MIND THE GAP!

HERITAGE AND MEMORY STUDIES

ANNUAL FUTURE REVIEW

UNIVERSITY OF AMSTERDAM

WHAT IS A FUTURE REVIEW?

In this inaugural volume of the Future Review of the University of Amsterdam's Heritage and Memory class, the contributions, centred around the theme of 'gaps', raise various questions: what gaps do we see within the field of Heritage and Memory, what do these gaps reveal, and how can we situate this with an eye for the future?

Rather than attending to Heritage as a static field of passive inheritance and pristine preservation, this year's theme invites contributors to take a critical approach to dissect what is omitted, silenced, absent, and how these gaps have shaped heritage discourse. Authors have taken various approaches-letters, art, essays, and more-to not only convey the issues they see but to think through potentialities for the future. Many find hope and potential in the, often creative, possibilities for generating change and alternative ways of being in this complex and contested terrain.

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“THANK GOD FOR FOOTBALL”: HOME GAME (2024) AND IDENTITY RECONCILIATION IN POSTMEMORY

By: Hruška

“Here, it will not escalate,” Lidija repeats to herself over and over. While the Yugoslavian war refugee tries to reassure herself that the 21st-century Netherlands will be safe among rising ethnic tensions, she cannot forget that the past has betrayed her before.

Narrated by herself, *Home Game* (2024) is a personal documentary film by Lidija Zelovic, which reflects on 50 years of her life: from Lidija’s cheerful youth, dimmed by the ethnic wars in Yugoslavia, to her settling down in the Netherlands in search of shelter. Reunion with her brother and parents in Amsterdam and the birth of her son Sergej filled her with joy mixed with worry. Amidst the post-9/11 socio-political aversion towards migrants, she feels war looming over. During family gatherings, Lidija mediates political debates, navigating different opinions and revealing how fragile they can be. Sergej sits by quietly, seemingly bored, occasionally commenting on the football match playing on the TV.

As the film unfolds, Sergej’s identity journey emerges as central, not only to Lidija’s fears but also to the debate on what belonging means in a world of inherited trauma. Although born in the Netherlands, Sergej’s first language is Serbo-Croatian. For Lidija, speaking to him in her mother tongue felt natural, despite her family’s criticism that it impedes his integration. She finds, that certain phrases, like *volim te* (“I love you”), lose their emotional weight in translation. The film reflects this layered identity as Lidija narrates in both Serbo-Croatian and Dutch, to address various feelings and audiences. Considering a large portion of the film is concerned with the currently heated Dutch politics, the latter is a sensible artistic choice.

Whether due to his family’s mixed background, their Yugo-nostalgia, or his simple love for football, Sergej grows up proud of his heritage. While playing with his friends as a young boy, he tells Lidija about all the football teams he roots for, ranking Croatia the highest, followed by Bosnia, Serbia, and Slovenia. She asks him if it is because they were once Yugoslavia, and he affirms. Sergej then admits he would root for the Netherlands, but only because it’s his birth country and not because he feels Dutch. He feels and thinks in Serbo-Croatian. Lidija closes the scene, telling him tenderly, that she wants him to be happy.

The film implicitly questions whether embracing Dutch identity might make Sergej happier or safer in the future. Possessing no direct burden of refugee experience, he is believed by his family to have a clean slate and potential to build himself up in the Netherlands. Meanwhile, he bears postmemory, as both a recipient and mediator in a resurfacing trauma of his refugee family. As Sergej matures, we see him navigate various understandings of his identity and identity politics, learn about fascism and social nationalism, realizing that politics are deeply complex. But when his head turns to football, everything seems simple.

A football match, polarized between opposing teams and fan bases, historically holds symbolism beyond that of a game. At the beginning of the film, Lidija remembers the Dinamo-Red Star riot of 1990 at a football stadium in Zagreb, a violent escalation between Croats and Serbs which is believed to be one of the tipping points that sparked the upcoming wars. Born into a survivor family, Sergej's pure love for the sport doesn't neglect the past; on the contrary, it allows for healing. By endorsing all post-Yugoslav teams, Sergej shows resilience to political divides, cultivating hope that postmemory generations can all learn, remember, and move on from their elders' trauma.

Lidija, knowing that a war is never in the hands of a soldier, remains worried. The film ends with the beginning of war in Ukraine in 2022, far-right Geert Wilders doubling his party's seats in the Dutch government, Mark Rutte taking office as NATO's Secretary General, and Sergej reading out a letter from the Dutch government informing him of his eligibility to enter the military. While a sequence of devastating war footage from the 1990s plays, an unknown soldier hiding in the forest speaks to Lidija's camera: "Please tell my mother I am still alive and that I will return if God allows." He could be just another Sergej, as far as we know.

Home Game is a powerful example of how a personal documentary can weave across the gaps of understanding, social interconnectedness and belonging. Here, a mother's fear for her son's safety in a country believed to be peaceful becomes a universally resonant struggle. I strongly encourage everyone to experience this film and dive into parts that this article didn't have a capacity to include.

Produced by Zelovic Film, a team committed to the societal power of personal storytelling, Home Game earned a nomination for Best Dutch Documentary at IDFA 2024 and won the Audience Award at Movies that Matter 2025.

MAPPING THE UNSEEN/READING PALIMPSESTIC AMSTERDAM

By :Maia

Maps seem instantaneous. However accurate or flawed, whether depicting a demolished site, a shifted border, an unrealised construction, or an urban forecast, they always appear to capture a specific moment in time and space. A momentary claim to objectivity that, in that instant, arranges everything it depicts into order. Yet it is precisely what we do not see on a map that rejects its objective claim. Instead, the unseen demonstrates that any map is a layered composition of histories and memories, of what once existed or what was never able to become.

In Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory, Andreas Huyssen turns his attention to the unseen, the erased and the unrealised within the fabric of cities. He describes urban landscapes as palimpsests – a document that shows traces of other/older texts that have vanished or been overwritten over time. To read a city as a document of passing time and (dis)appearing space is to look beyond its present-day materiality; beyond what is fixed on the map. Instead, it invites us to trace the "configurations of urban spaces and their unfolding in time."[1]

This year, Amsterdam celebrates its 750th birthday. The municipality is marking the occasion with a year of festivities across the city, joined by cultural organisations and institutions that are organising exhibitions and launching publications centred on Amsterdam's history and heritage.[2] What fascinates me is not only how the city promotes its 'identity' and 'historical values' to its own citizens, but more importantly how the campaign builds on the assumption that the city's (urban) development has followed a linear path—one that positions its current state, its current map, as an inevitable outcome.

This framework overlooks what Huyssen identifies as essential to the urban condition: the idea that to arrive at a city's present materiality, spaces had to be demolished, rearranged, and reconstructed. So let us, instead, read Amsterdam as a palimpsest. Let us try to uncover some of the spatial configurations that, over time, have unfolded into the city's present.

It may seem contradictory to my introduction, but I found that maps can, in fact, help us see the unseen within urban landscapes. Recently, I was introduced to Allmaps.org, an open-source tool designed to layer historical maps and floorplans over contemporary ones. Users can upload any historical map and align it to scale by placing dots that correspond to recognisable reference points on both the historical and present-day maps.[3] The tool also allows for adjusting the transparency and contrast of each layer, making it easier to compare different temporal versions of a site. Beyond this, Allmaps facilitates access to and connections between digital archives, turning static documents into dynamic visual material. These features offer a starting point for tracing how traces of the past continue to shape the material fabric of the city today.

The Allard Pierson Museum in Amsterdam holds an extensive cartographic archive, with over eight hundred maps and atlases available online. Among them is the Kaart van Amsterdam 1:10.000 (fig.1), produced in 1951 by the Dienst voor Publieke Werken. At first glance, the city's expansion over the last 75 years is evident. But when this map is layered over a contemporary one, something deeper comes into view: the hidden infrastructures, the lingering lines of the past etched beneath today's buildings.

Zooming in on the Houthavens in northwest Amsterdam reveals a telling example. Once a harbour, now a residential neighbourhood, the street grid remains almost unchanged. Though the function has shifted, the former harbour's logic still shapes the present.[4] The past is not gone – it is configured in and with the present into its current form.
In the database, I discovered an older map from 1725 depicting Het Watergraafs of Diemer-Meer (fig. 2). Just decades earlier, the area had been a lake, drained and divided into country estates for the elite of Noord-Holland. Two roads – Middenweg and Kruislaan – cut across the polder then and still do now. Though the grand estates have vanished, the area's urban layout follows the old infrastructural spine, shaped by space long since transformed.

In the heart of the city, the Nieuwmarktbuurt bears another kind of trace. In the 1970s, a proposed four-lane highway threatened to cut through the neighbourhood. Citizen resistance stopped the plan, but not before many buildings were already demolished.[5] Aldo van Eyck and Theo Bosch designed the rebuilding of the area (fig. 3) – new dwellings that remain as quiet monuments to loss, protest, and a time when cities were shaped by the ideology of functional separation.

While I continue to question the truth claims embedded in cartographic practices, layering historical and contemporary maps has become a method for revealing what has been erased, forgotten, or pushed aside. These overlays allow us to trace lines that linger quietly beneath the surface of the city—fragments of the past inscribed into the present.
By uncovering these traces, maps begin to reveal the gaps, absences, and layers within the material fabric of the urban now. This echoes Huyssen's invitation to read the city as a palimpsest. Maps become entry points—portals through which we can glimpse past configurations and begin to understand how time has unfolded, how space has shifted, and how certain memories have been shaped, silenced, or erased. They also remind us that what has been constructed is never entirely new but always built upon what came before.

1. Andreas Huyssen, "Introduction" in Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory (Stanford: Standford University Press, 2003), 6-7.
2. "Over Amsterdam 750 Jaar," accessed 26 June 2025, https://amsterdam750.nl/over-750-amsterdam/
3. "AllMaps," accessed 25 June 2025, https://allmaps.org .
4. " Houthavens: een nieuwe duurzame woonwijk," accessed 26 June 2026, https://www.amsterdam.nl/projecten/houthaven/ .
5. "Aktiegroep Nieuwmarkt 1969-1974," accessed 26 June 2025, https://kunstencultuurcentrum.nl

Fig. 1 (top): Dienst voor Publieke Werken, Kaart van Amsterdam 1:10.000, 1951. Allard Pierson Museum, Amsterdam. Layered on contemporary map of Amsterdam with https://editor.allmaps.org , accessed 25 June 2025 , https://viewer.allmaps.org/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fannotations.allmaps.org%2Fmaps%2Feaa990689f45a090

Fig 2 (middle): Andries and Hendrik de Leth, Het Watergraafs of Diemer-Meer, 1725. Allard Pierson Museum, Amsterdam. Layered on contemporary map with https://editor.allmaps.org , accessed 25 June 2025, https://viewer.allmaps.org/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fannotations.allmaps.org%2Fmaps%2F35c3ecb28757c271 .

Fig. 3: Aldo van Eyck and Theo Bosch, Reconstruction plan Nieuwmarktbuurt, 1980. Archive of Het Nieuwe Instituut, Rotterdam. Layered on a contemporary map of Amsterdam (the image was not available in IIIF format, so I layered them myself.)

BEYOND PRESERVATION VERSUS TRANSFORMATION: THE DEEP CITIES APPROACH TO HISTORIC CITIES

By: N.

In 2021, UNESCO delisted the historic city center of Liverpool from its World Heritage List. A decision that was made “due to the irreversible loss of attributes conveying the outstanding universal value of the property” (UNESCO 2023). This “irreversible loss” was said to be caused by urban development projects such as Liverpool Waters, a large-scale project initiated to transform the docks of the city (UNESCO 2023).

The case of Liverpool’s delisting highlights a common tension between heritage preservation and urban transformation. UNESCO viewed the redevelopment as “detrimental to the site’s authenticity and integrity” (UNESCO 2023), whereas Liverpool’s municipality framed it as necessary renewal, aimed at “bringing life back to the historic docklands” by taking contemporary and future needs into account (Peel Waters n.d.).

