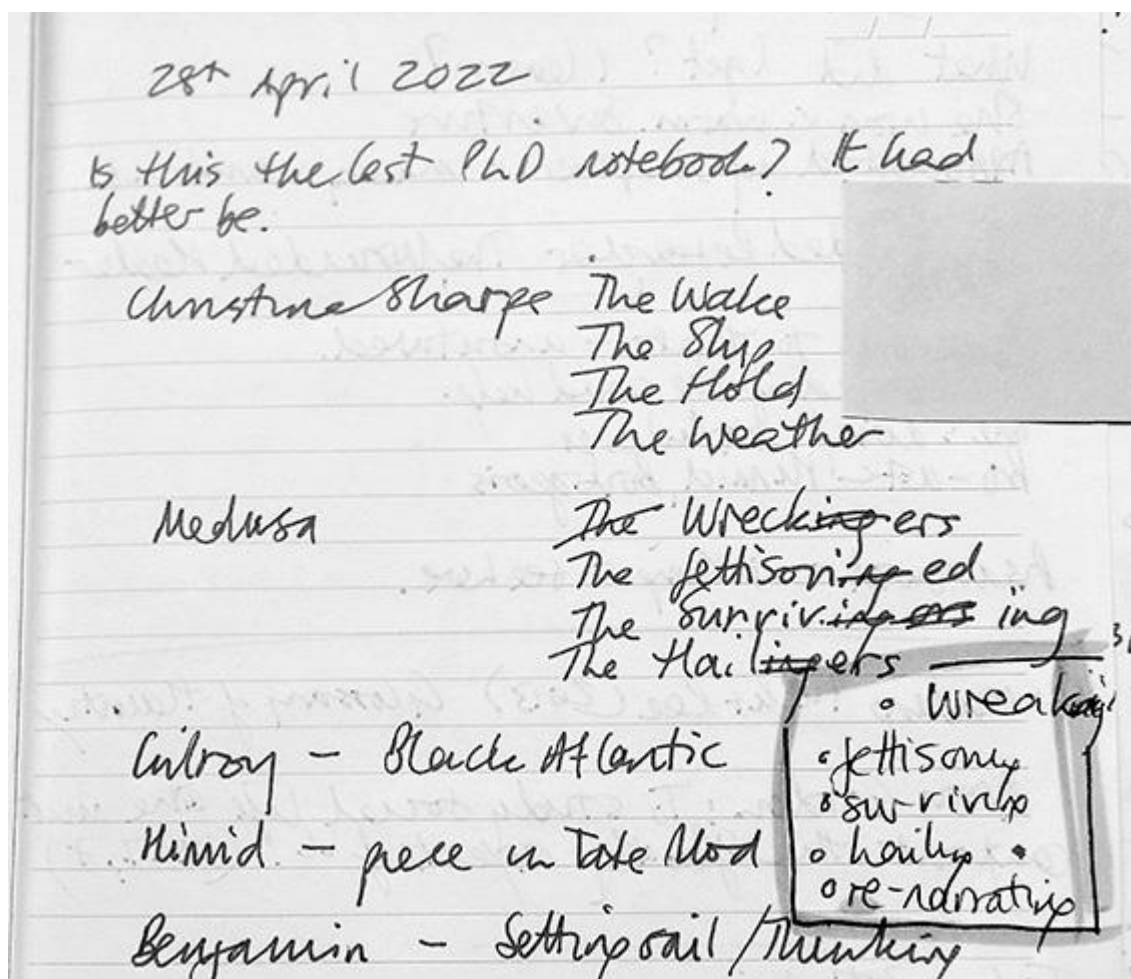


Fig 69. Jane Trowell, *Notes towards the Raft structure*, April 2022.
 [Digital photograph] Personal collection.

I've since worked into each of the five headings.

I propose this:

Wrecking – the havoc wreaked and the violence of **structural and systemic racism** and **white supremacy** in art education. The system sets out to exclude, unless you place European art and culture as the gold standard, and even then, if not 'white' you

will face racism. Young people and art educators' personhood and cultures are structurally invisibilised, denied, abused, dismissed and barred from entitlement to a creative artistic education, and therefore who may become a teacher. 'White' students are mal-educated to reproduce white supremacist world. Cradle to Cradle.

Jettisoning – the direct pedagogical form of white supremacy. The throwing overboard by 'white' art educators or art educators working within whiteness of young people whom they racialise and class, make 'other', deem unprepared and unsuitable for Eurocentric ontologies, epistemologies and pedagogies of 'art'. Young people are deemed wrong, invisible, not required or eligible, made disposable by white supremacy. As on the Raft, class oppression provides an opportunity for alliance and common cause against middle-class hegemony.

Surviving – the resilience yet toll resilience takes for young people and artists who are Black and of the global majority, and working class, to survive the wrecking and jettisoning in art education; the networks and alliances which intervene and support, pushing back against the whiteness of 'art education'. Young people, artists and art educators make it through, with creativity intact, but acknowledgement must be given to the ongoing exhausting cost exacted in overcoming / surviving.

Hailing – those Black and global majority young people, artists, art educators and cultural activists who have the capacity to alert others, who signal, who risk and whistleblow, who make work and organise, who open spaces for health and creativity in acknowledgement of but also de-centring white supremacy. Yet, who is watching for the signal, who is responding, who is taking care of the hailers' safety in the face of aggressive pushback from white supremacy; who is coopting; who is stepping back, redistributing resources, ceding privilege.

Re-narrating – the story is re-centred and re-told by a multiplicity of those with lived experience outside European middle-class culture. Some hold an inquest, speaking

back to power. Others narrate different joyful futures: visions flourish and are amplified. Resources are re-imagined. Ongoing paths emerge, parallel artworlds by artists and other creative people in new alliances and paradigms for what 'art' can be, what art is, and who can be 'artists'. The re-told story is here to stay and is re-told daily, hourly.

D, you have spoken often to me about the harm you see being done to students by your colleagues who are 'white' art lecturers, many cis-female, who outright reject or who appear insulted even at an invitation to *think* about racism or classism or oppression in their ontology and pedagogy.

We've also spoken at length about what allyship does and doesn't look like in 'white' art educators like you and me, between us and young Black or global majority students and colleagues.

I found myself working more with the five headings above. I wrote a kind of 'charge sheet' to get the attention of art educators racialised as 'white' or buying into 'whiteness': *these are the incisions*, the historical depth of white supremacy in our behaviour and the system we are operating in:

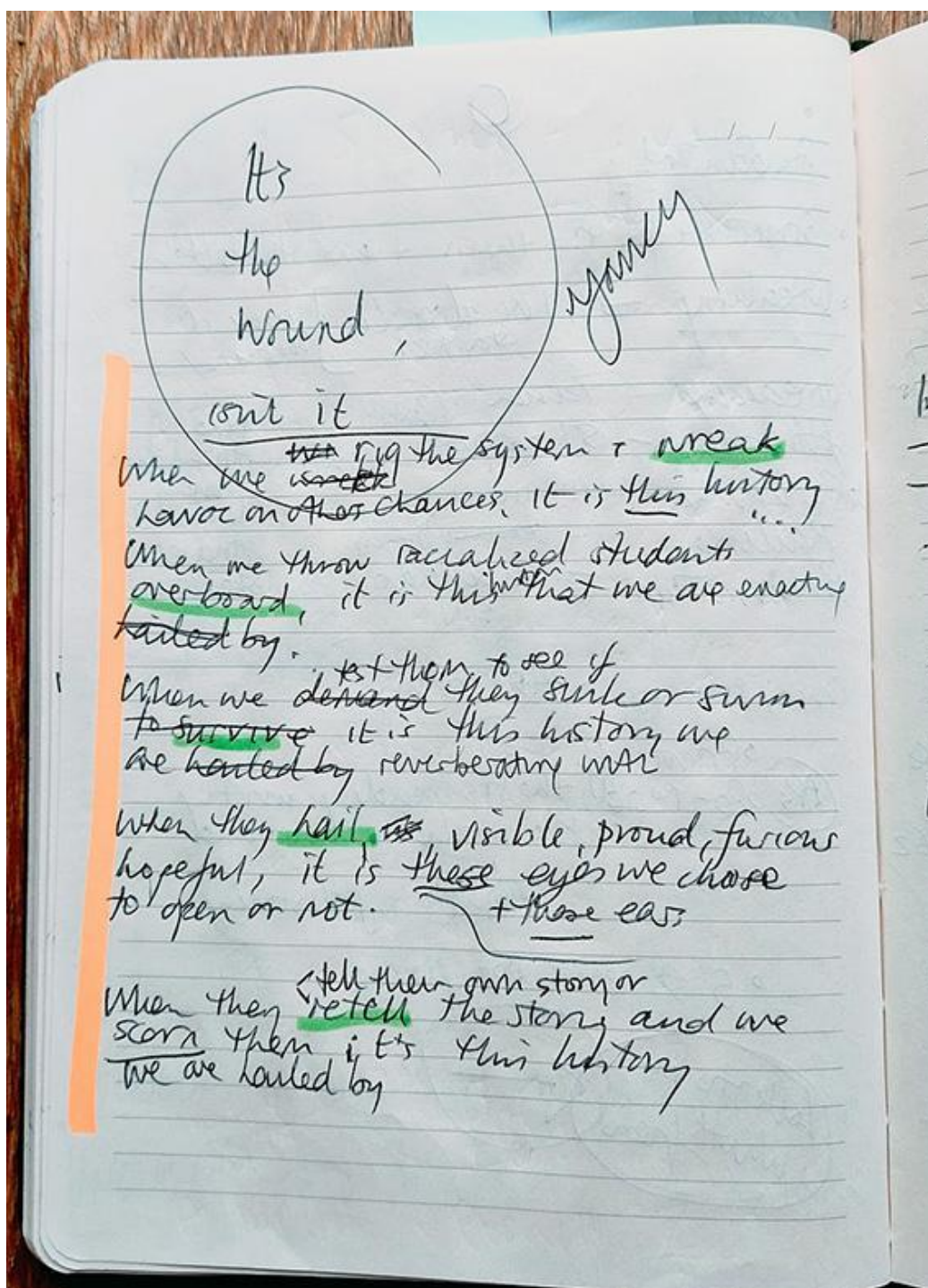


Fig 70. Jane Trowell, Notes on Raft structure and harm to students, October 2022.

[Digital photograph] Personal collection.

When we rig the system and wreak havoc on others' chances, it is this history...

