

Re/entangling Irish and Nigerian diasporas: Colonial amnesias, decolonial aesthetics and archive-assemblage praxis

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Abstract

This article discusses the practice of ‘genealogical re/entanglement’ developed in the context of a project about the ways colonial amnesias obscure the connections between the histories of Anglo-European colonialities and the crises of contemporary migrations. This methodology appropriates archival and assemblage art making practices to make visible and ‘familialise’ the prior encounters of Irish and Nigerian diasporans that remain unknown in Ireland, towards reshaping the grounds of present and future relations. The centrality of embodied knowledges in decolonial scholarship creates an imperative of not only grounding theoretical work in the materialities of lived experiences but also confronting the colonial inheritances that underpin the methods employed to engage them. As such, in the contexts of this project, the development of the methodology became a project in itself. In this article, I reflect on the decolonial interrogations and method(il)logical transfigurations of the Western art and research traditions that intersected with and co-constructed the substantive analysis of Irish and Nigerian diasporic entanglements. An interactive account of how the method operates provides an opportunity to explore the ways the interconnectedness of the aesthetic, epistemological and pedagogical projects underpinning decolonial work combine to constitute a dynamic praxis.

Keywords

aesthetics, archive, assemblage, colonial amnesia, decolonial, diaspora, methodology, social arts practice

When Irish people ask me why I’m here, I tell them I’m just returning the favour ...

Festus Ikeotwonye¹

I often say to Irish people I meet here that Nigeria was colonized by Britain but we were integrated by the Irish people ... I was born into a Catholic family. My kids were in a Catholic school that was run by an Irish nun ... my wedding ceremony ... was

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conducted by an Irish priest ... He is actually back in Ireland and I am in contact with him. So, we have had that long-standing relationship ... The Irish people who came to Nigeria lived exemplary lives. You couldn't fault them ... so we always had it at the back of our minds that if we ever had any cause to live abroad, it will be the country that these wonderful people come from. So, it was a conscious decision to come here.
We worked towards that.

Benedicta Attoh²

When I came here I met a lot of people – and ... sometimes they ask you – ‘You are a black man; and the Irish and the black man have no connections’. I do tell them, yes, we’ve got some connections ... We’ve all been colonized by the British empire ... [and] if you go back to Bini history, like the British massacre of the Binis in 1897, it was Frederick O’Shea who controlled the Bini king. We thought all these men were British, but at the end of the day, when I came to Ireland, I began to see O’Shea as an Irish name!

Edwin Igbinosum³

Claims of moral, legal and political responsibility feature heavily in discourse on the phenomenon of irregular migration by sea (or ‘boat migration’). This is understandable given the growing humanitarian catastrophe being witnessed in the Mediterranean region at present... The question of European states’ willingness to share in the burden of saving lives at sea has come into sharp focus in the aftermath of the EU’s decision in 2014 to cancel the Mare Nostrum rescue programme... the unprecedented number of deaths at sea in recent months there seems to be growing acknowledgement in principle that responsibility for the fate of migrants is, or should be, shared among states and institutions at the European level. However, there has been little systematic study of what this shared or collective responsibility actually entails in terms of specific duties and responsibilities.

Call For Papers, Europe’s Shared Burden: Collective Responsibility for Migrants at Sea, Workshop, UCD Sutherland School of Law, 2015

Colonial amnesias obscure the connections between the histories of Anglo-European coloniality and the necropolitics⁴ underpinning the crises of contemporary migrations. The present project arises from a critical exploration of the inheritances of colonial amnesias that infuse each of the preceding quotes and recollections that introduce this article. Edwin Igbinosum’s story moved me to search for information about the colonial officer, Frederick O’Shea. This journey, in turn, became a decolonial project of ‘genealogical re/entanglement’ that attempts to re-member the histories of diasporic encounters between Irish and Nigerian people that, while long-standing, are persistently un-known in Ireland.

The concept of genealogy is engaged here in several ways: as a project of tracing familial ancestries, as a method of critical inquiry in the Foucauldian sense, and as the material outcome – the ‘stuff’ of such excavations. This is not, however, an attempt to isolate or construct some sort of homogenizing ‘lineage’. Rather, this work seeks to make visible the contours of diasporic imbrications – scars as well as overlaps – multi-layered over the course of ongoing Irish and Nigerian interconnections. It is not simply about familiarizing Irish people with their ‘own history’, but *familiarizing* these

geopolitical inter-relationships such that they are re-cognized as part, not outside, of the 'Irish story'. In this way, the intention of the project is to disrupt the Western colonial knowledge formations and methodological nationalisms that endlessly perpetuate the 'repertoires of thinking Blackness in the White European mind' (Broeck, 2014: 109) and to intervene in and imagine beyond the logics that give rise to and sustain questions of *Why are you here? Who should be responsible?*

Inhering in work that stretches across scholarship on decoloniality, the African diaspora, Black Europe and Black Studies,⁵ and anchored in work evolving at the confluences of the 'social turn' in art and the 'arts turn' in qualitative research,⁶ the project quickly became as much a methodological as a substantive one. Traversing the landscapes of Ireland and Nigeria, past and future, art and research illuminated the interconnectedness of the epistemological and aesthetic projects of decolonial endeavours. This, in turn, brought to the fore the challenges for developing praxis, as the promise of both aesthetic transformations and 'epistemic disobedience' (Mignolo, 2009) are ultimately mired in the inheritances of colonial violence. Following Fanon (1967), Gordon (2011: 97) observes that the problem of critically assessing methodology lies in the fact that

[A]ny presumed method, especially from a subject living within a colonized framework, could generate continued colonization. To evaluate method, the best 'method' is the suspension of methodology. This paradox leads to a demand for radical anti-colonial critique. But for such a reflection to be radical, it must also make even logic itself suspect.

Like the substantive diasporic genealogy project itself, the colonial entanglements implicated in the methodological practices I might use for such purposes – and the disciplinary structures in which they are embedded – must themselves be made visible, interrogated and transfigured. In the following, I reflect on the cultivation of a decolonized and, following Gordon, a method(il)logical, so to speak, approach for this re/entangling inter-diasporic genealogy. I begin by framing the landscape that situates the colonial amnesias, diasporic epistemology and decolonial aesthetics at play in this work. I then set out a 'practice genealogy' of sorts which critically maps how I have developed an affective, generative and interventionist praxis through the re/appropriation of archival and assemblage art. The article concludes by way of an interactive engagement with the method and enunciation of some initial outcomes of this work.

Colonial amnesias, diasporic epistemologies and decolonial aesthetics: A practice genealogy

A White New Yorker of despecified (by way of Ellis Island) Austro-Hungarian and Russian descent, I migrated to Ireland in 1996. My arrival coincided with the now historic demographic shift in the population from net emigration to net in-migration.⁷ This followed another historic moment: the then-President of Ireland Mary Robinson's (1995) 'Cherishing the Diaspora' speech given on the occasion of the 150 year commemoration of the Irish famine. In it, Robinson emphasized the inseparability of what constitutes Irishness from the country's long history of diverse 'settlers'.⁸ She also underlined the 'moral relationship' Irish people have with those who left and those who now 'instruct our society in the values of diversity, tolerance and fair-mindedness'. Her narrative portrayed

the inherently contradictory discourses of the Irish diaspora story: one of sorrows, regrets and forced dispossessions on one hand and of achievement, resilience and belonging on the other; a story that ranges from victimhood to heroism and that encourages a shift from the ‘silence of our own past’ to leadership in relation ‘to those who now suffer’.

In 2002, the number of refugees applying for asylum reached a peak of just over 11,600, up from 362 refugees in 1994 (Ruhs and Quinn, 2009). People seeking asylum experienced little of the nobility, dignity and empathy Robinson’s speech exuded. Moral panics manifested through racist hysteria regarding ‘floods’, ‘bogus asylum seekers’, ‘spongers’ and the like, led by the government, vitalized by the media and perpetuated by the general public replaced any sense of ‘moral relationship’ with those born elsewhere. This lent justification for the establishment of the carceral system of Direct Provision,⁹ which would become the next iteration of the country’s nearly 200 years of colonial and post-colonial ‘coercive confinement’ culture (O’Sullivan and O’Donnell, 2012; Smith, 2007). Amid accusations of ‘citizenship tourism’ directed primarily at African women, the 2004 citizenship referendum revoked the constitutional basis of *jus soli* citizenship (Loyal, 2011).

