

Abstract

What is the role of cultural archives in creating and sustaining connections between diasporic communities? Through an analysis of an audio-visual archive that has sought to bring together representations of and by African, Caribbean and Asian people, this article discusses the relationship between diasporic film, knowledge production and feminist solidarity. Focusing on a self-curated, UK based archive, the June Givanni Pan African Cinema Archive, we explore the potentiality of archives for carving out spaces of diasporic connectivity and resistance. This archive assembles the holdings of pan African films and film-related materials, built over several decades by June Givanni, a Guyanese-born London-based film curator. Givanni's archive embodies her long relationship with the intersecting worlds of African and Asian diasporic cinema, which hold deep connections to Black British heritage through global networks spanning across empire.

In the making of this cultural analysis, we employ a co-produced, decolonial methodological approach by designing and producing the article in collaboration with Givanni over a two-year period. We aim to foreground the role of feminist labour (academic and practitioner) as agents of change who are reclaiming stories, voices and memory-making. The wider backdrop to this co-produced analysis, is the ongoing resilience of a cultural amnesia that has pervaded the Black British experience and the current fragility of Black arts and cultural spaces in the UK. Our question is how might archives help us map the connections between racialised ideas of belonging, memory politics and the reconfiguration of colonial power whilst also operating as a site of feminist connectivity?

Key Words: *archive, diaspora, decoloniality, Black Britain, film, feminism*

Introduction

June Givanni's Pan-African Cinema Archive (JGPACA) occupies an inimitable space within the UK's cultural landscape. The self-curated archive is an embodiment of Givanni's thirty-year long relationship with the intersecting worlds of African and Asian diasporic cinema. As a curator and film programmer, Givanni has amassed a collection of 10,000 films and artefacts connected to these cinematic histories. The archive is now located at the MayDay Rooms in Central London, which describes itself as an 'archive, resource and safe haven for social movements, experimental and marginal cultures and their histories' (maydayrooms.org)

As an archive of the diaspora, the JGPACA is of deep significance given the marginalisation, exclusion and the potential erasure of Black and Asian diasporic narratives from established histories of Britain. This article examines how Givanni's archive provides a home for the circulation of diasporic culture as history, acting as a diasporic dwelling space that accommodates different articulations of Britishness, diaspora and Blackness. We use the term Black, Black and Asian, and Black and Brown in the article through the lens of political Blackness, as this is how the term is constituted by Givanni in the archive. As a politics of solidarity, Black feminist historian and scholar Nydia Swaby (2014) teases out the history of political blackness in Britain showing how, as a mobilising strategy, it constituted a positive diasporic consciousness between seemingly disparate migrant communities (see also Bryan et al, 1995; Brah, 1996; Mirza, 1997; Gunaratnam, 2014). Accordingly, the archive, with its diasporic histories, reconfigures Britishness, Blackness and diaspora by cultivating a site of contested postcolonial histories where the intricacies of diasporic dwelling across the African, Caribbean and Asian diasporas can be explored. The queer of colour feminist Fatima El-Tayeb (2004) emphasises the role of the archive in 'creating a sense of belonging, of a continuity of resistance against marginalisation' (pp 4). Anchoring the gesture of archiving in the liminal space of diasporic identities axiomatically generates a different articulation of what constitutes knowledge.

This article has been produced with Givanni's active presence in its conceptualisation, crafting and execution. Tracing with Givanni the history of the archive since its formal inception in 2014 and within a dearth of Black cultural spaces in Britain, we consider

how the archive has come to exist as it does, retaining its relative independence and autonomy to serve as a diasporic dwelling space for Black cultural histories. We examine the significance of the archive in creating a space for Black and Asian diasporas to define their own history and cultural memory, functioning as a key site of political self-recovery, belonging and connectivity in perpetually highly-racialised contexts. The political act of remembering is described by Givanni as important because:

here in the UK...Black people should be defining their own history, their own cultural memory and they should know themselves... you need to know yourself, you need to know your history, you need to value it to be able to decide where you are in this world

(Givanni, 2017)

Givanni illustrates the power of cultural memory in how it enables a sense of consciousness about oneself and one's place in the world, a reality that El-Tayeb (2004) speaks of more widely as being denied to communities of colour in Europe. Givanni helps us understand that the archive is more than just a repository of knowledge; it is in fact a living entity, transmuting as it interacts with people in different contexts, carrying a varying politics of race and racism. Our engagement with Givanni and the archive suggests a liveness, a wakefulness, that is activated and released upon different encounters.