When we throw racialised students overboard, it is this history that we are enacting.

When we test them to see if they sink or swim, it is this history we are reverberating with.

When they hail - visible, proud, furious, hopeful - it is these eyes and these ears we chose to open, or not.

When they tell their own story or re-tell our story and we scorn them, it is this history we are hailed by.

I feel able to move forward within this.

Thank you for being the one to whom I could write,

Jane

PS. Before I close, a disclosure. As you're about to start a PhD yourself, you might be interested to know that, as with so much in my lurching process, it is only *retrospectively* that I have looked for theory to help me understand what I did. I know I think letters liberate, and liberated me here, but why? What does scholarship say about this? I have found that letter-writing is often included within arts-based research.

Lorri Neilsen coins the term 'lyric inquiry' and cites letter-writing as one method within it. She proposes that:

Lyric inquiry is based on a conviction that using expressive and poetic functions of language creates the possibility of a resonant, ethical, and engaged relationship between the knower and the known. (Neilsen, 2008, p.94)

As one of my concerns about 'writing up' findings from the fieldwork is about ethics and extraction, I feel I have used letters to attempt an ethical relationship, a kind of 'writing with' rather than 'writing about', even 'with' my addressee who is long deceased.

Liaquat A Channa's article *Letter writing as a reflective practice: understanding the shuffling, shifting, and shaping of a researcher identity* explores how it affords 'a dialogue with my inner self about my self as a researcher and then presenting the dialogue to...readers' (2017, p.360). Given that my thesis sits within reflective practice and self-study, I understand better why how letters were an effective, affective and appealing form through which to develop my theoretical ideas (2017, p.358).

I've also read about addressees when letter-writing. In her article *Dear Matilda: Letter Writing as Research Method*, Christina Flemming writes to her baby daughter, an addressee who may one day read her mum's article. By contrast Frantz Fanon will never read mine, yet Flemming and I both found it generative to write to these non-respondents. Flemming cites Ardra Cole, who tells her: 'The form of letters also clearly acknowledges an audience which, for a writer, creates a certain ease of articulation, but also sets a context for the reader...' (Cole in Flemming, 2020, p.8). This 'ease' is indeed what I found when writing the letters. Cole points out that *reader's* approach to ideas in the letter is affected by who the addressee is. I offer the following examples: the readers are encouraged to think intergenerationally when we are told the addressees are Christine Flemming's baby Matilda, or Farzana who is thirty years younger than me, or Frantz Fanon.

In my thesis, letter-writing is an expression of my explicit desire to understand and - crucially - *to be understood by another*, especially the complex unfolding of turbulent feelings that may underpin the content and should be surfaced in getting to the roots of racism. Lorri Neilsen says: 'Because it often strikes deep, lyric inquiry can move us, in all senses of that word' and she fleshes out *how* it moves us by proposing characteristics of lyric inquiry:

liminality, ineffability, metaphorical thinking, embodied understanding, personal evocations, domestic and local understanding, and an embrace of the eros of language—the desire to honor and experience phenomena through words... (both Neilsen, 2007, p.94)

This brings me to the emotional vulnerability in writing or reading the letter form in academic research or writing. We, the readers, feel people's humanity. In *Letters to those who dare feel*,

Using Reflective Letter-Writing to Explore the Emotionality of Research (2012), Kathleen Pithouse-Morgan, Mathabo Khau, Lungile Masinga and Catherine van der Ruit describe how they developed and shared a reflective letter-writing practice to 'access and portray emotional aspects of their research experience' (2012, p.40). Their research was into the often distressing, disturbing social aspects of HIV and AIDS in South Africa. Why does this piece really speak to me, who was writing one-way letters about striving in 'white' anti-racist practice?

The connection for me is that the letter form legitimizes writing *with rawness* about the major politicising impacts of encounters with transformative theory or art: for example, through the upending, world-changing prose of Gloria Anzadúa, Christina Sharpe, Frantz Fanon, Kamel Daoud. I propose that in a thesis aimed at changing 'white' practices in anti-racism, such 'white' emotionality needs appropriate containers or it can show up as white fragility. Letters that start out as freewriting to addressees can contain such emotions. The acts of reflection, editing, or realizing the letter should not be sent at all, can instruct us about our formation and enable change.

D, I see letter-writing along with other lyric forms such as notebook entries and visual work as part of the formal integrity of this thesis. *I am trying to present my research journey into whiteness through modes of expression that refute whiteness*, refuse the long history of white supremacist patriarchal 'objectivity' and allegedly timeless emotionless text-driven analysis that has dominated European-influenced research, epistemologies and pedagogies, and into which I was nurtured. After all, it's this history that has calmly, clinically justified racist brutality, devastation and theft of resources... and epistemicide, and continues to do so.

Onwards, until next time,

Jane

Reflections: on leaving The Raft

In late 2022, as described above to D, I was convinced by the structure of analysing contributors' testimony through the five stages of the Raft framing.

I developed this title you have read before:

'Look, a White!' Racism, Coloniality and Whiteness in Art Education in England.

What and who it serves, what and who it wrecks, how it is survived, why and how it can be otherwise.

'Look, a White!' references George Yancy's book of the same name (2012). Here he powerfully 'flips the script', based on a traumatic incident that Frantz Fanon experienced, analysed by Fanon in *Black Skin, White Masks* (1986, p.113): a 'white' boy was walking with his 'white' mother. On seeing Fanon, the boy points in alarm and cries out to his mother, 'Look, a Negro!... ..Mama, see the Negro, I'm frightened!' (in Yancy, 2012, p.2). Fanon writes of the profound dehumanisation he felt in this moment: 'My body was given back to me sprawled out, distorted, recolored, clad in mourning in that white winter day' (in Yancy, 2012, p.3).

Following in the footsteps of Fanon's subsequent analysis, Yancy proposes that:

The white boy, though, is no mere innocent proxy for whiteness. Rather he is learning, at that very moment, the power of racial speech...or racial gesturing. He is learning how to think about and feel about the so-called dark Other. He is undergoing *white subject formation*. (Yancy, 2012, p.3, my italics)

Yancy refers to James Baldwin's famous reversal (*Warning: N word as used by Baldwin*) 'I give you your problem back: You're the 'nigger', baby, it isn't me' (Baldwin in *Take This Hammer*, 1963, emphasis as in the film).

He goes on to describe 'flipping the script' on the assumed power and racist intentions behind "Look, a Negro!" thus:

"Look, a white!" presupposes a Black counter-gaze. Moreover it is this black gaze that I encourage my white students to cultivate.' (2012, p.10)

For Yancy, flipping the script is an iterative practice for 'white' people in reversing the direction of the 'white' pointed finger, to point out '*white subject formation*':

I want my white students to shout, "Look, a white!" on a daily basis, to call whiteness out, publicly... ..to develop a form of 'double consciousness that enables them to see the world differently, and themselves differently through the experiences of Black people and people of color' (Yancy, 2012, p.12).

Yancy positions this as a positive act for 'white' people. It is a 'gift offering: an opportunity, a call to responsibility... It is disruptive and clears a space for new forms of recognition' (2012, p.5).

By citing "Look, a white!" in my title, I was committing myself to a thesis attempting to live out Yancy's methods: that I, a 'white' person would practice the cultivation of the 'black gaze' on whiteness. I would attempt this through learning from the experience of contributors, underpinned by theory, and practising through my own work and life and reflections on practice. I would become fluent in pointing and say "Look, a white!" to me and to others, and to the structures we are operating within.

Building from this, before the winter break 2022 I did a lot of analytical work with the contributors' testimony, attempting to look 'through their gaze' under the five Raft headings: Wrecking, Jettisoning, Surviving, Hailing, Re-narrating. I noted what had surprised or ambushed me in the testimony, as well as the difficult and traumatic for the contributors. For the sections on surviving, hailing and re-narrating, I paid attention to joys in art, moments of thriving, moments of repudiation of racism, ecstatic connection; I identified when testimony

could work across more than one heading. My misgivings were still strong about the colonial ethics of extracting quotations out of the full context of conversation, in the power imbalance between a 'white' researcher and Black and global majority contributors, yet I trusted that through consultation with the contributors I could establish a less extractive, negotiated ethical process. This process was agreed with supervisors. I determined that the Raft framing was conceptually sound, emphasising structural violence as well as breakthrough and parallel futures, and also imaginative. This felt like the flow I'd been seeking for so long.

After a week with family, at new year I took some days off work to re-immense myself in the concept and material.

Once again, as so often in this PhD process, I started... but was halted, unhappy with my plan. Ethically, I was ambushed. Aghast, I found myself objecting to the Raft framing.

It is telling that what directly triggered the objection was the act of addressing the contributors with my proposal. I started drafting an email - a letter - in which I described to them the Raft framing and its rationale. In the letter I asked for their views. I asked if they would consent in principle to their material being considered through the framing; if consenting, I would follow up by sending them passages/pages and sections where I featured their testimony, for their further consent. It was only when thinking about the addressees' reactions to reading this email that I realised that there were fundamental issues in both ethical process and concept that were for me now glaringly problematic:

On the ethics of the process, I became starkly aware of the amount of time the 'white' researcher was asking of the contributors in reading this email: time needed to digest the new framing and how I had arrived at it, time needed for consideration and future corresponding. I was also unhappy at putting them under pressure of a short deadline of my own making. Additionally, there is the factor that the contributors are my peers: colleagues and friends may feel uncomfortable or stressed in saying no to me, or in critiquing or refuting the Raft framing. This would require emotional labour of them. This felt wrong.

When thinking about contributors reading about the *concept* behind the Raft framing, I suddenly felt very uncomfortable. I now flesh these out into three main objections which, even if some contributors would have given me consent, I still stand by.

Reflecting and writing this in 2024, it's deeply ironic that the objections map onto both Yancy's "Look, a white!", and my own interpretation of the modern-day racist behavioural legacies from the historical paintings of Henrietta of Lorraine (control), Britannia (self-delusion), and Victoria (white knowledge supremacy) discussed earlier in this thesis. This was clearly a major ambush:

As a 'white' person, it wasn't ethical for me to 'put' the contributors who are mostly Black and of the global majority in a place of anguish, conflict and survival such as the Raft. Even as theory and metaphor, in light of the innumerable racist tragedies that take place on the earth's seas, and the everyday abuses of individual and structural racism that racialised contributors experience, this now felt like 'white' puppeteering, grossly insensitive, at definite risk of compounding insult and harm.

