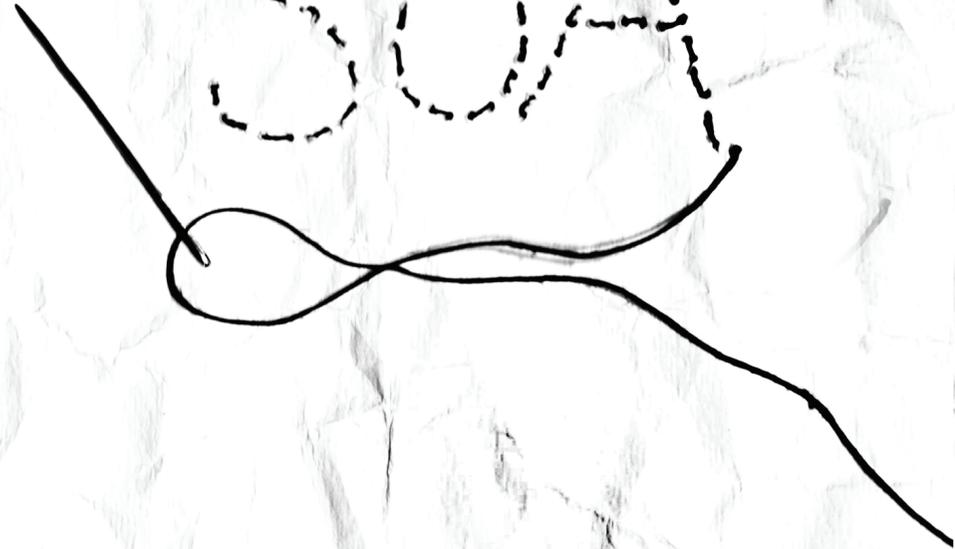




S04



School of Anxiety (SoA):

Autopoiesis, Entropy or
Redundancy and other
terms

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SHORT TEXT ON EVENTS BY NYAKALLO MALEKE, SANYU KIYIMBA-KISAKA, AWUOR ONYANGO

This particular writing process has provided us with a space to unburden ourselves; we've dedicated our time to speaking our truth-through various writing approaches of our choosing. With this being said, we're opening our souls and bearing our vulnerability. It's not a bad thing. That's the interesting thing about us, we feel. It's normal, it's a human characteristic.

This publication was created with the intention of narrating a collective, individual, social, political, historical and psychological anxieties; the list goes on. Certainly the conversations in this publication will be transformed once we've compiled everything. With that said, this could be one of the stages towards some kind of healing. If it's not obtained here, then maybe it'll begin after it's printed and even after the "Berlin" cloud has subsided.

If you were to ask how this publication should be read, the answer could potentially be an unobscure one. Directly, we'd say that this publication needs to be read as if though your hands are symbolically peeling. We'd say that this publication needs to be read as a counter discourse, it should be imagined as a kind of fracture within the whole that attempts to come into its own being-reconstructing itself from the point of view of a line, a video, conversations, crumpled textures, an ambiguous duck, a spot, a centre informed by an unknowing constraint; all of which make up a series of collected anxieties. Essentially, a mapping process that is negotiating itself across a black and white plane and then continuing to negotiate again against the grey textures in between. Each gesture that involves an act of undoing, a process of revealing in turn could discover something delicate.

This is a collaboration. By defining it in this way it is unlikely that it will exclude you. No, it implicates you too. From how you choose to engage with it. By even choosing to own and read it. Alternatively, the end result, or the conclusion at which you aspire to receive at the end of indulging in these intricate passages of this publication could potentially become unrealised.



EVENT I
INTRODUCTION TO SoA TERMS

Awuor Onyango

"What truth is not met with tears, what growth lacks a thread of grief? We seek catharsis in the flowers we broke from their stems to offer our dead. We seek immortality in the sculptures we make of the once-living. We battle to pull the grieving and bereaved from the realm of Poseidon?"

A visit to the Hector Pieterse Museum and walking through a kind of symbolic graveyard of those who are known to have perished during the 1976 Soweto uprising raised a lot of questions around memory and what it takes to be allowed access to memorialization. An arbitrary insertion of Mandela into the narrative was featured is a portrait of him that stood near the exit as if to wipe away all the grief by reminding you that Jesus/Mandela sorted all things out during his presidency. The museum seemed to be a popular tourist spot that brought into question the museum as a hollow ground, a literal graveyard inaccessible to locals but completely open to foreigners to scummage through, a site of memory only useful to those who had nothing to lose or gain from the memories stored. In addition the graveyard contained the names of the dead, which brought to question what the cut off point for being remembered was; in this case the clear line was death. Going through the narrative it was clear that damage had come in many forms, many losses, many disappearances, many exiled and bombed abroad or lost forever, many families torn apart forever. The museum seemed to only memorialize those whose lives had been killed during the uprising and I couldn't help but draw parallels to the situation in Kenya and how exactly, in my hopes back then for freedom and justice, the struggle would be memorialized.

"There will be more of the language of surveillance disguised as research of politics and history calculated to render the suffering of millions mute; language glamorized to thrill the dissatisfied and bereft into assaulting their neighbors; arrogant pseudo-empirical language crafted to lock creative people into cages of inferiority and hopelessness."

-Toni Morrison-

Would it be about the people whose deaths made the news over and above the people who were tortured, who went into exile, to those who returned from exile numb to politics, who brought their children up for export hoping we would find life as far away from the injustice and violence the state would mete on our psyches and bodies. How do you choose what to quantify in memory when it comes to revolutions, to resistance and the myriad of levels that they occupy, and the fact that they do not start or end in a day. The curator of the museum readily pointed out that Hector Pieterse, who it is named after and from whose death the narrative of the Soweto uprising blooms wasn't the first person to die. What is it that museums seek to achieve,



I couldn't help but wonder, perhaps from a Kenyan perspective in which museum spaces, even now, seem to be more for the white/European field. The National Museum in Kenya didn't have a single black employee until about 1968 when they hired a ticket clerk. In my recent interactions with the museum, the club is full of Americans and Europeans and even during our school trips to the museum there didn't seem to be a point of access for locals into the narrative that was being crafted, not when the Leakeys and the Croydons and Thompsons were the discoverers of a land that was inhabited, named, historicized before their arrival. Perhaps it was through this gaze that I saw the way in which the locals were not present at the Hector Pieterse Museum. By this I do not mean they were not present in the narrative but [sic].

While I can admit to not having fully understood autopoiesis during the Jo'burg iteration of the School of Anxiety, I was more interested in obsessional doubt and reduction/redundancy. A lot had been erased and set aside for the narrative of the Hector Pieterse Museum to have been crafted as it is, and though I was left wondering who this narrative was crafted for, to whose benefit it was and in what ways the same would apply to the histories I had witnessed and lived through.

ABOUT ANXIETY

Sanyu Kiyimba-Kisaka

"And though I realized this was me thinking as him, and not in fact him speaking, when offense is being taken, offense is heard everywhere, even in the imagination."
-Claudia Rankine-

Every story has a beginning, middle and end. This particular story has several beginnings and middles but not enough endings. And that is where I start to write this. This is a quest to find another ending to a story of many flavors.

JUMP

Uncertainty is the place where a person waits anxiously in the in-between. I found myself in this place several times in the last few months. I sat in a full, small and cramped waiting room with steel, cushion-less chairs and windowless walls that made the room feel like it were floating in its own time. It was my third time in this room that morning and I wondered whether I'd get my visa in time. Stripped of my phone, and given a number for identification, I quickly felt like a convict returning once more to court to defend the one reason as to why they should travel to South Africa.

JUMP

Anxiety creeps onto you. It does not knock or announce itself. No. It looks for the opportune time and boom! It is in your face. We were supposed to be studying about the anxieties of a society but it was not long after the class had started that cold morning in Johannesburg that it occurred to me that I had no idea what I had signed up for. This one week in nippy Jo'burg, I thought, may make me more anxious than navigating a downtown New York subway at peak hour on a summer day. I purposed to instead focus my thoughts on those sunny succulent breakfast meals and hope they would make my class responses sound less apprehensive.

JUMP

Monday morning, the 4th of September. The first question that Moses, our coordinator asks is: "What does it mean to mourn?" Good Lord! I thought. The sun was not quarter way to the top of the sky and we were already throwing terms like autopoiesis, mourning, becoming, unlearning, entropy and redundancy out there. I sat back and gazed at my two lovely classmates. I watched how their body language wrestled with the terms. Nyakallo buried her face in her laptop and Awuor twisted her head upwards as she changed the topic to what we would have for lunch. My mind escaped from the room and went into a hollow chasm filled with all the phrases from the literature we read:



Jamaica Kincaid: *"My Presence will leave room for theories."*

Warsan Shire: *"You are terrifying and beautiful, something not everyone knows how to love."*

Freud: *"Sameness is not a popular goal these days and for very good reasons especially when it supports the fantasy of eradicating difference."*

Duune Seery: *"It is not clear to me that we can "unlearn" without undergoing mourning."*

Spaces, anxiety, spaces, unlearning, processes of unlearning, embodying spaces, terrifying, spaces, habits, becoming, becoming, becoming, what is mourning, spaces, do we mourn spaces?

"Sanyu, say something. You're very quiet." Moses' voice pierced through freezing brain and jolted me from the abyss of my thoughts. The kind of thoughts that were not full together but, somehow, all related to one another. These terms haunted me. You can't separate anxieties. You can't say, let me put mine aside and deal with yours. Anxiety attaches to itself and becomes more whole. Whether you're anxious and dealing with uncertainties in a visa waiting room or in a class discussing societal anxieties. It's all the same. You have to address it as a whole. There is no escape.

