

## RESEARCH ESSAY

# Writing on the Indelible

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In this research essay, sections will be displaced narratives, each specific to their context, place, and historical reference, but within this writing will be juxtaposed through experiences of discomfort. The survey of stories enacts the author's navigation of instances of multiplicity, and other autoethnographic musings through fragments. This essay is submitted as part of the publication for the 9th Bucharest Biennale.

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## A Short Introduction

Perhaps I should start with a run-through of what you should expect from this paper, as it is, I am writing on short events (perhaps seemingly arbitrary sometimes discordant associations) that have no through-line of thought but bear with me, as they do lead to a speculative *somewhere*. Sections will be displaced narratives, each specific to their context, place, and historical reference, but within this writing will be juxtaposed through experiences of discomfort. Now *discomfort* is broad term that comes with a to us with a familial familiarity, it probably sits in our vocabulary of daily use be it a quick conversation about the weather or the trying times of post-pandemic social interaction. In a way, everyone has experienced and can empathize with a feeling of distinct awkwardness.

*Discomfort* is a bodily condition most often defined by an incessant bad feeling, a slight pain, an embarrassment, an unease—niggling thoughts that something isn't quite right with *you*. Discomfort, much like shame, can also be hoisted upon the body. It does not only emanate from the inside, but can be inflicted from the outside. The body though registers this infliction almost as if it comes from itself (a self-flagellation, if you will).

*Uncomfortable* is a term that people often use to describe how others make them feel in phrases such as: "Talking about race makes me *uncomfortable*". Uncomfortable often pertains to a loss of comfort, a quick comparison of a before and after—like, I was comfortable *before* you started talking about race— and points to an outside source of agitation.

*Speculation* will appear a lot in this writing, as it is what I am putting forward is a speculative line of thought— an idea that tags discomfort as an embodied way-of-being that defines how marginalized communities have learned to move in this world and how this is learned disposition not only generates a specific relation to dominant communities, but also reveals strategies of resilience and survival that punctuate through these narratives. I emphasize the speculative manner of this query as my research, or what was to have been my year of immersion in Australia was disrupted by the realities of a world-wide pandemic. I have nothing to offer but a somewhat nostalgic, easily recognisable yearning to know more, but am also hoping (by brazenly taking this to writing) to present evidence of what I can *hope* to find.

What this Covid-19 pandemic has underscored however (and blatantly laid bare), are that economic and social stratifications still fall largely along the lines of race. Systemic racism has managed to successfully disenfranchise people-of-color, so much so, that one is driven to buy cigarettes with counterfeit bills (in the case of George Floyd). Bruno Latour in his opinion piece on [AOC Media](#) justly charges that the most shocking reveal about this pandemic is not the death count, but how quickly the wheels of the economy system ground to a halt, a system has vastly been regarded as unstoppable and imbibed with a god-like life of its own (beyond human machinations). It can actually be stopped. The construct has been revealed. And so Latour goes on to say, "Injustice is not just about the redistribution of the fruits of progress, but about the very manner in which the planet is made fruitful. This does not mean de-growth, or living off love alone or