The article analyses archival holdings, film and film-related materials, and interview data through a framework of cultural theory. The authors collaborated with Givanni over a two-year period, through engagement with JGPACA at the MayDay Rooms, JGPACA public screenings, and with Givanni herself in the form of discussions, email dialogue and two face to face interviews that took place at the MayDay Rooms in October 2017 and March 2019. The authors' worlds have intersected with Givanni's in deep forms of engagement identified here as intergenerational Black feminist solidarity (Mirza,1997; Anim-Adoo,2014). Whilst based at the British Film Institute, Givanni was the supervisor, along with the cultural studies pioneer and scholar Stuart Hall, of XXXX's PhD in the 1990s. The work of the PhD involved an analysis of the visual archives of the Black and brown diaspora before the JGPACA came into formal

existence. The legacy of that archival research has evolved, two decades on, into a new generation of scholarship and critical inquiry. The archive, now reconstituted in the form of the JGPACA, has become a site through which reconnections with Givanni are made possible, as well as providing an opportunity for us to collectively revisit Stuart Hall's work on archives (2001). Thus, the article provides space for us to situate ourselves within the archive and speak to how it has started, sustained and continued the conversation of both diasporic and feminist solidarity.

The article is organised in four sections. Firstly, we locate the archive within London's cultural landscape, signifying why the JGPACA is of particular importance to diasporic histories, touching on the origin story of the archive and what it holds. Secondly, we flesh out the concept of the archive as a diasporic dwelling space through unearthing the different types of diasporic identities and intimacies homed here. Thirdly, we explore how the archive functions as a site for Black, intergenerational feminist connectivity between the authors and different generations of Black and Brown diaspora women. Finally, through framing the archive as a living entity we see how the life of the archive migrates and how, through engaging with contemporary diasporic subjects it deepens its relevance in present contexts, including for the authors.

These different 'ways in' to understanding the JGPACA are supported by a brief overview of the kinds of archival materials it holds. We examine how, as a holding space for counter-narratives and decolonial epistemologies, the archive allows for polyphonic diasporic memories to co-exist. We analyse the work of the archive, by considering how the archive speaks and the different contexts within which it is compelled to speak. We combine these different framings of the archive with our ongoing conversations with Givanni, suggestive of a continued feminist solidarity spanning decades, that challenges the common metaphor of distinct 'waves' of feminist politics (Pruchniewska, 2016). We explore this temporal entanglement of feminist connectivity nurtured in the archive.

Locating the JGPACA and what it holds

Givanni's archive, along with London's other Black cultural archives, create a cartography which Caspar Melville (2019), a scholar looking at the interracial dynamics of space, race and belonging in Black London's music scenes, describes as forming part of the postcolonial constitution of Britain. These archives tease out Britain's hidden histories, comprising what Stuart Hall describes as 'the unfinished history of the Black British diaspora and its intricate interweaving with British life' (2001). The Black Cultural Archives in Brixton, the George Padmore Institute in Finsbury Park and the Huntley Archives situated in the London Metropolitan Archive, all house rich and diverse Black diasporic knowledge, with a palpable international presence, capturing different trajectories of migration, both spatially and temporally. There are degrees of overlap between each of these archives. Givanni argues that this ensemble of London archives, focused on seeing the world through the artistic, political and cultural agendas of Black and Brown people working in the world of radical and revolutionary diasporic culture, plays a vital role in helping us to 'trace the geopolitics of where we are today' (2019). Film is the modality through which Givanni connects geography, history and subjectivity, helping to create constellations of diasporic knowledge. In this way, the medium lends itself to a solidarity between the past and the present; a conduit for temporal and spatial conversation.

Indeed, Givanni frames her archive as a site of cultural conversation across space and time, a site dedicated to the stories of African cinema and African and Asian diasporic narratives, axiomatically situated in a different space from institutional archives. 'Pan-African Cinema Archive'; its title announces a political standpoint, redolent of a time when anti-colonial struggles coalesced around narratives of reclamation, unity and self-determination, locating it within a genealogy of cultural resistance as revolutionary praxis. This lineage of cultural resistance is not limited to certain geographies but is dynamic. Anti-colonial intellectual, Amilcar Cabral, tells us that the concept of revolution and Pan-Africanism is not just limited to people of African heritage but is part of a universal anti-colonial liberation struggle (Gamedze, 2018 pp 15). Similarly, Givanni presents the archive as 'a site of knowledge production...allowing you to connect the dots' (2019). Thus, through holding a variety of narratives in the same space, the visitor must perform the labour of forging connections and linkages between

different fragments of cultural knowledge. Riffing off Adorno's conceptualisation of 'thinking in constellations', temporal, spatial and epistemological borderlines which have been crystallised in hegemonic discourses, are ruptured through multi-disciplinary thought and praxis (Masquelier, 2014 pp 65). This polyvocal prism enables a fuller understanding of history, teasing out the nuances of different cosmologies and a plurality of experience(s) which can help to forge (re)new(ed) understandings of history.