**BECOMING
SELF-PRODUCTION
MOURNING HOME
HYPER-VISIBILITY
TRANSGRESSION
SURVIVAL KIT MENTALITY
AND OTHER TERMS**



Nyakallo Maleke

Response #1

Becoming

Becoming could consist of the following ingredients: one part transitioning, one part awareness, one part readiness, one part rebirth and one part affirmation. However these options do not conclude, and they don't necessarily occur in that order. In my understanding of becoming, the procedure isn't a linear kind. In a time period that is continuously redefining itself, it is necessary that one learns to adjust with it. I'd liken this development with the act of retracing one's steps. It is the peak where consciousness is heightened. In my understanding, the method of becoming could be circular, or it could be patterned like zigzag fractal that winds in the middle of nowhere. Becoming can be likened to an abyss of ongoing darkness. Sometimes, it is a fluid process on a good day.

Response #2

Self-Production

Some kind of resolution...? Observing the observer...? Perhaps, it is a proposal for a re-presentation. It sounds more mechanical than fulfilling. It rejects perfection although it may imply it. It suggests multiplicity although it is not isolated to the singular and physical body and the skills that it possesses. Self-production is an ellipsis... a full stop... parenthesis. However, self-production acknowledges and accepts failure too.

Response #3

Toni Morrison discusses the idea of 'dead language,' which is a type of language that is violent in the sense that it does not provide a space for engaging and exchanging of ideas. When it is spoken, the impact that it creates is not meaningful because it is ignorant and, it creates the danger of making a topic or object that is significant, insignificant. Alternatively, it is a void that exists in between two or multiple conversations. When the space (for 'language') to unpack itself has not been created in order for one to be, it means that the grounds where learning is initiated is invisible. The weight of the concept is leaking. The opinions of the bodies that are included in discourse become unheard because they become invisible. The discourse is meaningless. It's like saying something that really doesn't mean anything. So then, how do we make language un-dead? How do we make our subjects undead? Listening. Reading. Learning. Understanding. Reflecting. Sharing.



Response #5

Nairobi Word List

Life is transient. An impermanent uprising, a revival towards a deformation. A conflict of repetition, creation, a game. A thread that motions towards a grief then as it attempts to deal with rejection, it loops into a process of an opaque catharsis. Again, a coffin adorned with flowers is surreal. A loop of conflation, a deformation of transparent imbalance and an anxiety for a hopeful green. A sculpture is the process of becoming a progressive battle somewhat of a spiral, crumbling like the printmaking's of a dry river bank. A formulation of eternal tears, fragile air and a dualism of grief and NGOs. A fluid change and destruction.

BECOMING

Awuor Onyango

A tension exists between being and becoming, a chasm of unknown proportions, a sameness in motion divided by a difference in knowledge. It is possible to know exactly who you have been/are being. It is impossible to know that you will ever become, to trust in who it is you are becoming. One is familiar, a challenge already overcome, a task subdued, the other is unfamiliar, often unstructured and therefore suspicious. How do you become? What is it to be? From what do you become? If the culture and society you are born into already lend a personality a soft fiction of what is possible and a language to you, can you become anything other than a set of sub/di/inversions of it. How do you learn new possibilities of becoming? Leaves, Flowers, Keyboards, Bisch, Zoop.

"For fear of the unknown, people cling to the familiar suffering."

Survival Kit Mentality/Mourning the leaving behind of the known in search of the unknown autopoiesis, sometime last year, a friend sent me a link to a since deleted facebook post that contained three things: a bible verse, advice on how to get your child ready for school in under half an hour, and an invitation to (perhaps just?) cunnilingus with a boy toy who was touted as "discreet and orally talented." The post was by *Purity a "loving wife, fellow mother, and Christian" and her followership of about a thousand mostly married women, lived and understood this triplicity of God, Child, and paid for sexual favours. Creating survival kits as consumable/capitalist goods, as a (consumable) reprieve from the fear of the unknown/mourning of the known. Is it possible to buy our way out of our current/all anxieties? Is it possible to create a survival kit?

I had an aunt (Rispa) who died because the bleaching had made her skin too raw for her operation wounds to heal. I had an aunt (Rispa) who died because of skin bleaching. I had an aunt (Rispa) who lived because of skin bleaching. I never got to ask her why or if it had been worth it for her, but when I see facebook forums offering safe skin bleaching practices/tips/kits I can't help but see these as the production of autopoietic processes as survival kits for toxic environments.

Survival kits and victim blaming/shaming. The as is/now/static as stealing from the what could be/future/dynamic. Buying comfort instead of embracing/to postpone anxiety. Postponed anxiety accumulating into violence.



Obsessional doubt also keeps us in the mire of a refusal of attachment, of decision, since, as Sodre puts it of one of his analysands, “any decision represented a loss, and [...] this loss was unbearable”— I had an aunt (Rispa) who died because the bleaching had made her skin too raw for her operation wounds to heal. I had an aunt (Rispa) who died because of skin bleaching. I had an aunt (Rispa) who lived because of skin bleaching. I never got to ask her why or if it had been worth it for her, but when I see facebook forums offering safe skin bleaching practices/tips/kits I can’t help but see these as the production of autopoietic processes as survival kits for toxic environments. Either you do it or you don’t, you will regret both. There’s no catharsis in continuums.

We fear what we cannot reduce, we love only what we can make redundant. I do not understand you therefore you are wrong/ugly/primitive. You have no right to try and make me understand you, you’re an angry black woman, inherently violent, a big black man incapable of joy. I do not understand you therefore you cannot exist, cannot continue to be. We ignore the margins, have no use for them, use them as guides to cut out what is undesired, misunderstood, unwanted. We decapitate what blurs the lines between what we know and brings us comfort and what is possible and as of yet unnamed, unexpected. We rage against the irreducible.

Schrodinger’s negro. First you beat them down to a lesser being and then put them in a toxic environment with potentially radioactive elements. It is important to reduce them. It is also important to make them believe in this reduction. Let’s call this environment a box. When Schrodinger’s negro is in the box, they are simultaneously primitive and civilized. Only when you open the box do you see them for who they truly are. When Claudia Rankine says “Angry black people are the old black and everyone knows that’s pathological. The new black is accomplished, assimilated, and integrated. The new black reaches across the aisle.” she’s expressing the state of Schrodinger’s negro, who until provoked to speak up for herself is both angry black and new black. When a woman with bleached skin has not unlearned the anxieties of her shed dark skin, she is expressing Schrodinger’s negro.

What does it mean to be more than what you’re reduced to? To want to be more? To suddenly sprout/become more/other than what you’re sanctioned to become? Perhaps death is a continuum as opposed to an end and we die every day in the eyes of those who let us, who allow us to be opaque and approachable, who address us not as phantoms of reduced former selves/slaves/savages. Is it to us to mourn the ways in which we die to our former selves, we become and unbecome or is it to those



into the words, labels, boxes they prepared for us. The decision to stay put for the who bear us witness, who see us change and grow or shrink, who see us move away or towards, who cling onto our past selves desperately trying to beat us back down comfort of others, much like the decision to grow/change/transgress for our own comfort result in death and therefore mourning. Everything is lost all the time. There is no catharsis in continuums, no transparency in the margins.

"Trauma tourism" -Gabi Ngcobo-

There is freedom in the margins; an ability to move wherever in whichever way without attachment, without labels, without closure. There is anxiety because of this freedom, discomfort formed because we are taught to fear what we cannot name, what we cannot see through, what we cannot grasp, what we cannot point at.

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Sanyu Kiyimba-Kisaka

Rewrite: What does it mean to mourn home?

If I remove everything I have known to become something new, how shall I mourn what I once knew? How fast can I unlearn in order to become present again? It is a sacrifice. Leaving home is sacrifice that is an attempt to make adaptable and recognizable. But home shaped me so to a certain extent I carry it with me always. It's forever with me as I become. But when everybody is becoming then it's all an attempt to remain the same or equal to one another. Mourning home is a sacrifice but a sacrifice that one is willing to give up as long as everyone is giving it up. We are all becoming therefore it's easier and the unlearning is a collaboration.

Rewrite. Becoming

Becoming is active. It connotes a continuous movement; an autopoiesis where there is still wholeness and unity but at the same time, within this union, recreation, reordering or reproduction is taking place and enhancing the whole. It is not drastic like an internal construction site where rubble is being taking out on new trucks but rather it is a constant budding like an organism becoming a finer version of itself, like rock to diamond. Becoming is filled with uncertainty and anxiety of what the new self holds. Yet, external factors are constantly pushing us to become, to change, to adapt and so we change, and enter into a constant autopoiesis in order to stay the same.

Hyper-Visibility

And then there was I was... noticed. I became filled with doubt. I was at war with home and identity, my once close friends. I became muted when I became identified. Black, tall and black. How could this hyper-visibility simultaneously eradicate my voice? My tongue was amputated, my voice removed from everything that I had previously known. And so I had to unlearn the masks given to me, I had to let go of my self-satisfied position in order to find equilibrium once again. I had to learn how to reckon with the new knowledge of myself that was so brutally slapped on to me by the other. Repeat.

Transgression/what lies in the margin/Loss

The fight is to not be defined which may be considered the margin but the margin may also be its own side. There is no position that is truly comfortable: left, right or "the margin". Each is a place of pain and perpetual discomfort. Why should these sides even exist? We box in subjects and we are made subjects. If every decision made is an unbearable loss then why make the decision at all? Perhaps, not being



seen is the ultimate abandonment and no one wants to be abandoned. We would rather be subjected to someone else's idea of who we are and have the spotlight shone in our faces for two minutes of fame than be abandoned. Then, when we feel as if we have achieved enough applause and gathered enough imposed definitions, we attempt to tilt the tables, blur the lines and transgress but there is a resistance internally and externally. We must die. We must die to live fully. We must encounter a complete rejection in order to transgress and live fully. To be seen for who we are requires courage. To be courageous requires immunity to everything around you and even to yourself; the demons in your mind. This fills me with anxiety because now I have come to love my labels, sides and object-hood. It's safe there. What lies in the margins is a box full of axes, swords, guns and spears ready to amputate me and expose my true nature to the world but I can I handle the pain. Can I transgress? My life would no longer be a set of rules. There would be no tool kit, survival kit, make-up kit and no rulebook. I would be my own. It's a dangerous kind of beautiful.