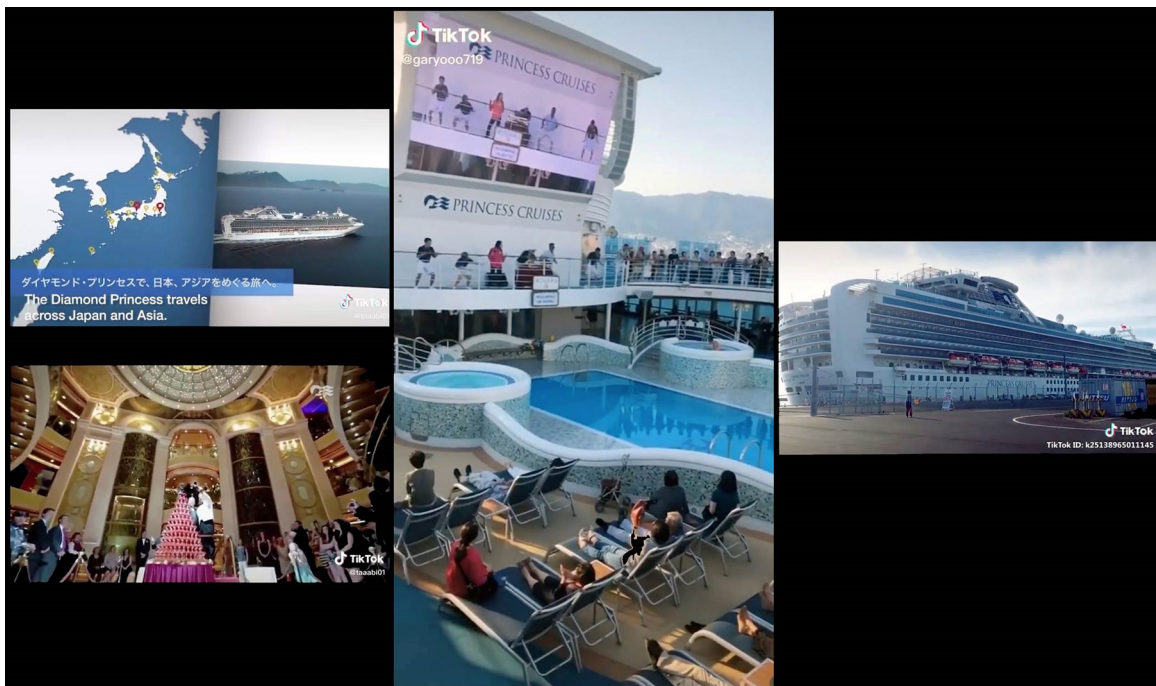
fresh water. It means learning to select each segment of this so-called irreversible system, putting a question mark over each of its supposed indispensable connections, and then testing in more and more detail what is desirable and what has ceased to be so.”<sup>1</sup>

### I. We are not over the Titanic

On the evening of 3 February 2020, a cruise ship returned to Yokohama Port where it had started its journey on nearly two weeks ago. The 3,700 passengers and crew on board the Diamond Princess were immediately quarantined by the Japanese Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare for what was expected to be a 14-day period. Four days later there were 61 confirmed cases of SARS-CoV-2 infections, the highest known outside of Wuhan, China at this point in time.

The world watched closely as Japanese officials proceeded to refuse anyone off the ship, this included a refusal to include the number of sick into its own Covid19 tally. The Diamond Princess was to stay an undefined international space, challenging the applications of “nationality”, and remaining its own entry (as if a country) in various charts and maps of the spread of the virus worldwide. The Diamond Princess was an anomaly, a glitch in what was (at this point in time) highly nationalized responses to an escalating global crisis. Little did we know that the Diamond Princess would be this crystal ball, a prism through which the we would see how economic, political, social, and racial stratifications laid bare.

What has been glossed over, as the world obsessed over the number of infected vacationers, were the Diamond Princess’ crew and workers and the precarious state of their livelihood and health. Of the cruise ships’ crew, 531 of them were from the Philippines and were hired with temporary contracts. Contracts that are hard to come by, and even harder to continually renew as they are in high demand as by the end of 2018 there would be 330,859 Filipinos<sup>2</sup> on the sea working for the cruise ship industry. The desirability of these temporary contracts emphasize the vulnerability of the temporary worker, who would risk life



**Photo 1:** *Diamond Princess Titanic*, Stephanie Misa and Multiple Spirits, 2020 (video, 9'50). Left to Right: “Diamond Princess Advertisement”, from Tik Tok @taaabi01, “On board the Diamond Princess”, from Tik Tok @gary00719, “Diamond Princess in quarantined at the Yokohama port”, from Tik Tok ID k25138965011145.

