Unlearning Imperialism in the Gallery: Diasporic Reanimation of Art and Archives.

In its current usage, the term diaspora has expanded from its predominant associations with Greek, Jewish, Armenian, Black and Irish Diasporas to include all dispersed and/or displaced peoples and their future generations from an original "home".[1] In this essay, rather than focussing on displaced persons, I am concerned with how visual cultural objects in art collections and film archives might become themselves become "diasporised"[2] in being repurposed by diasporic artists to enable a plurality of voices to speak across times and geolocations. In taking this approach, I am loosely adhering to Stuart Hall's and Paul Gilroy's 1970s theorizations of diaspora as a positive symbol of performative heterogeneity.[3] While "it cannot be assumed that a transformative politics is immanent in […] the proliferation of diasporas",[4] nonetheless, this historical theorization of heterogeneity is worth recalling as a counter to the contemporary separatisms of identity politics. I shall focus on two main art-related case studies that "diasporise" objects in two different types of collection. In the first case study, I look at how a conceptual artwork in the contemporary art collection of the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, Carey Young's *Declared Void II* (2013), was repurposed as a performance platform to be used by local diasporic artists working in different creative fields from fine art to poetry and music. The second explores an artists' film, Onyeka Igwe's *Specialised Technique* (2018), in which colonial ethnographic film footage sourced from various UK-based archives was re-appropriated to tell another story. Using Ariella Aïsha Azoulay's concept of co-citizenship as a framework for my exploration of diasporised museal objects, I argue that such performative appropriations propose the sovereign co-existences of peoples across temporal scales and spatial zones, and thereby activate another kind of archive, one that is networked and virtual rather than housed and ordered according to imperial history.

Reading Azoulay's *Potential History* during lockdown in 2020, I was struck by her call for a return to the moment before, as she puts it, the shutter of imperialism went down and captured those it documented in images that forever picture them as enslaved, thereby closing off the liveliness of their pre-existences. Pre-existing societies were relegated to a space of pre-history thereby disappearing or subjugating their peoples within the separable territorial and constitutional boundaries of imperial rule. As an imaginary corrective to this logic of differential rule, Azoulay posits the necessity of suspending history to rethink a co-citizenship of the victims and the perpetrators of imperial logic.[5] In this, she advocates for the photograph as an arena of relations in which 'victims' and 'perpetrators' participate in rehearsals of co-citizenship in which worlds are shared as being in common rather than being parcelled up into the linear temporalities and bounded spatialities that facilitate imperial rule. I shall return to Azoulay's theorisation of co-citizenship, but firstly, as a prelude to my main case studies, I want to situate it in visual rather than purely theoretical terms.

In Lebanese artist Akram Zaatari's photographic installation, *Faces to Faces* (2017), the faces of the French military and the faces of individuals from the Tripoli community gaze out towards the viewer on the same plane of the image. The superimposition of their portraits was the result of an accident, however, Zaatari's artistic methodology of re-presentation reactivates a foreclosed past that aesthetically reorients the imperial logic of capture and gestures towards the shared commons of co-citizenship. Acquiring a collection of glass-plate portraits made in the early 1940s by Tripoli-based photographer Antranick Anouchian, which were recovered from storage stuck to one another, Zaatari selected pairs of negatives where this accidental superimposition of gazes suggests that the military representatives of the governors and the governed occupy and have the right to look from the same shared space. Whereas in reality, the governed did not have the right to look but had to defer their gaze for fear of violent repercussion. That the momentary suspension of the violent rule of law in

these superimpositions only occurs over time rather than being something that was photographed at the time of military occupation links to Azoulay's notion of a non-imperial ontology of photography in which, rather than being reduced to the moment of capture, the photograph is an arena of relations. It is an event whose multiple temporal and spatial intersections might enact the co-citizenship of shared worlds. In *Potential History*, Azoulay only briefly footnotes Zaatari's work with the Arab Image Foundation, an organisation that preserves photographic collections of the Middle East, North Africa and Arab diasporas and makes these collections available for new readings of history.[6] But to my mind, the artist's re-presentation of Anouchian's negatives gesture, not only to the historical life of images, but also to a rerouting of the absences and closures that unworlded the representational life-worlds of "the governed". *Faces to Faces* unearths a haunting co-citizenship of gazes in which, not only do "victims" and "perpetrators" co-exist on the same plane, but their separate identities become productively entangled.