EVENT II

THE CONVERSATION IN JOBURG



THAT IS NOT ME
Sanyu Kiyimba-Kisaka

"A cell maintains its identity and distinctiveness even though it incorporates at least 109 different constitutive molecules during its lifespan. This maintenance of unity and wholeness, while the components themselves are being continuously or periodically disassembled and rebuilt, created and decimated, produced and consumed, is called "autopoiesis."

-Milan Zeleny-

"I am not who you think, I am not."

Sitting in the panel for this discussion revealed many things to me but I'll speak of three. It revealed that 1. People need answers, 2. Art is war and 3. Our joy may be someone else's point of anxiety.

Sitting on the panel made me extremely aware of the fact that people will always try to fix me in boxes and in definitions in order to understand me for themselves. Yes, I am a playwright, but I wouldn't call myself that. I prefer to be seen as someone who 'does things'. However, this sort of phrase makes others anxious. They have nothing to grasp onto when they call you. They feel as though they were falling for lack of definitions for you. People need answers; answers for how to see themselves, other people and the world. A lady in the audience asked me if I faced challenges in my work back home and do I use play writing as a kind of weapon to fight back. I thought to myself, do I only have one weapon? Am I fighting? I struggled in answering her because I did not see my work as a fight but rather as a response. If I align myself with the Fanon's and Toni Morrison's of the world and say yes, "Oppressive language is violence," I haven't fought. I've simply agreed.

I sat on the panel and struggled with the phrases hyper-visibility and artist-activist. I just didn't see myself that way. I love to make art. Yes my work speaks, that's what art does, naturally, it speaks. Regardless of if I am there or not. I squeezed my fingers together and hoped Awuor on my left wouldn't notice how nervous I was. We, in that theater, on that panel, were being named, becoming hyper-visible and because we were shrouded in the arms of the School of Anxiety our responses were cordial and immunized. All these terms came back. In the midst of the applause I became numb. Is this where I should be? Is this how I want to be seen? I decided to ignore the inner turmoil and instead draw energy from my fellow classmates.



SOMETHING ABOUT THE CONVERSATION IN JOHANNESBURG

Nyakallo Maleke

My mind is stubborn when it tries to remember,
It's a black out...

[Delay]:

I recall our email conversations, but all of them were friendly. A pdf here, a pdf here and there would often be several more to follow in a chain of conversations. Some of them would be distributed across new conversations... to conclude, I think that the total number of emails was 25.

[Delay]:

[1, 2, 3]... I also remember a Google Word document... [1, 2, 3] With statements and gaps in between for images and links. We spoke through compiling and listing, reading and signing, rehearsal and sometimes...

[Sometimes]:
Sometimes...

My mind is stubborn when it tries to remember,
Chinese food: The dumplings that Sanyu ordered, Awuor's miso soup. I can't recall what I had. It was a rice and chicken dish. However, I do recall our sudden craving for Asian food during one night. We had arrived to our regular spot... I think we had just returned from... [Pause] ... fuck!?!... I just forgot Johannesburg. I've been away for too long!

[Black out]:
[Again]... [1, 2, 3]

I remember our conversation where we were shaken by the sudden appearance of the black workers at night. We were shaken by our inability to ever recall seeing them there when we went there during lunch. Correction, we never saw them during the day.

Why now? Why were their bodies being revealed to us when it was time to close up?
The usual role, clean up after the "baas".

[Black out]:

...we boycotted this restaurant and found a new obsession in a fast food shop just a few blocks from where we stayed...

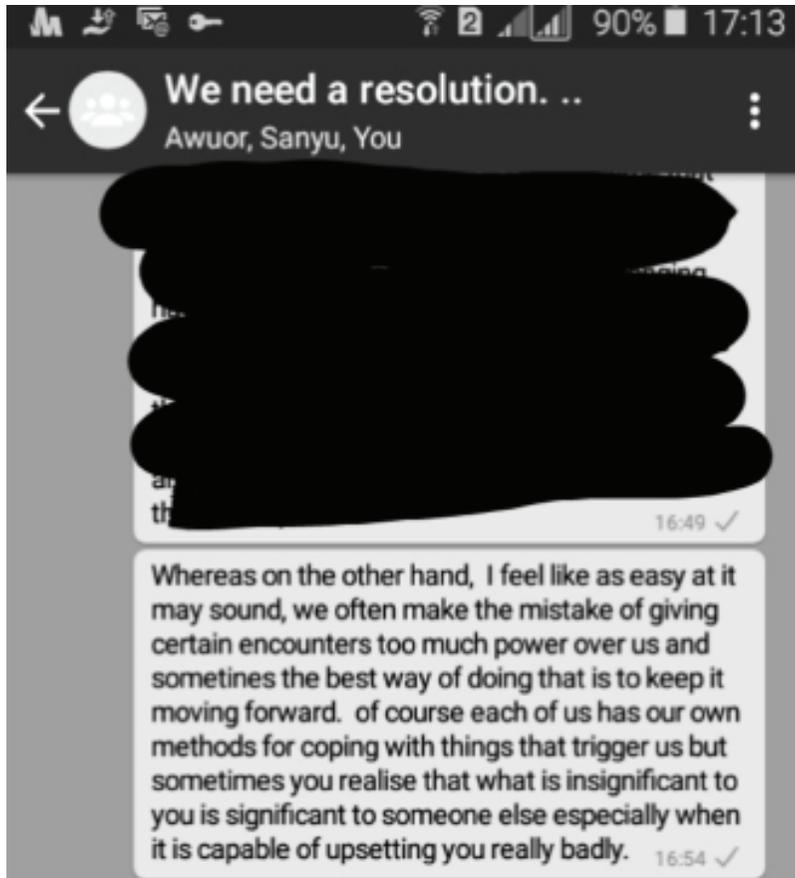
[Delay]:

I don't know, sometimes, my mind is stubborn when it tries to remember.

[Pause]

[End]





EVENT III CONCLUSION OF JOBURG



GIRL
(AFTER JAMAICA KINCAID)
Nyakallo Maleke

This is how you engage anxiety; pack it all in a brown bag sis and throw it away; throw it all away; be prepared to meet people, different people and, know that you will most likely be having dinner with them and drink rosé; order something neutral, vegetarian. Make the compromises, you have to put your pride aside. Know that you will discuss; know that you will need to reflect; this is how conversations are conducted; you will need to listen a lot; don't wallow in your insecurities; this is not how you behave; you will move around, a lot. Know that you will need to contribute some money, and sometimes not. Make the compromises, you have to put your pride aside. Sit in the middle, maybe to the side. Rehearse in your head, rehearse your gestures, don't laugh too loud and don't gulp down your drink too fast; don't eat too little and DON'T EAT TOO MUCH 'PETUNIA!'; Make the compromises, you have to put your pride aside. You know them, they know you; convince yourself to stay calm; be aware; pay attention and listen; you will be put on the spot; made to think on the spot; or speak on the spot; you will have to come out of your shell; Make the compromises, you have to put your pride aside. You will never be used to it regardless of how many times you do this; it's 'maaklik', 'pap n vleis'! Make the compromises, you have to put your pride aside. You will find your feet, you will laugh, they will be patient; they are. Make the compromises, you have to put your pride aside. You always get nervous each time you see people you know; it's just how things go; Smile, you could engage in small talk; be friendly; exchange a casual smile of acknowledgement; you will be inspired; you will be in awe; you will be a little tough on yourself for catching on later; these things never make sense immediately; tell me that you don't want to be that girl who lost out because she was too afraid!



Awuor Onyango

"Creating survival kits as consumable/capitalist goods, as a (consumable) reprieve from the fear of the unknown/mourning of the known. Is it possible to buy our way out of our current/all anxieties? Is it possible to create a survival kit."

Coming into Johannesburg a few days after a historic nullification of an election in Kenya, I was swimming afresh in a naive hope I was intent on finding and telling Trevor Noah that my mum says Hi and anxious about meeting the rest of my co-collaborators for the project. I had met Moses under circumstances I don't quite recall, kept in touch and worked with him on a project previously but knew nothing of anyone else. My naivety was no match for the ghost of racial anxieties that Nairobi's existence was predicated upon and Jozi seemed to be quite virulently battling. I couldn't help but recall the only time I'd ever heard my father curse, when he was warning my sister about the violence of Jozi as she was on her way to study at Wits. My uncle Roc, who had been a professor there, had just passed on and I didn't have any link to the city past him and only the idea in my youth that Jozi must be really bad if someone who lived in Nairobi had to be warned about it. The only place in the continent that I had ever felt so blatantly "black" was in Egypt when people kept asking if I was from Africa while I thought I had landed on the continent. Jozi had its number of shocks, one was that I was clearly Venda. Though I had the habit of disappearing into whichever African country I visited I had thought it would be impossible in South Africa but clearly I was wrong. My ability to phenotypically slide into the culture of a country aside, another thing I was not prepared to deal with is the whiteness of the art scene. Perhaps I had been disproportionately naive in this sense because even in Nairobi the experts on African art always seem to be white, along with the practitioners of contemporary art. However, walking past two or three ubers that had been piled on top of each other and set on fire (I naively thought this was an art installation but it turned out to be a doing of metre cab drivers protesting Uber) to get to the art fair and then seeing Esther Mahlangu paraded beside a BMW 7 series that she had painted on a carpet and behind velvet rope like some modern day Saartjie Baartman surrounded by white people I couldn't help but wonder if I didn't have what it takes to exist in the space. I had questions, perhaps especially about the framing of Esther Mahlangu and her work and the white people with champagne glasses smiling and observing her as she smiled back in her traditional Ndebele clothing. Was this wrong or was I imagining it and was it even my place to say or ask anything? Was I reading too much into something that was purely coincidence? I remember talking to Sanyu about it, just to confirm that perhaps I wasn't being too sensitive about it and how