<sup>1</sup> Latour, Bruno. “Imaginer Les Gestes-Barrières Contre Le Retour à La Production D’avant-Crise.” AOC Media – Analyse Opinion Critique, 30 Mar. 2020, aoc.media/opinion/2020/03/29/imaginer-les-gestes-barrieres-contre-le-retour-a-la-production-davant-prise/.  
<sup>2</sup> Factor, Mikkah F. “PH Seafarers Need Lifeline or Sink amid Global Rivals.” Inquirer.net, 13 July 2019, globalnation.inquirer.net/177879/ph-seafarers-need-lifeline-or-sink-amid-global-rivals.

and limb to secure a constant stream of income for their family. This vulnerability played a crucial factor in the implementation protocols onboard the Diamond Princess where the crew continued to work despite the alarming conditions of infections spreading throughout the ship. They went on with delivering food with lack of protective wear or instruction on how to properly prevent exposure to the virus, and continued with communal labor such as cooking in the galleys and shared sleeping quarters despite the imposition of isolation in passenger cabins and social-distancing on the rest of the ship. The ship's protocols clearly highlight whose lives were considered less of importance and therefore disposable in cases of emergency.

One Diamond Princess crew member spoke about her experiences, on condition of anonymity, saying that she *feared* retaliation from the cruise company for describing the events on the ship. In the first phase of the lockdown, crew members were ordered to assist potentially infected passengers and also enforce restrictions on them. "All of the crew were given thermometers. If your body temperature exceeded 37.5 degrees Celsius, you had to call specific numbers that were provided by the company, and then go to see a doctor, and then you would be placed in quarantine. But, at the beginning, the medical team was very busy with the passengers. So the crew members got put off, even though some were feeling sick. The crew was so *anxious* back then."<sup>3</sup>

Parallels cannot help but be drawn with another luxury ship liner, the Titanic. Tragedy struck on its maiden voyage from Southampton, England to New York City in 1912 as it hit an iceberg and sank. The exact number of those who perished in the Titanic are still unknown as aside from the usual omissions and name misspellings on the ship's manifest, failure to count musicians and other contracted employees as either passengers or crew members add to the inconsistencies. It is generally believed however that of the ship's approximately 2,200 passengers and crew members, some 1,500 people perished. The crew, of course, suffered the most casualties, with about 700 fatalities. Third class passengers also suffered greatly, as only 174 of its approximately 710 passengers survived.<sup>4</sup>

Of the 3,711 people aboard Diamond Princess on the 20 January cruise, 1,045 were crew and 2,666 were passengers. By the time the entire ship was emptied on 1 March, the Covid-19 count was at 712 patients, of this number 567 were passengers and 145 crew.<sup>5</sup>

The statistics are telling enough to pose the question whose lives are disposable in times of crisis?

## II. Filipinos (edible and non-edible)

Aside from the name given to the people of the Philippines (a country named after King Philipp II of Spain: *Las Islas Filipinas*), **Filipinos** (plural) is also a cookie, whereas **Filipino** (in singular) is the official national language of the Republic of the Philippines. A lot of confusion can come from this (whether speaking of the people, a cookie, or the language) as is the ambivalent nature of the name, "Filipino".

The Philippines, as an archipelagic nation is home to around seven main languages and 175 variations of those languages spoken in different island groups. It was an executive order by Philippines President Manuel Quezon (signed in 1937) that decreed *Filipino* a national language. Before then, "Filipino" as a language did not exist. Under the recommendation of the Institute of National Language (a task force formed to survey the existing languages of the Philippines), Tagalog was declared the base of the new Filipino language on the basis of its "rich" literary tradition, and as Manila was historically the economic center of the Philippines through both Spanish and American colonial eras. "Filipino" as a language was really just Tagalog given a more Nationalistic bent.