The Archive's Migrations and Mutations

The archive has not always existed in its current iteration. Previously located between Stockwell community centre and her home in South East London, Givanni flirted with the concept of an archive to actualise her vision of holding space for diasporic knowledge(s) through the medium of film. It was through her collaboration with institutional partners, that Givanni was able to craft a paradigm for her archive, installing a model for it in 2016, as part of the Creativeworks London Festival (junegivannifilmarchive.com). This installation of the archive can be conceived of as an experiment in archivisation, exploring different ways into sustaining the archive, what this would look like for the JGPACA and how to make the archive relevant for those whose life experiences intersect with the material. It is through funded improvisations such as this that the archive has been able to reside in its current form. In fact, it was only through access to funding streams, and institutional knowledge and resources (Birkbeck and University of the Arts London), which Andrew Flinn (2011) refers to in his work on archives holding marginalised knowledge in London, that the archive was assembled and homed in the MayDay Rooms. Givanni's archive is situated in an in-between space, where it retains its autonomy but also has ties to institutional bodies which help to provide the resources it requires for it to sustain itself.

An apt site for the archive, the MayDay Rooms was conceived of as an educational charity with a focus on radical thought, marginalised histories and struggles for justice. It stands out from other institutional spaces in how it is rooted in Marxist and collectivist ideology, created with the intention of disrupting the normalisation of established histories. A pulse of critical intervention runs through the MayDay Rooms, providing shelter for non-normative histories which reside on the peripheries of centralised

knowledge-making spaces. This creates an opening which destabilises dominant narratives of race, space, identity and belonging. At the MayDay Rooms, the JGPACA sits alongside other radical archives and organisations such as Latin American Women's Rights Service and Women of Occupy London, facilitating the potential for wider feminist and diasporic connectivity. Thus, its positioning within a 'cultural commons' that presences radical thought, feminist histories and anti-racist struggles, destabilises the geometry of power which has historically marginalised Black diasporic narratives (ibid). In essence, it helps to create space for these worlds of epistemology, ontology and performativity to breathe. This is of particular importance because it situates the JGPACA within a politically anchored and radical landscape.

Archival holdings circulating diasporic knowledge in ensemble

The presence of the JGPACA is testament to Givanni's inexorable labour: three decades of collecting, excavating and curating material. The archival matter ranges from audio and video tapes, to publications, film scripts, photographs, books and ephemera connected to film work from Africa, Asia and its respective diasporas across the Americas and Europe. We learn through and of different knowledge(s) in a multi-sensory way; film is both a site of knowledge but also a portal, enabling access to subterranean histories, marginalised ontologies and silenced narratives. It is Givanni's personal history and relationships to filmmakers, artists and curators which both sustain and comprise the rich textures of her archive. In our first interview with Givanni (2017), she conceives of the archive as a holding space for the breadth and diversity of African and Asian diasporic histories, a site where histories are contested and where people grapple with their respective contexts in a variety of ways. The conceptualisation of culture as a 'historical force' is pertinent, holding the social, economic and political conditions which both create and constitute culture (Gamedze, 2018 pp 15). The question of who the archive was conceived by and who it is created for becomes of great importance; the archivist's curation of the material and its framing within particular epistemologies shape how the material will be read.

Eric Ketelaar (2001) demystifies the purported neutrality and division between the archive and archivists, framing the archive as a creation and construction of its

creator/curator. Thinking with Verne Harris (2018) we see how through archivist's curation of the material, hegemonic power can be 'troubled...enabling affective experience(s) for those who encounter them' (pp 15). It is the archivist, in this case Givanni, who ascertains which films, articles and posters should be assembled in an archival ensemble. It is the archivist whose spirit of discernment ascertains which texts should be put in conversation with each other. It is the archivist who determines how the work should be accessed. Further, the archive is inextricably connected to Givanni's personal and professional navigation through the world of Black British, African and diasporic cinema. Thus, each artefact is woven with her touch, carrying personal narratives of history and intimacy with it.

The archival material is an expansive, but not exhaustive collection of all Pan-African film work and related materials. Whilst it is called a Pan-African Cinema Archive, the space contains work from South Asian filmmakers too, holding films by several British Asian filmmakers including Gurinder Chadha and Pakistani director Salmaan Peerzada, thus pertaining to formative ideas of political Blackness (Brah,1996). Givanni started collecting material from the 1980s but the holdings span from as early as the 1920s, including the work of pioneers of early Black American cinema such as Oscar Micheaux. With a heavy leaning towards radical cinematic work which saw film being used as a weapon of decolonisation across the African continent and Americas, it also includes the work of Egyptian filmmaker, Jihan El-Tahri's *Cuba: An African Odyssey* (2007), Mozambican João Ribeiro's *The Gaze of the Stars* (1997) and Senegalese Djibril Dop Mambéty's *Contras City* (1969). Sitting alongside this are the films of the Greater London Council (GLC) funded creative collectives such as RETAKE and Sankofa. RETAKE's *Hotel London* (1987) is a film that speaks to narratives of South Asian migration against a backdrop of racism, whilst Martina Atille's (a member of Sankofa), *Dreaming Rivers* (1988), grapples with Black feminist inter-generational communion. Whilst Givanni's archive is situated as a site of African, Asian and diasporic audio-visual creativity, it does not claim to carry the totality of narratives that comprise such a nuanced and heterogeneous cultural terrain.