odd and zoo like it felt. There is always, at least for me, a tension in the artist being present. Perhaps due to my social anxieties I've never made peace with or understood having to perform presence, perhaps because my father instilled in me the idea of making work that speaks for itself and to most importantly not interrupt it, perhaps because in my experiences in Kenya buyers usually want to speak to the artist in order to underpay them or feel justified that their coin is helping a struggling someone pursue their passion, perhaps because asking to see the manager is a function of whiteness and class and no one ever asks to see the car designer or the script writer (in my experience at least). There is a power dynamic involved in having to present the artist along with their work that has never quite sat well with me, the classed performance that it usually necessitates. Before we left for the Art Fair, armed with our VIP status and unsure of what we would come to see (I say we to mean Sanyu and I, Nyakallo immediately found her people and disappeared on us), Nyakallo had to call me to intervene on how Sanyu was dressed, touching on the kind of performance the fair would require of us. Thinking back it was quite hilarious that we thought our VIP status would grant us any kind of reprieve from the strata that were in place, starting from being ignored by a curator who didn't seem to remember any of us in this context that they had found themselves in (but could remember Moses), to being unable to afford an Art book that Nyakallo had been featured in and having the book monger pretty much imply this from the beginning of our interaction (Why are Art books that expensive?) to the point where upon introduction to another curator, Nyakallo overheard them loudly ask if she was important enough to remember/know. Being perhaps too optimistic for my own good I decided to focus on the fact that I got to see a piece by Dumile Feni by my own four eyes, making a map of the event to cater to the art heaux fangirl life, seeing Zanele's work, Mary Sibande, Yinka Shonibare, things I see online in Nairobi but would've never seen with my own four eyes, trying to forget the parallel that was seemingly clear to me between Esther Mahlangu and Saartjie Baartman.

As if the racial anxiety of that moment had been simple forbearing, our panel discussion came right after Dr. Zoe Whitley's discussion with Penny Siopsis, Sue Williamson and Mmakgabo Mapula Helen Sebidi. I had happened to overhear Dr. Zoe ask Mma Helen how to pronounce her name and watched with interest as Mma Helen's face fell upon her introduction to the audience. The panel discussion ended on quite a sour note when someone from the audience pointed out the racialized difference between how Penny Siopsis and Sue Williamson had been treated and that of Mma Helen and so naturally when we got on stage to discuss the School of Anxiety and do our readings and opened the floor to questions it seemed only natural that we were asked to solve South Africa's race issue. Getting on stage after that comment on

the racialized exploration of the artist's work, it seemed to me that the audience had been split along race lines, though I could've imagined this or this had been the case but unclear to me since I was previously part of the audience.

Speaking on anxieties in non-medical terms seemed to only heighten the anxiety in the room and make space for them to be addressed. An audience member asked why it is that black people are not allowed to assign themselves fear, to be scared, even when most violences are meted on our bodies and psychologies from white people yet it is more accepted of white people to fear black bodies than the other way around. As she asked this (her name is Milisuthando and we ended up having a conversation about it after) someone from the white section of the audience shouted "Get over it." and I was all but ready to exercise my privilege of checking into my flight back home.

As I struggle to understand the panel, which for me was supposed to be about reduction and the way in which reduced narratives are a form of violence, erase the complications of being, erase people's suffering by reducing it to "only those who died suffered enough to be memorialized" etc., I struggle to understand my space in writing about Jozi, perhaps I am too sensitive to strangers driving narratives that aren't theirs to navigate.

CAUGHT IN LIMBO

Sanyu Kiyimba-Kisaka

"I was responsible at the same time for my body, for my race, for my ancestors. I subjected myself to an objective examination, I discovered my blackness, my ethnic characteristics; and I was battered down by tom-toms, cannibalism, intellectual deficiency, fetishism, racial defects, slave-ships, and above all else, above all: 'Sho' good eatin'."

-Frantz Fanon-

Awuor and I sat at a restaurant in OR Tambo International Airport at 6am and recalled the anxiety filled days we had spent together. Not that we had been anxious the entire time but as the nature of the school would have it, the conversation revolved around anxiety. We chatted about Nairobi, Kigali and Kampala in comparison to Jo'burg as if these were cities that knew us by name. It became clear that the School of Anxiety would need to happen again, if only for us to meet once more. I waved and hugged her goodbye.

I missed my flight.

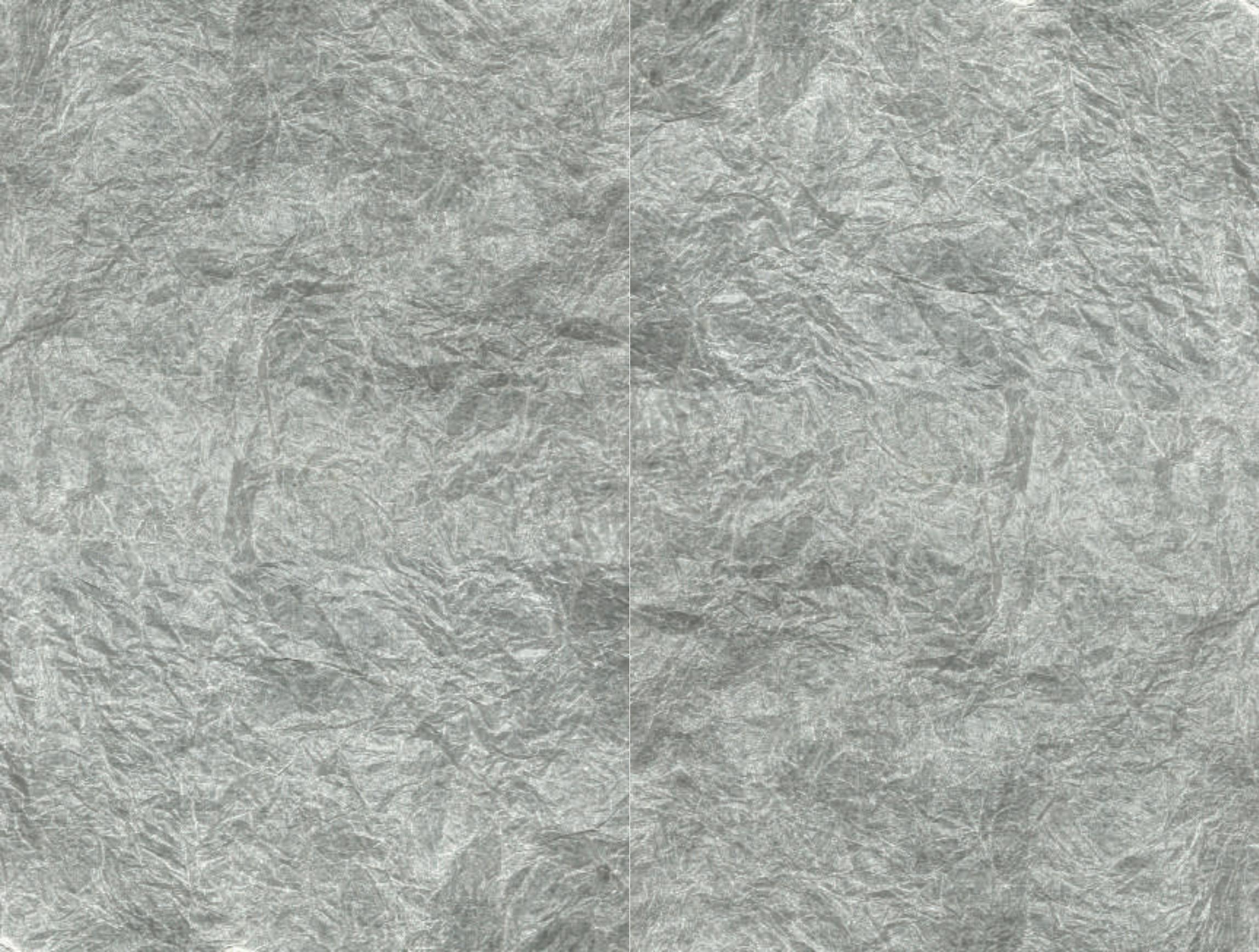
Airports have the ability of making one strangely aware of themselves and who they are. Are you a smoker or non-smoker? Disabled or abled? First class or ordinary? Black or white? With child or without child? With luggage or without luggage? Young or old? Traveler or worker? As soon as you enter the airport, your brain shuffles lists and places you into categories that automatically dictate where you sit, what you eat or where you eat, how you stand or who you talk to. We're inclined to think that this is unoppressive because it keeps the order. But when you're lost or all you need is a flight home, an upgrade to first class or a couch to lie on after the long flight while in layover these categories become a battering to the soul. You're caught in limbo. You cannot transgress because you never expected yourself to be here in the first place.

There, in a airstrip facing restaurant, I subjected myself to an objective examination. The waiter approached and asked, "Are you an American?" I laughed and shook my head, no. His eyes became wide and his voice loud, "Really! You look like an American. Tall. Nice hair. The accent. Little luggage. Where you from?"

"Uganda" I said as I placed my passport beside me. He was charming.

As he examined me, I discovered what kind of black I was and the characteristics the world saw in me. American. I chuckled. I wondered what Ugandans looked like. There, in that restaurant, I became aware of myself among others. Airports have a strange way of doing that to you if you stay in them long enough.