This issue could be regarded as a values-based conflict between heritage preservation versus urban development. However, rather than framing this as a binary conflict between preservation and development, this article proposes a different lens: a clash of temporal imaginaries. Through the concept of ‘deep cities,’ I explore how heritage and change can coexist in more integrated and forward-thinking ways.

The deep cities approach acknowledges that cities are characterized by their ongoing transformation, with different temporal layers bearing witness to the earlier transformations cities have gone through. The approach supports a trans-temporal perspective—integrating past, present, and future—as essential for the sustainable and meaningful development of cities (Kalliopi, Guttormsen and Swensen 2020).

As the deep cities approach recognizes that transformation is an integral part of a city’s fabric, change is embraced rather than resisted (Kalliopi, Guttormsen and Swensen 2020, 107). This idea challenges the static approach that historic cities should be preserved ‘as they are’ in order to maintain their status of Outstanding Universal Value as identified by UNESCO.

In fact, transformation can breathe new life into cultural heritage within the city. Thoughtful urban development can encourage more active engagement with heritage and cultivate deeper connections between people and place. This transforms the city from a museum-like environment to a lived space.

Evangelia Alverti and Kalliopi Fouseki refer to this phenomenon as a an effort to revive a ‘sense of place’. The notion of 'sense of place' refers to the emotional and cultural meaning attached to a location, shaped by its physical features (space) and its historical layers (time) (Kalliopi, Guttormsen and Swensen 2020, 111-114). When urban development lets residents and visitors connect with the past meanings of a place and add their own meanings, change can become a positive heritage value, strengthening the sense of place.

However, the deep cities approach does not imply that change is always positive. Too rapid and extensive transformation can damage the local identity of the city, disconnecting the physical space from its historical depth. The Liverpool Waters project, for instance, poses a potential threat to the sense of place, as it proposes rapid and intensive redevelopment that may override the site's layered history. This type of transformation risks turning public places into generic and exclusionary "place-less" places (Kalliopi, Guttormsen and Swensen 2020, 115).

To avoid historic cities becoming "place-less" places, the meanings associated with the physical space must be considered in conservation efforts. Acknowledging the layers of meaning built up across time ensures that a city maintains its trans-temporal character (Kalliopi, Guttormsen and Swensen 2020, 123). The deep cities approach holds that change "needs to be steady, organic and gradually 'heritagized' so that it becomes an integral part of local identity" (Kalliopi, Guttormsen and Swensen 2020, 11). Thinking about cities through the lens of trans-temporality and sense of place allows for urban transformation that remains grounded in the heritage of the space.

This asks for a certain level of flexibility from both heritage preservationists and city developers. It requires an understanding of the 'sense of place' connected to the city in order to envision how urban development can revitalize its character.

The deep cities approach offers an alternative by viewing urban transformation as part of a city's character rather than as a threat to its authenticity, while encouraging cities to evolve in ways that respect historical depth. Historic cities like Liverpool could benefit from this approach by aligning development with the city's layered identity, allowing change to enhance rather than erase its sense of place.

Peel Waters. n.d. "Breathing Life Back into the Historic Docklands." Accessed 28 May 2025. https://www.peelwaters.co.uk/portfolio/liverpool-waters/.

Kalliopi Fouseki, Torgrim Sneve Guttormsen, Grete Swensen, eds. 2020. Heritage and Sustainable Urban Transformations Deep Cities. Routledge.

UNESCO "World Heritage Committee deletes Liverpool - Maritime Mercantile City from UNESCO's World Heritage List." 2023, Last updated April 20. https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/world-heritage-committee-deletes-liverpool-maritime-mercantile-city-unescos-world-heritage-list#:~:text=The%20World%20Heritage%20Committee%2C%20holding,universal%20value%20of%20the%20property.

MIND THE GAP BETWEEN THE PLINTH AND THE FUTURE.

By: M.T Gap

Trafalgar square in London has four plinths at each corner of the square, but only three statues are standing on their plinths.

It has been argued that Trafalgar square and its Victorian design is a monolithic and powerful symbol of the British nation and Empire. It is consistently used as a setting for national events and protests, and it continues to this day to contribute to discursive narratives of Britishness. The three statues, all of men in battle for the British Empire, were made between the 1840s and the 1880s and depict a Governor of Sindh that later became Commander-in-Chief in India, a general involved in a campaign in India in 1857, and King George IV, whose statue was originally intended to sit on the top of the marble arch at the entrance to Buckingham Palace. The fourth plinth was intended for an equestrian statue of King William IV, but due to lack of funds, the plinth remained empty. After standing vacant for 150 years, the Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce (RSA) started an initiative of commissioning temporary displays of contemporary statues on the plinth from leading national and international artists that began in 1998, and is still ongoing. The idea was that the contemporary sculptures would allow Trafalgar Square to become a vibrant public space that encourages interest in art placed in public spaces and to resolve the issue of the long-term future of the plinth. The Chair of the RSA at the time, Prue Leith, had received suggestions from the public for the use of plinth, but there were too many suggestions, and so she instead set up a committee which agreed on using the plinth for contemporary sculpture. The artworks that are meant as “public art” are chosen through a top-down approach, by an RSA appointed commissioning group, rather than a public consensus, thereby continuing to perpetuate the elitist power dynamics of shaping Britishness in Trafalgar Square.

Model For a Hotel, Thomas Schütte (2007-2009)

Hahn/Cock, KatharinaFritsch (2013-2015)

Really Good, David Shrigley (2016-2018)

The End, HeatherPhillipson (2020-2022)

The continued rotation of sculptures on the plinth seems to beg the question of what artwork is nationally significant enough to fill it. But maybe, instead of creating new statues for the fourth plinth that continue to generate top-down narratives of national identity, and that divert attention from the other statues of the square and their created national narrative, I would like to propose another initiative: leaving it empty.

Imagine the plinth standing in the square, empty and contrasted to the three other decorated plinths. There is just a surface, waiting. People walk past, some notice and stop. A plaque reads:

Reserved for a memory yet to come.

Leaving the plinth empty is an act of commoning. To emphasise the vacant space above the plinth allows a creation of space for the imagination of the collective. It becomes an attempt at going against our need to commemorate and of using statues to build national discourses and myths, as these often fail to represent the totality of stories and lived experiences of a society. An empty fourth plinth is a bottom-up approach, in which the public shares a common good that is constantly in a process of being co-produced and shared by all the imaginaries of passers-by and the public.