Colonial amnesias

Constituting a majority of those making asylum claims at that time (and Ireland’s so-called first ‘experience’ of diversity on a demographic scale), Nigerian people did not experience the ‘welcome home’ implied by Benedicta Attoh’s recollection or what the many other Nigerians I knew, worked with and interviewed had imagined. Through personal relationships, I had heard of the varied and entrenched roles of Irish missionaries, educators and volunteers in Nigeria. In interviews with White Irish people in the early years of the country’s ‘new’ ‘migration age’, many recalled that their first ‘experience’ of people of colour was with the ‘Penny for the Black Babies’ collection box campaign (Feldman, 2006, 2008).¹⁰ From many years of working for and with migrant-led and support organizations and undertaking participatory researches in these contexts, I had also heard many stories from White Irish students, activists and development workers about the trips to Africa that played a large role in their political activation and life trajectories and also informed the practices that they brought with them back to Irish civil society.¹¹

It was in the context of the project, *Placing Voices, Voicing Places*,¹² that I encountered Edwin Igbinosum’s account of Frederick O’Shea. This work explored the dynamics of ‘diverse heritages’ in Dublin city – and if such plurality is even possible within the hegemonic lexicon of national heritage discourse. As part of the work, I undertook a series of small projects that involved oral histories, photovoice, local heritage walks and discussion sessions and digital storytelling (See note 12). Seeking to avoid imposing a touristic, state-centric, stereotypic frame on the discussion, I employed a working definition of heritage ‘as something you carry with you and seek to pass along’. The O’Shea story moved me to search for more information about Irish involvement in British colonialism and empire and to consider the ‘inheritances’ that ‘newcomers’ were, in a sense, bringing ‘back’ to Ireland (Feldman, 2015b, 2015c, 2016).

I have yet to locate O’Shea, and what I did find was a veritable absence of material on Irish involvement in British colonialism which, while unsurprising, spoke volumes. Re/tracing colonialism in Nigeria, however, immediately brought me to the lengthy history

of Irish religious missionization/colonization there (Ekechi, 1972). Because of the duration and extent of Irish religious presence/occupation in the region and the depth of their immersion in local life, this line of inquiry led quickly to the war in Biafra, and the involvement of Irish clergy in the war and famine aid campaign. This was the 'Penny for the Black Baby campaign' Irish people had referred to in their interviews, yet were unaware of the depth of their connections to such a profound moment in their own history.

Over the next few years, with each sunken boat and each life tragically lost in the Mediterranean, Europe's 'migration crisis' grew, along with the wilful amnesias occluding the historic circumstances and the complicities of its own states and peoples that have given rise to it. The advertisement of the *Europe's Shared Burden* workshop, and its focus on questions of *whether* Europe has a 'burden' of 'responsibility' to respond to the 'crisis', articulated without any seeming conscious reference to Kipling's work (*The White Man's Burden*), was a final catalyst for a returning point in my work. This led me away from the methodological nationalism that, having been operating within the arenas of mainstream migration studies, had come to attenuate my work and back to the anti/post/decolonial frames I had used in earlier research in a much more purposeful way. This coalesced with new work with the UCD Parity Studios Artist in Residence programme and collaborations with the National College of Art and Design that re/vitalised my recent explorations of critical arts-research practices and political mobilizations (Feldman, 2015a; Feldman and Nedeljković, 2016).¹³ It was this confluence that gave rise to the present project, and the methodological problematics that underpin it.

Diasporic epistemologies

In an interview with Ruben Gaztambide-Fernández (2014), Walter Dignolo observes that a decolonial approach to diaspora involves a shift from conceiving it as an object of study to an epistemology in itself. This entails an analytical consciousness that turns on the inter-relationships between the materialities of lived experiences in/of diaspora and the decolonial knowledge projects that seek to apprehend and intervene in the conditions of human dis/re/emplacements. On one hand, a diasporic epistemology inheres in the contemporary realities of colonial legacies and amnesias that underwrite the 'perverted frames' and regimes perpetuating White abjectorship (Broeck, 2014: 110), leaving European collective consciousness untouched (Echerou, 1999: 6). At the same time, this requires engaging strategies that un-think, delink from and transform the materialities of dehumanization and the 'coloniality of being' towards re-imaginings and 're-existences' (Albán-Achinte, 2009, cited in Tlostanova, 2017: 35, see also Dignolo and Tlostanova, 2012).

For the purposes of the present project, engaging a diasporic epistemology decolonially involves excavating the entanglements of prior colonial encounters in order to dismantle false separations between diasporans and the material conditions that constitute their diasporic existences. For example, rather than focusing on the specificities of African diasporans living in Europe, scholars are theorizing the condition of Black Europe as a broader, sociohistorical formation, one that, itself, creolizes the coloniality of Europe (Hine et al., 2009; Rodriguez and Tate, 2015).¹⁴ According to Hesse (2009), Black Europe unsettles 'the official map of Europe ... expos[ing] the traces of well-travelled human geographies of displacement and disavowed liberal-colonial assemblages of

race, traditionally obscured under the historical imprint “Europe” (p. 291)’. This type of re/narration illustrates the ways ‘Europe appears different when seen from the experiences of colonization or inferiorization in specific parts of the world, since these “different geographies of colonialism” speak of “different Europes”’ (Chakrabarty, 2000: 16). Following from Chakrabarty, Hesse goes on to observe, European sociopolitical landscapes can be conceptualized as always-already ‘creolized’.

While the etymology of the concept of creolization in academic scholarship is a long and varied one, I take Hesse’s construction as reflective of Glissant’s notion of creolization as a planetary or worldwide ‘mode of entanglement’ (see Chancé, 2011), a global ‘transactional aggregate’ of international cultures, histories and circumstances (Bernabé et al., 1990: 891, in Walcott, 2000: 138). It is a ‘theory of creative disorder’ that subverts the binaries that recreate the colonial gaze (Rodríguez and Tate, 2015: 7), and according to Walcott (2000), ‘requires we think about the possibilities and turbulences of violent cultural sharing that produces new positions of identity and relations’ (p. 139). Thus, in contrast to othering conceptualizations that Echerou (1999) argues construct African diasporans as ‘uniquely’ creolized or hybrid in their struggles to be both Black and European, Hesse alludes to a pluriversalizing force.¹⁵ The creolizing dynamics of a decolonial diasporic epistemology thus create fluid and dialectic landscapes, both, I would argue, within *and across* diasporic genealogies and diasporans.¹⁶ They create opportunities to disrupt, for example, the ‘Irish elsewhere, Nigerians from no-where’ logic that makes possible – and legitimizes – the question, ‘*Why are they here?*’.

Echerou (1999) observes that

What the history of the black diaspora teaches us is that black identity must always be predicated on black experience, and to whatever additional extent possible, on the experience of those others touched enough by black blood to identify themselves with it. Nothing in that act of commitment restricts the growth of the inside. (p. 11)

This perspective coalesces the central problematique of this project: whether Irish people have been ‘touched’ by Nigerian blood – and Nigerian people by Irish blood – enough to constitute something along the lines of the diasporic ‘counter/parts’ Brown (2009) articulates, such that ‘familial’ re-existences can lay beyond such genealogical confrontations.¹⁷ This project of genealogical re/entanglement attempts to make Nigerian histories visible to Irish people by re/tracing Irish trajectories, encounters and presences in (and in relation to) Nigeria. This, in turn, could render unknown and unknowing Irish histories visible by re/tracing Nigerian trajectories, encounters and presences in (and in relation to) Ireland. But what methods or practices might give way to these creolizing de/colonial re-memberings? Through what means might this decolonial diasporic epistemology be made manifest in its effectively and appropriately method(ill)logical form?