In addition to the films themselves, the archive holds non-audio visual material such as film journals, transcripts and photographs. Interviews in film journals like the *Black Film Bulletin* co-edited by Givanni and Gaylene Gould, are a record of discussions with

several renowned Black artists, including LA Rebellion filmmakers Larry Clark and Julie Dash. Manuscripts from Mambety's *Hyenas* (1992), a postcolonial satire, critiquing neo-colonialism and African consumerism, to transcripts from Pan-African film conferences such as the 1980 Havana Film Festival attended by a range of Black cultural makers across the diaspora, are all found in the archive. Rare, original photographs capturing moments of Black cultural connectivity; a photograph of Stuart Hall *en route* to the Images Caribes Film Festival, Fort-de-France, Martinique in 1988, where he would go on to deliver a lecture on Caribbean film and cultural identity. Being assembled and sheltered in the JGPACA, this material helps us to render meaning and connection between different diasporic histories and memories, as well as acting as a rare marker of the permanence of Black presence in Britain. The traces of memory and history gathering in the same space is powerful as they become rooted and grounded in an eco-system of decolonial epistemological constellations, creating valuable context amidst shifting temporalities.

Diasporic dwelling space?

The diasporic connectivity, connecting different diasporic cultures and struggles...bringing it together as an archive means that it provides a space where that connection can be seen.

(Givanni, 2017)

In this section, we explore the concept of Givanni's archive as a diasporic dwelling space. We suggest that the JGPACA provides shelter and restitution for cultural discourses which grapple with the complexity, nuance and historical intricacies of Black and Asian diasporic lifeworld(s). It is useful or maybe even necessary to frame the archive in this way as it resides in a hostile cultural environment, or put differently, if other cultural institutions do not provide a home for diasporic narratives and cultural memory. Where the presence of nuanced and complex diasporic histories are absented from mainstream archives and institutions, archival scholars Cook and Schwartz (2002) argue that it is incumbent on community archives, such as Givanni's, to bridge the chasm in understanding and knowledge, committing their labour to that

of presencing (Lewis,2019). The JGPACA is leaning into epistemological and institutional absences, carving a space for Black and Asian diasporic artists and culture-makers, who have been denied entry to other institutional spaces, to find a home in the archive.

To better grapple with the concept of homing, it becomes useful to think through the racialisation of space in London. Melville's (2019) 'It's a London Thing' speaks to how the right to the city has been differentially granted along the axis of race. With the racialisation of space tacitly controlling the movement of people through the city, the JGPACA functions as a rare place created for those racialised as Black to assemble histories, memories and experiences, and to exist outside racialised regimes of surveillance. Simply put, the JGPACA is a site which centres the histories and epistemologies of Black and Asian diasporic communities across different geographies and temporalities. Therefore, as a diasporic dwelling space, it plays a foundational role in preserving a breadth and range of diasporic cultural histories, creating space for those who have been marginalised to, as Flinn et al., (2009) argue 'exercise some control over its representation and the construction of its collective and public memory' (pp 83). Together, these different epistemologies work to deconstruct colonial hierarchies, histories and dichotomies, allowing for a richly textured tapestry of decolonial (cinematic) ontologies to emerge.

It is through piecing archival material together, engaging with it individually and collectively that a fuller picture of these different moments in time can be garnered. Being in this space creates an environment of grappling with the past that has not yet passed and a present that is haunted by colonialism, prising open possibilities of different futurities, rooted in a politics of refusal (Campt,2017). Here, multiple narratives are held in the same utterance, challenging mono-dimensional narratives of Black and Asian diasporic lifeworlds. With diasporic memories circulating and rubbing up against each other, we truly garner the possibility of what Paul Gilroy (1987) and Stuart Hall (2002) frame as a hybridised, multicultural and convivial society, where heritage is (re)imagined and (re)invented to situate Black and Brown people as central to the fabric of British society. As a diasporic dwelling space, the JGPACA plays a vital role in instituting and motivating these potential transformations, challenging engagement with the nuances of heritage and imperial histories.