"Look, A white!": *A 'white' anti-racist scholar decides and controls where and how the contributors are situated within the violence of white supremacy, and through this, re-traumatises.*

I had been deeply transformed and ignited by what I had learnt through the research. Yet I was seduced and dazzled by the conceptual 'breakthrough' of the five stages of my Raft framing. At the time, I believed that the Raft framing was 'flipping the script' rather than examining how it was beset with whiteness.

"Look, a white!": *a 'white' anti-racist scholar, inside the ivory tower, is 'offered' testimony on whiteness from those who are Black and global majority. She stows it on a Raft conceptualised by her 'white' self, derived from a painting by a 'white' male, itself based on an account of a racialised, class-based disaster by literate 'white' male survivors.*

In acknowledgement of the multi-dimensional ecological disasters of racial capitalism, I could take a planetary position of 'We are all on the Raft'. Yet racial capitalism ensures the burden is deliberately and horrifically unequal. What gift do I think I am giving through the Raft framing? Who has capacity and resources to describe life on the Raft and its causes, and to survive it? Who decides what is knowledge, what is to be learnt, critiqued and transmitted: with their account, 'white' literate lower order officers Corr  ard and Savigny fulfilled this role.

"Look, a white!": *a 'white' anti-racist researcher witnesses racialised lived experience, has time and resources to process it, organise, extract and frame the knowledge. She 'makes the news' through publication of the thesis.*

The last is a more complex parallel: Corr  ard and Savigny's account of the shipwreck indeed brought to light huge injustice and corruption. They used their gender, class and educational privilege to cause political outrage that effected societal change. Their account also caused a major artwork to be made that has ensured the events will never be forgotten. However, in the case of my research, the structural violence of whiteness experienced by Black and global majority young people in education, by artists and art educators is *absolutely not news*. As I have described throughout the thesis, there have been decades of publishing, campaigns, exhibitions, artworks, made and led by those with direct lived experience of white supremacy in art and art education, and also work by some 'white' allies. *So was this account by me even needed?*

On grounds of ethics and concept, it was clear to me that the Raft framing was too problematic. The plan had un-sutured and there remained two challenges: what to do about the PhD thesis, and how to be accountable to the testimony and the contributors.

The second challenge was and is clearer for me: for those contributors who wish to publish their testimony, I could offer collaborative cultural and pedagogical production. In order to be able to pay contributors, I would use my experience to fundraise or locate a production partner. I've sounded out two or three contributors who are already positive. The thesis is only

one context for getting the testimony into the world. My wider responsibility is to act on the issues at stake, on the change that needs to happen in art education, and in art and culture.

Regarding the PhD thesis, as you read in the introduction, I could not resolve the ethical and irreducible contradictions of racism, coloniality and whiteness repeatedly embedded in the PhD as a knowledge-making structure and in me as 'white' middle class researcher, practising antiracist racist. The un-suturing of the Raft framing was only the latest arrest. In the introduction I set out how *not* being able to write the thesis because of racism, coloniality and whiteness then became *the topic* for the submission. The pedagogical memoir of an un-suturable antiracist racist PhD research process offered insights into the necessity for and possibilities of living with un-suturing *as anti-racism*.

IN-CONCLUSIVE: In which the research and researcher are loosely sutured.

November 2024

Dear Readers,

'...there is work *to be done*, a form of work, **self-work**, a socio-ontological project that will not conclude in the form of a *fait accompli*'. (Yancy, 2015, p.xxv, his italics, my bold)

Given the course and nature of my inquiry, this moment at the apparent end of the thesis will be in-conclusive, reflective, propositional and future-orientated. This thesis cannot be a *fait accompli* - a job completed. I now see this thesis is a particular episode in my life of Yancy's 'self-work', an ongoing past, present and future 'in the wake' (Sharpe, 2016).

First, I return to the research questions I set out at the beginning of this thesis. I review my findings, and consider the contribution to and the implications for research. I make proposals for three 'strivings' for 'white' art educators and researchers to undertake, in order to strengthen 'white' anti-racism and activism against whiteness in our field. I challenge George Yancy by proposing a new ontological-political concept for 'white' art educators and researchers: remaining *loosely sutured*. To embody *loosely sutured* practice, I end by salvaging something from The Raft.

In the service of 'white' anti-racist practice, what is learnt from 'white' anti-racist research approaches that repeatedly run aground and un-suture?

'Running aground' is often associated with a dangerous and unintended situation, sometimes caused by inadequate navigation, sometimes by faults with the vessel. The craft that runs aground in bad weather is very likely to become damaged, holed and break up. Yet in calm weather, to run aground on sand, shingle or mud causes little danger as long as you have

drinking water, although those on board may feel frustration and anger. It requires the anchor to be put out, and above all patience waiting for the tide to rise, enabling movement again. In fact, under these conditions, being aground provides space for thought.

Similarly, an 'un-sutured' wound can be life-threatening. There is urgency to clean it and stitch it up because of infection and because it needs to clot to form a scab. Stitches need to be checked, dressings renewed. It is important for healing not to knock the wound, and this cautiousness also 'buys time' for the soul to catch up from shock. The moment comes when the sutures dissolve or get taken out. Yet still, caution and thoughtfulness is still needed.

Across the course of this thesis, from the early encounter with Yancy's theories, and later *The Raft of the Medusa*, these two metaphors have, for me, gained political, theoretical and pedagogical traction, both in the research process and also in the development of 'white' anti-racist practice. In the right circumstances, they both provide conditions for reflective practice.

From allowing myself to dwell in the often frustrating, angry-making, occasionally numbing spaces made by running aground and un-suturing, and working through a lot of unwieldy thoughts and feelings assisted by reading theory, I observe the following: within a transformative paradigm, the major trait of whiteness that ambushed me was a belief that I could and must find a *solution* to the research and thesis, when the task itself is in fact irreconcilable.

The useful ambush of the solution

I restlessly sought the *most effective and uncompromised way* for 'white' me to embody and model research that is anti-racist, decolonial in design, ethics, fieldwork, analysis and, in the very form of presenting ideas, of 'writing up' the thesis. I see now that, given my critique of white supremacy in art education and wider society, given my critique of the Westernised neoliberal university yet implicated within it as a 'white' middle-class person, I wanted to find the ultimate solution in order to justify my very privilege. I didn't allow myself a more humble position of adding another small link to the chain of scholar-activism, of being part of a lineage

and community in developing anti-racist research practices. The demand to myself that I find the solution, job done, is borderline 'white missionary' and saviourist in its lineage (Ware, 1992), but also a misunderstanding of the ongoingness of the task of anti-racism for 'white' people, in daily life as in research. It is a question of working on our antiracist racist 'being' as well as our anti-racism action. I repeat, as Yancy states, 'there is work *to be done*, a form of work, **self-work**, a **socio-ontological** project...' (2015, p.xxv, his italics, my bold).

My findings are, through the unintended path that the PhD took, that of course there is no such 'solution' to the thesis. Rather, as in life, the 'white' antiracist racist should only expect self-disruption in research on anti-racism. An irony is that *I know this* in the context of my daily work on and around anti-racism, and through the PhD-related events that I have described: unexpected 'white' reactions and emotions (my own and others'), ambushes of racism and whiteness (my own and others') are constant and intrinsic. Yet, in a research context, it ambushed me.

For a 'white' person, nothing around navigating whiteness, coloniality and racism can be entered in a settled, comfortable or known state. The state that is required is exactly the alertness needed on board a ship at sea, or living with a wound: processes and relationships run aground and burst their seams; harm is done, pain is felt, and abuse may be called out. There is a continuous need for the desire, ability and the capacity to reflect, process, step back, heal, come clean, continue. Why should research be different?

'White' anti-racist researchers should enter an anti-racist research practice knowing it to be iterative, knowing that for 'white' researchers, there will always be ambushes, and that if there aren't, it means we have become sutured to our racism; that the racism of the institutional context has become opaque and normalised to us. This practice requires listening to unease, and grappling with dismaying feedback, going into the painful emotions, having difficult conversations with the self and with others, not burdening racialised people with schooling us, doing our work for us, or absolving us, being deeply committed to ethics in all dimensions, self-arrest where necessary, sharing the learning from ambushes, accepting and

acknowledging failure, practising calling out whiteness in others, practising strengthening through ongoing self-reflexivity.

However now I will counter myself: is the quest for the solution in 'white' anti-racist research *by definition* a problem? What might be afforded if the emphasis is placed on the *questing* rather than the solution itself.

Re-reading this thesis, my time-stamped documents and journal notes show me that after crisis and stasis, the breakthroughs of each solution acted as a rising tide, lifting me off, re-energising me and enabling new movement in the research. Each running aground, each unsuturing made a sober reflective space, a questing space where ethical issues became clearer, where different nuances on theory about whiteness in research, and different methods to theorise through text and imagery could emerge. I now believe my path was inevitable and irresolvable given my 'white' subject position, my previous record of 'success' in the 'white' academy *that I wanted to throw into question*, and the issues I was researching situated within an institution originally founded on white knowledge supremacy.

Retrospectively I see that I performed a necessary sequence of self-arrests that enabled me to learn, re-learn and learn again a sustained practice of anti-racist 'striving' (Yancy, 2015, p.xii), with its 'lengthy duration' (Ahmed, 2004, para 57).

The lengthy duration however is a class privilege. I had planned to finish the doctorate within the six years (part-time), but once encountering difficulty intrinsic to me and this research, I used my material privilege to pay to investigate an unintended faltering path, as part of the research. Sara Ahmed points to the contradictions of deploying privilege in permitting 'white' hyper-self-reflexivity about one's racism:

Such a self-conscious subject is classically a bourgeois subject, one who has the time and resources to be a self, as a subject that has depth which one can be conscious about, in the first place. (Ahmed, 2004, para 39)

I must live with the contradiction and derive value from it. My self-funded *durational* learning indeed arose from 'white' middle-class privilege can and must afford learning in what it takes to endure and develop in anti-racist practice.

Within the field of art education, what can 'white' anti-racist art educators learn from this un-suturing thesis?

In this section, I address my 'white' anti-racist colleagues committed to anti-racism within art and art education although my remarks may be applicable more broadly. I contend that 'we' (active 'white' anti-racist art educators) are too few and too muted, as I will show. We who claim to be anti-racist need to do what Yancy calls the 'self-work' on a deeper level to support us to be more confident in re-centring epistemologies and pedagogies; in redistributing resources (including stepping away from the resources ourselves); in finding each other to make community in order to become more outspoken, together, towards equity, justice and disruption of racism in our field.

