



**I am delighted to have been awarded the 2023/24 Banister Fletcher Global Fellowship for my project 'Distant Islands, Spectral Cities', hosted by the University of London Institute in Paris (ULIP). As the work unfolds, I am publishing a series of notes that share some of the ambitions and questions driving the research, which will result in texts, invitations and curations as well as a week of gatherings in Paris in April 2024, with satellite events in London. The project focuses on forms of political and aesthetic emancipation and imagination within minority populations in Europe, taking into account their fragility. It will do this while always keeping in view the precariousness that increasingly makes our research processes also prone to**

and dehumanised, of discounted existences that have come up against the racist social structures of the West and yet never ceased to invent – in anger and shame, in deprivation and mourning – gestures, places and aesthetics of resistance.<sup>[4]</sup> And they continue to risk doing so. The challenge of this research is to collectively develop a method that does not so much celebrate new minority heroisms as creates the conditions to embrace the impurity

Here, the idea of repetition is twofold. It echoes a non-linear temporal epistemology, the spiral poetics of Caribbean time (Frankétienne), where everything is already there, where events keep coming back in different forms, relegating the relation to what we might call an archive. But the idea of repetition is also useful for underlining the centrality of an abolitionist politics that brings about a desirable life by practising it in fragments, by performing/repeating<sup>[7]</sup> it whenever possible – ‘life in rehearsal’ (Ruth Wilson Gilmore). Weaving a tapestry of events also implies paying attention to the ruptures in certain movements, without seeing them as synonymous with failure. These interruptions teach us a great deal about divisive strategies and contradictory impulses, as well as about power relations and false allies in a given context. They are tools and warnings from which to build future rehearsals and our commitment to them.

### **Interpretive community and the ethics of necessity: extractivism, responsibility and the archive as address<sup>[8]</sup>**

This approach to repetition structures the ecology and ethics of the work. As already noted, we must invent its forms in light of the fragilities engendered by a knowledge economy oriented ever more to structures premised upon individual success and predation. Our aim here is to develop a relationship with the archive that goes beyond the vocabulary of ‘discovery’, the obsessive pursuit of the ‘first time’ and the ‘new’, in order to imagine regimes of value production other than those driven by extractivist fever, *columbusing* and similar tactics of appropriation. All these practices of interruption contribute to the dispersal of narratives and weaken their transmission. They often exclude those for whom these stories are vital presences, modes of address, even hauntings, embodied to the point of trauma.

Research into the fragmented histories of the Caribbean should not reproduce logics of domination and patterns of material and epistemological violence which, in many ways, are responsible for the tragedy that took place in that part of the world, and still contribute to some of its structural incapacities. But we cannot ignore the damaging effects of the growing precariousness amongst art practitioners and university workers who are drawn into fierce forms of competition to survive on multiple fronts. As a result, aggressive research and production practices are spreading fencing of parcels of knowledge and delegitimizing many ways of telling, making and imagining histories and their interconnectedness. We choose to consider these harmful systemic effects, this ‘backdrop’, as genuine methodological concerns, in order to inscribe this research in a reparative dynamic. This means questioning who has the privilege of being in the room, of sitting around the table. It also means creating hospitable conditions to engage with situated speech and vocabularies.<sup>[9]</sup> The same attentiveness will apply to the uses, benefits and futures of this research, compelling us to think about the continuity of the working community it will bring together, and the necessities and emergencies it will have to face.

This is the meaning of the second reading of the principle of repetition, which requires establishing an *interpretive community*<sup>[10]</sup> around an archive, i.e., a group that produces situated translations of events and traces of the past. In so doing, it creates collective property, a shared responsibility and a common project. This last point is important as it allows us to think of *rehearsal (performing repetition)* as a gesture that brings the potentialities of the archive into being that takes up what was left unfinished from an event or form, and reconstitutes a filiation that produces obligation. An *act of continuity* in which the archive is thought of as a 'blueprint' – an attempt – and no longer as a commodity, a fetish on the market of cognitive capitalism. In particular, we will look at how marches, wakes, dances, storytelling and poetry, as well as a whole range of performances, participate in this practice of conservation/preparation, linking the act in the past to the

matter – whose *(re)humanizing*