Homing different diasporic narratives

Thinking with Avtar Brah and her influential work on diaspora spaces, we argue that the JGPACA enables film and other material artefacts, to 'dwell differently' (Clifford, 1994 in Swaby, 2014). This difference in dwelling is cultivated through accommodating the complexity, nuance and fluidity of diaspora identities, rupturing the notion of returning to a geographical homeland. For Brah (1996), 'all diaspora is differentiated, heterogeneous, contested spaces, even as they are implicated in the construction of a common "we"' (pp181). The JGPACA holds space for the multiplicity of subjectivities which can, do and could constitute diaspora, with the juxtaposition of these complex and complicated lifeworlds challenging, contesting and interrogating the very notion of tradition and the association of diaspora with a desire to return to a mythologised homeland (ibid). The archive, in a sense, creates space for this return to manifest, a return to a home of flux, a return to shifting positionalities, a (re)turn to the myriad axis of difference. Thus, it is as much a home for works that document anti-colonial struggles such as Sarah Maldoror's *Sambizanga* (1972), as it is for films which craft the interior worlds of Black people such as the auto-ethnographic *Coffee Coloured Children* (1988), a short film by Nigerian British filmmaker Ngozi Onwurah. The diasporic archive does not necessarily prescribe a specific aesthetic or ontology or even a totality or completeness of Black experiences; it does not claim to do this. Instead, it is a space of artistic diversity, sheltering a multitude of diasporic works and articulations of Blackness, diaspora, pan-Africanism and cultural resistance. In these ways, it reconfigures Britishness and diaspora, cultivating a site of contested histories, where the complexities and intricacies of diasporic dwelling in Britain and beyond can be explored.

The JGPACA is also notable for homing the ideological spirit of revolutionary, feminist filmmakers. As mentioned, Sarah Maldoror's *Sambizanga* (1972), one of the first feature films to be directed by a woman of African descent, rests in the archive. Maldoror was deeply committed to crafting a poetic audio-visual form which captured the tones of freedom emerging from a still decolonising Angola. *Sambizanga* is crafted through a decolonial feminist prism, platforming Angola's movement for liberation through the lens of Maria, the wife of a revolutionary. Exploring her interior world and

relationship to the liberation struggle, Maldador leans into the marginalised memories of women in the revolution. In an interview with *African Screens*, Maldador encapsulates the urgency of African women's presence in different realms of the filmmaking process: 'African women must be everywhere. They must be in the images, behind the camera, in the editing room and involved in every stage of the making of a film. They must be the ones to talk about their problems' (1995 pp12). The positioning of African women at every stage of the filmmaking process destabilises the patriarchal pulse of the industry and enables the creation of art which is both reflective of and responsible to the experiences and interiority of African women.

Similarly, Givanni places emphasis on the way the archive recognises diasporic connections in the Global South, resonating with Brah's work on the multi-axial pulse of diaspora, with a shifting locationality, residing in the space of liminality. For Givanni, presencing diasporic relationships beyond sites of European settlement becomes important in terms of enriching diasporic configurations of power and relationality. We witness this in the enduring relationships forged by filmmakers across Africa and Latin America who would meet at conferences in Cuba to share their cultural histories and discuss their interconnected grievances. These meetings highlight the role of Pan-Africanism in shaping struggles and generating connectivity between African and diasporic communities. The archive bears witness to the spatial and temporal entanglement of diasporic conversation(s) as we see these generative cultural conversations in Cuba migrating to a different context, several decades later in the UK. Notably, Black Audio Film Collective was deeply influenced by the decolonial cultural work of Latin American and Pan-African filmmakers. Such diasporic entanglements and African diasporic epistemologies interrupt the hegemony of Euro-American cultural framings. Further, there is a rough cut of Kuumba's unfinished 1984 documentary *Third Eye Film Festival of Third Cinema in London*, where filmmakers from Asia, Latin-America, Africa and its diasporas congregate to discuss the role of cinema in imperialist cultural domination and the representation of women in the Global South (2014). Givanni recalls the 'creative impulse' for artists to connect and share, and a strong intention amongst diasporic filmmakers 'to keep, share and witness diasporic connections' (2019). These cultural whisperings infer a decolonial gesture, reconfiguring the global geometry of power which places the Euro-American pulse as the centrifugal force.

Archive as a feminist dwelling space

A home is curated and created for the material itself and also for Black and Brown women of the diaspora whose histories and experiences bring them, as us, to the archive. The archive and the labour involved is testament to the collective utterance of diverse diasporic feminist voices. Black feminist scholar, historian and cultural theorist, Saidiya Hartman (2019) speaks of this as a collective sounding, constituent of a Black feminist endeavour. Of particular interest to us is the space the archive holds for the histories of politically Black feminisms, coalescing around a praxis of solidarity through difference, against an imperialist, racist and patriarchal state (Bryan et al, 1985). Collecting and settling here, we are able to grapple with how this translates on screen.