The plinth's negative space also allows for a gap that can be explored, an absence as presence, a potential history, to imagine what has not or cannot be spoken or made visible. Statues and monuments often look to the past as a way of creating a present narrative or myth, but what about the future? How can the present become an active gap that creates space for histories that are unfolding, grief that has not yet been named, crises not yet memorialised? The empty plinth does not ask people to reflect on the past, but rather on what we are failing to see now, to question what we may demand to remember in the future. The plinth can allow us to re-orient memory to also understand the present as an active shaper of the future, rather than the past as a plinth for the present.

So, the next time you're in London, mind the gap.

If you want to know more about the fourth plinth and Trafalgar Square:

Trafalgar square as a national identity:

Sumartojo, Shanti. "The Fourth Plinth: Creating and Contesting National Identity in Trafalgar Square, 2005–2010." Cultural Geographies 20, no. 1 (2012): 67–8

Information about the past fourth plinth commissions:

Londonist, "Every Fourth Plinth Commission, And Where They Are Now*" Londonist, 2024*
https://londonist.com/london/art-and-photography/every-work-of-art-on-the-fourth-plinth-so-far

Understanding the commission process of the fourth plinth sculptures:

London Gov "Fourth Plinth Commissions. Artist information pack"
https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/mgla140518-1933_-_attachment.pdf

Current fourth plinth:

What's on the fourth plinth now. *The Fourth Plinth sculpture: Mil Veces un Instante (A thousand times an Instant) by Teresa Margolles*. https://www.london.gov.uk/programmes-strategies/arts-and-culture/current-culture-projects/fourth-plinth-trafalgar-square/whats-fourth-plinth-now

IT'S NOT ME, IT IS YOU

By Brigitte M.

Dear UvA, dear faculty of my dearest humanities, dear CvB (dear Edith, dear Peter-Paul), my dearest Heritage and Memory programme,

It hurts me deeply to write this but I have decided that the best thing for our relationship right now, would be to part ways. This might come as a shock given my endless, unwavering love and support for you, but I have to set boundaries. Our time together has been beautiful, but I have decided I am ready to move on. Given this letter aims to foresee the future, I would like to cut straight to the point: there is no future for us. Here is why.

Recently, you informed me with the sweet news of a big step in your life you have been debating for over 1,5 years now. I was delighted to hear you proudly telling me you had decided not to enter into any new HorizonEurope collaborations with 'Israeli' organisations. Sadly, this happiness between us could not last. You said in your statement this decision was for the time being, and by mentioning the 'large-scale violence' you still refused to take a stance and call the Zionist entity out on what they are doing: committing a genocide against the Palestinian people. I have reflected on what this means for us, together in this skewed world where your higher education budgets are cut to justify our government's elitist arms race. I used to think it was the two of us academically battling against that system, but I should have known better.

Our romance was lovely and alluring. You were my happy place, you gave me shelter, introduced me to new friends, gave me a place to work. You have made me feel so welcome and for this I am utterly and eternally grateful. Yet this liaison was doomed to fail, I see that now. Dear UvA, I have lost faith in you. You abandoned me and my favourite professors when they needed you most. You are a bad, disloyal friend, you are greedy; putting the money you force off me into unethical, non-transparent places and funds, gaslighting me and others to stay under your influence. And still I stayed with you – are these my attachment issues, you may ask, or are we dealing with a classic example of Stockholm syndrome? I looked up to you; you taught me how to write and how to think – though when one teaches the other how to think, has power over the other's future and decisions, an imbalance is naturally created. It turned out this hierarchy between us had always been there. I am merely a poor player, a walking shadow slipping by in your longstanding history and life. You were my great love, but I was never yours.

It was May 2024 when I really started doubting my choice in love interests. The cracks of the built up tension were tearing us apart, and slowly my shame and guilt for being with you and paying you arose (I should've then listened to my gut feeling but you know how difficult that is!). Yet back then I still held the hope you would change. I thought you would alter your standpoint when you hosted Maya Wind at the Dominicuskerk; she explained so clearly the way that Dutch universities, that you, are affiliated to the funding of the nauseating arms and genocide machine at work in the Zionist entity. As she writes in Towers of Ivory and Steel: the Western, Orientalist consensus of academic freedom in the MENA-region is built on false predicaments, while 'Israeli' institutions of higher educations 'have played a key role in planning, implementing and justifying Israel's occupation and apartheid policies' – directly supported by European collaborations (PACBI qtd. in Wind 2024). What did you learn from this, my dear UvA? Nothing. You called the riot police on your students, you were abusive to me and my friends (causing bruises, fractures, and concussions), you squashed every form of protests and we, your loyal following, were met bulldozers and police dogs. You did not apologize – of course not; apologies do not mean anything to you. Trust was broken then, sweet UvA.

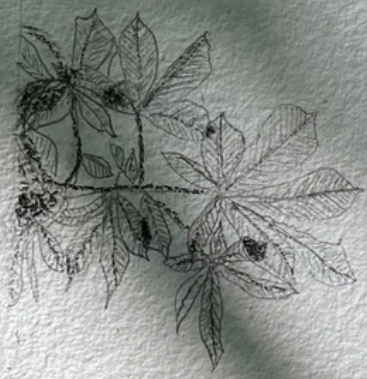
This academic year I had the vain hope you would have evolved over summer, that we could begin anew. By starting a new programme, Heritage and Memory Studies, that I selected for the reason that it'd be less out of touch with the outside world, I hoped to climb out of academia's ivory towers. I expected to be handed the tools to apply my newly acquired knowledge and skills to the big, angry outside world. My bruises had faded and I felt confident you would have changed your perspective, because you and me, sweet UvA, I thought were meant to be. I was so pleasantly surprised with what you taught me those first months, blinded by your love bombing. I remember the classes we enjoyed together in September, reading the most current and prominent theories, and how we talked about changing the discipline and the university from the inside. It was here that I learned about the pitfalls of memory studies through the articles of Marianne Hirsch, where I saw that academics do change their point of view. In her article 'Rethinking Holocaust Memory after October 7' she asks the reader: 'What, then, is the responsibility of those of us who might have contributed—however inadvertently—to the tenacity of this trauma-dominated version of Holocaust memory?' (Hirsch 2024). But it is exactly this responsibility that you avoid taking; even more so, every day the innocent are murdered and you keep up the lie of neutrality, you contribute to this exact trauma-dominated version of Shoah memory.