This made my own first language, Cebuano, a *bastard tongue*— a language learned through community, family, and friends that finds its agency in a more performative presence rather than a written one. The difficulty in most colonized, multi-linguistic nations is that more often than not, non-dominant languages are "demoted" to a purely oral level. Linguistic nationalism ironically adheres to a colonial ideology, as it maps

<sup>3</sup> Patton, Elaina, Wright, Robin, and Chotiner, Isaac. "The High-Risk Work of a Cruise-Ship Crew Member Under Coronavirus Quarantine." *The New Yorker*, March 11, 2020. <https://www.newyorker.com/news/as-told-to/a-cruise-ship-crew-member-describes-a-failed-effort-to-contain-the-coronavirus>.

<sup>4</sup> Tikkanen, Amy. "Titanic." *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 21 Mar. 2020, [www.britannica.com/topic/Titanic](http://www.britannica.com/topic/Titanic).

<sup>5</sup> Statista Research, "Japan: Diamond Princess Coronavirus Cases 2020." Statista, 4 Sept. 2020, [www.statista.com/statistics/1099517/japan-coronavirus-patients-diamond-princess/](http://www.statista.com/statistics/1099517/japan-coronavirus-patients-diamond-princess/).

linguistic hierarchy onto social hierarchy. In effect, the Philippines, despite its geographic character as an *archipelago*, is discursively (and metaphorically) rendered a mere *island*.<sup>6</sup>

Well this *bastard tongue*, has been given a gift— the gift of unregulated otherness. Perhaps this is what it means to have a living language: one that is tied to people rather than structure, one that can viscerally mirror contemporary concerns and are in themselves their own contemporaneity. This also means acknowledging that the language of enculturation can come from many different sites, and nine months in a mother's womb does not guaranty eloquence in her tongue. It opens to the idea that a “mother tongue” is not sustained by the single starting point it implies, but for trans-national, multi-language speaking identities, is a gift offered by *many* mothers.

So imagine my surprise when on my first ever trip to Spain I run into package of cookies with “Filipinos” emblazoned on its packet. Filipinos are chocolate-covered cookies shaped like a ring, or a mini-doughnut (with a hole in the middle). These cookies, unnervingly named after my ethnic identity, were made by Artiach, a former family bakeshop base in Bilboa in 1907 and was now a cookie-making conglomerate with 100 year history of baking “Filipinos”. Ironically, if the Filipino cookie was made in 1907, this would have been an act of reminiscence and nostalgia as the Spanish left the Philippines in 1890.

I had, at that point, never run into food I should take personal offence at. Sure, there was the danish, and the vienna sausage, and frankfurter, and hamburger— but these were food pointing to places of origin— like the much debated french fry (or “freedom fries” at one point in recent American history)— this was not food commentary on the outward appearance of a people by its former colonizer. Diminutive in size, the Filipino cookie could be a fat ring on a child's finger, its brown chocolate cover a reference to my skin, its caramel-colored crunchy *galletas* in the center perhaps a swing at our cultural civilization under the hands of both Catholic church and Spanish governance, an ownership of over mind, body, and soul. Perhaps we were always disposable, made to nourish the Spanish colonial body.

Whatever the cookies' original intent, I took perverse pleasure in eating it.



**Photo 2:** Filipinos in a grocery store. Photo credit: Cedric Castillo on Twitter.

<sup>6</sup> Cuevas-Hewitt, Marco. “Sketching Towards an Archipelagic Poetics of Postcolonial Belonging.” *Budhi: A Journal of Ideas and Culture* [Online], 11.1 (2007): 239–246.

### III. Lola, my grand-mother tongue

As a child, I had never fully understood my grandmother's predicament of being in-between, not being fully Filipino, yet never being Hawaiian (or American) either. She married my grandfather when she was 23 years old, and moved to his hometown in the Philippines, Cebu. This may have been the first time she had ever been to the Philippines. I felt she was somehow different from all the other *Lolas* (the Filipino endearment for grandmother) around. She always spoke with a lilting English, and could never quite speak Visayan (the dialect from our region in the Philippines).

My grandmother was raised in Hawaii in a particular moment in time when Philippine- Hawaiian relations peaked at the turn of the 19th century while both were American "protectorates" (a euphemism for colonies). Officially under American governance since the relinquishing of Spanish territories to the United States, the Philippines became an ingenious source of uncapped labor for the Hawaiian Sugar Planters Association (HSPA).