Azoulay's emphasis on recuperating an imaginary co-citizenship aims to unbalance the scales of imperial measurement by recognising the survival of autonomous ways of being that continued, albeit severely inhibited, under imperial rule. As well as dense historical accounts of injustice, Azoulay uses artistic license: between main sections, she inserts performative manifesto-like statements of radical refusal in which she calls on museum workers, photographers, historians, and the governed to imagine going on strike until the world is repaired. In other equally performative passages, she reads existing documents and images, in the archive for example, not as evidence of what is missing from official imperial histories, but rather for how what is presented can be used to tell other stories that 'rehearse' a co-citizenship of shared worlds. Rehearsals propose "mode[s] of being with others differently".[7] They are undertaken to replace the imperial impulse to separate and subjugate with "a shared right to participate in the common".[8] That those who are allowed under

imperial sovereignty to become citizens relate to noncitizens “as if they were off-stage”,[9] then recentering the “off-stage” becomes crucial to an aesthetics of co-citizenship or, in my rephrasing of Azoulay’s term, sovereign co-existences.[10] In the following two case studies, I explore how an art museum and an artist stage ‘rehearsals’ by using what is already in Euro-American collections to propose the sharing of worlds that potentially characterizes diasporic co-citizenship. Such collections, whether of so-called ethnographic material or of modern art, derive directly or indirectly from the spoils of colonial extractivism and imperial processes of modernity. However, rather than dismantling them, ‘rehearsals’ could be said to open them up to the potentiality of existences that had been violently displaced and suppressed. This is not a redemption but a treatment of collections that re-animates their contaminated objects to propose forms of sovereign co-existences across space and time between artists, audiences and communities of diaspora.

In this, I am repurposing Azoulay, who, as well as calling for the necessity of rehearsals with others to worldly sovereignty, also calls for the dismantling of citizenship due to its imperial disabling of the rights of others to maintain its differential sovereignty. She states:

> Care for the shared world and co-citizenship, which I will reconstruct as the common ground of competing models of sovereignty, by definition cannot be achieved through progress and the gradual extension of imperial citizenship to others.[11]

While undoubtedly the acquisition of modern (imperial) citizenship is a discriminatory process predicated on the control of state borders,[12] for me, the call to dismantle it may be too absolute, and, through the lens of my case studies, I ask how it might be recuperated for modes of life-enhancing, shared co-existences across space and time? This is not to forget the experiences of precarity and exploitation that migration generates, but, while I am largely in

sympathy with Azoulay's call for the reversal of imperial rights including citizenship, it flies in the face of everyday desires for citizenship and the protection and potential it can offer. In fact, Azoulay admits as much in her earlier *The Civil Contract of Photography* where she argues for the rehabilitation of citizenship as a right of stay and political participation divorced from nationality.[13] However, feeling that Azoulay's cogent argument in *Potential History* comes from the privileged position of having citizenship, however fraught,[14] I looked for an art example that might help me think through the potential of citizenship. Searching online, I was struck by an unusual image of a familiar artwork, Carey Young's *Declared Void II* (2013). Instead of the white cube space at the heart of the work being empty, two women of colour sitting on a patterned rug occupied it. The image was from a public events programme, 'Citizenship series: Filling the Void', at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis that ran in conjunction with the exhibition 'I am you, you are too' (2017-20), which foregrounded selected works from their collections addressing citizenship, borders, belonging and geopolitical tensions.[15]