Decolonial aesthetics/aesthesis

Recent discussions concerning the evermore central roles of art and aesthetics in decolonial projects have focused on the ways modern/colonial regimes of the aesthetic have demonized non-European ways of living, thinking and being, as well as controlled and

closed down peoples' sensual/embodied forms of perception (Lockward, 2013; Mignolo and Vázquez, 2013; Tlostanova, 2017). According to this perspective, the canon of aesthetics, based on Western notions of beauty, rationality and ethics, has delegitimized and excluded 'other' forms of embodied expressions, experiences and knowledges. Central to this work is the identification of the fundamental difference between the terms, aesthetics and aesthesis (the latter emphasising the centrality of the sensory and sensual experience) and the ends towards which they are deployed. Working through the lens of *aesthesis* creates fertile ground for decolonial art practices and scholarship that not only engage radical critiques of modern/colonial art regimes, but give form to decolonial subjectivities through 'the confluence of popular practices of re-existence, artistic installations, theatrical and musical performances, literature and poetry, sculpture and other visual arts' (Mignolo and Vázquez, 2013). Tlostanova (2017) observes that

Art acts as a crossroads of being and cognition, in which reason and imagination interact ... Thus art gives an insight into different ways of understanding always stressing the multiplicity of truth and the equality of its different interpretations. This specific knowledge would always be relative, non-absolute, multi-spatial, and vacillating between reason and imagination. (p. 35)

The epistemological and aesthetic projects of decoloniality are thus inextricably linked – in terms of their transformative potentials, but also given their colonial inheritances. As is well documented, art and cultural production amplified the discourses and practices of scientific racism and supplemented the 'documentation' that legitimized colonial genocide and empire building (Berkhofer, 1979; Smith, 1999). In turn, Western Enlightenment knowledge regimes 'theorized' and operationalized the structural frameworks that justified the decimation, theft and erasure of non-Western, 'primitive' cultures in the name of 'progress', 'civilization' and 'modernity'. Thus, aesthetic practice in and of itself does not necessarily involve, seek or achieve a decolonial imperative, orientation or outcome. In similar fashion, neither socially engaged art nor the incorporation of artists or arts-based methods within the paradigms and parameters of Western research guarantee such work will be non-digestive or non-exploitative or inherently decolonial.¹⁸ Despite decades of participatory and arts-based social research, and the more recent genre of 'artistic research' in third-level arts institutions, the question remains as to whether the fundamental Western/modern/colonial research paradigm has been altered to any significant extent, illuminating the resilience of methodological canons to de[con]structive attempts. The next section provides an account of my attempt to take up Gordon's challenge through decolonial interrogation and re/appropriation of the aesthetic art making practices of archive and assemblage art as the foundation for the genealogical re/entanglement project.

Re/appropriating archival and assemblage art making towards decolonial ends

Both archival and assemblage art involve the work of collection, arrangement and interpretation to make visible and accessible materials typically absent within or located outside received vernacular and hegemonic registers. Archives and assemblages are

multiplicitous in content, form and function in that they are *constituted* through artistic and knowledge actions and outcomes, as well as *constitute* collections of things. In the contexts of the present genealogy project, a key inspiration from archival practice arises in the ‘technologies’ artists and researchers use to re/generate records and collections. The particular contributions of assemblage work revolve around the centering of the dynamics of relationality and the aims of disturbing the coherence, stasis and inevitability of the materials that comprise it. Both lend themselves to aesthetic, collaborative and generative engagements between the maker(s), materials and publics from which interventions that cultivate decolonizing re-narrations and subjectivities may be engaged.

The archive/archival art

Over the past several decades, the mutually reinforcing ‘archival turn’ in both the humanities/social sciences and in art has transformed the conceptualizations, functions, activities and institutions relating to practices among scholars, artists, librarians and professional archivists alike (Manoff, 2004). This has generated a rich and varied landscape of practices that draw from poststructural and post-colonial theories on one hand to long-standing work concerning participatory development and research and methods of critical pedagogy on the other. A central outcome has been the innovative development of critical heuristic tools and lexicons involving constructs and metaphors around traces, absences, silences, erasures and hauntings used in the work of making visible invisibilized lives and the stories and knowledges they carry. Stoler (2002) observes that post/colonial critique of archives in the field of anthropology is part of a wider critical knowledge project concerned with examining ‘the legitimating social coordinates of epistemologies ... how people imagine they know what they know and what institutions validate that knowledge, and how they do so’ (p. 95).

Manoff (2004: 38–39) observes that the imperial archive inhered in the fantasy that imperial control ‘hinge[d] on a British monopoly over knowledge’ conceived of as universal and essential, whereby the British could imagine they controlled all the territory that they were able to document. This, as Stoler (2002) describes it, constituted a system used by the colonial state to tell stories to itself. And ‘at the very moment that the creation of national archives in European nation-states enabled the writing of history’ observe Basu and de Jong (2016), ‘this form of knowledge production erased the historicity of the colonised’ (p. 8). In this way, re-reading archives ‘along the grain’ provides insights into ‘the tropes and technologies of legitimation and reproduction in order to write “un-State-d” histories that might demonstrate the warped reality of official knowledges and the enduring consequences of such political distortions’ (Stoler, 2002: 99).

This approach to critical and post-colonial anthropology reflects a shift from conceiving the archive as resource to subject, from text to object, from extraction to ethnography (Basu and de Jong, 2016; Stoler, 2002). As a source of both epistemic violence as well as utopian possibilities and future imaginaries, Basu and de Jong (2016) focus attention on the epistemic disobedience of archives – their ‘multidirectional flows of texts, images, embodied practices and discursive strategies that transcend geographical and historical boundaries and are as much about Europe as the many “elsewheres” against which Europe imagined itself’ (p. 6). Yet in order to develop a radical critique of European enslavement and White abjection that intervenes in the ongoing production of Black

social death and the genocides they legitimize, Broeck (2014) argues that we must break away from the reliance on ethnographic documentation, of what she refers to as 'ethnographic benevolence' (p. 126). Thus, there may be limitations of 're-reading' on its own, even if it directs our attention to the irrationalities and the silences necessary to reach beyond coloniality or engage decolonial acts.

Herein lies a qualitative difference between art and social research. For artists, the archive not only constitutes a source of raw material but a site of *creative practice* (Breakwell, 2008). It is a locus for critical inquiry *and* intervention, involving the movement and transformation of archival records through art production, display, circulation, consumption and exchange (Carbone, 2017). Drawing on naturally occurring, non-institutional archives of popular culture and everyday life as well as their own personal archives (Carbone, 2017), archival artists draw attention to 'the nature of all archival materials as found yet constructed, factual yet fictive, public yet private' (Foster, 2004: 5). Through their use of 'critical-aesthetic' strategies to alter and fabricate records, artists 'reconsider historical narratives, interrogate modes of representation, question absences, expose missing or silenced voices in the records, and explore the relationships between official and personal memory' (Breakwell, 2008: np). They work with 'the archive's potential not only for the stories it tells by itself – but also for the enabling of other, multiple stories through its interaction with the viewer or reader and their consequent re-interpretation, re-iteration or re-presentation' (Breakwell, 2008). In this way, Breakwell observes, 'Multiple readings of archive materials are possible, through each user ... having the same experience of encounter without disturbing the traces for others'.

Recent literature emphasizes the centrality of the affective dynamics of archives (Carbone, 2017; Lee, 2016; Sheffield, 2014). Carbone (2017) argues that records are not solely representations of particular realities, but that they are 'affectively charged objects able to move people into new ways of being and doing' by evoking 'bodily shifts – corporeal, emotional or cognitive reactions (sensations, feelings, thoughts) in those that engage with them' (p. 102). Through her queer/ed approach to archival productions, Lee (2016) seeks to unhinge the hierarchies of knowledge through the sensual, sensuous, sense-making bodyness of the archives in order to produce and activate imaginings that might function to create spaces of home and of simultaneous resistance for non-normative and underrepresented peoples and communities (p. 39). Such reactions and relationships, between and among the archive's moving 'body' of parts (i.e. archives, archivists, records, creators and visitors), between individuals and communities and between history and memory, can, in turn, prompt human agency and action (Carbone, 2017; Lee, 2016).