Recruitment of Filipino laborers started slowly in 1906, reached its peak in 1923. These laborers who left for Hawaii were called *Sakadas*, a term derived from the Ilocano (a dialect of the Ilocos Region of Northern Philippines) phrase *sakasakada amin*, meaning, "barefoot workers struggling to earn a living".<sup>7</sup> The Ilocos Norte Province was a favorite for recruitment resulting in Ilocanos being the largest Philippine ethnic group in the plantations. Recruitment would last for 40 years, finally ending in 1946.

Cayetano Ligot, my grandmother's father, was assigned as the first Resident Labor Commissioner to Hawaii after a string of "visiting investigators" failed to represent the real working conditions of Filipino Farmers on Plantations. Their reports were similarly worded due to data mostly furnished by the HSPA themselves.<sup>8</sup> Ligot was fairly unpopular during his tenure as Resident Labor Commissioner, often accused as working for the interests of the HSPA versus assisting the *Sakadas* in their grievances. The Hanapepe Workers Strike of 1924 would be the height of this unrest, setting the tone for future labor rights negotiations.

I knew very little about my Grandmother's father, or of my grandmother growing up in Hawaii. Stories about Cayetano Ligot were often the stuff of legends. He was a former seminarian turned "Aglipayon" (a Philippine Religion founded by a former bishop, Gregorio Aglipay, that broke off from Catholic Church during the height of (Spanish) Catholic atrocities in the Philippines), a free mason, and an avid reader.



**Photo 3:** Cayetano Ligot, center, celebrates his birthday in Oahu with all his children present. Photo courtesy of the author.

<sup>7</sup> Alcantara, Ruben R. "Sakada: Philippine Adaptation in Hawaii." Lanham: University Press of America, 1981.

<sup>8</sup> Pablo, Severino V. "Remembering the Sakada Pioneers in Hawaii." Ilocos Times, 13 – 19 September 2004.



**Photo 4:** Gloria Ligot, circa 1940s, during a celebration of the *Santacruzán*, a ritual pageant held on the last day of the *Flores de Mayo* (a Philippine festival for the Virgin Mary), in Oahu, Hawaii. Photo courtesy of the author.

But my mother mostly remembered him (her grandfather) as a quiet man who enjoyed teaching her short-cuts to her multiplication tables.

The interviews I conducted in Laoag, Ilocos Norte, where he acted as Governor between the years 1919–1922 did not tell me much about him either. His portrait was missing from the Governor’s Hall. It seemed his work as acting-governor had not left an indelible mark on the city. Even the library that City Hall records claimed he (Cayetano) opened and inaugurated in 1921 was left empty. They just had moved to better and brighter facilities a year ago. I finally stumbled on the only surviving landmark I could find of his. It was a small street named “Ligot”, where the old Ligot Family home had been.

The diversity of the Filipino diasporic experience is often left unaddressed and conveniently reduced to give way to a cohesive idea of the Filipino foreign worker as a “hero of the nation” (*balikbayan*). Most Filipino immigrant stories refer to a voyage away from the “motherland”.

In the cultural usage of the Filipino diaspora, “*balikbayan*” literally describes “*balik*” (return) and “*bayan*” (city), the return of Filipinos permanently living abroad as tourists. The term “*balikbayan*” not only denotes a changed perception of space (the hometown, the hometown is now viewed through the lens of the temporary stay in tourism), but also a radically different concept of identity, which is defined by volatility instead of permanence, and thus not by which is generally associated with stability but with mobility. However, what the term “*balikbayan*”, this temporary return, does not mention, are the various forms that this return can take.