In my elective course Transitional Justice we learned –by not learning about it– how Palestinian suffering, or Palestine for that matter, did not seem to exist. In the discussion about Eichmann's trial and Hannah Arendt the main point seemed to get lost: how this trial gave 'Israel' a justification to assert its sovereignty. In my head echoed anthropologist Sinan Çankaya's words: 'eerst de Holocaust, dan de rest. In precies die volgorde. Zo maakt de wetenschappelijke discipline Holocaust- en genocidestudies haar prioriteiten en rangorde meteen duidelijk' (Çankaya 2025, 196). I don't know why you surprised me with this, UvA, I should have known better given the absence of a Palestinian narrative in Dutch collective memory, the guilt of the war still weighing heavily on this city. Of course you would never stand by an academic boycott.

What we have been taught during these last months of this programme is quite the opposite of the practical consequences awaiting us when we put these critical thinking lessons into use. We have learned to work on our academic skills in an academic climate that we are not able to speak out in, an academic climate that is complicit in mass atrocities. We learned in practice how our power has become performative, while I expected to learn from you to stand up for myself, undertake action, and bring about change to this ugly world. But I should have known that the master's tools would never dismantle the master's house. You think I sound radical? It was you who radicalised me, dear UvA, don't you see? When our buildings were sold to conglomerates, when the funding to the humanities and my professors' research was cut, when PhD vacancies disappeared, when you pushed your teaching blocks into six weeks. I recently confided in one of my professors, employed by you, when I told her I felt shame for paying tuition to you. She told me: the UvA would rather see you go; they do not need you like you need them. It is the only resistance you have made possible, the only way to distance myself from the hostile environment you have created. You are a hypocrite, dear UvA, a narcissist. Nothing in your position has ever changed, merely your position on bad press. So it has come to this. Reading this, you might be wondering about our future. Is this letter not to be a future review? I have come to realise that not only do we have no future together, but that there is none. If this is what the world is, and this is how it works, I do not wish to be a part of it. Call me cynical but you have deadened me, and with that our love. And worry not, I will not occupy you any longer as you do not occupy a place in my head anymore. My complicity ends here.

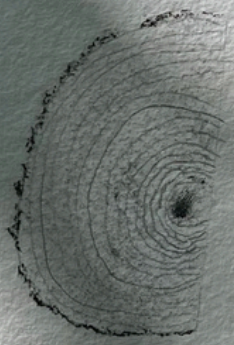
All my best,
B.M.

To Meet a Tree



Here you are, in the shadow of my crown
Ground through your feet
Find a stillness
Send your breath into the earth
Making your presence known and felt
is a form of radical acknowledgment

Come a little closer
Feel the space between us
Find the boundary



Use your intuition, use your imagination
Press your fingers into your palms
Notice the steady pulse of life.

Make contact with my trunk
Go on, feel my ridges and my roundness
But Remember, whilst you are touching me
I am touching you too
Lean on me. Let me hold you
Imagine the gap between us dissolving
into one flesh, a vast tissue of
existance.

ROOTS

To Meet a Tree is an exercise in connection. It explores the connection between our internal environment (our bodies) and the external environment (the Earth). Through sensing, breathing and gently moving we practice a type of ecological consciousness that honours feeling and attunement as a form of knowledge in its own right. To meet 'in the flesh,' is a way to take care of relationships, it is paying attention as a form of reciprocity with the living world.

Noticing is my way of opposing indifference, of allowing things to emerge. I take inspiration from radical imaginer Adrienne Maree Brown, who says "Hope is an act of imagination with real world consequences". To engage with the hope, I invite you to turn to trees through this illustrated invitation. The handwriting and the drawings engage with an embodied process of translating what I see and feel onto paper, through lines, shades and textures. Going back to this active process of making seeks to address the profound effect that the climate crisis has on our bodies – eco-anxiety, overwhelm and climate crisis paralysis – are all deeply embodied experiences. Our bodies are the material through which we perceive, respond and take action

Just as we learn to write or draw, we can also learn different techniques of relation and rehearse alternative ways of being and knowing that resist environmental disconnection and 'plant blindness' – our inability to notice, recognise and relate to the plants around us. This is especially important in urban environments, where plants tend to get lost in the background of our busy day-to-day lives. But I think noticing the natural world in our everyday lives is the key to cultivating a deep- seated sensitivity towards our shared natural hertiage. Nature (with a capital N) is not out there in the National Parks, it is here in our everyday. *To Meet a Tree* is a practice in ecomemory – a deep memory of a habitat, inhabited by an ecological assemblage of human and nonhuman relations.

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NATIONAL IDENTITIES IN THE AGE OF DIGITAL REPRODUCTION: TUVALU'S ONLINE RETREAT AGAINST THE TIDES

BY PIER LUIGI DE NERO

While the world scrambles half heartedly to meet carbon emission goals, island states such as Tuvalu are already resigned. Looking beyond mitigation measures with limited impact the atoll nation has looked for innovative solutions to face rising sea levels. Considering the low elevation of Tuvalu's atoll chains most of its critical infrastructure will be submerged at high tides by 2050 (NASA, 2023). The disappearance of its landmass in the immediate future leads Tuvalu to face consequential sovereignty threats. The country has therefore established itself in a leading role towards introducing climate change considerations in current international law principles. Tuvalu faces complete territory loss and a global population displacement, therefore losing the two essential components
which define a sovereign nation state (clearly defined territory and a permanent population). Through its Digital Nation project Tuvalu looks to cement its place as a sovereign state through the online realm claiming international sovereignty recognition as a first digital nation. The existential threats applied to Tuvalu's national identity and statehood call for innovative solutions: the step-by-step incrementalisation of a national prosthetic memory through cloud upload can be a solution to preserve statehood against climate change predicaments international law cannot provide answers to. Considering the Digital Nation project as a form of prosthetic memory falls in line with Landsberg conceptualisation of prosthetic memories as catalysts for new forms of political alliances grounded in collective social responsibility. The national digitalization is therefore an eminently political act, aimed inwards towards Tuvalu's inhabitants and outwards as a beacon for the international community.