These aesthetic qualities are central to the interventionist potentials of archival art. Sheffield (2014) observes that an

archive intervention is a research-based art practice that seeks to enliven relations between archives or research collections and the communities they serve. The overall aim of the intervention is to generate new interest in a collection and re-establish its importance and relevance ... Interventions can take any form, but many include an exhibit, workshop, or event that is intended to challenge the community to challenge the collection. (p. 12)

Such work can serve to amplify and commemorate voices, social action, dissent and new paths (Carbone, 2017), particularly in the collaborative contexts of socially engaged

arts practices by ‘using records to pose questions with, elicit memories of, and create dialogue and generative social exchanges’ (p. 103).¹⁹

Assemblage/the art of assemblage

Assemblage art spans an extraordinary breadth of time, history – in terms of social, political as well as art historical movements – agendas, practices and styles. It is steeped in an extended radical critique of Western societies, canons of art and the social mores through the deployment of antagonistic, anti-establishment and anti-art tactics. As Seitz (1961) narrates in the catalogue for the groundbreaking 1961 Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) exhibition, *The Art of Assemblage*, the movements giving rise to assemblage art – for example, Cubism, Futurism and dada – constituted an

interrelated sequence of currents. They point to a period in which brilliant and daring ... minds totally fragmented or altered traditional and even advanced modes. Perhaps even more important ... for the first time in Western thought – dada substituted a nonrational metaphysical of oppositions for a rationalized hierarchy of values ... [It] released a constellation of physical and intellectual energies through which an artist could (and still can) operate in a way that, at least in the West, was previously impossible. (p. 37; see also Kelly, 2008)

Yet the art historical account of assemblage practice illuminates the Western/modern/colonial propensity to appropriate the cultural practices of non-European cultures, while reproducing the languages, discourses and consequences of White supremacy. On one hand, artists employed assemblage work with the aims of violating the mores of aesthetic coherence and exposing the limits of representation. Yet, their lines of sight remained occluded by the Western European civilizing lens of romanticized, racialized notions of the ‘noble savage’ locked within a less-than-human ‘state of nature’. In Seitz’s (1961) own words, ‘No mode of creation is more direct or naturally arrived at than the accumulation and agglomeration of materials found close at hand. Indeed, some of the finest assemblages are the work of primitives and folk artists ...’ (p. 68). Thus, as Staszak (2004) observes, the forms of expression and practice deemed ‘truer and freer’ and that served as alternatives for these artists were borrowed from ‘those instituted by the West as archetypes of Otherness: the child, the insane, the dreamer, the woman, and the animal. But it’s the Savage, the Primitive who constitutes the main alternative and source of inspiration’ (p. 354).²⁰ It is thus telling, albeit unsurprising, that ‘primitive art’ was considered more an anthropological topic and something to be exhibited in ethnographic museums (Myers, 2006) than art in and of itself.

Commenting on the 1961 MoMA exhibition, Kisin (2012) argues that its failure to include any non-Western art erased the non-European ontologies that influenced many of the artists’ approaches to their materials and practices. In relation to another major exhibition 50 years later in 2011, she observed that while *Hunters and Gatherers: The Art of Assemblage* centred on the theme of the universal human compulsion to collect, and recognized the long-standing hybridity of Western art, it was ‘contained by a modernist vision in which only the Western artist emerges as bricoleur-savenger’ (no page). Combined with an emphasis primarily on the ceremonial contexts relating to the

non-Western art that was included in the catalogue, she argues that a universal notion of assemblage thus ‘enable[d] a one-way tracking of routes between the West and non-West ... that becomes a contemporary rubric under which non-Western objects – and only historical, ceremonial ones from the classic periods of collecting – can be recognized as “art”’ (Kisin, 2012, original emphasis).

In terms of practice, across both art and academic research, assemblage has been described as work based on ‘the fitting together of parts and pieces’, constructed from odds and ends and often discarded or purloined objects – suggesting transformation, loss, reinvention – through acts of bricolage (Dezeuze, 2008: 31). Similarly to an archive, the individual elements produce something beyond the collection itself; something ‘that has properties of its own’ (Trewn, 2013: 26). However, the materials in the archive are included as fundamentally independent, individual elements: they may or may not ‘relate’ to each other. In contrast, the individual parts of the assemblage ‘belong’ solely on the basis that they ‘amplify’ one another and have the capacity to change or transform the whole in some way. This transformative dynamic relies on the generation or maintenance of some element of tension such that the parts do not collapse into each other. As Trewn (2013) observes that an assemblage is a ‘heterogeneous totality which arises through the interaction between component parts, while the properties of the parts are not defined by their relations’ (p. 27).

Thus, as a theoretical tool, Kisin (2012) notes that assemblage practice ‘allows for an explanation of social action, of doing things, that is sufficiently ephemeral and processual. Analysis in such a frame consists of tracing the contingent connections that constitute emergent social worlds’. As such, assemblage theory has been applied to a range of sociopolitical contexts and ‘things’, and appropriated by those working in an array of disciplines outside of art/art history, including general social theory and philosophy (DeLanda, 2016; Deleuze and Guattari, 1980), research methods (Marcus and Saka, 2006), and in the contexts of substantive literatures involving critical re/conceptualizations by feminist, queer, race-critical and decolonial scholars (Puar, 2011; Trewn, 2013; Weheliye, 2014).

In the contexts of the latter scholarship, an assemblage-focused perspective introduces a shift from the overemphasis of discursive, linguistic and identity-centred lenses of representational politics to attending to more corporeal, affective and performative dynamics and circumstances (Puar, 2011; Trewn, 2013; Weheliye, 2014). Puar (2011) argues that this overcomes the categorical limitations of intersectionality whereby ‘race, gender, sexuality – are considered events, actions, and encounters, *between* bodies, rather than simply entities and attributes of subjects’, their patterns and properties, and the affective conditions necessary for these encounters to unfold (emphasis added). The focus on performativity and the affective conditions necessary for such encounters to unfold contests ‘the excessive power granted to language to determine what is real ...’ (Puar, 2011). As such, Weheliye (2014: 1–2) writes that assemblage theory ‘recalibrate[s] conceptual frameworks’ creating a better balance between ‘alternative modes of life alongside [critiques of] the violence, subjection, exploitation, and racialization that define the modern human’. Assemblage in this sense is a ‘theory of possibilities’ (Trewn, 2013: 27).

As a process of interpretation and analysis, Marcus and Saka (2006: 101) acknowledge the usefulness of assemblage as a heuristic tool for apprehending the ‘evanescent and the emergent’ nature of social life. They observe that the deployment of an assemblage approach creates ‘a certain tension, balancing, and tentativeness where the contradictions between the ephemeral and the structural, and between the structural and the unstably heterogeneous create almost a nervous condition for analytic reason’ (Marcus and Saka, 2006: 102). They go on to note that these dynamics of juxtapositions, within the process of data analysis, create opportunities for strategic ambiguities, troublings, non-repetition and disorder that are ‘the ground and primary expression of all qualitative difference’ (Marcus and Saka, 2006: 103). Assemblage practice holds great promises for maintaining some of the energetic – and aesthetic – qualities of interpretation, analysis and potential forms of inter/active interventions through re-narrations, reconfigurations, offshoots and so on.

Yet, in contrast to the extensive, transdisciplinary cross-fertilization of archival art and research practices, the engagement with assemblage outside of the arts has remained largely at the level of theory, despite the vast wealth of a century of art making. Exclusively rooted in and attributed to the work of philosophers Deleuze and Guattari and their 1980 publication *A Thousand Plateaus*, the evolution of humanities/social science assemblage work has been detached from its art-historical scholarship and material practices. As a result, assemblage vocabulary has been relegated to serving as a heuristic device or simple metaphor. This disconnection derails the deployment of the aesthetic power of assemblage and along with it, its inherently disruptive dynamics and (what, I would argue, ultimately distinguishes it from basic notions of ‘social formation’). Moreover, it obstructs the flows of interventions by artists and other cultural practitioners who operate outside of the Western academy. This limits possibilities for disrupting the perpetual returnings to Eurocentric, enlightenment paradigms, logics and traditions in search of radical or transformative resources. As such, by anchoring my methodology in the aesthetic practices of art making and the art historical foundations of archive and assemblage, I have sought to cultivate forms of embodied inquiry, while maintaining a sustained and constructive, decolonial interrogation of the practice of research.