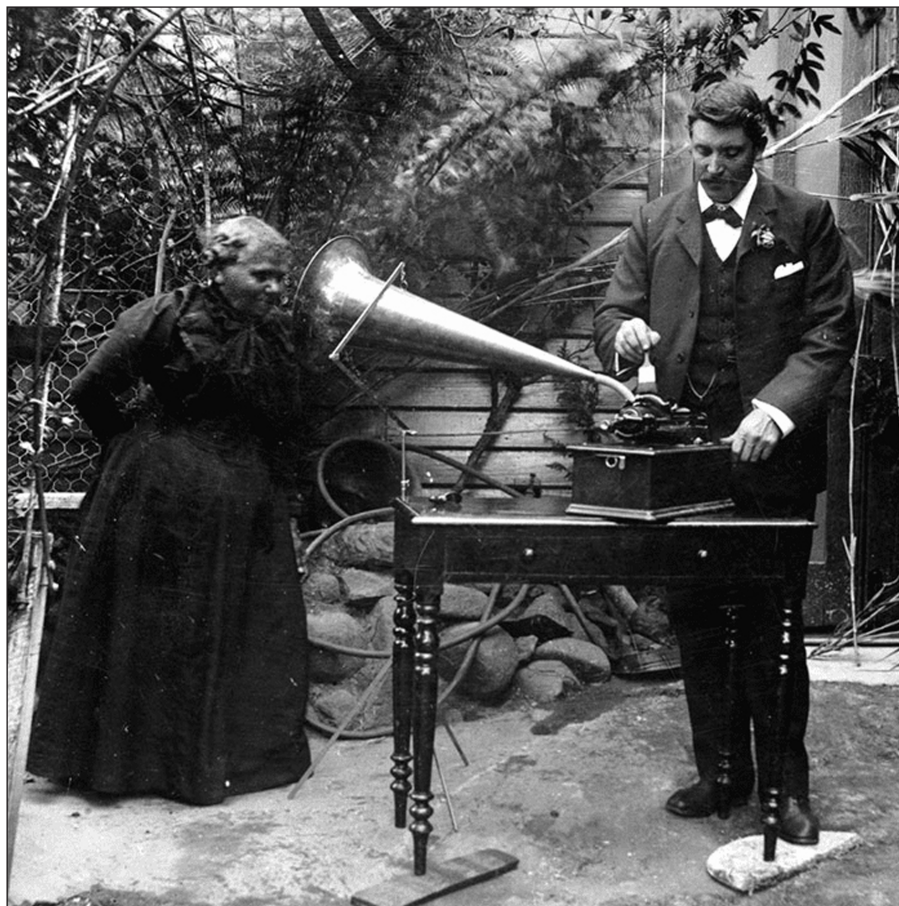
The importance of return is also shaped by the multiple forms of the diaspora. How does the return differ from those who have always called other cities, other countries their home? Does returning home to parents or grandparents represent the same imaginative and emotional leap “back home” for second and third generation immigrants? In a world of increasing global mobility, is the sentimentality of returning compared to previous forms of longing still justified? How do we go back? And should we do that at all?

My grandmother's story is one of assimilation and a journey that returns "home", where "home" felt as foreign as being away. As Stuart Hall so aptly says "if this paper seems preoccupied with the diaspora experience and its narratives of displacement, it is worth remembering that all discourse is 'placed', and the heart has its reasons."<sup>9</sup>

#### IV. Fanny Cochrane-Smith

I am trying to understand my fascination with Fanny Cochrane-Smith. Cochrane-Smith was a Tasmanian Aboriginal woman whose wax cylinder recordings of Aboriginal songs are the only evidence left of a Tasmanian Aboriginal language. She lived in the Oyster Cove Aboriginal establishment with her mother and sister before marrying William Smith, an English sawyer and ex-convict transported for stealing a donkey.<sup>10</sup>

In an article written about Cochrane-Smith in the newspaper *The Mercury Hobart* on 23 March 1949 titled "Voice of Extinct People Lives on in Memory and Wax", an 82 year-old Emily Keene narrates Cochrane-Smith's reaction to hearing her recordings played back to her for the first time. She had cried "My poor race, what have I done?" and preceded to be inconsolable. Keene goes on to say, "She thought the voice she had heard was that of her mother". Recordings are powerful ways to communicate and promote cultural knowledge and do suggest that a culture can be "known" partially, even outside of written language, yet, in Cochrane-Smiths' instance, she met her own recordings with a sense of sadness. I would like to try to understand this sense of "loss" through a more physical dimension of a reduced embodiment, a betrayal to the body of the orator.