*Declared Void II* is a conceptual artwork that conflates gallery space with the space of law. A thick black vinyl tape outlines a cuboid space, two of whose 'walls' are formed by the architectural frame of a corner of the gallery, the other two being implied by the floor drawing. An adjacent accompanying text foregrounds this cube within a cube as a space separate from, yet connected to, the world outside the gallery. It reads: 'BY STANDING IN THE ZONE CREATED BY THIS DRAWING, AND FOR THE PERIOD YOU REMAIN THERE, YOU DECLARE AND AGREE THAT YOU ARE A CITIZEN OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA'. Inspired by Sol Le Witt's instructional gallery pieces, the work is itself an iteration of Young's earlier *Declared Void* (2005), the only difference being the text's negation which reads: 'BY ENTERING THE ZONE CREATED BY THIS DRAWING, AND FOR THE PERIOD YOU REMAIN THERE, YOU DECLARE AND

AGREE THAT THE US CONSTITUTION WILL NOT APPLY TO YOU'. *Declared Void* was a response to the question:

> How do I take a corner of an art gallery outside the US constitution while making reference to Guantanamo, and all in the form of a contract which connects a viewer with the gallery space and the artist?[16]

Young describes these statements as legal fictions in which the viewer is invited into a real contractual agreement with her, the texts being drawn up with a team of lawyers to make the contract watertight. In the normal course of things, the space demarcated by the cube is reified as conferring an imaginary form of citizenship, one that is real in the artwork, but fictional in the world outside of it. The online image of the women's occupation of the cuboid space suggested an infiltration of worlds outside the frame of the artwork. I had the notion that what was being enacted here might throw a spanner in the works of Azoulay's call to refuse citizenship as well as enabling me to think through her call for rehearsals of co-citizenship, so I investigated further.

With Young's permission, *Declared Void II* was repurposed as a performative stage for the 'Citizenship: Filling the Void' public events programme. A number of diasporic local artists, (including song, music, poetry and performance art), were invited to (mis)use the empty cube. A performance by artist Peng Wu, *A Long Hug*, which took place on April 4 2019, poignantly demonstrated how citizenship is premised on boundaries between who is included and excluded. It began with members of the audience passing out pink envelopes containing letters written by non-citizens of the United States. As the audience began to open the letters, a dozen couples diverse in ethnicity and age, each consisting of a non-U.S. citizen and a U.S. citizen, gathered on the boundary line of *Declared Void II*: non-citizens remaining outside the line, citizens within. From either side of the line, the couples held an embrace for

fifteen minutes or so, enacting the enforced separation between families and partners due to national borders. Further reinforcing the notion of exclusion and inclusion, a lone figure on the inner boundary line facing the audience embraced the projection on his white t-shirt of a video call image of an absent beloved. The performance made palpable questions of who can enter, who is kept out and at what cost. This aligns with Azoulay's assertion that worldly sovereignty cannot be enacted through citizenship. For her: "Worldly reparations […] cannot be envisaged in terms of inclusion into existing imperial structures".[17] However, the performance also raised the further question of who can afford to forego citizenship. In contemporary migrations to countries that are recognised as democratic, citizenship is not merely an imperial salve, but a desirable legal habitus that protects and enables more than merely the right to stay and vote. With the expansion of the notion of diaspora and its dispersed communities, citizenship could also be said to involve making something new out of the antagonisms between displacement and belonging, which in turn change, however slowly, the structures and legacy of imperial rule.[18]

The online image that had grabbed my attention was a performance held on September 13, 2018, by Somali-born poet Nimo H. Farah and singer of Ethiopian heritage, Fayise Abrahim, both of whom are US citizens.[19] Their takeover of *Declared Void II* enacted diasporic forms in which belonging can be understood in "more fluid, dynamic and performative ways".[20] Removing their shoes to respectfully enter the space, the women used traditional song and oral-storytelling traditions as part of a diasporic self-styling presentation. Interspersing spoken word with singing songs in dissonant harmony from their mutual heritages, the two women recounted and relayed stories about their migratory journeys, respectively: the grief involved in having to leave a beloved birthplace due to war; and inheriting the traumatic memories of a previous generation's migration due to political torture. They spoke about codeswitching between identities both in their use of language, i.e.