Three Strivings

To frame my remarks on what can be learnt from the un-suturings of this thesis as a form of 'self-work', I will work with Yancy's concept of 'striving':

White self-interrogation, however, is a form of *striving*, etymologically, "to quarrel" [*streiten*] which means that one is committed to a life of danger and contestation, one which refuses to make peace with taken for granted "legitimizing" white norms and practices which actually perpetuate racial injustice. (2015, p.xii)

I feel the repeated un-suturings and de-legitimisations of this research align with *striving as quarrel*. Striving as quarrel suggests to me a process of to and fro, taking issue, disagreeing, thrashing out, returning again. It suggests this practice with the self, with others that 'white' antiracist racists need to build capacity for. The word 'quarrel' also appeals as it is a daily kind of word, unfreighted with 'white' patriarchal testosterone of winning the argument.

Thus, I identify below three strivings arising from my research experience that I suggest can support the 'socio-ontological' project that Yancy advocates (2015, p.xxv). In framing the strivings, I also attempt to address Sara Ahmed's 'double-turn' that, with a warning, she offers to 'white' scholars of whiteness:

...stay implicated in what [you] critique, turning **towards** [your] role and responsibility in these histories of racism, as histories of this present, to turn **away** from [your]selves, and towards others. This double-turn is not sufficient, but it clears some ground, upon which the work of exposing racism might provide the conditions for another kind of work..' (Ahmed, 2004, para 59, my emphasis and adaptation from they/them to you/your).

The first two strivings turn **towards** our 'self-work' and accountability:

- Learning to endure: artistic practices as kin to *un-sutured* anti-racist practices.
- Surfacing our racism that isn't (yet) known or can't (yet) be spoken of: utilising memoir and arts-based inquiry as methodologies.

The third striving turns towards and then **away**, towards others.

- Refusing 'white' desconocimiento in art education through 'Look, a white!' (Yancy, 2012; Anzaldúa, 2022)

Learning to endure: artistic practices as kin to un-sutured anti-racist practices

I am aware that at different times over the course of the doctorate I have tried thinking of myself as an artist and calling the thesis an artwork. On these occasions the repeated running aground and un-suturing of this thesis resembled artistic practice. Like artistic practice, working through it also takes personal, emotional commitment. The unknowable aspects of scholarship which can feel unbearable (I'm supposed to know! I'm in a knowledge-making machine!), feel supported by the normality, even celebration, of the *unknowable in art practice*. When I have framed the thesis as an artwork it has helped me keep going.

Below I flesh this out as a supportive framing for other 'white' art educators and researchers seeking for methods to sustain their anti-racist practice.

It is a lovely paradox that in a piece of research about racism, coloniality and whiteness in art education I refer to 'white' male European-descended practices in art and art-making as *useful to* un-suturing anti-racist practices, of practices that run aground and have to wait for the tide, or deal with the emergency of breaking up. Artists of any cultural or class background who are inculcated into the European art tradition of individual unique expression are trained to trust a process that may require endless research, many sketchbooks or digital equivalent, multiple attempts, and still end in an artwork that doesn't fulfil the artist's aim, or that just can't be realised. Or perhaps it's that there is no artwork yet: the timing for it is wrong. In craft, the skill or knack may well be perfected over the famous ten thousand hours of practice. In art, a work of power and beauty may be produced in minutes, hours, weeks or years. Conversely, after ten years, thirty years there may yet be no result.

In the tradition of being an artist as described above, sustaining practice requires stamina and a belief that every exploration in art-making can be seen as *compost* to the practice. It is essential to growth that there is quarrelling with the self and the ideas. To give an example, for children in a STEM-dominated education system where 'getting it right' is prized, an instruction to draw in soft pencil or charcoal *without rubbing out* can be confusing. Yet in an art room, this is normal practice, inculcating learning through doing, an iterative playfulness, an acceptance of the workings out, of the self and the emerging artwork.

At best this thesis is an unfinished artwork about what can be learnt when an artwork won't cohere; about what it takes to keep going. A major ontological conclusion I draw from my experience of doing this research is that 'white' art educators who are committed to developing their anti-racist (or any anti-oppression) practices come from a discipline where there is transferable way of being, a transferable skill in striving.

Proposal: Artistic practices involve ontological and methodological skills in stamina that align with what it takes to remain un-sutured to one's racism while acting against racism over the lengthy duration. This transferability of mindset can assist 'white' art educators strengthen and deepen their capacity for ongoing anti-racist practice, and help defuse the 'white' antiracist racist compulsion towards a solution.

Surfacing our racism that isn't (yet) known or can't (yet) be spoken of: utilising memoir and arts-based inquiry as methodologies.

Throughout the thesis I have insisted on the pedagogical and research significance of knowing and naming the moment in time and the context in which new ideas, events and reflection-on-learning have taken place. There is a parallel here with another artistic practice that I suggest is transferable from artistic practice in sustaining an ongoing practice of anti-racism. Once again referencing the European tradition, artists are inculcated, from secondary school, to keep a sketchbook or journaling practice to capture their ideas and influences as they emerge (whether physical, online, audio, video etc).⁹⁶ Outside the surveillance of schooling, the sketchbook is often a deeply personal, powerful and confidential practice, and mature artists may have dozens of books, or private online equivalents. For my argument, I see the artist's sketchbook as a *proto-memoir* of artistic practice, a temporal vessel to store ideas as they emerge in visual or written form, enabling artists to track back and forward to support and understand their development.

In this framing, my physical PhD notebooks acted as sketchbooks, helping me to understand my ideas, and to track timings of conjunctions, of when I came across something pivotal in my anti-racist research journey. I preferred plain paper so that I could draw, map or write at any scale. I kept a record of incidents of my own racist harm to others, reflecting on what had caused it. I have spotted patterns, quarrelled with myself, and reflected on how all this related to theory. I typed up and dated significant thumbnail extracts from the notebooks to make a

⁹⁶ Such personal sketchbooks/journals whether in book form or through digital media would typically include drawings, photographs, personal notes from exhibitions or other artists' work and writing, diary entries of significant life events, images from the media, flyers, URL links, poetic writing, notes of critical or supportive comments from friends, mentors, public.

searchable online document that I have constantly used, now covering eighteen notebooks. In terms of enduring the suturing and un-suturing and embedding anti-racist practice over the lengthy duration, I have found this invaluable and the notebook practice won't be stopping after this thesis is submitted.

Proposal: For their 'self-work', 'White' anti-racist art educators and researchers can build on the existing artist's convention of the developmental, reflective, unsurveilled sketchbook to establish a practice of keeping an anti-racist, anti-oppression journal in any medium to reflect on their teaching, relations with learners and colleagues, interventions, failures and 'quarrels', towards personal accountability in their own anti-racist journey.

Coming from visual art, throughout this thesis I have worked with the visual as a vital, sometimes ineffable mode of researching and theorising racism, coloniality and whiteness in art education. I have referenced historical artworks, media imagery and contemporary art by others, and developed my own theoretical frameworks out of them. I found myself driven through a large-scale montaged piece to explore complex racialised relations, speaking back to power, exploring difficult feelings that I could not express in words. Its tattiness, its poor renditions, its endless corrections and repositionings, afforded me a huge amount of learning and processing about whiteness and power in imagery, and about my whiteness. Imagery and image-making both *made* theory and *released* my words. Many artists work abstractly and conceptually, and not with figurative imagery: regardless, all are practices of knowledge-making, of self-understanding through visual communication.

Proposal: 'White' anti-racist art educators and researchers can engage whatever form their artistic practice takes to express, explore, understand and strengthen their anti-racist practice as educators. The ineffability of this expression may be invaluable in its own right (many things are understood beyond words), or may assist in releasing articulation in words or through pedagogy.

Letter-writing for me enabled a depth of engagement that no academic chapter-writing had previously done. It arose after eight years, from a feeling that if only I could have very long conversations with various people over many hours, I could articulate myself. One supervisor had suggested using *Otter*, an audio software that transcribes as you speak. It was definitely useful to read back my thoughts in transcript, and I would recommend it for those who do not chime with letter-writing, who are dyslexic or logoscopic. The letters and Otter were first and foremost a form of self-address, tools of self-work.

The letters provided me with an imagined community of learning. The epistolary form with its dedicated addressees unleashed me to share complexities of specific theories, and how they change ontology. There is increased recognition of the value of letter-writing in academic research along with recognition of the functions of freewriting, poetry, fiction, creative non-fiction, theatre scripts, imagined dialogue and the graphic novel as lyric inquiry (Neilsen, 2008).

Proposal: 'White' anti-racist educators and researchers can unleash unself-conscious, unsurveilled, self-understanding in written form by using modes of lyric inquiry such as letter-writing, poetic approaches, vlogs and audio. This can form crucial raw material for reflection, towards strengthening their anti-racist practice.

Refusing 'white' desconocimiento in art education through 'Look, a white!' (Anzaldúa, 2022; Yancy, 2012)

In this section I claim that a necessary striving for 'white' art educators is to develop the skills and the habit of 'cultivating the Black gaze' as discussed above (Yancy, 2012, p.10). We need to 'flip the script' on what the 'white' gaze usually invisibilises by learning both to see 'Look, a white!', and to say 'Look, a white!' to ourselves and to others.

Working through the discomfort and conflict of calling out whiteness, we must refuse *desconocimiento*: '... the ignorance we cultivate to *keep ourselves from knowledge so that we*

can remain unaccountable...' (Anzaldúa, 2015, p.2, my italics). Yet the work of calling out whiteness always involves navigating and being suspicious of our performativity, knowing that the operation of the 'white' ego is always opaque to us (Yancy, 2012; Ahmed, 2004).

My remarks are in two areas: my strivings to flip the script in the thesis itself and implications for researchers; and secondly, what I learnt about other 'white' anti-racist art educators and researchers who are flipping the script, or not, in the wider field.