**EVENT IV
IN BETWEEN JOBURG
AND NAIROBI**

SUMMARISING ANXIETY
Nyakallo Maleke

November 2017						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
			x	x	x	x
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
x	x	x	x	x	x	x
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
x	x	x	x	x	x	x
29	30	31				
x	x	x				

January 2018							
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
25	26	27	28	29	30	31	
x	x	x	x	x	x	x	

December 2017						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
x	x	x	x	x	x	x
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
x	x	x	x	x	x	x
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
x	x	x	x	x	x	x
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
x	x	x	x	x	x	x
29	30	31				
x	x	x				

February 2018						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
x	x	x	x	x	x	x
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
x	x	x	x	x	x	x
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
x						
22	23	24	25	26	27	28

MOVING ON

Sanyu Kiyimba-Kisaka

*"The body is the boundary,
To transgress I must move past boundaries."*

-bell hooks-

Sometimes, to get over anxiety, one has to get past themselves. That in itself is an anxiety-filled feat. However, anxiety is always there. Every hurdle has its own set of demons to deal with so why not face them head on. It presents itself in worries and unanswerable questions that circulate the mind. Silence is the weapon that anxiety uses to trap and scare but if only we could just speak. If only we were more vocal about the anxieties. You may realize that the only thing standing between you and your perceived ideal destination is not anxiety but just... you.

So I spoke.

Email.

WhatsApp.

More WhatsApp.

How could we avoid the class discussions becoming part of our personal anxieties.

Email.

WhatsApp.

More WhatsApp.

How do you deal with someone who is not ready to face their own anxieties, their own boundaries?

WhatsApp.

More WhatsApp.

Nairobi had never been a city that, I felt, welcomed me. It used every opportunity to show me that I was a foreigner and I could be robbed clean or killed at any moment. It's pace was fast. It's struggle unique. What would it mean for me to perform the struggles of the city in the city? What happens when you transgress a boundary and enter another? You're a foreigner searching for your voice in that space. The struggle continues. New territory but same struggle. You keep on.

My brother waved me off on that 45 minute flight to Nairobi from Entebbe and I felt like I was taking a 16-hour flight to JFK New York. But I had to go. We had to transgress. We had to perform.

**EVENT V
DAY 1 NAIROBI**



Awuor Onyango

I could've stayed at home where my bed was used to my body and my body my bed. The SoA apartment in Nairobi was literally a block from my parent's house, the bed was uncomfortable there, there was a 4th bedroom that we called the slave quarters because how was someone supposed to sleep in such a place, far away from everyone and with access to the kitchen and a door of it's own to the outside. A room for castaways, for the unwanted, a room neither of us wanted to sleep in. I should've stayed at home and walked to the house every morning, but I had never really worked and been at home at the same time. I didn't trust my body to know that skyping in an hour late instead of getting up and working wasn't a good work ethic. I was also tired of home, so I packed my bags and told my mum I would see her when the week is over, made up some kind of excuse for why I had to go and got in a cab because dragging my suitcase up the hill would be a tell of how close the project house was, only to find that it was across the street from my big sister's house.

We sat at Kengeles, Sanyu was somewhat freezing and Nyakallo had leaned all the way back on her chair in that way that stated that she had disengaged. We were well into what was somehow supposed to be an insightful interview with a journalist/writer about the political anxieties of Kenya at the moment. Moses kept repeating that Isaac always blurred the truth with fiction, Isaac knew the guy who was the architect of the military state we now found ourselves in, Moses and Isaac discussed distrusting people who were close to power, chuckled about a friend of theirs who could get a certain president on the phone. I tried to hide the fact that I knew who they were talking about, that I was drawing parallels to Isaac's proximity to the mysterious architect of Kenya's problems with his opinion on people who are close to power but do not stand up against its misuse. I distracted myself with fries and guacamole, with trying to look around in the darkening bar as the "interview" revealed itself to be a catch up between two men who hadn't seen each other in a long time.

I understood, as did Sanyu and Nyakallo perhaps at that very moment that we were on the sidelines, cheerleaders to whatever this was, props to a reunion we couldn't take part in.



The body took its time. Somewhere beneath blazing disco beats, high spirits, and steaming chicken wings the body became numb amongst other bodies. Once in a while East African rhythms and phrases from the vibrant conversation happening between the two men on the ruling political families in Kenya, Uganda and Rwanda pranced by the margins of the mind and exited out back. The body took its time and I allowed it.

EVENT VI: FOOD ANXIETY



**DID YOU KNOW THAT ONE OF THE GREATEST FULFILMENTS IN LIFE IS TO
TAKE A DECISION ON WHAT IT IS THAT YOU WANT TO EAT?**

Nyakallo Maleke

The characteristics of a divine broth is: attitude, sweat, fire and vanity. There are no options that exist outside of wild taxi rides that are like noisy reformed rollercoasters or a chaining escape from a noisy dream. We need diversity; we need to decipher it from unreal fibres, to peel it from disabling poisons, to fry it from cute comfort foods and to boil from efficient depression; and milk it from scary disappointments.

Awuor Onyango

I'm already terrible with food as it is.

I am flexi-vegan, pescetarian... pesce-vegan? Presbyterian is the family joke, what a fancy little presbyterian we have, doesn't eat meat in a country that prides itself on burning cows on grills. A presbyterian.

Not by choice... Well mostly not by choice.

I am allergic to eggs, to lactose, I dislike the texture of most meats but for turkey and fish. I do not believe in the existence of broccoli and cauliflower and if the red or green peppers are not an integral part of the dish, if you expect me to eat them like one would do tomatoes, I won't. I love cheese and I love icecream and I suffer each time I eat them because that's how lactose intolerance works.

There is no telling when I will eat, when I will be hungry, what it is that my soul will crave. What I can tell you is that I will be starving and decline a meal because that's not what my body wants. I listen to my body, Njoki once told me that all that meant was that I am an intuitive eater and that it's ok. I've been trying to come to terms with that.

What I haven't been prepared for is the anxiety of food budgets that are not up for discussion and the idea that one must know a week in advance what it is they want to eat, that the whimsy and delight of when to eat what is taken away so arbitrarily in my home city, which apparently is more expensive than New York when it comes to food.

Before we've even tried to go out for food, to the dives that I love, to the terrific Tuesday pizza deals and the roadside fish joints and fruit juice and fruit salad bars, before we go to the cheap Chinese restaurant or the Ethiopian or Eritrean one or the rather pricey Ghanaian one, before I could unveil my grand plan for the culinary ex. [sic]



THIS KNIFE IS TOO BLUNT TO CUT TOMATOES

Sanyu Kiyimba-Kisaka

- A: We need get some groceries.
 B: Um, we just did a whole weeks shopping yesterday.
 A: This stuff is for a week?
 C: We got some plums, some tomatoes, there's brown rice.
 A: You expect this bread to last a week. It's definitely getting done tomorrow.
 B: Well we should try not to spend so much.
 D: Is our budget less than last time?
 B: Um... No, I just don't think... I'll have to look at the figures and check.
 D: Gee, food anxieties now?
 A: I know right. We have to spend the whole morning talking about anxieties and our stomachs will suffer as well.
 C: I don't know about you guys, but I need food to think.
 A: You and I both. I guess we'll cross that bridge when we get there.

Time Lapse

- B: Alright, we have 200 shillings to get everything we need.
 A: Some oats, some flour and oil, juice, breakfast items, more bread.
 B: Guys, this is going way over budget.
 A: Well if it is, then just take it from my fee. I don't want to starve in Nairobi.
 B: No, I'm just saying...
 C: What are you saying?
 B: This stuff has to last.
 A: Ok...What is the budget anyway?
 D: Let just pay and head home.
 A: Could you pay, I'll pay for the cab to the apartment.
 D: Ok.

Time Lapse.

Repeat.

Repeat.

Pizza! Yay!

EVENT VII

PLANNING CHEBOMUREN



CHEBOMUREN: "a woman with the 'unbwogable' spirit of a man"
Nyakallo Maleke



(We Crave Role Models)

The politics aligned you with men,
Typically so, because all conversations were led by them;
That 'Kalenjin girl'
Was even named as one of their seven bearded brothers.
That 'Kalenjin girl'
Shocked the masses, and you were the only one at the time,
That 'Kalenjin girl'
Contributed towards conversations about multi-partyism.
That 'Kalenjin girl'
Was a student activist;
That 'Kalenjin girl'
Unsettled Kenyatta's governance.
That 'Kalenjin girl'
Was a thorn to Moi, too;
That 'Kalenjin girl'
Was jailed for leading land occupations
But still,
That "Kalenjin girl's"
Presence was unwanted.
You were tucked away, slowly succumbing to old age and ill health
That "Kalenjin girl"
Wanted Freedom
That Kalejin girl is,
Freedom



Awuor Onyango

"There is and will be more seductive, mutant language designed to throttle women, to pack their throats like paté-producing geese with their own unsayable, transgressive words; there will be more of the language of surveillance disguised as research; of politics and history calculated to render the suffering of millions mute; language glamorized to thrill the dissatisfied and bereft into assaulting their neighbors; arrogant pseudo-empirical language crafted to lock creative people into cages of inferiority and hopelessness.

But who does not know of literature banned because it is interrogative; discredited because it is critical; erased because alternate? And how many are outraged by the thought of a self-ravaged tongue?

We die. That may be the meaning of life. But we do language. That may be the measure of our lives."

-Toni Morrison-

Reflecting on SoA Nairobi brings to mind that time at the Chinese/Pan-Asian place in Jozi when I looked up from my thoughts to find Moses curled up in the foetal position and pointed this out to him and asked rather intrusively if he was alright. It brings to mind conversations we had over breakfast that seemed slightly off colour and some conversations that revealed his anxieties around the school, the project, curating, family dynamics and the idea of home. Nairobi, perhaps because I have lived here for most of my life, is not a city that panders to anyone's anxieties. Born of a stopover, a transit station when the white settlers were on their way to the highlands or islands or the original capital city of Kenya, Machakos, Nairobi has no time for anyone and even less for their fragilities. Perhaps speaking as someone born and somewhat raised in Nairobi, I am more familiar with the way in which it refuses to fit into your perception of it. Nairobi's only constant is its transience, its gaseous state and the way in which any attempt to plant yourself into its soil fails miserably.