The technological capacities of cloud services allow Tuvalu to develop a carefully planned out and coordinated form of a national prosthetic memory, maximising the advantages spelled out by Landsberg. Tuvalu's digital upload into the "cloud" is presented by the government as an opportunity for its exiled population and its future generations to retain a popular yet intimate connection to its land and heritage lost to the waters. The prospective interactivity and easy access of the digital nation generates a non essentialist form of prosthetic memory, as community members may upload any and all forms of tangible and intangible heritage they may wish to safeguard. This state-led "strategic remembering" (Landsberg, 2004) will affect both inhabitants' self perception as displaced Tuvaluans andthe world's perception of the atoll nation. The power of prosthetic memory as envisioned by Lansdberg stands in its capacity to foster individual inclusion in broader historical narratives; keeping the displaced Tuvaluan diaspora digitally connected while simultaneously seeking international recognition for innovative statehood models may foster new forms of national identity and enable collective social responsibility. The use of the metaverse to create a digital copy of the nation represents therefore a key conducer to enable "strategic remembering" and generate prosthetic memories at the national level.

The digital nation project dedicates a significant part of its resources specifically to heritage preservation which is considered as a foundational pillar to preserve Tuvalu's national identity. Destined to be operated at the national level, the project nevertheless looks to retain participatory governance and design: Tuvaluans are entrusted to take on an active role in the preservation of their heritage. The atoll nation therefore champions local ownership of its heritage practices to place self-determination as a key feature of the database. During the project inception's the government adopted a non-essentialist outlook on digitalisation by making provisions to thoroughly consider local traditions and sacred sites/beliefs, which are not easily compatible with digital technologies.

The database can be seen as a 4D output, giving equal space to cultural heritage sites scans then to audiovisual recordings of intangible heritage practices: Tuvalu's small atoll nation is composed of unique indigenous knowledge systems which are to be carefully digitised to guarantee generational durability.

More generally speaking, as climate change seeps into habitats and threatens livelihoods, questions of heritage preservation will increasingly require innovation conservation strategies. The nation of Tuvalu is far beyond the time of mitigation, and looks to coordinate the most effective damage control strategy. Attached to the hip of the modern capitalist world, prosthetic memories look to work within the system to turn commodified memories towards politically progressive ends. In similar fashion, Tuvalu aims to use the technological resources at its disposal to champion the nation's digital alter ego with the existential purpose of national preservation in mind. The mounting pressure of rising sea levels have led Tuvaluans to lean toward their own indigenous beliefs and practices to imagine their own futures; the ground-breaking conceptions of statehood and heritage conservation strategies put in place deserve to be closely monitored in their affirmation.

A LETTER TO MY FUTURE SELF,

Hopefully, a museum professional.

Written by: Alt

Archive is the mainstay of historical inquiry. Yet even with all the proper training in historian's craft, it is a sly beast to harness. My own unsuccessful attempts to research into certain angles of women's history in the past, along with the theoretical readings from the last academic year, both illuminate the archive's knack for eluding investigation into non-male, non-political, and non-Western-related topics. Many perspectives are simply undocumented; the act of putting pen to paper and then safeguarding these traces for futurity was reserved for a select few. With all the archival gaps in mind, Saidiya Hartman's pursuit of coming up with a method to tell these impossible stories speaks to me in the most inspiring way, and I want to understand it, better yet - document it for my future self. So, what do I make of Venus in Two Acts, and how can it relate to museums?

Saidiya Hartman situates her text within the context of Atlantic slavery and sets out to search for many voices lost to it. There is an urgency to her quest, a level of closeness with the people she tries to evoke. She declares: "This writing is personal because the history has engendered me, 'because the knowledge of the other marks me'." Carrying the knowledge of those before us, even when blurry and intangible, dimmed down to a vague sense instead of a concrete fact - isn't it the whole essence of memory, the subtle ways it both informs and ensnares?

To assume the position of now and personal, I gather, is the first part of Hartman's method for telling untold stories. Narratives and past violence are present and continue to interrupt our present, but by consciously making space for our ghosts, we might begin to tame them. More importantly, such efforts seem pertinent to futurity, as Hartman puts it: "the necessity of trying to represent what we cannot [...] animates our desire for a liberated future," - imagining the "afterlife of slavery." That said, speaking about history not in terms of the past but in terms of something that interlaces yesterday, today, and tomorrow is something I am excited to apply in practice in the museum space. Interestingly enough, approaching from a temporality of now, in the event of very little proven historical knowledge, can safeguard the dead from distortion of their stories. But at the same time, while striving not to reproduce the violence of the archive, presenting Venus - or any other 'ghost' who has already endured too much - with this big ask to guide and instruct might be considered another unwarranted burden and requires close ethical consideration.

Second, to practice narrative restrain. This principle does not only stem from the historian's habit of staying true to evidence but from the realisation that the gaps are as much part of the story (oftentimes of significant proportion) as they indicate active erasure. Thus, when one screams into the void and only hears an echo, it exposes the impossibility of telling such stories. The dissonance opens conversation about why and how these lives were pushed to the margins, as well as imaginaries of what might have been. Space for the ghost to be present through other means than a verified biography is in turn created.

To fantasise - not what had happened, but what are the questions never to be answered. In her own text, Saidiya Hartman puts this theory into practice very literally by interspersing chunks of unanswerable questions every few paragraphs. While they don't necessarily portray a clearer picture of Venus, they spark our minds into motion, thinking of and searching for her figure. This creates a vision, a mirage, not yet tangible but potent enough to convey her presence. Such a playful technique, I'd argue, has the same potential as the usual 'realist' approach to leave the observer with a sense of closeness and connection, as it skips the encyclopedic narrative and appeals directly to emotions, the end stop after you forget the details. Merging the fictive and the historical, without crossing the limits of what cannot be known, creates textures and layers that facilitate ties to the past while assuring us of our place.