Across the lengthy duration of this thesis, I reflect that the suturing and un-suturing could now be framed as attempts to 'flip the script' and 'cultivate the Black gaze'. As a *research method* each attempt may have un-sutured, but in striving to locate whiteness and say 'Look, a white!', I argue that the attempts embedded habitual, *yet-never-not-problematic practices* that are useful for 'white' anti-racist research in art education. In summary, these include:

- prioritising and centring theory by those who are Black and global majority throughout the PhD; influenced by these standpoints and politics, theorising the thesis, while also questioning the 'white' right and capacity to do so, and being wary of credentialising.
- prioritising listening to the lived experience of Black and global majority peers as the informants on racism, coloniality and whiteness in art education; their descriptions and experiences, diagnoses, survival strategies, and what enabled them to thrive despite it, while necessarily troubled by the ethics and trustworthiness of being a 'white' researcher/listener.
- exploring through art-making how historical imagery acts a 'race-making technology' that sustains white supremacy in the present day (Denmead, 2024); through the visual, attempting to 'flip the script' to call out, de-normalise and disrupt daily whiteness, while implicating the 'white' self as artist; ensuring that visual work by Black and global majority artists is valued in its own terms, not recruited to call out whiteness; taking in critical and disarming feedback on viscosity from the Black gaze.

- inviting but *not expecting* commentary on one's writing from colleagues and friends who read through Black gazes; if offered, taking on the complexity of the feedback, staying with it and with them, remaining opened; not being extractive and burdening others, not assuming their intellectual labour, name or citation alone will authorise 'white' anti-racist work.

Proposal: a 'white' anti-racist researcher into racism, coloniality and whiteness in art education could *from the start* consider how research design and methodologies intend to flip the script, assist the visibilising of whiteness through 'Look, a white!', and strengthen the 'self-work' across the duration. In advance, consider what this approach implies for relational ethics.

Turning away, towards others, I now look at what I learnt about flipping the script and the refusal of *desconocimiento* in the wider field of art education theory. I also return to *now*: the current urgency, the current *crisis*, that Marlene Wylie named so acutely, with which I opened the Prologue (Wylie, 2023). The now is making the future. This future is happening in the context of Reform Party leader Nigel Farage touring Britain with his 'white' male-dominated, anti-cosmopolitan, pro-deportation entourage, working long-term to gather and influence disaffected voters for next years' local government elections, towards major gains in the General Election of 2029. Behind this pernicious campaign stands the incoming President Donald Trump and his White House, with its billionaire support for 'white' right-wing movements across the world.

So, in the context of the brazen, well-funded and politically backed racism of these times, and the five hundred year history that has built up to it, it's more important than ever for 'white' people to activate their *conocimiento*, and fight against their *desconocimiento* in whatever context, including art education. I will now share some comments on who, among 'white art educators, has been responding to Wylie's call to action and deep reflection in this field.

Specifically because of this contemporary moment I am interested in how *whiteness* in art education is being named and challenged (while understanding that anything published is actually written one to two years prior). To what extent are 'white' art educators and researchers publicly making a commitment to addressing the issue of racism and xenophobia and the root cause of whiteness/white supremacy in our field, and also, what is being shied away from, what is not being named? I am seeking 'white' scholars and art educators who are attempting to flip the script in their theoretical work, cultivating the Black gaze, and naming whiteness and white supremacy as a cause of racism in art education and art educators, and society.

I will reflect solely on theory and publishing on art education in the UK from the time I submitted the thesis in March 2023 to this re-submission now (November 2024). Of course this exercise is also about what (mostly 'white-led') publishers wish to prioritise in a UK landscape of culture wars, 'colonial amnesia' and 'white' 'defensiveness, denial and resentment' (Gunaratnam, 2022, p.165, p. 170).

What I see is that there is, predictably but disappointingly, a difference in how 'white' authors write about racism and whiteness depending on the institutional context.

In the introduction's Literature Review, I identified that in 2023, four articles were published explicitly addressing whiteness in secondary school art and design, written by 'white' UK art educators (all 2023: Knight and Jones; Stanhope; Grant and colleagues; Dennington and Goozee). This is a striking phenomenon given the very small number of 'white' UK scholars writing on whiteness *in any level of art education* prior to this. (I reference here Kate Hatton, Fiona O'Rourke, Terry Finnigan, Tyler Denmead). Given publishing lead-in times, I speculate that this was entirely connected to an emboldening and galvanising effect, post the Black Lives Matter uprisings of 2020, but also the impact of NSEAD's *Anti-racism Checklists* (2020).

However, in the Literature Review I also cited two high-profile *institutional* reports from 2023 - *Art Now* and *The Arts in Schools* - that barely mentioned the word racism, let alone whiteness (Broadhead, 2023; Tambling and Bacon, 2023). The ignoring of racism and whiteness in

these reports which were researched and written in the period after Black Lives Matter, Colston's toppling, and demands for decolonisation across education, is, I propose, *desconocimiento*. Paradoxically for publications orientated towards arts advocacy, it is also a waste within their own goals: by omitting to discuss the rampancy of racism and its genesis in whiteness, they deny the crucial role the subject (and all the arts) can and must play in building future generations and indeed society away from racism.

I also include within an institutional framework the new handbook for UK-based art teachers mentioned earlier: *A Practical Guide to Teaching Art and Design in the Secondary School* (Ash and Carr, 2024). Equity issues are indeed significant throughout this book. Yet racism feels 'peppered in' by its many 'white' contributors, rather than central in urgency to the context we're in. Illustrative of this, a search in the index shows that decolonisation is mentioned seven times, six of which are within one chapter. This is the same and the *only* chapter where issues of whiteness in art education are named and discussed: chapter fifteen: *Personalising Decolonisation*, by... Marlene Wylie. Why is the labour of specifically addressing whiteness and decolonisation being left to one of the two global majority authors in this volume?

In 2024, the impactful Black-researcher-led report *Visualise, Race and inclusion in secondary school* names 'white' domination and 'white' normativity throughout, using statistical analyses and drawing on powerful testimony from lived experience of racism (Begum, 2024). Yet 'whiteness' as a *phenomenon* is not named nor discussed here. As it is pointed out so repeatedly in *Visualise*, why would *whiteness* not be named as such? It may have been deemed off-putting and moreover 'inflammatory', similar to white supremacy or white privilege (also not named). But I speculate that for the authors, the multiple citations of 'white' domination were damning enough in their own terms while also drawing in 'white' allies. Given that 'whiteness' as a term is very searchable (as opposed to 'white'), there may also a need for a degree of self-protection from online racist trolls and thugs.

This brings me to my last observation on *desconocimiento* in publishing on whiteness in this recent period. This relates to citation practices of the key anti-racist texts of the past ten years that name and anatomise white supremacy and whiteness in art education in Britain. None of the institutional reports/publications covering schooling above, including Visualise, mention 'white' scholar Fiona O'Rourke's key article *Race, whiteness, and the National Curriculum in Art* (2018), based on critical race theory. A citation check via search engines (which is indicative and non-exhaustive) shows that O'Rourke's article has been cited around fifteen times, of which four are from discussions within a UK context, of which *only three* are from the field of art and design education, and one was me (Dennington and Goozee, 2023; Trowell, 2021; Crilly, 2019).

Similarly, although not specific to secondary schooling, 'white' scholar Kate Hatton's significant publishing and edited books on inclusivity and intersectionality in art education with a central positioning of anti-racism and whiteness are also not cited in those reports (2015, 2016, 2019). Neither is Black scholar and art educator Sylvia Theuri's work that is framed by critical race theory (2016); nor the definitive, authoritative, 300-page *Peekaboo we see you: whiteness*, produced by *Shades of Noir*, led by Aisha Richards and team (Shades of Noir, 2018). My own chapter on whiteness in art education from 2021 has received two citations in three years, both through Visualise team connections (Begum, 2024; Wylie, 2024). It will be instructive to track the reception of the chapter that Tanveer Ahmed and I co-wrote, *Whiteness in the Art and Design Classroom*, for the forthcoming 4th edition of *Learning to teach art and design in the secondary school* (Ahmed and Trowell, in Addison and Burgess, 2025).

My provisional conclusion to a dearth in institutional work on whiteness, or in citing whiteness, is that existential-fuelled myopia in art and design, wider political pressures, the populist take-up following the statement that teaching of white privilege is illegal (Badenoch, 2020), and 'white' pre-emptive fear of 'white' violence successfully hinders 'white' institutional naming and critique of whiteness.

To be openly critical of white privilege and whiteness in xenophobic and racist, post-Brexit, immigrant-scapegoating, deportation-obsessed, 'white' nativist Britain (particularly England) more than ever involves taking a stand. The political space has narrowed exactly as the stakes have rarely been higher on the harm and abuse of racism that is being more deeply instituted and normalised. Taking a stand exacts very different levels of risk for 'white' people than those who are racialised. What does this fact mean for 'white' anti-racist art educators and theorists striving to refuse *desconocimiento* and practising naming 'Look, a white!' in art education?

Proposal: Individual 'White' anti-racist art educators must strengthen their practice, step up and speak up wherever they/we can to disobey the institutional silence around whiteness and racism in our field. At the same time, they/we must strive to cultivate the Black gaze, centring the lived experience and insights of our racialised students, artists and art educator colleagues who everyday see clearly its operation and suffer its impacts, while also not burdening them with our needs and demands for support, endorsement or instruction. We must strive to work with each other, practising across difference, 'white' people taking in and acting on the critique, frustrations and exhaustion of racialised colleagues, in order to build trust (that may only ever be provisional). In 'white' caucus, 'white' art educators can meet, learn, hold ourselves and others to account; above all, name and act on the *desconocimiento* of racism and whiteness taking place among us and in our field. We can organise, whether this is behind the scenes or in public fora, turning outwards to devise effective structural and institutional disruptions of whiteness.

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Loosely sutured in-conclusions

You, or I, may feel that this resubmitted-thesis at doctoral level within the Westernised university *still* does not hold together. Arguments are left hanging, there are jump-starts, there is inconsistent substantiation.

Yet if I follow the logic of Yancy's un-suturedness, I feel that this thesis by a 'white' researcher into racism *should not* hold together.

While abandoning the Raft framing as a way to analyse the contributors' testimony, I did not abandon the Raft. I have re-submitted a more argued, more inter-connected, more substantiated but still visibly rickety vessel of whiteness, *because it cannot be otherwise*. Yet the deed was in fact done, the thesis does end.

Here, at last, I take issue with Yancy.