**Photo 5:** Fanny Cochrane Smith Recording. Photo credit: Sinchi Foundation <https://sinchi-foundation.com/news/fanny-cochrane-smiths-songs-survival/>.

<sup>9</sup> Hall, Stuart. "Cultural Identity and Diaspora." *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*. Ed. Jonathan Rutherford. Lawrence & Wishart, 1990 Project MUSE [muse.jhu.edu/book/34784](http://muse.jhu.edu/book/34784).

<sup>10</sup> J. Clark, "Smith, Fanny Cochrane (1834–1905)." *Australian Dictionary of Biography*. National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/smith-fanny-cochrane-8466/text14887>, published first in hardcopy 1988, accessed online 29 June 2020.

In an effort to recover some sort of research impetus (now that a trip to Australia has officially been cancelled for the year), I scoured the internet. I wanted to see what I could know of her, of the wax recordings, from far away. The bounty of the internet is not to be underestimated. I soon found that small enhanced segments of the 8 wax recordings were accessible through the National Film and Sound Archive of Australia and available online,<sup>11</sup> aside from having the original records at the Tasmanian Museum and Gallery.

Another gift was from a catalogue archived online by the National Library of Australia that was written by Murray J. Longman from the Tasmanian Museum in Hobart, on proceedings he had undergone for the re-recording of 8 the wax cylinder records for the Royal Society of Tasmania. What was to follow in the paper, was not only a detailed description of the physical condition of the wax cylinder records themselves, but Longman goes into minute detail into his recording technique, who were present at the recordings, when and where they were originally made, and a written copy of each recorded song and audio clip (as translated by himself and his wife)— what was to follow reads like a court transcript. To give an example, this was one of the entries:

*Record 1 (15685/M3317).*

*This cylinder which was unbroken but in poor condition, consists of an introduction and song by Mrs. Fanny Smith. She speaks in English, answers several questions and concludes by singing her version of the "Corroboree Song" in the Tasmanian language.*

*"I'm Fanny Smith. I was born on Flinders Island. I'm the last of the Tasmanians ... the island ... how about that. I'll tell you the truth, the truth. About us. My mother's name was Tangnarootoora. We are some true born sisters from Flinders Island, where we were for seven years and I am well, since good time".*

*A question is asked here. "You ask me if I remember my father? My father Noona. Noona not here. Noona, Noona gone...My father Noona. My father was a whaler, left my mother, all gone".*

*Another question is now asked. "My family? I'm married. Goodbye, my father, mother".<sup>12</sup>*

Longman does not stop there, he goes beyond what is in front of him and goes on to give a historical note on the personhood of Fanny Cochrane Smith. Cochrane-Smith has herself claimed the title of the last living Aboriginal Tasmanian, a title, though shrouded in speculation came with the parliamentary benefits of 200 acres of land and a stipend, and of course, the official recognition that comes with it. Cochrane-Smith's bloodline has always been in question though, as her father was never known and many from the Flinders Island and Oyster Cove Aboriginal settlements believed she was "half-caste". Again from Longman's notes:

*Fanny firmly believed that she was a full-blood aborigine and on 14th September on the motion of Mr. Burgess, a Parliamentary Committee met to consider an address to the Governor for an additional £26 p.a. for her. Satisfied after due enquiry, that Fanny Smith was actually the last Tasmanian aborigine, Parliament resolved that the supplementary annuity be sought. However people who had known her on Flinders Island and at Oyster Cove did not agree with this decision.*