After writing down notes on Hartman's ideas for my future use, the big question looms - how is it applicable to museums? Above all, a museum is a material place. It features walls and storage rooms filled with objects, display tables showcasing exhibits, and a carefully designed path created by architects. Ironically, a common critique among museumgoers after an exhibition is that it was "hard to understand, hard to follow a narrative." The inherent fragmentation of material storytelling, in this case, is something to be used intentionally. A labyrinth with no pre-designed path, architectural pockets and associative objects, display gaps with topical ruminations instead of past traces is the non-linear curatorial technique fit to remember and evoke through exposure to unanswerable questions. That said, the main takeaway I look forward practicing is this: you can find somebody through heart, not only through hard evidence.

(A brief aside: Hartman's openly personal confession is not commonly found in academic texts. And by extension, I take it as a permission to glance inward and inspect the marks I carry, even though in these times of geopolitical mess such questions feel a tad heavy loaded. A conscientious effort to keep calm and carry on is required most days, as my minds plays tricks on me, and the nameless and the forgotten of the Bloodlands on the Eastern Flank begin to take the shape of familiar faces. And if someone offered me an opportunity to heal, to be liberated, and to jump straight into the afterlife of the Bloodlands - I would not think twice.)

-Alt

STORIES STITCHED IN THREAD

By: August

Stories are inscribed into the very fabric of objects—from the life stories of those who made them, embedding their years of learning and experience into each creation, to the life it lives and the purposes it fulfils, to its ultimate decay. Decay is often perceived as the death of an object, but it could also be considered a continuation of stories and memories. As its very material makeup is transformed by the hands of nature, it continues to live on in memory. Even the forgetting of the object is a story in itself, often overlooked but telling of the value we place on certain objects and the effects of time.

The textile collage pictured here represents this multiplicity of stories, and is a love-letter or homage of sorts to forgetting, decay, and that which is discarded. The various textile pieces come from a box at the Textile Research Centre in Leiden—items that have found their way there and been designated for discarding or reuse (e.g., as rags). Several of the pieces have been hand embroidered by unknown hands, their original context lost with no way of knowing who made it and why it came to be assigned a different value. The fact that they did not finish embroidering these pieces opens the viewer up to speculation and fabulation.

This led me to ask: why do obvious signs of time and change often reduce the value we assign to textiles? When something has been worn to the point of fading, or repeatedly mended, it tells us the story of the wearer's love or regard for the piece. A just-begun embroidery work on a beginners stencil tells us the story of someone's desires to learn a new and difficult craft, becoming part of the history and future of a potentially 'dying' craft. And a forgotten piece of clothing boxed up in an attic tells us the story of a person growing and changing.

I have loosely stitched together the pieces in red thread to highlight the lines we draw, interpretations we make and the gaps we fill with speculations when the context is lost. We reassign value to the object, thus becoming part of its continuous story ourselves. If the red stitches are cut, the pieces are once again made separate, open for reinterpretation and new stories. It feel very human to me, to fill in gaps with stories and feel the need to contextualise objects that appear lost. But with heritage collections, especially 'orphan collections', where do we strike the balance between contextualising pieces that have been removed from their original context (including through looting and unethical collection practices)and deciding to let some objects speak for themselves, and perhaps letting some be forgotten? And who decides which objects are left to be forgotten and which are given attention?

In the Sleeping Beauty Experiment, Rooijakkers, Bergevoet, and Masselink (2024) advocate for a "culture of slowness", in which they put into place an 'orderly forgetting' with an eye for the future. To avoid appropriating the future, they leave decisions on what to do with orphan collections for those of the future. Giving as much information with it as they can but allowing those of the future to interpret the objects according to their own context[1]. Curated decay and orderly forgetting could have a place in helping us rethink how we assign value to things. Building a system in which space is left for the unknown and for those of the future who will inherit these objects.

Similarly, for the textiles that are part of our everyday lives, these ideas can help us to build towards a culture of slowness, keeping those who will inherit our textiles in mind. In the face of over-production and over-consumption, building more consciousness around the stories of objects, from the materials to the people who made them, and the long history behind how the object came to be, can help shift value placement and consideration of what we forget and what happens to the object after we forget it. Many contemporary textiles cannot simply be left to decay and return to the earth. But there is so much potential to be found in creative solutions that can be realised by slowing down

[1]*Rooijakkers, Gerard, Bergevoet, Frank and Masselink, Evelien "*The Sleeping Beauty Scenario: A Handbook for the Orderly Forgetting of Collections*" Delft: Erfgoedhuis Zuid-Holland, 2024.*

FOR THE RECORD

Written by: S.D Axford

Track I

When Voyager 1 and 2 were launched in 1977, each included an identical golden vinyl record with diagrams showing how to make it play etched on their covers and filled with the images, sounds, and music from Earth. “The Golden Records” were designed to communicate the memories of our world for the whole universe to hear. The disks include a greeting from the UN secretary general, greetings in 56 earthly languages, (55 human ones and one humpback whale), 116 images, and 90 minutes of music from around the world as the ideal representation for all of life on our planet.[1] The plan was a 5 year mission to study Jupiter and Saturn who were aligning just right to make this work. After that, the satellites and their records would float beyond our solar system, carrying the sounds of humanity for anyone or anything that might come across it in the future.

Track II

In 1947, linguist Patrick Shuldham-Shaw travelled back to the Shetland Islands of Scotland, an isolated archipelago first colonised by the Vikings before becoming part of Scotland. When speaking with local John Stickle about nonsense songs,[2] Stickle sang a fragment of a local tune he claimed was the most nonsensical songs he knew. It probably confused Sickle a great deal when Shuldham-Shaw was ecstatic hearing the supposed nonsense lyrics.

Except it wasn’t nonsense. Sickle was unknowingly singing in Norn, the language spoken by the Vikings and their descendants that inhabited the island, before going extinct in favour of the local Scots dialect. Even if no one spoke it, it was still perfectly and unintentionally preserved in the archive of song. The lyrics had been written down prior to this encounter, but the tune sung by Sickle was thought to have been completely lost until that moment.[3]

An ancient language left sleeping between the words of a ballad, sung on a melody that was thought to be forgotten. Despite believing the words had no meaning, generations of Shetland Islanders perfectly preserved the lyrics and an ancient melody using one of the oldest and most reliable forms of archiving humans have - our own voices and languages.