shifting between English and their mother tongues, and for Farah, the wearing, or not, of the hijab, diasporic habitus involving the occupation of multiple overlapping spaces. Through sound and story, trauma and pain was expressed, but also poignantly, how their journeys were an opportunity to grow and expand their selfhoods. Farah relayed her grandmother's advice to "Gather yourself", the oscillation between the dying and becoming of her sense of selfhood involving "gathering and grieving many selves".[21] What also struck me watching the performance on vimeo was that the artists were not performing 'otherness' as a spectacle to be consumed,[22] but instead mobilising the joining together and rending apart, the differences and connections that melds the inheritance of oral traditions of storytelling and song with new experiences of becoming. Granted that, if it were not for the damage wrought by imperialism, colonialism and their continuing legacies, many would not choose to "diasporise" themselves and become hybrid persons. However, the gesture of repurposing *Declared Void II* as a performance space in which diasporic alliances could be made across times and spaces between people of different ancestral heritage runs counter to the differential rule of imperialism which is to separate time and space as well as peoples. As Abrahim put it in the Q&A, the effort to decolonize oneself by telling stories is part of the emotional survival that everyone could learn from refugees and migrants journeys. Farah's and Abrahim's intervention into *Declared Void II* enacted "survivance" as a diasporic modality of life-enhancement that celebrated heterogeneity rather than mere survival.[23] It enacted a rehearsal of co-citizenship as a sharing of sovereign co-existences across time and space that counters imperial traditions of archival gathering.[24]

In a less absolutist way, Azoulay also refers to rehearsals with others that can be enacted through new uses of the archive. She states:

> Intervention, imagination, transmission, accession, deaccession, plasticization, or open-ended indexicality are some of the procedures through which co-

> citizens exercise their archival rights, that is, the right to make use of the archive with others who have been excluded from entering.[25]

These others might not be alive or visible according to the norms of representation. For example, examining photographs of Berlin taken by the Allies at the end of WWII, Azoulay reads the absence of people from streets showing the facades of demolished buildings as an index of crimes that were known but invisible, i.e. the unacknowledged rapes of German women by Allied soldiers. Her gaze does not restore these women to representation, the representation of violence in photography being seen as a perpetuation, and therefore doubling, of originary violence. Instead, she reads the devastated streets as signs of hidden violence, their haunting silences invoking another story: a fictional co-existence of victims and perpetrators in which imperial power is divested of its legibility, traversed as it is by another scene that makes the voiceless' absence palpable. In this other story, Azoulay's rehearsal of potential history invites perpetrators to exert "the right not to be perpetrators"[26] in order to reimagine shared worlds that are differently occupied rather than premised on the subjugation and violent displacement of others.

Azoulay's return to the archive was to acknowledge that "prior to the destruction of worlds and the imposition of imperial sovereignty, different types of sovereignty existed and still exist and can be reconstructed through rehearsals with others".[27] As well as her reading of the archival photographs of Berlin's ruins and empty streets as signs of crimes against German women, another example of 'rehearsals with others' is her refusal to reprint an archival image of a Palestinian man which pictures him in a supine position refusing to leave his village, a protest that will have incurred retribution. Instead of reproducing the originary violence implied by and captured by the closure of the shutter, Azoulay begins to trace and draw the image as a way of being with and reactivating the agency of the subject. Azoulay's gesture recalls Onyeka Igwe's *Specialised Technique* (2018), a film in which the British-

Nigerian artist repurposed colonial archival film footage from West Africa sourced in the BFI National Film Archive, British Pathé and The British Empire and Commonwealth Collection.[28] Igwe's treatment of ethnographic films from colonial West Africa could be said to stage rehearsals with the women and men who were forced to perform their culture, i.e. their dances, for the colonizers gaze.