I feel that if, in this research journey, I had remained fully un-sutured in undertaking and writing up my research as a 'white' antiracist racist, I would have quit long ago. This is because my attempts to 'tarry in the unfinished present' (Yancy, 2012, p.158), to 'live with the opened wound', to 'resist the scabbing over' (2015, p.xvii), resulted in self-silencing, not trusting myself to speak or write. I needed time to work all this through. Yancy's exhortation to 'repeatedly expose whites to the idea that *they don't know who they are*' (2015, p.xv, his emphasis), is in my experience absolutely essential to undoing the certitude of white supremacist programming which is especially opaque to progressive 'white' antiracist racists (Ahmed, 2004). However, the risk of the resulting vacuum turning into self-pitying narcissism that leads to quitting has to be held while at the same time refused. The strivings I propose above are key.

Yancy addresses this:

tarrying or lingering with the analysis... is not meant to paralyze action and critique but to instigate action and critique, though always with the understanding that white antiracist action and critique take place within a systemic white racist context of white power and privilege... (2012, p.174)

Unplanned, I indeed used the doctoral process to 'cultivate spaces where whites [I myself] can experience crisis' (Yancy, 2015, p.xiv, my insertion). The 'dedication to create fearless spaces..., spaces that take transformation seriously, spaces that must be made "unsafe"' (2012, p.162) resonates with the extended space that I gave myself on this PhD, although I have not been fearless.

Paradoxically, my own experience of recovering action from the un-suturing in the research came when I allowed myself to identify the various new actions - the solutions - as described above. This appears to contradict Yancy's thesis. Perhaps my experience of finding and suturing each solution aligns better with his task of reimagination: 'white antiracist racists must begin to give an account of themselves, critique themselves, and *continue to reimagine themselves...*' (2012, p.175, my italics).

In 'continuing to reimagine' each solution, I enabled myself *keep striving*, iteratively. Retrospectively I see that suturing the solutions enabled me to experience and live through the un-suturings: the repeated 'epistemic fissuring', the reality of 'undo[ing], troubl[ing], over and over again the complex psychic and socio-ontological ways in which one is embedded in whiteness' (2015, pp.xiii, xiv).

I propose that instead of remaining un-sutured which would have led to me quitting, what I discovered is the function of *loose sutures*. Loose sutures keep the wound of one's racism at risk of bursting its stitches, fostering cautiousness and hyper-self-reflexivity, requiring 'white' people to be vigilant to their whiteness, privilege and racism, *and* take action. Loose sutures enable continued striving for anti-racism.

This critical research memoir by a 'white' art educator about the impossibility of doing and writing up 'the research', yet the possibility of learning from the irreconcilabilities in the research, has enabled my understanding of and commitment to anti-racist practice to radically deepen. The thesis, through its loosely sutured faultiness, its frayedness, its precariousness, its jettisonings, its open-to-critique but urgent proposals could assist 'white' others and *all concerned with whiteness* to understand what it can take to sustain anti-racist research, ethics, teaching, relationships and action.

Thank you for reading.

Onwards,

Jane

Appendices

A. Ethics Form and Ethics Committee approval

Narrative extracted from Ethics Form, University of Nottingham

Racism, coloniality and whiteness in art education: art educators' and artists' perspectives.

Candidate: Jane Trowell

Supervisor: Dr Sarah Amsler, School of Education

1. Please provide a brief description of the project and its aims.

This research explores racism in art education and how to disrupt it. Specifically, I am researching the impact of the dominance of white middle class art educators across art education in England, and its implications for race/class inequity through the 'life cycle' of the subject. At present, the white, middle classes are disproportionately dominant among those who study art at GCSE and A Level at secondary school and at degree level in HE, those who become artists, who become art teachers/lecturers or curators, who become audiences for 'art'. This is inevitable in that their cultural capital is reflected in the current epistemologies, values, and behaviours of mainstream art education and arts institutions. White middle class art students and artists therefore have structural advantage in getting ahead and dominating this field. Thus people of colour and those – including white people – who are from working class backgrounds who have not been exposed through their families to European histories of elite art and their institutions, are deterred, alienated or actively blocked from entitlement, participation, and careers.

The secondary school subject 'art' is 'whiter' than the average: DfE data for 2016 reveals over 94% of secondary art teachers self-identified as white British, white Irish or white other, against the average of 90% (DfE, 2017, FOI). Looking at who become art teachers, in 2013, out of 347 art and design PGCE students offered places, 319 identified as white, 5 as Indian, and 13 were 'unknown'. Out of 18 self-identified applicants of African or African Caribbean descent, none was offered a place (GTTR, 2014, 27). Over the past thirty years, I have so far

only located one lecturer in art and design education (ITE) in England who identifies as a person of colour. In a recent report, O'Brien and Taylor assert that the arts currently 'contribute more to maintaining social divisions in the UK than to breaking them down' (O'Brien and Taylor, 2016, my emphasis). I will be looking at this phenomenon through the lenses of racism and of coloniality – the legacies of colonial rule that are embodied long after the colonized 'land' has been taken back or returned. The research acknowledges that while the situation is extreme in 'art', it is symptomatic of a wider crisis of representation: across UK schools, an extra 68,000 black and minority ethnic teachers are needed in order to reflect the pupil population (Rhodes, 2017).

I am a white middle class female art educator, facilitator, and lecturer of thirty years' experience, including in Initial Teacher Education (ITE) in Art & Design. Some years ago I began to see that whatever measures I took in my teaching to promote cultural diversity, anti-racism and cultural entitlement, what really needed to happen was for more educators and artists of colour to be doing the work I've had the structural advantage and opportunity to do. I saw that I and my kind were still dominating the job market in art education (and associated fields such as museum and gallery education, art charities and projects), and we were reproducing ourselves, even while we were claiming to work for socially just and egalitarian access to arts and culture. I recognised therefore that I was implicated in the problem and my motivation to undertake doctoral research stemmed from these realisations. As a result, my research design includes elements of self-reflexivity and auto-ethnography which will allow me to critically engage with my role within the problem while inviting engagement from peer-participants.

Theoretically, I am working with concepts around institutional racism (Bhopal 2018), whiteness (Yancy, 2014; Ahmed, 2004, 2016), coloniality (Maldonado-Torres, 2007) and intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1993) to investigate the reproduction of inequality in my field. Each of these contribute to a layered understanding of the problem: institutional racism and coloniality speak to wider socio-cultural structures and their living yet historical roots; whiteness speaks to issues around not only skin privilege but also internalized oppressive

processes such as Frantz Fanon discusses in 'Black Skin, White Masks' (1967); intersectionality insists upon acknowledgement of the complexities and blurs between race, class, gender, sexualities, abilities/disabilities.

The theoretical framework will assist in investigating a number of key phenomena including bias in educational recruitment, institutional racism, and Eurocentrism in epistemologies of art and culture. The data I want to analyse will be the testimony of peers: individual art educators, artist-facilitators and those in Initial Teacher Education in art from across my networks. These will include people who identify as white and people who identify as being of colour. It is key to the research to gather testimony from across racialised experiences. African-American philosopher George Yancy for example claims that white people's whiteness is largely opaque to themselves (Yancy 2014). I want to tease this out with white colleagues. W.E.B Dubois and Sara Ahmed, writing almost a century apart, speak of how glaringly visible the operations of whiteness and racism are to a person of colour, and this too I want to investigate (Dubois 1920; Ahmed 2016).

I will use qualitative methods with peers in order to get to the fine-grained nuances of how they believe the reproduction of inequality operates across art education practices and also, how it is disrupted. I will use semi-structured interviews with the same key questions across all participants – white and people of colour - and some targeted questions allowing for differences in professional of life experience: for example, a participant working in ITE, or an undergraduate, an artist, a teacher.

Thus I will invite participation from a range of peers who act as informants or witnesses to how racism appears in different parts of the field. As such the research sits within an ethnographic frame.

To my knowledge, this ethnographic peer-based approach within the context of understanding the operation of racism, whiteness and coloniality in art education has not yet been done in the context of England.

2. Please identify the intended participants indicating how they will be selected and approached.

My intended participants are a group of about 30 art educators across different sectors of art education, all based in the UK. I am focusing on my peers, most of whom I have worked closely with in the past ten years. I am focusing on peers because there is a level of trust built up that can assist the flow of conversation, and also many peers are aware I am doing research on these issues and are supportive of it. About half the peers are visibly people of colour, and half visibly white (although self-identification will be invited as part of the interview process). I will also approach a number of art educators who I don't know. These too are people of colour as well as white. It will be useful to compare what is yielded from the peer conversations where there is familiarity and a degree of trust, with material from previously unknown individuals.

I have identified them by the following process:

- mapping all my art educator networks across the 'life cycle'
- looking for art educators who have been through the schooling system in the UK, specifically England.
- ensuring there are peers across the different sectors (schooling, HE, ITE, galleries, etc)
- noting unevennesses in race representation in the different sectors among my peers.

To address the disproportionate dominance of white and female art educators across the field, and influenced by theories around coloniality and whiteness which propose that white people's whiteness is opaque to them but visible to everyone else, I intend that 50% of my participants are peers of colour in order to give more weight to their analyses/experience.

I will recruit the peers by email invitation. As many peers already know and support my doctoral research, I have some confidence that I will have positive responses from at least 20 peers. I also anticipate that people will put me onto other contacts whom they think would be interested or useful to the research. This 'snowball' sampling could add a further 5 or 6 to the total.

3. What types of data will be collected and what methods of data collection will be used?

As an ethnographic research, I will collect informants' and witnesses' testimony and analysis.

This will be done through

- field notes of conversations
- audio-recording of conversations (with permission)

I will also use notes from my reflective journals to situate and analyse my own participation as art educator.

To explore the contemporary art education contexts for the research, I will also collect data from conferences & seminars, professional journals/resources, chance encounters in the field.

4. How will data be stored and used?

The data generated for this research will be used only for the purposes of completing my PhD thesis and related presentations and publications.

With permission, I will make field notes and audio-record the conversations to allow coding and analysis. The records will be stored on my computer. Audio recording is appropriate and necessary as my analysis will focus on verbatim syntax, lexicon, speech patterns and intonation, in order to access important indicators of coloniality and whiteness that are often expressed unintentionally and unconsciously (Yancy, 2014). If participants are uneasy with audio-recording, I will use notes made during the conversation. I will give participants copies of the recordings/transcripts or notes for their own records and to invite them to make comments or amendments.

I will ask participants if they wish to be pseudonimised, and if so, give guarantees that their roles/jobs would not be traceable through description in the text.

Participants' right to data protection is a primary concern, emphasized by the new 2018 General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) legislation. I have made myself familiar with

GDPR principles and guidelines for participants' privacy in academic research, and also BERA guidelines.