Years of imperial and colonial schools of thinking have prioritized the written archive above all - as if it is the most unmoving and objective form of archiving. Beyound those narrow definitions there are countless archives, oral and otherwise, that contain and preserve information that no written archive could, or seemed to bother with. Music has kept diasporas connected and marginalized knowledge alive; working with the archives that exist outside of traditional institutions is vital to the study and remembering of the past.

Track III

Nuclear energy has been subject to intense fearmongering campaigns and political lobbying for decades, but the true problem is the waste: the leftover contaminated materials that are dangerous for tens of thousands of years. We do have ways of storing it that will keep us and the environment safe, but only as long as it’s not disturbed.

Except, in the millennia that it will take it to become safe, how do we pass on the message of danger? We may have symbols we know as “dangerous” or “nuclear”, but there’s no guarantee they’ll always mean that. How do you leave a message of danger for people who speak languages that haven’t been formed yet, how does a warning outlast those who made it? Those who study nuclear semiotics have proposed a plethora of solutions. Maybe plant fields of imposing, sharp rocks, the waste deep underneath, creating a naturally unsettling environment to deter people away. Or use the long-standing method of oral history, intentionally passing down folkloric warnings of the dangers of certain (man-made) environmental markers. Maybe it would be better to leave no warning, no temptation, where hopefully no one will ever find it. Thomas Sebeok proposed an atomic priesthood which harnessed religious institutions’ longstanding power as memory keepers to teach this fear as the godly truth.[4]

Human curiosity seems so natural, it's hard to believe those of the future will always stay terrified of these warnings; enough time allows even the deepest of fears to turn into curiosity. If raiders didn’t heed to the warnings written on the tomb of Tutankhamun, if urban explorers march past “keep out” signs without a second thought, who are we to believe that people will listen to a warning? What does it take to thwart inevitable human curiosity?

Track IV

My mother didn’t know how to do hair. A curse of growing up the defiant daughter with only older brothers and a strained mother-daughter relationship that wouldn’t change until she moved out, she never learnt anything beyond a basic ponytail and three strand braid. When the other middle school girls started showing up to the playground with sock buns and Katniss Everdeen-esque diagonal dutch braids, I was seething with jealousy but also too stubbornly independent to ask anyone for help. So I started watching hours of YouTube hair tutorials. Dozens of different girls talking to their pixelated webcams taught me the difference between a french and dutch braid, how to get the perfect ballerina bun, and what was most “flattering” for my face shape. I don’t remember any of their names, faces, or voices, but I remember the way their hands run through my hair.

I fell in love with anthropology because of my high school teacher. My favourite ramen is the brand that my first year roommate introduced me to. There is a hard drive sitting on my shelf that contains every single photo, video and screenshot I’ve taken since 2014 and over my dead body will I delete any of them. Whenever I’m homesick I blast Led Zeppelin and Barenaked Ladies just like my dad did every weekend. When I write, the bottoms of my W are curved because the girl I had a crush on in grade three did hers the same way. I have over 100 Spotify playlists that document different seasons and moods of my life. I’m always building archives of myself from pieces of the archives around me.

I am a mosaic of all the different archives contained within me, formed by the many parts of those around me I have adapted as my own. In the future, my memory will be defined by the parts of those I choose to share with the world.

Track V

Since Voyager 1 and 2 launched the Golden Records into space, many people have had many different ideas on how it should have been done. Once these messages left the Earth, they were completely decontextualized from human culture.[5] The Voyagers' golden records was a group of scientists and engineers (not artists, archivists, diplomats or any social scientist/humanist)[6] who had the power and authority to create a canon of the complete human experience through our images, music and oral traditions. The medium they chose to do so is a reflection of what they perceived as immovable and powerful aspects of our world. How we archive can tell us just as much as what we archive does.

The 5 year Voyager mission is about to reach its 50th anniversary, longer than anyone dared plan for. The two satellites passed their original planetary targets and shot out in opposite directions into unending interstellar space. They have no particular direction, targets or deadlines. Both are still collecting any data possible, to be sent and stored in a datacentre back on solid ground.

Humans aren't very good at thinking of the future, but that will never stop us from trying. The various archives of institutions and the canons of humanity are shaped by the active and passive selection of information. An archive can take on many different forms, each one a reflection of the stories they are collecting and the (perceived) security and longevity of the format. What we archive shows the canon we want to create, but how we archive is a reflection of the people or institutions that created it. As we as a field of study work towards addressing the power imbalances and violence of the archive, acknowledging and working with all forms of archives is a vital part of that process.

Billions of years from now, long after the sun explodes and Earth is nothing more than ash, and even longer since the twin satellites ran out of power and stopped sending signals back home, there will still be two records. Space is too vast; the chances of randomly happening upon other life is too small. However, even if no one else ever hears or sees it, we have done everything we can to document ourselves. We were here, and we did everything we could to be remembered for it.

1. "Golden Record Contents - NASA Science," April 9, 2024. https://science.nasa.gov/mission/voyager/golden-record-contents/.
2. A nonsense song refers to any song with meaningless lyrics or vocalizations: think "la la la".
3. Shuldham-Shaw, Patrick N. "The Ballad King Orfeo." *Scottish Studies* 20 (January 1, 1976): 124–27
4. Thibault, Mattia. "Speculative Semiotics." Linguistic Frontiers 5, no. 3 (December 1, 2022): 1–9. https://doi.org/10.2478/lf-2022-0012.
5. Lerner, Neil. "Alien Listening: Voyager's Golden Record and Music from Earth, by Daniel K. L. Chua and Alexander Rehding." *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 75, no. 3 (December 1, 2022): 624–28. https://doi.org/10.1525/jams.2022.75.3.624.
6. Traphagan, John W. "Should We Lie to Extraterrestrials? A Critique of the Voyager Golden Records." Space Policy 57 (August 1, 2021): 101440. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.spacepol.2021.101440.

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