It's with knowledge of the absurdism of implanting ourselves in the narrative of Nairobi that I walked to Freedom Corner. The 16 women we attempted to honour at our performance at Freedom Corner had been erased by this same gaseous state of Nairobi, in narratives untold and forgotten, sidelined, out of reach and therefore out of use. Michelle Wallace, in *Black Macho*, says that history as it is told by men only has enough space for one prominent woman at a time. This is how Freedom Corner came

to be, the prominent woman chosen was Wangari Maathai, the sixteen women who agitated and organized and came together surviving torture, death threats, state violence, those women were too many for Nairobi's patriarchs to historicize.

Our performance was meant to be a gesture of recognition, from the invisible to the erased. It turned out to be a defiance of our own making, struggling to gesture to the erased sixteen women who camped at Freedom Corner through the tight grip of a curator who wanted to know what was best for our safety in a city where we were already invisible due to our hypervisibility.

*"To be seen and not known is the ultimate abandonment
To tell the truth is to transgress."*

-bell hooks-



MEET ME IN THE MIDDLE

Sanyu Kiyimba-Kisaka

"Agree not merely to the right to difference but, carrying this further, agree also to the right to opacity that is not enclosure within an impenetrable autarchy but subsistence within an irreducible singularity. Opacities can coexist and converge, weaving fabrics."

-Glissant-

I'm sorry, I beg to differ with you Glissant but in this particular instance in Nairobi, our opacities failed to coexist or converge. The difference was the issue. The unknown space between what we want to do and how we were going to do it.

Dear Glissant, tell me how to weave Chebomuren when the only thread I have is anxiety about the weaving process. Tell me how to weave Chebomuren when those that desire it won't even wear it. Tell me Glissant, how to weave Chebomuren in two days. Tell me which song I should play. Tell me that I'll prick my fingers and bleed in the process and I'll have to keep going. Tell me that sometimes I'll work alone and shut my eyes as the tapestry drops to the floor. Tell me I'll lie in a bed with my fellow weavers and hide from the horrors of Chebomuren. Glissant, coexisting is hard.

"For days, my body has been collecting water but I still won't cry."

-Jamaica Kincaid-

During the night, my heart left my body and jumped out the window. I woke up. Because I had no heart, I floated about. Things simply got done. Boarded a taxi. Arrived in town. Bought some thread and gloves. Used a bathroom at a restaurant. Went to the park. Chebomuren.

The body automatically searches for its heart. And in the grass there at Chebomuren I searched for my heart. Yet with every interruption, every disapproving glance of my audience I sensed my heart skip further away. But I kept on, and on, weeding, throwing, catching, running and on till it was over. Then my heart came back. Given back to me with a flimsy applause and unapologetic disapproval of Chebomuren. My poor heart: so small after the torture, it almost didn't fit back in place.

Poor Chebomuren. Poor heart.



**EVENT VIII:
CONCLUSION OF NAIROBI**

PERSISTENTLY UNDOING: CONCLUDING OF NAIROBI
Nyakallo Maleke

Pinpointing an appropriate phrase for the good times that have gone is a bit difficult for me at this moment simply because a lot of opportunities have availed themselves and, the School of Anxiety—being one of them, will have likely reached its conclusion by the time that you read this. In addition to this, there is a feeling that lays deep within my gut and it is desperately waiting to be released but again, I am not entirely sure of how to share it because of several reasons. There are multiple terms and concepts that form part of our glossary that requires a consistent awareness just in terms of how a society is organised or impacted. Secondly, the dual geopolitical dialogues that were taking place during 2017 and 2018 within the ‘school’ are also an important factor in this discussion.

Anxiety, whether it is social, intellectual, familial, political and historical namely; whether shared or, is geographically specific, depending on the context at which we read them, are some of the important genealogies to consider, in how they are implicated in the organisation of a nation, of an ethnic group, or demographic. It is implicated where there is a removal or defiance, where there is alienation or discomfort, alternatively, in what Glissant defines as diverse ‘humanities’,¹ whose lives are at stake. Of course this list is not this condensed, the effects of these factors manifest themselves in a myriad of ways, as they continue to translate, accumulate value and articulate themselves over time in different contexts.

Our research workshop in Nairobi, Kenya consisted of a deep engagement with the concept of death and mourning. Through a range of texts such as Edwidge Danticat’s *The Art of Death: Writing the Final Story* (2017) and Jacques Derrida’s *The Work of Mourning* (2001), ‘dying’ became a major theme for mapping. It is also necessary to mention that the act of dying didn’t just signal an end but that it’s meaning implied

¹Edouard Glissant in conversation with Manthia Diawara speaks about humanity in its plural form to think about the diversity that is inherent within each human within the context of African and the African Diaspora that was most present during the Transatlantic slave trade and also within context to the Caribbean. He says “Now, the philosophy of Relation is the voyage, not the concept — it’s the voyage in which, from intuition of the world to intuition of the world, we try to see how humanities transform themselves — I say “humanities,” never “humanity.” So there’s Relation, which is the moment of contact, and there’s the moment of evolution and transformation, which is philosophy.” pg.15

Glissant E. Diawara M. Wick C. *Manthia Diawara in Conversation with Edouard Glissant. Nka: Journal of Contemporary African Art.* Number 28, 2011. pp. 4-19. (Article)



some kind of transition; a continuity. We took into consideration the historical context of the country and the city, post-independence.

In order to shape the conversation for this session, it was important for us to understand why and how present day Kenya, organizes itself within the recent establishment of a Para-government; a Kenyatta legacy versus a government led by Raila Odinga. In January 2018, Odinga had a presidential inauguration after it was reported that the August 2017 elections were manipulated. Kenyatta won the re-run elections in October 2017, which the courts had ordered. It was significant for us to recognize the impact of a Gikuyu Supremacy on the traditional and social mapping of Kenya, and arguably, an underlying conversation related to particular intellectuals and how their leadership has influenced social, political and power dynamics. Bear in mind, this is not an anti-intellectual stance that I am speaking from rather a series of observations, which implicates these intellectuals in 'isolated' decisions that may or may have not been promising for the equal benefit and recognition of the masses and as a whole, the land of Kenya.

Our journey entailed a series of inquiries, into the presence of women and in particular, the mothers and, how their influence in the struggle, for instance a naked protest and hunger strike, had become a realistic and symbolic factor that guided conversations that pertained to multipartyism, reconciliation, memorials and land amongst some of the ideas in Kenya. All of these gestures implied the depths at which Kenyans were willing to go through for the sake of their country.

The concluding of Nairobi, was amongst some of the greatest commitments that I have made. Having gone through an overdue process of deracination, as Keguro Macharia talks about in his text *On Quitting*, this idea, alludes to acts of 'being uprooted—to be loosened, to be unmoored' [Macharia 2013:3]. I looked to Nairobi for refuge, to temporarily restore my sense of self. But as I reread Macharia, I am quickly reminded when he rearticulates deracination as a 'persistent undoing' [Macharia 2013:4].

That in this deep engagement, I couldn't impose my own anxieties onto a country that is stubbornly renegotiating in its own political friction. After all, it had welcomed me and that was enough. It would have been selfish of me to do so, even though I was struggling to put the pieces together again regarding my own life at the time. More so, through further discussions, I'm realising that it was revolutionary, femal bodies

who were the ones that were explicitly uprooting the persistent regimes of Jomo Kenyatta, Daniel Arap Moi and Uhuru Kenyatta. That through intensive effort of the pressure groups of the 90s, a struggle truly does not go unheard when it is in a collective. This narrative reiterated itself during our performance as gentle and caring as we were. We'd concluded our performance at Freedom Corner, a site for the 1992 women's protest against the political imprisonment of their sons. Sanyu, Awuor and I were relieved post performance, as we walked away from the site to the rest of the park. Despite the subtle attention, fear and motivation that we had experienced prior the event and during, it was necessary for us to continue to be persistent in our actions. To be defiantly persistent when we were told to 'hurry up'; to be persistent when we pulled out those weeds; to be persistent when we threw that yarn to re-enact a chain. To continue to be persistent even when we had familiar and unfamiliar faces watching us intermittently.

We proceeded to go on a small peddle boat ride on the lake with our videographer, Malcolm. As we circled the river, our nerves 'loosened' with each cycling gesture that we made on the peddling boat. All I could hear echoing in my mind as we peddled, was the word, 'Persist'.

Glissant, E. Diawara, M. Wicks, C. *Manthia Diawara in Conversation with Edouard Glissant*. *Nka: Journal of Contemporary African Art*, Number 28, 2011. pp. 4-19. (Article). Date Accessed: 2/5/2018

Macharia, K (2013) *On Quitting*, [pp.1-11] <https://getpocket.com/a/read/1707742454> Date accessed: 9/3/2017



Awuor Onyango

'[People] [...] hold onto their theories until [...] failures [...] convince them to accept new paradigms'

We watched *Black Panther* after the performance, bought ourselves tickets to the premiere and went to the IMAX, needing some distance from it all. I was 3000% excited about the movie, a friend of mine had coloured a scene, I'd read the comics instead of law cases when I was in law school and some time in 2015 there had been whispers on tumblr that this film was being made. I had followed its progress from casting news to teasers to T'Challa's first appearance in *Winter Soldier*. I however think I got away with making the experience super casual and seem like a complete coincidence to Sanyu and Nyakallo. We needed the cool anyway after the tensions of the performance, and the distance to gather or lose ourselves before we had to talk about SoA Nairobi and the perils of it. What we didn't know at the time is that we wouldn't talk about it, wouldn't conclude on it, would be pushed into silences and guilts and confusions.

There would be an attempt to look at German something or the other in preparation for SoA Berlin, this attempt would seem to come from centre-left, couched in ideas about what good work is and who gets to see good work and who doesn't, sprinkled with pressures none of us were ready to bare. We will look at each other in confusion, whisper questions to each other "Do you see this?" "How do we ask?" "Is someone going to ask?" We will grow closer during the confusion, collaborate, negotiate and move as one, we will be cast aside for this union/unity and then we will be sort out again to try and bring together some kind of resolution to the standoff.