Films here bear witness to the politically Black feminist consciousness of the 1970s and 1980s. Pratibha Parmar speaks of political blackness creating an opening, a space for dialogues around sistership and intersectional identities to emerge (Gunaratnam, 2014). Parmar's *Emergence* (1986), held in the archive, riffs off a politically Black feminist connectivity, capturing the interwoven narratives of identity, subjectivity, fragmentation and (un)belonging within different diasporic contexts. *Emergence* looks specifically at the work of four politically Black artists, including Palestinian performance artist Mona Hatoum, Black American poet Audre Lorde and Vietnamese filmmaker Trinh Ti Minh-Ha. The piece explores how Black feminism and solidarity building was at the root of these women's creative practices, enabling an ecology of radical work by Black and Brown feminist filmmakers. It documents the changing definitions and subjectivities that are sheltered in racial signifiers for a racialised feminist solidarity and how the mutability of Blackness, for purposes of strategic essentialism in the British and South African context, were vital for an anti-racist political movement (Mirza, 1997). Its power resides in feminist praxis that is harnessed and embodied through the relationships and connections forged between the matter of the archive and those who choose to engage with it, contextualising contemporary feminist work. Thinking with Swaby (2014) we see how Parmar,

...unpicks the diasporic dimensions of political blackness, reflecting on the issues that converged to foreground 'black' as the basis for mobilising women of African and Asian decent to engage in collective activism (pp11.)

Parmar's work signals the connections between the African and Asian diaspora, that Givanni's archive cultivates more broadly. By focusing on connections in the Global South, Givanni disrupts the hegemony of diasporic narratives as originating from the global North and migrating outwards towards former colonised lands, located on the periphery. This encourages diasporic subjects in Britain to think outside our own ontologies and step into a world of subjectivities that are (dis)connected from our own. Our own relationship with Givanni induces memories of migration, movement, different diasporic histories and political struggles. From our Tamil, Guyanese and Punjabi diasporas, as women of colour with converging interests in archives, film culture and decolonial creativities, the archive has nurtured space and time for productive intergenerational relationships and diasporic feminist connectivity (Anim-Adoo, 2014).

Feminist Intimacies

A discernible sense of intimacy is created with the three generations of Black and Brown women that we represent, exploring across feminist 'waves', similar archival terrains, memories and feminist praxis. Our feminist solidarity builds on our differences in positionality, allowing for our respective subjectivities, ontologies and knowledge(s) to coalesce as the intimacies of race, gender and class shift (Gunaratnam and Mirza, 2014). There is a space in between us sharing archival space, where relationships are forged and different layers of connectedness teased out. Having been in conversation with Givanni and XXX for the past three years there is a richness to the conversational terrains we have traversed, collectively and respectively. Givanni and XXXX, inhabited similar artistic, activist and cultural spheres, moving around each other but never quite together. It is only through XXX's doctoral research at the JGPACA that we moved in synchronicity with each other, unfurling a series of generative conversational orbits. XXX and Givanni had already forged an intimate relationship in the 1990s through Givanni and XXXX's supervision period, also with Hall. These legacies of their

combined practical and intellectual contribution, now renewed through a feminist solidarity via the JGPACA.

Through this process of (un)consciously building feminist solidarity, Givanni shared with us the deep connection that was forged between African diasporic and South Asian women filmmakers in Chennai. She remembers the demand and insistence for work from Black female filmmakers to be screened at the film festival. Givanni's memory of being at a women's film festival in Chennai, with tongues of Tamil peppered in the space of an Indonesian cultural centre, where works by African and Asian female filmmakers were centred, explored and examined to generate a strong sense of Black and brown feminist ties, deeply moved us. In cultural archives, we rarely witness moments of transnational Black feminist connectivity framed through the gaze of those who were present. Thus, to encounter this knowledge through Givanni's first-hand account, connected with us on a cerebral and affective plain. There was something deeply nourishing and generative in Givanni recollecting these memories with us in the intimate space of her archive. This bypassing of the Global North by Asian and African filmmakers serves to rupture the reified notion of whiteness as a hegemonic cultural centre. Through this type of presencing we see how Haraway's (1988) yearning for 'an earth-wide network of connections' is part of the fabric of a decolonial feminist genealogy, with 'third world' women connecting, creating and sharing their situated epistemologies with each other across the colonial spatio-temporal logic (pp 580). Through the passage of space and time, different connectivities, once concealed, now emerge and cultivate a different modality of union. The erosion between different diasporic subjectivities and the potential barriers that emerge from the will to connect, evaporate at the seams of memory, subjectivity and experience. Historical, racialised and feminised heterogeneities comfortably sit together in the feminist connectivities created between Givanni, XXXXX and XXXXX. From our different standpoints, our subjectivities coalesce to highlight overlap but also difference in experience influenced by the different ways in which we engage with space and space with us (Ahmed, 2007).