*Specialised Technique* is one in a series of three films under the umbrella title of *No Dance, No Palaver*, which address the artist's research into the Aba Women's War of 1929, claimed to be one of the first anti-colonial protests in Nigeria almost exclusively undertaken by women protesting their taxation. The other films in the series are *Her Name in My Mouth* (2017) and *Sitting on a Man* (2018). In the latter, Igwe worked with contemporary dancers to re-enact gestures from the Aba women's protest dance captured in ethnographic films by George Basden, a missionary cum anthropologist. Placing footage of two contemporary dancers and the archival material in disjunctive relationships to one another, *Sitting on a Man,* a 3-channel film installation, forms a kind of dance circle across ancestral times and spaces in which the re-enactment and retranslation of gesture in the present addresses the repair of the violence of colonial capture. However, the single-channel *Specialised Technique* created a different kind of recuperative space in which a viewer could both witness and be incorporated into a reimagining of, to adopt Azoulay's words, the right not to be a perpetrator or a victim. This is not to deny the colonial violence of the gaze inflicted by ethnographers on the subjects they captured with their cameras, but to acknowledge the inherited trauma and shame that prevents shared worlds from coming into being for both 'victims' and 'perpetrators'. Igwe refers to her intention "to activate films produced under the strictures of the colonial imaginary", using a methodological approach she names "critical proximity"[29] which, akin to Azoulay's being-with-others in the archive while remaining critical of the structures that capture them, enables genealogical affinities across space and time. This is a

deliberate counter to the distanced looking of the ethnographic observational gaze. Using a variety of filmic re-processing techniques, Igwe manipulates as well the static representational framing of the ethnographic films, which was based on a spurious notion that non-Western Nigerian peoples were unable to read moving images due to having different eyes. Igwe creates a female genealogy that transcends the distance between these ethnographic historical documents and her location as a second-generation British-Nigerian. Turning to the archival bodies of dancing women in colonial moving images, she was fascinated by, as she describes it,

> an unnamed woman from Onitsha, Nigeria, dancing for Queen Elizabeth II. She was in the newsreel produced by British Pathé, covering the Royal Tour of Nigeria in 1956. In stadiums in Kaduna and Enugu, various groups produced displays of 'native' life for the Royal inquisitors. They showed off their 'village handicrafts' and traditional cooking methods and performed *tribal* dance displays, which the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh watched from a safe distance in the crowd. This was filmed four years before Nigerian independence and a year before my mother was born as a Nigerian subject of the British Empire, in a village not very far from the Enugu stadium. The voiceover in the newsreel introduces a group of women dancing and then the frame closes in on this one woman. She never looks up, so the camera lens doesn't capture her face, only her dancing body. I found *myself* in her stoop, bended knee and rounded arms. She beckoned me to memories of my grandmother, my mother and myself. I was startled into this connection and frozen in the moment of recognition—there was a line that joined her to me.[30]

Her affinity with the dancer's stoop engenders the conflicted experience of being "caught between an intellectual understanding of the racial regimes of knowledge that created these images and the blood memory that was activated by watching these women dance".[31] To answer the question of how to look at ancestors whose bodies were expropriated and subjugated as objects of display, Igwe not only reworks the footage, converting the archival film into individual frames and reanimating them by digitally drawing on them or slowing them down, tripling them and re-projecting the footage, she also inserts herself into the film. Towards the end, she enters the frame, projecting archival film footage of men dancing onto her leather skirt. It is as if she is dancing with the people in the film and thereby enacting a