An archive assemblage of Irish and Nigerian diasporic re/entanglements

Figures 1 to 4 illustrate the core components and dynamics underpinning both the process and outcomes of this method of genealogical re/entanglement. Engaged separately as well as interrelatedly, these components constitute and give rise to descriptive as well as analytical narratives and accounts. Figure 1, the collage prototype, shows a basic collage that (while limited to digital rendering for the purposes of this discussion) visually depicts a landscape of diasporic encounters in which certain ‘features’ may be illuminated, visibilized, marked or mapped out. Prompted by Edwin’s initial account, I collected the material electronically, guided by tacit, intuitive senses and previous researches/searches, and in reaction to the materials I encountered throughout this process. I continually arranged and rearranged the images according to both conscious and unconscious dynamics of collection, chronology and thematic prompts, but visual cues and composition played a fundamental if not primary role.

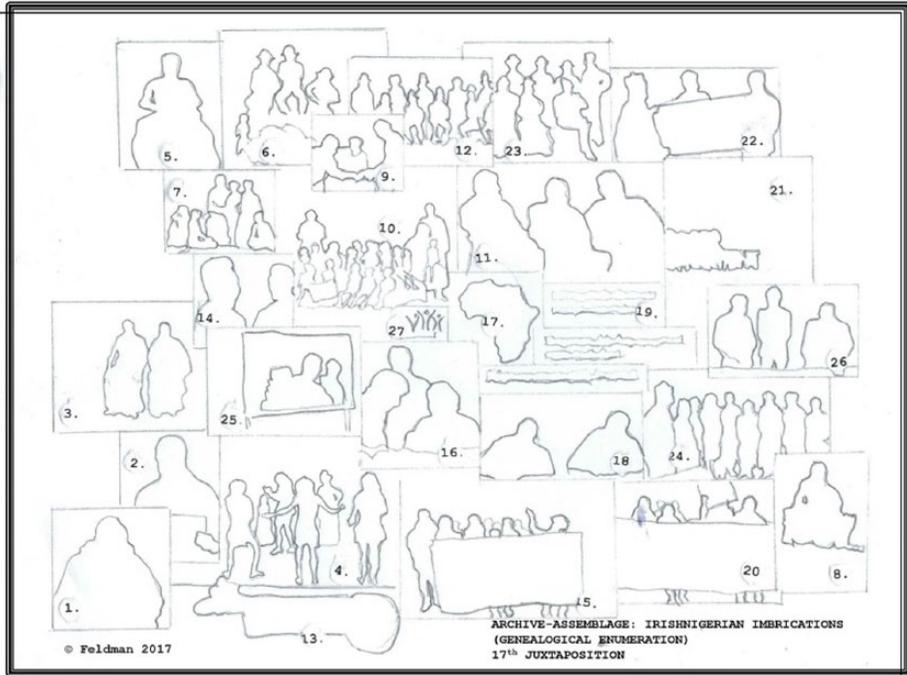


Figure 2. The genealogical enumeration.

about a particular image. Once within the Index, additional items about other images may draw attention, leading back to the collage. The method thus creates a process that generates continual self-interruption – of thought, imagination and sensation through pauses, digressions, starts and stops and physical/visual relocations.

An encounter with the archive assemblage is shaped by the specificities of one's experiences, circumstances and ways of being in the world. As such there are multiple entry points into an emergent narrative and endless possible permutations. Each series of moves, from collage images to Index items and back, changes the 'sense' and 'meaning' being made: reconfiguring narrative maps and cartographies of imagination that may be congealing and re/emplotments of the personal within them. The method propels the re/consideration of the unlikeliest relationships between elements, while maintaining tensions around their incommensurabilities. Such a process automatically stimulates ideas regarding necessary additions, changes, corrections and counterarguments with respect to the archival 'database' and the configuration of the assemblage. The structure of the archive assemblage lends itself to such interventions, when designed to be facilitated through either physical or digital formats and manipulations. Hence, the reader/consumer becomes active participant in the co-creation of 'knowledges otherwise' (Escobar, 2007).

ARCHIVE-ASSEMBLAGE
IRISHNIGERIAN IMBRICATIONS, AMNESIAS, INHERITANCES
(GENEALOGICAL ENUMERATION, 17th JUXTAPOSITION)
PROCESS INDEX (in order of collection) [with notes]

1. & 2. May 2009. Edwin Igbinosum and Edamwen Erokpa. Participating in the Heritage Discussion Group. Dublin Multicultural Resource Centre, Placing Voices, Voicing Places project. Photo: Author. *Inheriting diasporic inheritances*
3. & 4. ND. Members of Bini Community of Ireland during performances in Stephen's Green & at Clonsilla Primary School, Dublin. Photo: Edamwen Erokpa, with permission. *Future heritage(s) 'work'; Bini existence/Irish re-existence*
5. Circa 1897. Oba Ovonramen of (King of Benin) overthrown by the British in 1897. <https://hubpages.com/travel/artworks-of-africa-the-Benin-punitive-expedition-of-1897/> *See item 8*
6. 1897 'British Punitive Expedition'. <https://hubpages.com/travel/artworks-of-africa-the-Benin-punitive-expedition-of-1897/>
A natural resource conflict, legitimised by civilising narratives, funded by theft (Mitchell)
7. Lithograph ND. <https://scholarblogs.emory.edu/violenceinafrica/sample-page/the-philosophy-of-colonialism-civilization-christianity-and-commerce/>
1 in 120 Irish = missionaries; 2/3 of 6517 Irish Catholic missionaries in Africa ;In Nigeria 2419 primary schools educating 560,000+ children, 47 religious-run hospital (Staunton; see also Ekechi; O'Sullivan)
8. 2014. Film, *Invasion 1897*, by writer and director Lancelot Oduwa Imasuen released. <http://akatasia.com/films/invasion-1897-film-lancelot-oduwa-imasuen-official-trailer-benin/> *Resistance, re-narration, re-existence; note original photo of Oba*
9. July 2014. Britain Mark Walker returns Benin bronzes to Prince Edun Akenzua taken during the 1897 British Punitive Expedition and held by his father. <http://www.telesurtv.net/english/news/Stolen-Artifacts-Returned-to-Benin-Palace-in-Nigeria-20140729-0025.html/> *Colonial theft return; Irish version, item 22*
10. September 1968. Photo taken as part of an the Evening Herald/UNICEF fundraising campaign. Photo: Holy Ghost Fathers. <http://www.historyireland.com/20th-century-contemporary-history/the-forgotten-war/> *Photocall for starving children > media 'floods' of refugees; fund-raisers > moral panics*
11. 1968. Bishop Conway of Elfin (right) in conversation with Biafran leader Lt Colonel Odumegwu Ojukwu. Photo: Holy Ghost Fathers. <http://www.historyireland.com/20th-century-contemporary-history/the-forgotten-war/> *Expulsion of 27 Irish missionaries from Nigeria 1970; Irish govt distancing*
12. Colonial Officers of Royal Irish Constabulary outside Officer's Mess in Phoenix Park Dublin; training British Colonial Police see <http://irishconstabulary.com/topic/1903/Colonial-Police-Training-The-Irish-Constabulary-Model#.WRLj1RPyt0w/> *An Irish police for British colonies including Ireland*
13. Logos of 3 major Irish international NGOs that have their origins in the contexts of the Biafran war. *Volunteer-tourism a veritable Irish right/rite of passage*
14. October 1960. Irish Taoiseach Sean Lemass greets Prime Minister Alhaji Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa at Nigerian independence celebrations; Irish Consulate established. *Irish support of African decolonization & UN) = a crucial path out of isolation of Irish WWII neutrality (O'Sullivan)*
15. March 2016. Biafra Community of Ireland participating in St Patricks Day Parade, Waterford, Ireland <http://www.may30.org/biafrans-in-ireland-stunned-waterford-city-with-colourful-display-on-st-patricks-day-video-photos/>
St Patrick – Ireland's original (captive) migrant-turned-missionary; named patron saint of Nigeria by Irish bishops? (check); 30 May 2017, commemoration of 50 anniversary of Biafran war at Garden of Remembrance in Dublin; 'all t/here'; current moment for re-narrations

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Figure 3. The process index, page 1.