Further, connecting with the archival material itself can cultivate a multi-temporal feminist connectivity. Woven with various narratives of resistance, is a Black American piece embodying resistance through music, pleasure and kinship. *Tiny and Ruby: Hell*

Divin' Women (1996) by Greta Schiller and Andrea Weiss is a beautiful poetic of Black queer musical intimacy illustrated through the relationship between Tiny Davis and her partner of over 40 years, drummer-pianist Ruby Lucas. Through a montage of archival footage, moving image, interviews and dislocated sonic, we see a queer intimacy being evinced through quotidian gestures of dance, laughter, play and improvisation. How Black queer memories of pleasure and desire permeate into the present and provide a frame for the creation of new pleasures is tenderly captured. It becomes helpful to think with Hartman's *Wayward Lives and Beautiful Experiments* (2019). Here Hartman prises open archival documents to divulge the rich life-worlds of Black women, recognising them as 'sexual modernists, free lovers, radicals and anarchists', acknowledging and crediting them with the 'revolutionary ideals that animated ordinary lives' (pp xv). The intimacy of Black women's lives presented in Schiller and Weiss' film and the ontological scripts Tiny and Ruby create for themselves, beyond the confines and parameters of histories of violence, racial exclusion and economic segregation, are both experiments with freedom that have been threatened with obsolescence. However, their presence in the archive makes sure that they are remembered, placing value on Black women and the social spaces they have created through film, music and being, foregrounding 'the potentiality of life-worlds [which have] remained unthought because no one could conceive of young black women as social visionaries and innovators in the world in which these acts took place' (ibid).

For young Black and Brown women to connect with this past provides access to a world where pleasure, desire and the art of living was crafted on their own terms. This has the effect of expanding the feminist imaginary and enabling different ways of being to feed into the consciousness of Black women in the present. In this way, the archive becomes a site of feminist connectivity, enabling different generations of Black and Brown women to connect, literally and metaphysically, upon shifting cultural and political terrains. Further, any actual or imagined inter-generational silences may be lent into, with younger generations reflecting in response to the calls posed by their predecessors. This, as queer of colour feminist scholar Chandra Frank (2019) argues, constitutes the aliveness of the archive, 'urg[ing] necessary conversations with present-day feminist and anti-racist organisers' moving to similar diasporic, political and ideological rhythms (pp 17).

Engaging with the living archive: archival encounters

In this section, we will explore how the archive is a living entity through being encountered upon. For Givanni, 'all archives should be living archives so they can continually be challenged by people looking at them...seeing something else, questioning something and bringing something new to it' (Givanni, 2019). Her words speak to the past of the archive being reconfigured in different ways when encountered in the present. Hall has framed the archive as a living entity, unfolding outwards through space and time:

[the archive] cannot be complete because our present practice immediately adds to it, and our new interpretations inflect it differently. An archive may be largely about 'the past' but it is always 're-read' in the light of the present and the future

(Hall, 2001, pp91)

The layers of meaning woven within archives of image and sound are not necessarily static but have the potential to evolve and change as they collide and interact with the experiences and subjectivities of those who choose to engage with them. This concept is not new within archival literature (see Wilkinson in Lee, 2015), with Cook and Schwartz (2002) most recently disrupting discourses of passivity, objectivity and stasis which define the archive, framing it as a site of contesting, affirming and negotiating power on different terms. But what is radical about Hall's reading is his positioning of marginalised histories, specifically ones of the diaspora, and the presencing of such narratives in (re) constituting the archive. This speaks to the idea of the archive as an unfinished project, an ongoing conversation, open to rupture. Each (re)reading of the archive adds another layer to it, transforming it in some way. When people happen upon and engage with the archive there is a process of (re)awakening which transpires; cultural memories which appear to have been outlived are (re)centred and communed with in an impactful way (Ketelaar, 2001). Through the JGPACA speaking to and being encountered upon by different communities of people, the cultural legacies of Black presence in Britain and beyond may be (re)invoked. The

life-force of the archive may be activated and released when its material is touched, seen, heard and felt. Through engaging with the dead, their narratives are presenced, they emerge from the form in which they were contained and are given a pulse through their communion with the living. Thus, the archive is not merely a passive repository of knowledge but a living site that necessitates a politics of stasis, a (re)orientation in perspective and (re)visioning of history.

Viewing archival material as cultural texts also adds to this register of 'live-ness' and, if we think of cultural texts as social spaces, as conceptualised by Stefano Harney and Fred Moten(2013) in their radical work, *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study*, there is a sense that 'people, things, are meeting there [in the text] and interacting, rubbing off one another, brushing up against one another'(pp110). Entering the social space of a cultural text involves interacting with the text and all that it holds, inhabiting it and being open to the potentialities for change which emerge when becoming part of that space. Thus, these texts carry repositories of affect and feeling that also comprise social spaces. And in this way, Eric Ketelaar (2001) conceptualises the relationship between the archival texts and the individuals interacting with them as an active process, where the individual uses their agency to activate the threads of history, experience and subjectivity held within the material itself. It is in this way that the archive retains life and becomes alive (Frank, 2019)