rehearsal of being with others that recuperates their worldly sovereignty beyond the colonial gaze. All these techniques were utilised to create what she refers to as "a pensive spectator"[32] who can look and reflect on the material rather than deny or dismiss it as purely negative and racist. The technique I found most engaging and hardest to distance myself from was Igwe's use of her first-person voice in the occasional insertion of intertitles that sit next to the archival images, some of which read: "Do you not want me to see your face?"; and "How do you want me to frame the shot?". The questions set up a dialogue with the women in the footage, who answer back with the silent force of their bodies' articulations. In this dialogic space of encounter, the artist's voice of care towards and rehearsal with the women who either look down or close their eyes when dancing, also enable the viewer to look with care at these images. The final intertitle "Am I ok?" points even more overtly to Igwe's own positionality and evokes the contagion of trauma-at-a-distance that travels through time and space to the artist as she enters the colonial archive. The visual trauma in the image is not redeemed by her pensive looking and careful questioning but they gently force 'us' look at footage that might ordinarily be shied away from or dismissed as being too painful or disturbing to look at. Igwe's use of dance and the first-person inscriptions in *Specialised Technique* place what she refers to as "illegitimised ways of knowing"[33] on a par with archival ways of knowledge production. To put discredited knowledge such as gesture, dance, and the fictive in an intimate relationship with archival materials is an attempt to detoxify the enduring legacies of colonial imperialism. It is also to "diasporise" this footage, i.e. to find ways of looking the violence in the eye and forge new relations to it. In the Q&A at the Walker Art Center, Abrahim also spoke of the necessity of confronting 'our' pasts, but *Specialised Technique* seems to do more than this. Azoulay's argument is that co-citizenship can only be enacted if 'perpetrators' and their 'victims' enter the same frame. Staying close to the visual trauma of colonialism, Igwe also offers viewers an opportunity to 'unlearn

imperialism' by re-looking at what is occluded and reflecting on their affinity and complicity with the archive's techniques of visual capture. Albeit painful, Igwe's material gestures recall the uncanny doubling of gazes in Zaatari's *Faces to Faces* which invite spectators into a space in which the positions of 'victims' and perpetrators', while still in play, are subverted by the image to undermine the differential tactics of imperial logic.. They enact what Azoulay in *The Civil Contract of Photography* refers to as the 'space of plurality', which, while not erasing the unworldings executed by colonial violence, deterritorialises their irreversibility.[34] These reanimations and re-presentations of archival material momentarily, fictively, halt the closure of the shutter and enable a co-citizenship of shared sovereign worlds to appear, to be imagined.

In both my main case studies, the diasporic re-purposings of collections gives them an afterlife in which they speak to contemporary questions of how to live together on a shared planet. Igwe's personal reactivation of colonial film archives does not redeem the violent subjugation of other peoples, which is irreversible, but it facilitates a working-through of the ethnographic gaze that performs a life-affirming reorientation of its visual techniques of capture. The objects already in museums collections, both those on display and those in storage, can also be thought of as an archive for the future. Rather than adding to these collections, to allow for their repurposing by stakeholder communities, diasporises the time and space of the imperial institution of the museum in a decolonial move towards the shared commons of co-citizenship. Museums and/or archives, which Azoulay rightly posits as techniques of imperial rule, instead of being fortresses that house imperial cultural values can become performative spaces that enable rehearsals with others. In this way, they too might become "diasporised".

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[1] Sigona et al (eds), *Diasporas Reimagined.*
[2] Naficy, *An Accented Cinema*,14.
[3] See Sigona et al (eds), 10.
[4] Dimitrakaki, 'Gendering the multitude', 30.
[5] Azoulay's main historical case studies are: the Atlantic Slave Trade; the removal of Palestinians from Palestine and the founding of the Israeli State; and the Allies violence that imperilled German women at the end of War World II.
[6] Zaatari co-founded the Arab Image Foundation in 1997 with photographers Fouad Elkoury and Samer Mohdad. The organisation's collections of photographs and photographic studios of the Arab world tell other stories and evidence other worlds than are represented in official historical records.
[7] Azoulay, *Potential History*, 27.
[8] Azoulay, 55.
[9] Azoulay, *Potential History*, 367.
[10] Although beyond the scope of this short essay, it is interesting to consider Shourideh C. Molavi's point that the Palestinian-Arab population in Israel coexist as citizens without actually existing, whereas sovereign co-citizenship would imply co-existence as existing in common. See *Stateless Citizenship The Palestinian-Arab Citizens of Israel* (Leiden and Boston, Brill, 2013).
[11] Azoulay, 58.
[12] At the 'Citizenship: Filling the Void' event on 13 Sep 2013, Michelle Garnett MacKenzie, a lawyer with Advocates for Human Rights, gave a succinct introduction to how citizenship in the US is built around a white nationalist vision. Although citizenship is automatic through the legal principle of *jus soli* ("right of the soil")—that is, being born on U.S. soil—or *jus sanguinis* ("right of blood")—that is, being born to parents who are United States citizens, the law of the soil did not include black persons until 1868 and ancestry did not extend to Native Americans until the first part of the twentieth century.
[13] Azoulay, *The Civil Contract of Photography*, Zone Books, 2008. See pp. 80-2 in particular.