16. February 1975. Garret Fitzgerald, then Irish Minister for Foreign Affairs, signs the Lome Convention trade agreement between the EEC and the 71 ACP (African, Caribbean and Pacific) states.
<http://ec.europa.eu/avservices/photo/photoByReportage.cfm?sitelang=en&ref=003879>
Irish contributions to African independence ~ influencing African states to adopt European norms and other initiatives it sought and supported (O'Sullivan)
17. ND. <https://mapcollection.wordpress.com/2012/0619/colonial-africa>
18. 1973. Ireland joins EEC. http://fishingforjustice.eu/wp/?page_id=69/
Implications of Ireland's 'unmistakably European' post-independence path of national development and its internationalisation agendas (O'Sullivan).
19. 2016 & 2017. Selection of newspaper headlines regarding the need to recruit Catholic priests from Nigeria to serve in Ireland due seminary enrolment decrease.
'Returning the favour!?: paradoxical 'gift' ; disgraced Catholic Church; new age secularism
20. November 2016. Direct Provision Protest, Dublin. See Movement of Asylum Seekers Ireland <http://www.masi.ie/about-us/>
PostColony Ireland of Fortress Europe; Direct Provision as latest iteration of British colonial carceral architecture embraced by independent Irish state; From charity model to migrant-led activism
21. November, 2016. Exhibition at Thought Pyramid Arts Centre, Abuja to commemorate Casement's early years in Old Calabar. Irish Ambassador to Nigeria hosts and announces the establishment of a Casement fellowship to fund a Nigerian student to study human rights in Ireland, funded by Dept of Foreign Affairs. See <http://www.thoughtpyramidart.com/index.php/en/>
For Hoy's address see <https://www.dfa.ie/irish-embassy/nigeria/news-and-events/2016/embassy-holds-exhibition-on-roger-casement/>; using centenary to "green-wash" Irish history in Nigeria
22. June 2016. Irish Ambassador to Nigeria returns three route maps of Calabar and other Niger Delta terrains to DG National Commission for Museums and Monuments, Alhaji Yusuf Usman. The maps were designed by Roger Casement who served as British Consul General in Nigeria 1891-95, and lithographed at the Intelligence Division War Office in 1894. https://wn.com/roger_casement_nigeria (See item 9)
23. January 1895. Roger Casement outside the consular residence at Old Calabar. From, 'Casement's maps of the Niger delta'. <http://www.historyireland.com/20th-century-contemporary-history/casements-maps-of-the-niger-delta/>
Casement there in years just before British overthrow of Oba and located in the city of his exile; His maps used guide the 'Punitive Expedition'; see index item 2; See Mitchell (2006)
24. 2016. The Irish Embassy in Abuja, with the Savannah Centre for Diplomacy, Democracy and Development, for commemoration of Roger Casement's time in Nigeria; workshop on the impact of foreign investment on indigenous communities; to write communicate on rights to consultation, transparency of all transactions and independent monitoring. <https://www.dfa.ie/irish-embassy/nigeria/news-and-events/2016/roger-casement-in-calabar/> *Ultimate post/colonial/ising entanglement*
25. 1962. First Guinness Brewery outside 'British Isles' in Nigeria. Another in Benin in 1974. First exported to Sierra Leone in 1827. <http://www.beautifulng.com>
Nigerians have told me: 'Guinness was the first drink I ever had', and that 'We always thought Guinness was Nigerian!' Some noted surprise that Ireland 'also' uses the harp as a national symbol; Note dubious Anglo-Irish roots of Arthur Guinness; Note 'Guinness Made of More' commercial w/ Sapeurs in Brazzaville DRC.
26. Februarv 2016. Thabo Mbeki, Salman Khurshid and Benjamin Mkapa, speaking at event as leaders of former British colonies who 'share' Ireland's experience of transition to independence; hosted by University College Dublin as part of Irish independence centenary <http://centenaries.ucd.ie/events/after-emire-leaders-discussion/>
Heroic discourse of centenary commemoration: Ireland. the nation and its people as inspiring revolution/decolonisation across the Global South.
27. Logo. SPIRASI, the Spiritan Asylum Services Initiative established in 1999 under the trusteeship of the Spiritan congregation (the Holy Ghost Fathers) to provide medical and mental health services to survivors of torture.
www.spirasi.ie *One of the first/few to provide specialist services for refugees; existing in interstices of supporting for migrant-led groups, religious 'charity model', paternalism and exploitation of asylum seekers (see Feldman et al. 2002), funding-driven social engineering & NGO-ification*

Figure 4. The process index, page 2.

Re/entangling provocations: Performing colonialities, green-washing the diaspora and unstating the nation

The entanglements emerging from this preliminary work already begin to make legible the tremendous ambiguities, tensions and anxieties of Ireland's colonial/diasporic incarnations. The fundamental notion underpinning the method is that, ultimately, the 'outcome' – which includes both the materials generated as well as the effects of engaging with its different components – should stand on its own, without a formal narrative to explain or shape a given interpretation: the reader/participant has already 'done' the knowledge work. The following, necessarily brief, interpretive provocations provide further illustration how the method operates to catalyze questions, counterstories and further lines of inquiry through the processes of juxtaposing, isolating, reordering and reassembling images and materials in the archive assemblage.

Celebration of the globality, success and heroism of the Irish diaspora/ns has been a robust theme, particularly since the country's Celtic Tiger 'coming of age' in the mid-1990s (Inglis, 2007). Yet despite the departure from the traditional trope of colonial victim, the legitimizing accounts of Irish peoples' forced departures and (uninvited) arrivals and settlements are still located in the history of British colonization. There is thus a sense that by being colonized by Britain, Ireland as a country was not a colonizer of other peoples, and by association, neither were Irish people. 'Heroic' diasporic narratives can thus focus largely on the achievements of individuals, yet be disconnected from the sociopolitical, cultural, economic contexts in which they have actually operated, and the consequences of their presence. In this way, the complex goings-on in destination countries serve as mere backdrops for studies of the unique strengths of the Irish character, of protagonists not necessarily accountable to or responsible for the wider circumstances in which they were, and still are, implicated. As a result, Irish diasporans are constructed as 'present' but not 'perpetrators'; only passively and indirectly involved, often as unwilling, hapless participants and bystanders caught up in the machinations of empire.

Figure 5 throws into relief the dynamics of performative or performing colonialism that encapsulate this disposition. I found the images on the top left of the collage during my initial searches concerning the 1897 overthrow of Oba Ovonramwen, the Bini King. They include (#6) an iconic image of the invading British forces with the 'spoils' of conquest, and their subsequent (but very rare) return (#9), after decades of protest and mobilization, struggles which are ongoing (Layiwola, 2015). The image of the Irish police force (#12) involved in both training and support of British colonial forces (abroad and 'at home') appears adjacently but in the background, as a haunting and haunted history of contradictory colonial complicities and betrayals. It being 2016 and the year of the centenary of Irish independence, I was curious to see if there were any commemoration events that were hosted in Nigeria or by Nigerians in Ireland. I found a report of an exhibition held at the Thought Pyramid Arts Centre in Abuja on the life of Roger Casement, a well celebrated Irish diasporan known for his humanitarian achievements in Congo and the Amazon (#21). A search for 'Casement in Nigeria' ensued, leading me to the photograph of Casement (#23 back row, right) when he was located in Calabar (where the Oba was later exiled) in 1891–1895, as a member of the British Consulate.