DUMPLINGS AND UBER'S
(Response to *The Art of Death* by Edwidge Danticat)

Sanyu Kiyimba-Kisaka

I mentioned in the beginning that this is a quest to finding a conclusion to a story of many beginnings and many middles. Conclusions show you what you've done. They highlight where you have come from and the possible alternatives for the future. I sneaked out of Nairobi at 4am with Nyakallo that morning.

Conclusions are best shared with others. The discourse is part of the finality of the event. It's a way of letting go or even letting in. It's a way of feeling. Conclusions bring closure. I waited for a conclusion like a student waits expectantly for their parents to pick them up at the bus stop but they never show.

Conclusions are expected to things that are started. Even life. Sometimes we delay announcing that something is dead just to keep it alive a little longer in our minds. Perhaps that's why there was silence after Chebomuren. Perhaps that is why the day sieved through our fingers and vanished with the wind. Perhaps, all we did was keep Chebomuren alive in our minds.

I waited for my flight in a coffee shop at the airport with my journal ready at hand. A single page was all it took to make sense of my losses: a page for my conclusion and ending. I read the entry over and did not think it would suffice the ten-day trip I had just had but neither did I have any more words to write. That was all. It was over.

Conclusion are not meant to feel like the wind. There are supposed to feel final, like a coffin nailed shut. Tangible. Memorable. Complete.

In short, there was no conclusion to Nairobi. I snuck out like thief in the night as if I had left something undone or broken. Maybe I had.



**EVENT IX:
WHAT NOW BERLIN?**

THE WALLS OF BERLIN

Sanyu Kiyimba-Kisaka

Behind the walls of WhatsApp, Skype and Gmail we are all safe.
Everything is polite.
Every word is rosy.
Every response is censored.

Time is stretched behind these walls.
Responses delayed behind these walls.
Reactions are hidden behind these walls.
Thoughts are safe behind these walls.

Hearts are battered
Expectations are shattered
Voices stammer
Behind these walls

Walls are built behind these walls
With only enough space for memories to cruise in-between
Ladders are built behind these walls
Only to peep over and see Berlin.



RIDDLES (A list of resolutions)
Nyakallo Maleke

What?	Question	lost	undirected	
Question	Clarity	undirected	mission	
Repeat	Do over	#shook	goal	
Ok	Ok	speechless	win	
Confusion	Lost	unspoken	success	
Temporary	Expiry date	hidden	approved	
Now?	Immediately	Ok!	Progress	
Immediately?	Ok	Progress	transformation	
Today?	What time?	Levels	undoing	
When	Where?	Grading	mistakes	
Ok	Thumbs up	A+	trial and error	
So?	Ok!			
Berlin?	A Place?	Advanced	chicken	regenerate
A place?	Quarantined	Higher grade	liver	reboot
A vibe?	Secured	Chicken	regenerates	cleansed
A resolution	Anti-virus	Free range	#popping	rebirth
Maybe?	Technological	Above board	grilled onions	Erykah Badu
#Popping	Advanced	Legal	sauté a	higher being
Forward!	Wakanda	representation	statement	
Wakanda	representation	statement	pride	
Closure	Myth	legends	highly regarded	
Myth	Legends	highly regarded	priorities	
Rejection	Folklore	royalty	responsibility	
Uncommitted	Conversations	system	accountability	
Sour	Feeling things out	institutional	trust	
Distance	testing the waters	structure	mutual	
Split	separation	end	new paragraph	
Separation	end	new paragraph	body	
Shock	finish line	essay	structure	
Rip	tortoise	opinion	argument	
Two parts	shell	optional	concluded	

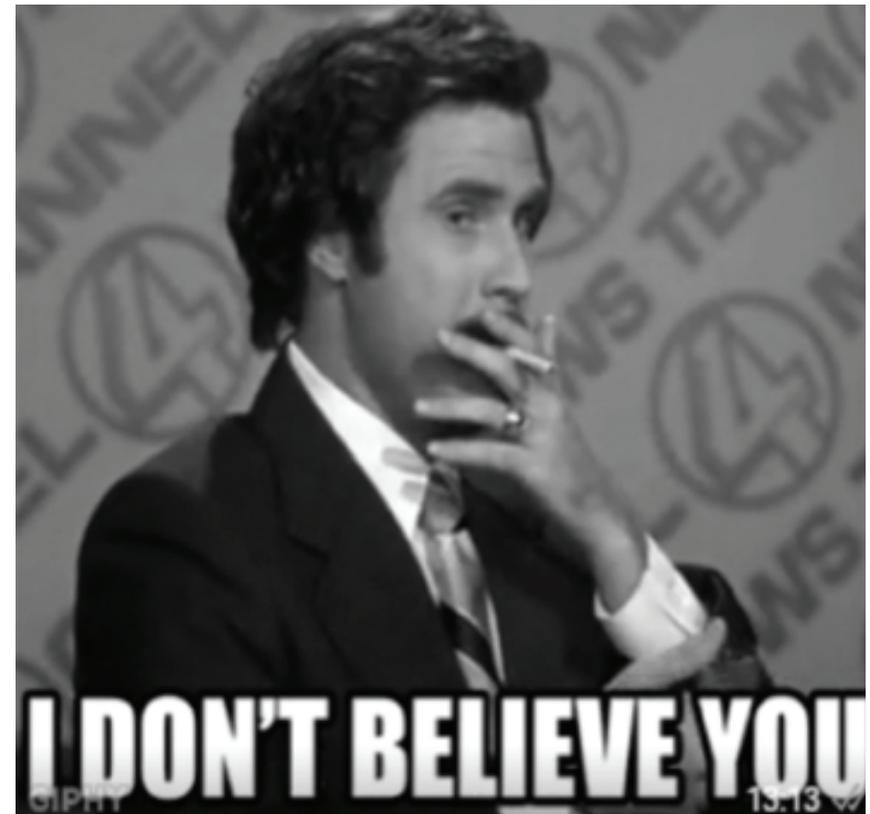
Awuor Onyango

I communicate best through gifs because no other form implies tone, facial expression, body language and context as effectively as 200 stills compressed into a few seconds. Are gifs and memes communist/socialist/anarchist?

Maybe so.

Gifs cannot be classed, cannot be commodified or made exclusive, memes cannot belong to a certain group or denote a certain stature. They don't discriminate between those who know what film or context they stem from and those who looked up the word disbelief and scrolled down to the gif. Gifs can both hold inside jokes held privately between two people and public information accessible to all.

Here is a gif I used during the conversation about Berlin, graduating from the School of Anxiety and what it means to be erased from your own work



**EVENT X:
WAITING**



SoA:
DISAPPEARING ACTS

Serubiri Moses

In 2011, I watched the performance of *Ganga Alula* (*Ganga has escaped*), a traditional Kiganda song, by Albert Ssempeke at the Sheraton Hotel in Kampala. The song stayed with me, and I spent the next years between 2011 and 2013 researching the song's genealogy within the context of the Baganda people and its elaboration of history. After interviewing Ssempeke, I wrote an article in *Start Journal* in which I tried to sketch out the song's meaning. I recognized the poetry within the song and its complex metaphors about a page at the royal palace in Buganda, who narrowly escapes death, with his hands and fingers chopped off. Following this article, I wrote a short essay titled, *Songs of History*, in which I tried to unpack the song's meaning in light of Uganda's Independence history. It would take me until 2014 to properly articulate the song's metaphors during an art symposium in a paper titled, *Modes of Artistic Survival*, organized in conjunction with KLA ART– the Kampala Contemporary Art Festival. In the symposium paper, I played a clip of *Ganga Alula* highlighting the part in which Temutewo Mukasa sings a wordless improvisation over his textured playing of the traditional kiganda harp, Ennanga. I identified this wordless improvisation as an act of criticism, and a strategy for survival. My reading of the song, informed by oral interviews, and Peter Cooke's musicological analysis, detailed the patronage of the artist and the ongoing seismic conditions within which artists lived.

Temutewo Mukasa, a court harpist in Buganda, during the 1940s performed songs that not only "entertained". Though his wordless improvisations were and are still indecipherable, they point towards criticality in the song's performance. This process of opacity exposes power dynamics in light of the artist's patronization, and the song's use of hard hitting images: raw meat, and dilapidated body parts. This reading of



Ganga Alula was informed by my research on 1970s artists in Uganda, who hardly escaped the turn to military dictatorship. Many were murdered or disappeared. Byron Kawadwa, who had written an opera, *Song of Wankoko*, using the metaphor of the cock, to critique the ongoing heedless precedent of Ugandan politics, was murdered shortly after the opera had debuted in Lagos, Nigeria, during the Second Festival of Black Arts in Lagos, Nigeria. Many who did not want to die staged their own disappearance. These political disappearances, as well as subversive disappearance acts, point towards a larger understanding of opacity within history. How does one account for disappearances that may be either enforced or even intentional? What are the loopholes and blind spots? And how can these be better articulated within the scope of a cultural and artistic paradigm?

By initiating a School of Anxiety (SoA), a curatorial pedagogical project within the 10th Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art, I was interested in further articulating these loopholes, and blind spots in the context of subjectivity. What did it mean to think about gaps within consciousness? Here, not only through the symbolic amputations of history, but also within modes of perceiving and knowing others. Owing to the role of colonial education in producing colonial narratives, Ugandan historian J. C. Ssekamwa's *History and Development of Education in Uganda* (Fountain, 1997), which details the history of the first Church Missionary Society (CMS) priests that visited Uganda in 1876, became a central text. What I found appealing was Ssekamwa's explanation for the slight variation of French and British words within Luganda: "The Baganda nicknamed Lourdel 'Mapeera' guavas because he always said 'M'appel' which means in French 'my name is'. You need to know that these first Missionaries did not know Luganda. While they were learning it, they used to mix English or French words in it until they learnt the Luganda language properly." In this analysis I noticed Ssekamwa's conveying of untranslatability: the inevitable loss of vowels, meanings, and consciousness.