How the living archive speaks to the present

There is always the possibility for intimacy to manifest when engaging with archival material. Both, in the process of grappling with the material itself and questioning how and why it has come to settle in the archive. Through informal conversations with filmmaker and scholar Onyeka Igwe, who was helping Givanni organise the intellectual copy rights of the film work held in the archive, it became clear to see just how profound an impact engaging with the JGPACA has had on her artistic practice. In an interview with artist and curator Sonya Dyer (2018), she recalls how the archive, through its focus on African and Asian film, functioned as a space of knowledge production, having not being educated on Black British film histories whilst studying film at various academic and artistic institutions. The previously unattended histories (Eshun, 2007): the notion of the avant-garde as Black (Moten, 2003), the radical politics and

experimental praxis of Black diaspora filmmaking, as discussed in the previous sections, entered her orbit, deeply influencing her filmmaking as we see in works such as 'the names have changed, including my own and truths have been altered'(2019). Her work heavily draws on the power of archival footage to unearth forgotten, intimate and incomplete anti-colonial histories.

In this way, Givanni grasps the power of bringing the archive to a space of conversation, where the material can be a way of touching many pasts. For her, the archive as a living entity plays an important role in the education and development of young people, echoing Hall's calls for the archive to be widely circulated. In this way, it functions as a pedagogical site, where situated knowledge is generated and (re)created with different generations of people. She emphasises how pivotal the archive is for young people:

I really want the archive to be used by younger people...we try and do as much as possible to try and encourage young people to visit the archive and to gain understanding of the present through the past

(Givanni, 2019)

This speaks to the collaborative nature of the archive, its living impulse and how the JGPACA sustains itself through its interactions with different generations of people. Connecting the archival material and the histories it carries with young people provides a way for them to actively trace their roots and positionality in a postcolonial world. In the summer of 2019 JGPACA collaborated with the National Maritime Museum to create a film production workshop for a group of young artists. They made a series of short films in response to the material they connected with in the archive, with 'what does diaspora mean to you' guiding their excavation. By using their encounters with and interpretations of the material to create short films, we see how the matter of the archive migrates through time, into different spaces, enabling young people to engage with history on their own terms. Thus, entering into the social space of the archival record, they activate the life of the material and move it from a place of stasis to one of motion (Moten and Harney, 2013). As Ketelaar (2001) argues, 'every interaction, intervention, interrogation, and interpretation by creator, user, and archivist is an

activation of the record'(pp137). With the archive holding space for a cascade of activations, we see how these young people have imprinted themselves on the archive, presencing different meanings, memories and experiences. They effectively re-enter history on their own terms. Thus, the archive takes on a new resonance, relevant to a contemporary gaze, in which younger generations are able to fathom the different registers and complexity the material holds in a personal way.

Concluding Reflections

The JGPACA signifies a rare intervention in how public knowledge of diverse diasporic experiences and their colonial legacies are produced. In a postcolonial topography where such histories are not only absent but where those racialised as 'Black' are rendered precarious; the living archive can be conceptualised as a dwelling space, where concealed histories emerge and converse with each other. In this sense, the JGPACA has the power to destabilise hegemonic memory and national identity and create, in Givanni's own words, the 'possibility of challenging ownership of knowledge' (Givanni, 2019). As framed by sociologist Gail Lewis, such 'presencing' of narratives that gravitate away from established scripts of history are tantamount to an epistemological and ontological praxis of emergence, making the invisible, visible and the obsolete, relevant and alive (2017). It is through archival dwelling, in spaces such as Givanni's, that histories of resistance are communicated with contemporary audiences, continuing unfinished conversations of anti-colonial struggles and revolution. As the archive speaks, communities of resistance come to embody cultural histories on their own terms, releasing the irruptive potential held within archival matter to make it matter outside of the archival space. This, in a potent way, brings the archive to life, giving it a transgressive power outside of its archival terrains.

In this moment of deep political uncertainty predicated on racialised notions of inclusion and exclusion in the UK, the archive creates a rare and significant space for Black and Brown people to both define their own history and cultural memory. In an archival space where diasporic dwelling is made possible, the element of consciousness-raising that Givanni invokes in her collaboration with us can be actualised. The archive, with its counter-histories, reconfigures identity through

diasporic narratives, cultivating a site of contested histories, where the complexities and intricacies of diasporic dwelling in Britain can be explored and a deep and permanent presence spanning centuries can be asserted. In these spaces, there becomes a privileging of displaced memories and narratives that appear as gaps or silences in imperial histories. In current vexed contexts, the archive can be conceptualised as a diasporic space, where concealed histories emerge and converse with each other and where Britain's collective memory has the potential to be destabilised. Diasporic cultural archives, that home subversive histories containing counter-narratives to those invested by the nation state, can be framed as sites of inheritance, reframing histories from a revolutionary past, to be passed down. Further, spending time with Givanni, connecting with her socially, intellectually and creatively, has crafted a space of inter-generational feminist connectivity. By building a unique space of home, resistance and survival, Givanni has enabled the archive to yield a connectivity both within and beyond the archive's present, as a diasporic feminist dwelling space.

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