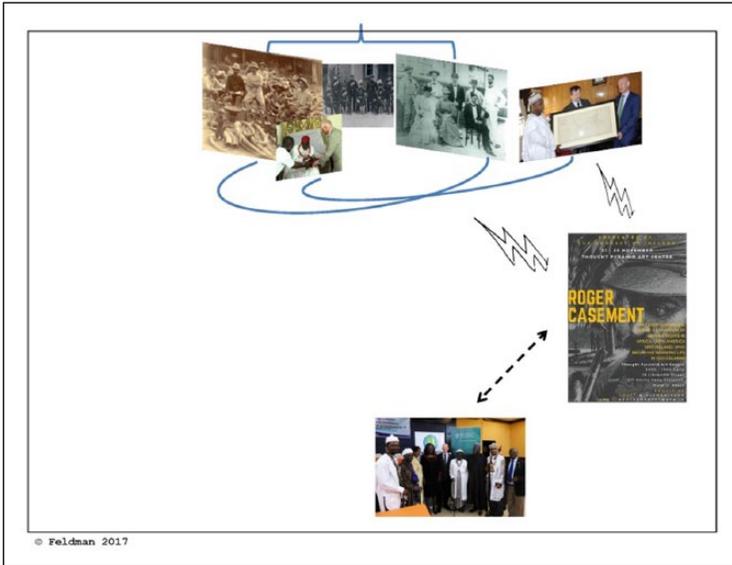


Figure 5. Example of re/interpretive juxtapositions.

Further inquiry located the report of Irish Ambassador to Nigeria Sean Hoy who, in the spirit of the Centenary, returned (or rather ‘gifted’?) three route maps created by Casement to Alhaji Yusuf Usman of the Nigerian National Commission for Museums and Monuments (#22). Casement’s arrival in Calabar – just years before the 1897 invasion – his role in the British Consulate and the generation of maps did not seem coincidental. I then learned from Mitchell’s (2006) research of the trade/resource conflict underlying Britain’s attempts to enter and gain control of the territory, which ultimately led to the invasion. Casement’s route maps evidently were, indeed, used for both planning the exploitation of oil reserves by the Niger Delta Oil Company and navigating the infiltration of the Delta. In this very symbolic, physical and visual gesture of ‘return’, lies the narrative of Ireland’s role as silent partner in British colonialism, as colonialist by proxy.

I had initially assumed that the Thought Pyramid Arts Centre had curated the exhibition and that, by detailing Casement’s time in Calabar, it would also bring light to the shadows of Irish colonial entanglements in Nigeria. For a Nigerian arts centre to curate and share such material in an exhibition launched by an Irish diplomatic figure would have indeed constituted a most unanticipated and surprisingly decolonial move. In fact, the exhibition was, instead, part of the Irish Embassy’s commemoration programme and actually produced by the Kerry County Museum in Ireland. And despite the occasion and location, the exhibition conveyed the standard narrative of Casement’s ‘fascinating life as an important early human rights advocate in the Congo, the Amazon and Ireland’. Noting the ‘little known’ (yet for whom?) history of Casement in Nigeria, in his opening comments, Hoy reproduced the classic picture of the intrepid White adventurer-turned-humanitarian during his time as a British diplomat travelling the country ‘collecting information’ that Hoy vaguely connected to the issue of trade and natural resources.²¹

Hoy spoke at length of Casement's maverick nature (that, it appears, even inspired Joseph Conrad), including his habit of travelling without armed escort so trusting and respectful he was of the people, the first of such officers committed to mutually beneficial trade with 'legal owners'. Hoy reflected, 'One can only imagine the difficulties for Casement as a public official in trying to raise the voice of local people in a world where White men, and they were almost entirely men, were crudely divided into either missionaries or mercenaries'. After an oblique reference to the current conflict in the Niger Delta as being more complex than one simply between external investors and indigenous peoples, Hoy concluded with the announcement of a fellowship in honour of Casement that will support a Nigerian citizen (residing in Nigeria) to study human rights in an Irish university as an international student.

Thus, an event that begins as a celebration of encounters with the potential for considering the intertwined histories of Irish involvement in the colonial landscapes of Nigeria appears to end up mobilizing a strategic post-independence/post-colonial 'greenwashing'. Amnesic narratives are smuggled in, camouflaged by well-known Irish heroic diaspora discourses, cloaked in the celebration of national independence and benevolence, and imposed by an Irish-designed exhibition held *for* the Nigerian public. A multitude of undertones, gestures and cues clearly reiterates the logic, 'Irish here (in Ireland), Nigerians there' (despite all of this taking place *in* Nigeria) – and the construction of an 'Us and Them' logic through a 'foreign affairs' narrative that is strategically disconnected from 'the domestic'.

Another Irish Embassy centenary event commemorating Casement's humanitarian work in Africa and his time in Nigeria included co-hosting a conference on Democracy and Development (#24). In this context, Hoy shared the story of Casement's development interventions on behalf of local communities, including securing funding for the first public water supply, still available from the two 'Casement Tanks'.²² In relation to the other collage elements, this event/image inhabits and further amplifies the nexus of the antagonistic discourses of 'foreign affairs'/'domestic issues' that emerged in the discussion of Figure 5. In partnership with the Savannah Centre for Diplomacy, Democracy and Development, the workshop focused on creating protections for indigenous communities in relation to foreign investment.

As depicted in Figure 6, the isolation and reconfiguration of different assemblage elements in the collage create complex connections with other clusters of previously collected and arranged images. At the time of Casement's deployment in Calabar, 'back home' Ireland itself was coming into a contradictory time of cultural regeneration and political upheaval in the approach to the end of British rule. Sixty five years later, Taoiseach Sean Lemass greets Prime Minister Alhaji Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa (#14) in celebration of Nigeria's independence from Britain. Championing the UN Decolonization project as a way of gaining a seat at the international table following the country's isolation due to its neutrality policy during World War II (O'Sullivan, 2012), in the coming years, Ireland joins the European Economic Community (EEC; #18) and Garret Fitzgerald signs the Lomé Convention trade agreement between the EEC and the 71 African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States (ACP; #16). The country's 'unmistakeably European path' (O'Sullivan, 2012) of post-independence nation-building thus intertwining the two countries' futures in the unequal exchange of geopolitical give-and-take.

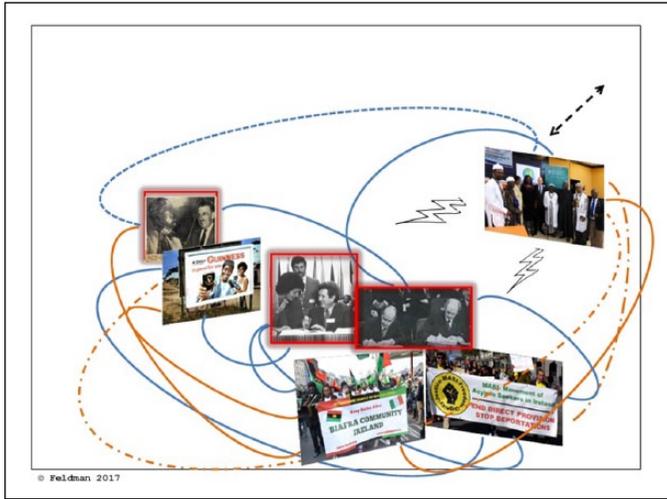


Figure 6. Example of re/interpretive juxtapositions.

These event/images instantiate performances of governmentality which have shaped the landscapes in which Irish and Nigerian people circulate and inhabit whether ‘at home’ or ‘away’. They narrate themes of both the post-colonial nation on one hand, and the Fortress Europe state on the other; the beneficence and largesse of the Department of Foreign Affairs (#24) giving way to the policing of the Department of Justice (Protest of asylum seekers against Direct Provision #20), depending on where Nigerian people are present and in what circumstances. Yet counterposed to the dynamics of border maintenance and securitization, are the fluid, pliable and creolizing forces of diaspora (#14 – Biafran Community of Ireland during a St. Patrick’s Day Parade in Waterford City, Ireland; #25 – billboard for Nigerian Guinness). Forced migrants seeking refuge on foreign shores; who celebrate St. Patrick as a patron saint and drink Guinness stout produced ‘back home’: Strangers yet ‘more than the Irish themselves’.²³ Nigerian people are constructed as both partners and ‘threats’, legitimate and ‘illegal’, kindred spirits and ‘aliens’ in relation to, and by, their diasporic counter/parts.