Untranslatability points towards theories of communication in cybernetics, which feature concepts such as 'feedback' and 'entropy'. In the first iteration of the project, SoA members, read and experimented with these concepts. We produced 'Anxiety Cards' which annotated words that would be marked as "redundant" within speech, such as "Uuuhhhmmm" – moments in which the mind is said to be breathing, while the mouth and the tongue continue to produce a sound that is either indecipherable or unconnected to a previously uttered statement. Our annotations brought to the fore aspects of anxiety within speech itself, via sonic or linguistic untranslatables. Illegibility resisted ontological definitions of anxiety rooted purely within a psycho-analytic framework. By becoming, we mean a process closer to the coming of age that takes place in the home itself. Here I am describing not only "home education" but the

tensions that arise within the home as a result of the larger currents and conditions of living in the world – this includes state and colonial education. Being that colonial education systems emerged in the 1920s, the conditions under which education developed in Uganda, South Africa, and other parts of the continent, are married with the simultaneous development of the colonial economies. As an education designed to produce a colonial-labor workforce, African colonial education produced a series of anxieties. Becoming, here, was seen not only at the level of growth, but also erasure. The blind spots that occurred within the framework of an African colonial education, were intentional. These blind spots were designed to erase a linguistic consciousness, such that becoming comprised of speaking English or French properly, the “true” mark of the educated. Thus, the violences that took place in the school, only mirrored the anxieties that were experienced at home. While “home education” was not entirely erased by the introduction of British or French colonial education, the seismic conditions under which one forgot their mother tongue were both violent and extraordinary.

Girl, a short story by Jamaica Kincaid, shows a mother instructing her daughter on tasks to be carried out as part of her “home education”: “Wash the white clothes on Monday and put them on the stone heap; wash the color clothes on Tuesday and put them on the clothesline to dry; don’t walk bearhead in the hot sun; cook pumpkin fritters in very hot sweet oil; soak your little cloths right after you take them off; (...) is it true that you sing benna in Sunday school?; always eat your food in such a way that it won’t turn someone else’s stomach; on Sundays try to walk like a lady and not like the slut you are so bent on becoming.” The list of chores, tasks, and rules given with a sense of authoritarianism is aimed at shaping the girl into a lady. This is made evident by the line in which the author quotes “becoming” a slut. These microaggressions exist in the space of home, as a mirror of the larger circumstances and expectations of a colonial education that can only tolerate lady-like behavior and nothing else.

Es’kia Mphahlele’s novel *Down Second Avenue*, shows a similar situation in which the maladies of punishment at school are mirrored with those at home. “Yes, I hated school, and swore to myself I would loathe it to the end of my life. The faces of those pedagogues seemed to tell a story of torture. And they seemed to want to work it off on us with a rod,” Mphahlele writes. When the narrator cuts school while playing in the mountains, both his grandmother and uncle rage against him: “You were not in school today, Eseki, you better not deny.”

In Nairobi, we were drawn to the idea of the Kenyan highlands predominantly because

of the mythology of mountains in Kenya. In one of the foundational texts of the country, *Facing Mt. Kenya*, written by former president Jomo Kenyatta, the Gumba people, are said to have “disappeared into the earth” in circa 15th century in an area bordering present-day Nairobi. This disappearance became a way to examine Kenya’s history. How did the Gumba people disappear? Was their disappearance intentional? Or were they methodically erased from the story? While we searched for answers to these questions, a report came up that showed that the Gumba people did not actually “disappear into the earth” as Kenyatta had written in the 1930s, but rather that they were alive and well in the same Kenyan forest they were said to have inhabited in the 15th century. Despite the evidence, the Gumba have fought the Kenyan government in court, as their identity and claim to the forest, has been systematically erased from the official national narrative.

We then investigated recent political erasures, beginning with the pressure group, Release Political Prisoners. In 1992 as part of this pressure group, Raila Odinga and Wangari Maathai, protested the arrest of political prisoners in Uhuru Park, in a key event historicized as the Freedom Corner protest, originally organized by a group of Kenyan women. In response, SoA members created a performance in Freedom Corner, Uhuru Park that re-enacted the planting of trees, and caring for the site, as a gesture of resistance against political erasure.

Returning to the wordless improvisations of Temutewo Mukasa, or that artists staged their own disappearances in 1970s Uganda to survive political murder, I am made aware of the anxieties that plague both institutions and the space of home. In both these spaces, subjectivity is constructed, and categories alongside criteria are designed for the making of future identities. Could opacities such as the illegibility of Mukasa’s improvisations, or the untranslatability of the Luganda language within missionary schools be an autopoietic resource for overcoming subjective anxieties?

POEM: ON DEATH AND LOVE

Serubiri Moses

After Jak Katarikawe, Portia Zvavahera and Nongqawuse

lines cascade like rain —
is it raining?
they are three —
 Siblings; or lovers; or three-some
sat down on all fours —
in the tall tall grasses of Rwanda

How hard to see cow as human being?

*When every herd of cattle was killed
and every seed of corn destroyed,
myriads of fat beautiful cattle would issue from the earth.¹*

In this passage, the author conflates beauty and disobedience.

I stood in front of the painting
A huge matron-like cow
Spreading snake-like
All over the canvas
In a Victorian lace gown

Gandhi-Gandhi-Gandhi

Gandhi gets thrown off the Whites Only cabin
Gandhi invents Satyagraha
Gandhi fasts—Gandhi fasts—Gandhi fasts
War and No Peace with Pakistan
Gandhi dies of a gunshot wound in a Hindu temple

His ashes are scattered in Uganda

*He said that Uganda was a land of false bottoms
where under every abyss was another
waiting to ensnare people, and that
the historians had made a mistake:
Abyssinia was not the ancient land
of Ethiopia, but modern Uganda.²*

¹John Berger. G. 1972. pp 99

²Moses Isegawa. *Abyssinian Chronicles*. 1998. pp 440

cows kissing
cows fondling each other
 fucking , like us —
 like us—like us

*The spirits instructed the people to kill all their cattle,
and to destroy every grain of corn possessed;*

(...)

The people obeyed.³

She-She-She

*She Whose Horns Encircle like Metallic Rings
She Who Wears The Bell
She Who Plays the Harp
She Who Seeks No Quarrel
She Who Walks in Kiganda Style She*

Gandhi's ashes are scattered in a graveyard.⁴

We're all carrying our coffins with us everyday.⁵

My Rectum is Not a Grave⁶

³John Berger. G. 1972. pp 99

⁴I used the word graveyard loosely to mean Lake Victoria, Uganda, in which many dead bodies are hidden, some Indian.

⁵Edwidge Danticat. *The Art of Death: Writing the Final Story*. 2017

⁶Steve Reinke. *My rectum is not a Grave (To a Film industry in Crisis)*. 2007

AUTHORS AND DESIGNER BIOS

Awuor Onyango is a writer and visual artist based in Nairobi, KE. She took part in a number of workshops at Kuona Trust – Centre for Visual Arts in Nairobi, KE. In 2014, she participated in Sanaa, an exhibition for upcoming artists at the Kenya Art Fair – Wasanii Exhibition, Nairobi, KE, and has since started experimenting with video art and mixed media pieces on paper as well as sculpture. She's currently exploring motion triggered video installation as well as experimental film as a medium for exploring the transgression, shame, and discomfort of the black feminine. She has shown her works *Library of Silence* (2016) and *Limbe* (2016) at CHALE WOTE Street Art Festival (2016), Accra, GH; and participated in the Nyege Nyege Festival (2016), Jinja, UG; *SHE* (2016), *Sweet 'Art*, London, UK; and *the Art @ the Bus Weekend* (2016), Nairobi, KE.

Nyakallo Maleke (b. 1993) is a South African multidisciplinary artist based in Johannesburg. She works with installation, sculpture, printmaking, video and performance. She is currently enrolled in a MAPS (Master of Art in Public Sphere) at Ecole Cantonale d'Art du Valais, Switzerland and she is currently interested in thinking about writing and other imagined possibilities of writing with the body to articulate moments of vulnerability, doubt as a medium, processional based experiences to stimulate collective engagement within the public sphere.

Sanyu Kiyimba-Kisaka, also known as Aganza, is an award winning actress and poet from Uganda. She has directed, written, produced and starred in several films and theatre productions in Uganda and abroad. Her short play *Black* (2015) was featured at the 2016 Kampala International Theatre Festival (KITF) and dealt with issues of blackness, race and identity. In 2017, her short story *Operation: Mother's Bruises* was published as part of the African women writers project titled *The Different Shades of a Feminine Mind*. This year, Kisaka took to the theatre once again in a producer/actor role for the political satirical play: *The Betrothal* by Joshua Mali that saw two full nights of audiences begging for more. Inspired by the burning questions of her heart and the complexities of society, Kisaka continues to act, write and produce.

Serubiri Moses is an independent writer and curator. His essays are published in *Chimurenga* (South Africa), *Kulturaustausch* (Germany), and *C& – Contemporary And* (Germany). His research and curatorial projects include: 'Life mu City' (2014), a series of public programs with the Goethe Center Kampala, and the biennial contemporary art festival, *KLA ART - UNMAPPED* (2014) among others. He has produced essays on African artists and curators for the online magazine *C& – Contemporary And*. Serubiri is currently on the curatorial team for the 10th Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art, curated by Gabi Ngcobo. He has served as faculty – and is alumnus – of the Asiko

International Art School, and was awarded the 2015 Stadtschreiber residency at the Bayreuth Academy of Advanced African Studies. Currently, he is pursuing an MA in Curatorial Studies at Bard College, US.

Roseline Olang' Odhiambo is an editor and illustrator with *Enkare Review*, an online publication based out of Nairobi. She studied Economics and Studio Art at the University of Notre Dame and has previously worked at Circle Art Gallery, The Snite Museum of Art and the National Museum of Women in the Arts in Washington DC. For her visual arts projects, Roseline primarily works in the artist book form and through illustration, drawing connections between literature, poetry and visual arts.

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