5. Based on responses to questions in Sections 3 to 5, please identify potential risks associated with this research and the steps taken to mitigate these risks.

The primary ethical consideration is possible unease/mistrust that might arise for some participants in talking about 'racism' with a white researcher for both participants of colour and white. For example, some participants of colour might be cautious of the motivations of the white researcher in terms of co-option of their work and ideas. Some white participants may be defensive if they suspect a white peer is setting herself up to be more 'advanced' or theorized in anti-racism than they are. With all participants, it will be important to state that I see myself as part of the problem – and therefore not having all the solutions - as discussed above. I am also mitigating against these by working mainly with peers with whom I have built up trust from years of collaboration, and with whom anti-racism is a known joint goal. The email invitation, information sheet, and consent form must be transparent, and help to build trust in the process, my motivations, and the overall goal.

Participants will be able to withdraw themselves or their data from the research at any time prior to publication.

On the basis of the answers you have provided below your ethics submission is indicated to be: *Above minimal risk*.

A submission above minimal risk can be low risk or high risk.

This submission is indicated to be: *Low Risk*.

[Ends]



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educationresearchethics@nottingham.ac.uk

24/07/2018

Our Ref: 2018/27

Dear Jane Trowell,

Thank you for your research ethics application for your project:

Racism, coloniality and whiteness in art education: art educators' and artists' perspectives.

Our Ethics Committee has looked at your submission and has the following comments.

- This is a well-thought through proposal which has addressed the key ethical concerns that are relevant to this research. The documents are very well prepared, clear and detailed and would make an excellent resource for others to use.
- Good luck with the fieldwork!
- In an email dated 25.08.2018 you confirmed you will address a data management plan with your supervisors.

Based on the above assessment, it is deemed your research is:

- **Approved**

We look forward to hearing from you with the information requested, and wish you well with your research.

Yours sincerely,

Prof John Holford
Ethics Committee Member

+44 (0)115 9514470
educationadmin@nottingham.ac.uk
nottingham.ac.uk/education

B. Letter of invitation to peers, with extract from Information Sheet, September 2018

Dear _____,

Invitation to participate in my PhD research: Racism, coloniality and whiteness in art education: art educators' and artists' perspectives.

As you know, I am engaged in doctoral research at the University of Nottingham, within the School of Education. I am investigating where and how racism, coloniality and whiteness is perpetuated in art education. As a 'white' middle class art educator, I am heavily implicated in the 'problem' of the research and this will also form part of the thesis.

I am at the stage where I would like to gather and learn from the testimony and insights of art educators and artists in the field – in secondary schools, FE, HE, galleries and museums and in informal contexts.

Because of our history of discussing these issues/working together on these issues, I am inviting to ask if you would be interested in conversation with me to assist in the research.

The conversation would take about an hour and, if you are comfortable, I would audio-record it and if not, I would make notes.

Your anonymity will be assured, and in advance of publication I would send you transcripts of any of your testimony that I intend to use in the research for you to comment on/edit. You would be able to withdraw from the research at any time before I complete the thesis. Have a look at the attached information sheet for more information.

Yours warmly,

Extract from Information Sheet

Aims: The aim of the project is to gain new understanding about how racism, coloniality* and whiteness in art education in England are perpetuated, by whom, through which structures, and crucially, how they are disrupted. The focus is on gathering insights from peer practitioners from my networks - peers of colour as well as 'white' peers - who are art educators and artists who have experience both of being educated and educating others in the UK.

The study will contribute research to the field of art education – from schooling through HE/art college, galleries, and Initial Teacher Education - and more broadly to the question of democratic education.

* Coloniality is a relatively recent concept. Puerto Rican scholar Ramón Grosfoguel defines coloniality as follows:

“I use ‘coloniality’ to address ‘colonial situations’ in the present period... I mean the cultural, political, sexual, spiritual, epistemic and economic oppression/exploitation of subordinate racialized/ethnic groups by dominant racialized/ethnic groups with or without the existence of colonial administrations.” (2007, 220)

C. Consent Form for participants

Postgraduate Research Study: **Racism, coloniality and whiteness in art education: art educators' and artists' perspectives.**

Researcher's Name – Jane Trowell, School of Education, University of Nottingham

Participant's name – _____

- I have read the Participant Information Sheet and the nature and purpose of the research project has been explained to me. I understand and agree to take part.
- I understand the purpose of the research project and my involvement in it.
- I understand that I may withdraw from the research project at any stage and that this will not affect my status now or in the future.
- I understand that while information gained during the study may be published, I will ^[]_{SEP} not be identified and my personal results will remain confidential unless I state I would like to be named.
- I understand that I will be audio-recorded during the interview.
- I understand that electronic data will be securely stored and will only be accessible to the researcher.
- I understand that I may contact the researcher or supervisor if I require further information about the research, and that I may contact the Research Ethics Coordinator of the School of Education, University of Nottingham, if I wish to make a complaint relating to my involvement in the research.

Signed (research participant)

Print name Date

Contact details: Researcher: Jane Trowell - jane.trowell@nottingham.ac.uk

Supervisors: 1) Dr Sarah Amsler - s.amsler@nottingham.ac.uk

2) Professor Pat Thomson - patricia.thomson@nottingham.ac.uk

The Ethics Coordinator is - educationresearchethics@nottingham.ac.uk

D. Script for conversations with participants, 2018-2020

Racism, coloniality and whiteness in art education: art educators' and artists' perspectives

0. Thank you. (Parameters of research, ethics, consent. Anonymity. Audio recording.)

Q: How would you describe yourself - in relation to art (creative, artist, art educator, lecturer, curator, other...?)

1. To warm up a bit, can you tell me – can you remember when you first became interested in art? What were the steps that made you the artist/XXX that you are today?

2. What do you think has most enabled you to develop as an artist / art teacher/lecturer / art educator in ITE ?

- has anything alienated you, hindered you, or downright blocked you?
- and how, why.

3. Who shaped your development as an artist (etc)? I'm asking here about individuals who were significant.

- who enabled you to thrive?
- who alienated, hindered or blocked you?
- and how, and why.

4. Can you describe any encounters, incidents or relationships with **individual art educators** that shaped your development?

- enabled you to thrive?
- hindered or blocked you?

5. How do you feel that the **race, class, and cultural tastes** of the individuals you just described play a part in your thriving or being blocked?

6. What do you make of these three images? **Warning** – they are historical portraits showing racist relations between 'white' women and subjected people. This is a spontaneous response – no prep needed. If you had to choose one to research further or make an artistic response to, which one would you choose and why? Conversation. (Show images in Note 1).
7. I'm working with Ramón Grosfoguel's definition of coloniality (Read out Note 2). Thinking structurally and also in terms of encounters with individual educators, what role has **whiteness and coloniality** played in enabling or hindering your development?
8. What is your reaction to this **data** from my research? (Read out Note 3)
9. Do you know of ways to **disrupt** this? Can you describe any of your own disruptions?
10. What do you think must happen to ensure **full entitlement to art education** and the potential to become an artist (in the UK)?
11. Have you got any questions for me?

Note 1

Screenshare slides of the oil paintings:

Henrietta of Lorraine accompanied by a page (Anthony Van Dyck, 1634)

The East offering its riches to Britannia (Spiridione Roma, 1778)

The Secret of England's Greatness (Thomas Jones Barker, 1863)

Note 2.

Coloniality [distinct from colonialism or colonization] is a relatively recent concept. Puerto Rican scholar Ramón Grosfoguel defines coloniality as follows:

“I use ‘coloniality’ to address ‘colonial situations’ in the present period... I mean the cultural, political, sexual, spiritual, epistemic and economic oppression/exploitation of subordinate racialized/ethnic groups by dominant racialized/ethnic groups with or without the existence of colonial administrations.” (2007, p.220)

Note 3.

Unmasking the data: Whose bodies are art educators’ bodies

My research has shown me that, in the context of secondary schooling, ‘art and design’ is staffed by more ‘white’ bodies than the average subject: In 2016, 94% of secondary art teachers self-identified as ‘white’ British, ‘white’ Irish or ‘white’ other, against the average of 90% (DfE 2017a). How might this operate alongside curriculum, and impact who feels encouraged to study art and design in school? Fiona O’Rourke (2018) in ‘Race, whiteness, and the National Curriculum in Art’ dynamically dissects how despite a gloss of multiculturalism, the current NC Orders still reinforce art as exclusively ‘white’ property’.

When I looked into who is accepted onto PGCEs in Art and Design according to applicants’ racial self-identification, in 2013, out of 347 art and design PGCE students offered places, 319 identified as ‘white’, 5 as Indian, and 13 were ‘unknown’. Out of 18 self-identified applicants of African or African Caribbean descent, not one was offered a place (GTTR 2014, p.27). What are the systemic reasons that not one of 18 have a portfolio or a degree of a quality that was acceptable to a PGCE interviewing tutor? Let’s consider the colleagues doing the interviews, let’s consider which people get jobs in ITE. Another landslide disproportion: over the past thirty years, I have so far only located one lecturer in art and design education (ITE) in England who identifies as a person of colour, the influential pioneer, artist, educationalist and scholar, now retired - Paul Dash (1999; 2010).

Turning to lecturers in art schools, in 2014, just 330 (5%) of UK art & design academic staff were from ‘Black and ethnic minorities’, while 6,275 ‘white’ staff account for 95% (ECU: 2014a). So, who gets to become ‘an artist’ in the first place: of the student body accepted onto ‘Fine Art’ courses in 2016, 10% identified as Black, Asian or mixed race, which was a 3% increase on 2007 (UCAS: 2016). This seems a positive trajectory, yet problematic for the

colonising reasons I cited from Fanon earlier. In their influential report *Art for a Few*, Penny Jane Burke and Jackie McManus (2011) studied staff who interview prospective art students applying to HE in England. Surely it is no surprise that they found the largely, 'white' staff favour students who could reference the expected European/North American-dominated artworld canon, and who reflected this both in the work in their portfolios, and in their cultural references. Burke and McManus (2011) conclude that 'the art and design academy has a deeply embedded, institutionalised class and ethnically biased notion of a highly idealised student against whom they measure applicants' (p.7).

It follows that, along with the wider crisis of representation and Euro-canonical content in teaching, not just recruitment but retention is affected. Terry Finnegan and Aisha Richards (2016) from UAL wrote that in 2010/11, 6% of 'white' students failed to complete their degrees compared to 9% of Black British Caribbean, 13% of Black or Black British African, and 10% of 'other' Black backgrounds (p.5). The overwhelmingly 'white' bodies of art lecturers, operating within a system of whiteness that endorses them – those who are delivering curriculum, handling crits and marking work - are delivering this.