These re/entanglements embody contradictory, destabilizing, productively de/con/structive re/narrations – both (to use Stoler’s language) ‘State-d’ and ‘Un-state-d’ – or perhaps, *state-ing and un-state-ing*. Ultimately, they return to the fundamental problematique of who (and what) can move, arrive, stay, settle – unfettered, without invitation, without scrutiny and under what conditions. They trouble notions of else-where, no-where, why-here and t/here in ways that move us to more fully consider Benedicta’s view that Nigerians arrive in Ireland already ‘integrated’. That they are thus ‘bringing back’ their inheritances and thereby engaging a process of ‘re/integrating’ the Irish in and into Irish history, society and national culture. That they are, as Festus is so fond of saying, ‘returning the favor’.

These are, of course, my own re-readings and narrative inventions constructed through an entangling methodology that attempts to apprehend diasporic re/entanglements. It is a method that harnesses the dynamics of bricolage and subjectivity, serendipity and flux to

cultivate and manifest epistemic disobedience through aesthetic acts of creative mimicry to intervene in Western practices of knowledge production. While these encounters are not my own diasporic stories, as a diasporan living in Ireland, they are my inheritances. The re/narrations I articulate here carry whatever value my lived experiences in Ireland over the past many years might contribute to potential decolonial re-existences here – as a privileged and engaged diasporan, activist, educator and researcher with decolonial aspirations.

What are the stories of those at the Arts Centre – and among general (Nigerian and Irish) publics – about the exhibition? About Casement? The university fellowship? How/do the inheritances of 1897 and of Biafra shape the diasporic everyday of Nigerian/Nigerian-Irish people in Ireland? What and how can or should they mean to Irish society as a whole? What further stories are there to be told by Irish people who are/were/have been in Nigeria and those who are coming to these histories for the first time? My accounts ultimately have little value on their own, in isolation from larger conversations, in the absence of the collective engagements necessary to animate (newly entangling) engagements among Irish and Nigerian counter/parts that will give life to these decolonial possibilities.

A method(il)logical incitement to decolonial praxis

Through the archive-assemblage configuration of art making and research practices, this method operates at the productive intersections of decolonial aesthetics and epistemological projects. It inheres in a productive amalgamation of the creatively disruptive, reconfiguring, ‘more than’ qualities attributed to both creolization and assemblage theories and practices. These, in turn, mirror the very dynamics of the diasporic encounters they have been engaged to examine. As demonstrated in the preceding accounts, through its method(il)logical design, the resulting practice of genealogical re/entanglement nurtures an ‘aesthetic compulsion’ that creates an irresistible curiosity and urge to inquiry. It does so in a way that is serendipitous and intuitive, perpetually interrupting, contradicting and derailing, always tentative and incomplete, yet inevitably fascinating and profound.

An interconnected element of ‘epistemic disruption’ with this process generates opportunities (or forces spaces) for participants to reflect on their perceptive tendencies, habitual reactions, their blind spots; to be consciously aware of how they perceive, make sense or meaning; how they ‘imagine they know what they know’ (Stoler, 2002: 95), and how they learn, how they encounter the unconsidered, the already known, the unrecognizable, the incommensurate, the dismissed.

The process of developing this method thus also has, for me, illuminated the ways pedagogy operates as the third inter-related sphere of the aesthetico-epistemic decolonial project. For it is the pedagogical dynamic, I would argue, that constitutes the space in which un/re/learnings and reimaginings foment, come forth, reveal themselves; the instances that move, that shift and that carry forward. This is the space of intervention, of mobilization and transformation and of re-existence; the space of decolonial praxis.

Acknowledgements

I would like to gratefully and humbly acknowledge the multitude of people who generously contributed their wisdom, energies and time to the various research, education and mobilizational projects over the years that have informed this article. Special thanks go to artist/sociologist

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Notes

1. Personal communication with a former PhD student.
2. From the project *Getting On: From Immigration to Integration* for the Immigrant Council of Ireland, 2008.
3. Arising during the course of the project, *Placing Voices, Voicing Places*, funded by the Heritage Council of Ireland with additional funding provided by the UCD Seed Funding Research Programme.⁴
4. See Mbembe (2003) and Gržinić and Tatlić (2014).
5. See, for example, Broeck and Junker (2014), Hine et al. (2009) and Mignolo and Escobar (2010). These disciplinary distinctions are, of course, problematic: see, for example, Nimako and Small (2009).
6. See, for example, Thompson (2012), Smith and Dean (2008) and Knowles and Cole (2008)
7. Returning Irish and incoming British continue to constitute the consistent majority of the immigration demographics, in contrast to the popular stereotypical misinformations based on the constructions of 'floods' of refugees or migrants of colour from the Global South.
8. She is referring to the 'pre-Celtic wanderers, by Celts, Vikings, Normans, Huguenots, Scottish and English settlers' noted in her speech.
9. Direct Provision is the system in Ireland for housing refugees seeking asylum and involves the various forms of social welfare and violations of basic rights that are associated with this immigration status (see Loyal, 2011).
10. In the contexts interviews conducted as part of the project, *Identity, Diversity and Citizenship*, funded by the Irish Higher Education Association, PRTL-3 programme, 2003.
11. In the contexts of the project, *Anti-Racism Activists in Ireland*, funded by the Irish Research Council, 2003, with additional funding provided by the College of Social Science and Law Seed Funding Programme, 2015.
12. Partners on these projects included Terry Fagan, Director of the Dublin Folklore Project; Cormac McDonnell, Dublin City Council Integration Unit; Photographer Michael Brown; Digital Storyteller and Ethnographer Dr Darcy Alexandra; Nanette Foley, Dublin Multicultural Resource Centre, the North Centre City Community Action Programme.
13. As part of the project, *Uncomfortable Encounters, Disruptive Pedagogies: Critical Explorations at the Intersections of Art, Research and Education*, Funded by the NCAD-UCD Alliance Seed Funding programme.
14. For work addressing the creolization of Western social theory, see Lionnet and Shih (2011) and decolonizing sociology Rodríguez et al. (2012).

15. 'Pluriverse implies breaking with uni-verse, which might involve the coexistence of diverse life projects, but subsumes and hierarchizes these, obeying the mono-logic by which they all revolve around one central historical, cultural, political and economic organizational axis, coloniality' (Suarez-Krabbe, 2014: 155).
16. This is a multiplication of the spheres Brah (1999) identifies in her framework of 'diaspora space', which she defines as constituted by the geographies and genealogies of those who left and who stayed put. In this case, I'm referring to not only the Irish who left and remained, but to the intersecting diasporas of all the diasporans now present in Ireland who also left 'somewhere' – and that somewhere, itself, being a place also constituted by the intersections of all those leaving, remaining and arriving (see Feldman, 2006).
17. Brown (2009) writes that 'diaspora should be understood not as an existential condition of displacement and dislocation, but as a kind of relation, one between and among counter/parts' (p. 202).
18. See <http://riserefugee.org/10-things-you-need-to-consider-if-you-are-an-artist-not-of-the-refugee-and-asylum-seeker-community-looking-to-work-with-our-community/> and <http://decolonialityeurope.wixsite.com/decoloniality/charter-of-decolonial-research-ethics>
19. Discussing a socially engaged artwork by Sand and Imatani.
20. Yet despite noting the various ways art and the artist were implicated in the broader projects of colonialism, Staszak (2004) is quick to emphasize that '[i]t would be exaggerated to set the artist on the front line of colonization, instead of the more conventional figures of the military, the missionary and the planter' (p. 357).
21. See <https://www.dfa.ie/irish-embassy/nigeria/news-and-events/2016/embassy-holds-exhibition-on-roger-casement/> (accessed 10/5/2017).
22. See <https://www.dfa.ie/irish-embassy/nigeria/news-and-events/2016/roger-casement-in-calar-bar/> (accessed 10/5/2017).
23. A common phrase referring to the idea that when the Normans invaded Ireland, they were so enamoured by the Gaelic culture they assimilated to such an extent they became even more Irish than the indigenous Irish. This imagining is deployed as the 'model' immigrant.

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