[14] Azoulay's conflictual relation to her Israeli citizenship stems from its "world-destroying" eradication of her Arab ancestry, her father being an Algerian Jew. In adopting her paternal grandmother's name Aïsha, she attempts to hold on to "the potential preserved in it, a potential that survived a long history, from before the Crémieux decree (1872) [a French imperial act to grant citizenship to Jewish Algerians] to the present form of Zionism and the Israeli state", *Potential History*, 31.
[15] The exhibition ran from 8 Sep 2017 – 1 Mar 2020.
[16] Young in Walsh, LAWWOMAN, 2.
[17] Azoulay, *Potential History*, 474.
[18] That said, new legislation can also be regressive such as the 1981 law revoking *jus soli* as conferring automatic citizenship in the UK. Although given my date of birth, this legislation does not apply to me, its stringency had a particular resonance given that I was born in the UK prior to 1982 to Irish parents who were then domiciled in the UK. For more on how Britain uses citizenship as a form of racialisation, see Imogen Tyler's 'Designed to fail: A biopolitics of British citizenship', *Citizenship Studies*, 14:1, 2010, pp.61-74.
[19] Both artists are also involved in activism. Farah is founder and artistic director of SALLI (Somali Arts Language and Leadership Institute), a non-profit organization promoting art and literature the Somali community. Abrahim, as well as being a published poet, is the organizing and training director at Voices for Racial Justice.
[20] Sigona et al (eds), *Diasporas Reimagined*, xviii.
[21] Accurate to my notes taken from watching the event on vimeo.
[22] Unlike for example Guillermo Gómez-Peña and Coco Fusco's *The Couple in the Cage* (1993) which documents their travelling performance in which they exhibited themselves as caged Amerindians from an imaginary island in a deliberate staging that critiqued the exoticism of otherness.
[23] Survivance is a term derived from the work of Anishinaabe cultural theorist Gerald Vizenor. Meaning more than mere survival, it is rather a way of life that nourishes and builds on story-telling traditions that enable the refashioning of identity beyond settler colonialism. See http://survivance.org/acts-of-survivance/ accessed 22 November 2019
[24]As well as questioning citizenship and its requirement to perform American-ness, they linked their mutual migration journeys to the originary displacement of Native Americans cleared to appropriate and demarcate US soil.
[25] Azoulay, *Potential History*, 212.
[26] Azoulay, 380.
[27] Azoulay *Potential History*, 340.
[28] Long after I had connected Igwe's film to Azoulay's notion of rehearsals with others in the archive, I came across an online conversation between them that took place on 17 Dec 2020 at the KW Institute for Contemporary Art in Berlin. https://www.kw-berlin.de/en/onyeka-igwe-and-ariella-aisha-azoulay/ Accessed 10 May 2022.
[29] Igwe, being close to, with or amongst', 45. The term "critical proximity" was originally coined by Bruno Latour (2005) in an imagined conversation with Donna Haraway about situated knowledge and feminist objectivity.
[30] Igwe, 44.
[31] Igwe, 52.
[32] Igwe, 51.
[33] Igwe, 45.
[34] Azoulay, *The Civil Contract of Photography*, 142.