Throughout the art educational life-cycle, whiteness alongside middleclassness appear to be reinforced as intrinsic to the activity and field of 'art', the arts as "white' property' (Kraehe and colleagues, 2018)

List of illustrations

Fig 1. Author's screenshot from *Letters to my Students*, Hayley Newman, 2016, p.5

Fig 2. Author's screenshot, *Keyword search 'doctoral thesis collapse'*, on NUsearch University of Nottingham online library catalogue. 8 February 2023

Fig 3. Author's scan of #OMG advert for BP's sponsorship of Tate, from *Tate etc Magazine* (Summer 2016)

Fig 4. Anthony Van Dyck, *Princess Henrietta of Lorraine accompanied by a page*, 1634. [Oil on canvas, 213.4 x 127 cm.] Kenwood House, Hampstead, London. Available at: <https://artuk.org/discover/artworks/princess-henrietta-of-lorraine-16111660-attended-by-a-page-191703> [Accessed 6 March 2023].

Fig 5. Jane Trowell, *"Real, honest colleagues?"*, 2017. [Poster, 59.4 x 84.1 cm, & digital version. Personal collection.

Fig 6. Self-Montage: The author's face montaged in to the #OMG advert and the Henrietta portrait, February 2017. [digital versions only]

Fig 7. Khadija Saye, *Dwelling: in this space we breathe*, 2016/17. [9 silkscreen prints from scans of wet collodion tintypes, each print 61.3 x 50.2cm.] Printed by the Estate of Khadija Saye in collaboration with master printer Matthew Rich, Jealous and The Studio of Nicola Green. Courtesy of the Studio of Nicola Green and Jealous. © The Estate of Khadija Saye, London. Tate (London) and private collections. Permission for Fair Use. Photograph from Christie's, <https://www.christies.com/features/Heartwarming-and-haunting-works-by-Khadija-Saye-9410-1.aspx> [Accessed 6 March 2023].

Fig 8. Khadija Saye, *Toor-Toor* (Sprout, grow), from *Dwelling: in this space we breathe*, 2016/17.

Fig 9. Khadija Saye, *Kurus* (Prayer beads) from *Dwelling: in this space we breathe*, 2016/17.

Fig 7. Khadija Saye, *Ragal* (Fear), from *Dwelling: in this space we breathe*, 2016/17.

Fig 10. Khadija Saye, *Tééré* (Amulet), from *Dwelling: in this space we breathe*, 2016/17.

Fig 11. Khadija Saye, *Sothiou* (Chewing-sticks/toothbrush), from *Dwelling: in this space we breathe*, 2016/17.

Fig 12. Khadija Saye, *Peitaw* (Cowrie shell(s)), from *Dwelling: in this space we breathe*, 2016/17.

Fig 13. Khadija Saye, *Nak Bejjen* (Cow's horn), from *Dwelling: in this space we breathe*, 2016/17.

Fig 14. Khadija Saye, *Limonj* (Lemon), from *Dwelling: in this space we breathe*, 2016/17.

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Fig 16. Catherine Armstrong, *Jane masked at her desk*, c1985. [Scan of black and white photograph] Personal collection of Catherine Armstrong and Jane Trowell.

Fig 17. Jane Trowell, *Henrietta, Britannia, Victoria and other art educators*, 2017
[Slides from slideshow for *Engage* conference 2017] Personal collection.

Fig 18. The author holding *Visibly Female*, edited by Hilary Robinson (1987), 2018. [Digital photograph] Personal collection. Featuring artwork by Sutapa Biswas, *Housewives with Steak-knives*, 1983-5. (See Fig 40. for details)

Fig 19. Jane Trowell, *Epistemalanche* (right), 2018. [Digital photograph] Personal collection.

Fig 20. Jane Trowell, *Epistemalanche* (left), 2018. [Digital photograph] Personal collection.

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Fig 22. Author's screenshot, *Bristol George Floyd protest: Colston statue toppled*, 7 June 2020. [BBC news online]. Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-bristol-52955868> [Accessed 5 March 2023]

Fig 23. Marc Quinn and Jen Reid, *A Surge of Power, Jen Reid (2020) with protest placard*. 2020. [Photograph- Getty Images] Available at: <https://www.stylist.co.uk/people/jen-reid-black-lives-matter-activist-statue-edward-colston-bristol-marc-quinn/408167> [Accessed 7 March 2023]

Fig 24. Author's screenshot, *Larry Achiampong on Marc Quinn*, 2020. [Still from Twitter video] Available at: https://x.com/ilona_sagar/status/1283412157804183552 [Accessed 8 December 2024]

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Fig 34. Jane Trowell, on left: *The Child (Blemish Removal)*. July 2020. [Digital artwork] Personal collection. On right for reference: original by Anthony Van Dyck, 1634.

Fig 35. Jane Trowell, above: *The East (Blemish Removal)*, July 2020. [Digital artwork] Personal collection. Below for reference: original by Spiridione Roma, 1778.

Fig 36. Jane Trowell, above: *The Envoy (Blemish Removal)*, July 2020. [Digital artwork] Personal collection. Below for reference: original by Thomas Jones Barker, 1863.

Figs 37-39. Jane Trowell, *Curation work in progress*, June – July 2020. [Digital photographs] Personal collection.

Fig 40. Sutapa Biswas, *Housewives with Steak-knives*, 1983-5. [Oil, acrylic, pastel, pencil, collage, tape, house paint on paper mounted onto stretched canvas, 274 x 244cm.] Bradford Museums and Galleries. © Sutapa Biswas. All rights reserved, DACS/Artimage 2020. Photo: Andy Keate. Available at: <https://artuk.org/discover/artworks/housewives-with-steak-knives-26532> [Accessed 6 March 2023].

Fig 41. Helen Sheehan, *Jane as The Modulor*, 2014. [Digital photograph] Taken at L'Unité d'Habitation, Marseille, France: architect Le Corbusier. Personal collection Helen Sheehan and Jane Trowell.

Fig 42. Helen Sheehan, *Detail of facade of L'Unité d'Habitation*, Marseille, France, 2014. [Digital photograph] Personal collection Helen Sheehan and Jane Trowell.

Fig 43. Jane Trowell, *Work in progress: sketching The Raft*, August 2020. [Digital photographs] Personal collection.

Fig 44. Jane Trowell, *Detail: Look, a 'white!' - masked*, September 2020. [Digital photograph] Personal collection.

Fig 45. The author holding *The Wounded Researcher*, by Robert Romanyshyn (2013), 2023. [Digital photograph] Personal collection. Featuring artwork by Remedios Varo, *Creation of The Birds*, (1958), [Oil, Masonite; 54 x 64 cm] Copyright Artists Right Society (ARS), New York/VEGAP, Madrid. Museo de Arte Moderno, Mexico City.

Figs 46 and 47. Jane Trowell, *Work in progress: painting in the 'Sail'*, 2021. [Digital photographs] Personal collection.

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Fig 53. Jane Trowell, *'Sail' completed*, October 2022. [Digital photograph] Personal collection.

Fig 54. Anthony Van Dyck, *Henrietta of Lorraine with a kidnapped and enslaved African child*, 1634. [Oil on canvas, 213.4 x 127 cm.] Kenwood House, Hampstead, London. (See Fig 4.)

Fig 55. Spiridione Roma, *The East offering its riches to Britannia*, 1778. [Oil on canvas, 228 x 305 cm.] Foreign and Commonwealth Office, London. Available at: <https://artuk.org/discover/artworks/the-east-offering-its-riches-to-britannia-191140> [Accessed 6 March 2023].

Fig 56. Thomas Jones Barker, *'The Secret of England's Greatness': Queen Victoria presenting a bible in the Audience Chamber at Windsor*, 1863. [Oil on canvas, 66 x 84 1/8 in.] National Portrait Gallery, London. Available at: <https://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/portrait/mw00071/The-Secret-of-Englands-Greatness-Queen-Victoria-presenting-a-Bible-in-the-Audience-Chamber-at-Windsor#:~:text=The%20painting%2C%20by%20Thomas%20Jones,its%20military%20or%20economic%20might> [Accessed 6 March 2023].

Fig 57. Théodore Géricault, *The Raft of the Medusa*, 1818/9. [Oil on canvas, 491 by 716cm.] Louvre, Paris. Available at: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/The-Raft-of-the-Medusa> [Accessed 6 March 2023].

Fig 58. Sutapa Biswas, Detail of flag from *Housewives with Steak-knives*, 1983-5, on which is collaged a photocopy of *Judith decapitating Holofernes* by Artemisia Gentileschi (1612).

Fig 59. Khadija Saye, *Dwelling: in this space we breathe*, 2016/17. [9 silkscreen prints from scans of wet collodion tintypes, each print 61.3 x 50.2cm.] (See details for Fig 7.)

Fig 60. Harmonia Rosales, *The Creation of God*, 2017. [Oil on linen, 48 x 60in.] Licenced for use through Wikimedia - https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Creation_of_God_by_Harmonia_Rosales.jpg
Also available at: <https://www.harmoniarosales.art/collections> [Accessed 6 March 2023].

Fig 61. Jane Trowell, *Frantz Fanon, accountability guide (at home)*, 2023. [Digital photograph] Personal collection.

Fig 62. Jane Trowell, *Frantz Fanon (and Kali), accountability guides (in Suffolk)*, 2023. [Digital photograph] Personal collection.

Fig 63. Théodore Géricault, *The Raft of the Medusa*, 1818/19. [Oil on canvas, 491 by 716cm.] Louvre, Paris. (See Fig 57.)

Fig 64. Jane Trowell, *In front of The Raft at the Louvre*, 2020. [Digital photograph] Personal collection.

Figs 65-68. Author's screenshots, *Shaun Parkes as Frank Critchlow in the courthouse cell, from 'Mangrove'; policeman at the cell door*. Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/p08vy19b/small-axe-series-1-mangrove> [Accessed 8.10.22] The scene described is from timestamp 1.30.01 – 1.32.05

Fig 69. Jane Trowell, *Notes towards the Raft structure*, April 2022. [Digital photograph] Personal collection.

Fig 70. Jane Trowell, *Notes on Raft structure and harm to students*, October 2022. [Digital photograph] Personal collection.

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