*Mr. A. E. Walpole, Police Magistrate of Franklin who paid monthly visits to Oyster Cove, wrote "I have known Fanny Smith (ne Cochrane) for some 27 years, She is a half-caste born of an aboriginal woman by a white man (whose name is unknown)". Mr. H. Hobinson, -son of the protector of the aborigines, stated that he remembered Fanny Cochrane well, that she was a half-caste and her mother was "married" to a prisoner of the crown. In 1884 Parliament passed another resolution granting Fanny Smith 200 acres of land in addition to the 100 acres she already owned, the reason again being that she was the last survivor of the aboriginal race.<sup>13</sup>*

<sup>11</sup> Fanny Cochrane Smith Audio Clip: <https://aso.gov.au/titles/music/fanny-cochrane-smith-songs/clip1/>.

<sup>12</sup> Longman, Murray J. "Songs of the Tasmanian Aborigines as Recorded by Mrs. Fanny Cochrane Smith" Paper and Proceedings of the Royal Society of Tasmania, Volume 94. National Library of Australia, 1960. Accessed June 30, 2020. <https://catalogue.nla.gov.au/Record/6776784>.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.



What is it to be an identity tied to the land, but dislocated by white-settler colonial impositions? I am compelled by the body that is caught in the middle—the body that molds the words, and sounds out this in-between-ess, the being that it is caught in the process of assimilation and refusal, and can't quite catch up to the present, because its past is still its present, and its future is the back and forth of remembrance and emergence. It looks at the occurrence of an unhinging; and in its stead, we find interchanging positions, and a body in translation. Could Cochrane-Smith's cultural displacement be considered contemporary, and does it reflect the discomfort of today's migrants who feel torn between the worlds of their past and their everyday lives? These questions arise in relation to their direct impact on the methods of isolation and segregation that are still effective in modern urban planning and in refugee/asylum processes.



**Photo 6:** Fanny Cochrane Smith, a Tasmanian Aborigine, wearing a belt with wallaby pelts. Photo credit: Wikipedia, Public Domain [https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fanny\\_Cochrane\\_Smith#/media/Datei:Fanny\\_Cochrane\\_Smith.jpg](https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fanny_Cochrane_Smith#/media/Datei:Fanny_Cochrane_Smith.jpg).

As Cochrane-Smiths' lost language is now being carefully reassembled by the Pakana people and their descendants — what is the contemporaneity of the composite language that emerges? I am speculating that the embodiment of an orality, its containment in a colonized, disenfranchised, diasporic body, is exactly what gives it power. One that cannot be divorced from the body that carries it. I do see orality as a way to access an intersectionality, one that perhaps ruptures the idea of bound cultures, and instead proposes that culture—by extension, language—is in perpetual flux, one that's marked by creative becomings.

## A Very Short Conclusion

So what do the Diamond Princess cruise ship, Filipinos (the cookie & the language), my grandmother, and Fanny Cochrane-Smith have to do with my Artistic Research work into 'orality' (aura-lity) and strategies of survival and resistance? What I sense in these stories is a *discomfort*, a discomfort that stems from being out-of-place, unheard, unseen, or bullied into submission— an ineffaceable stamp that has been carried far too long by those that the system has forgotten, or chosen to forget.

In Gloria Anzaldúa's words "I am a border woman... I have been straddling that *tejas*- Mexican border, and others all my life. It's not a comfortable territory to live in, this place of contradictions. Hatred, anger and exploitation are prominent features of this landscape. However, there have been compensations for this *mestiza*, and certain joys. Living on the borders, and in margins, keeping intact one's shifting and multiple identity and integrity, its like to trying to swim in a new element, an "alien" element."

She continues by writing, "The alien element has become familiar— *never comfortable*, not with society's clamor to uphold the old, to rejoin the flock, to go with the herd. No, not comfortable but home."<sup>14</sup>

No, not comfortable, but home.

## Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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<sup>14</sup> Anzaldúa, Gloria. Preface. *In Borderlands the New Mestiza = La Frontera*. San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 2012.

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