

Meeting With Ghosts: Telling a Story That's Impossible to Tell

A letter to ghosts

Dear Fahima, Farzana, Rabea,

I heard about your assassination on October 11, 2018, from the newspapers and TV. Normally, you wouldn't have made it to the mainstream news, maybe only the local media would add your bodies to their (un)documented archive, out of obligation to October's empty front page. Normally, you would have reached the morgue of the coroner in Alexandroupolis, because of drowning, of hypothermia, of hardships, this is how refugees and immigrant women die in Evros, this is their normalized death –how did you find yourself chained and stabbed in the neck?

If only you knew the disturbance you have caused to the residents of Evros! They were so afraid, not for the lives of the refugees who are at risk at the border, no, this is a reasonable and normal thing to happen, like the river that floods during the winter or the storks that come in the summer. They feared for their own lives since they were sure and certain that a jihadist killed you.

Photos of ISIS fighters filled the newspapers, on every website you could read that the Turks are not guarding the passages, and the Greek army and police are not enough despite their heroic efforts and that 500,000 Afghans are waiting in Eastern Thrace to cross, so they find you everywhere, in the fields, in the villages, in their homes. They lock themselves in the houses and close the shutters “so you won't bust in.” But the violence they fear is the violence they cause, as Butler reminds us in *Precarious Life* (2004).

“It is still evening; it is always nightfall along the ‘ramparts’, on the battlements of an old Europe at war. With the other and with itself” (Derrida 1994).

Europe is at war again, with the other and with itself, and perhaps that is why it is full of ghosts that haunt her. She signs Holy Alliances, agreements, drowns and murders daily on the borders of her fortress. But no matter how many times you shoot a ghost, it comes back. And if I am writing this letter to you, it is because I want you to return, I am summoning you here, to the

exploration (or is it an excavation) of memory, to fulfill the promise, to grant asylum, to render justice.

When I asked Kostas, the journalist who published your names in July 2019, why he had been searching for a year without anyone asking him to do it, without anyone paying him to do it, he did not mention the word mourning. We often confuse this word, we want to say mourning and instead we say obsession, like Kostas, although he sought justice beyond the law, "I don't care who the killer is, it was my morals that guided me. I wanted them to have a name." Not even Zaharoula, the lieutenant general of the Greek Police who made it personal to learn your names, said the word, even though it was only when I showed her the photographs of your graves, that one time during the interview where she softened, she let go, she tear up, "two months ago I was dealing with the numbers they give to the dead bodies, the people who are not identified, and the relatives looking for the bodies of their own people. And because it was all fresh, I was overwhelmed", she told me, while the journalist called it a duty "our job is to give voice to those who don't have one – that's why I did it."

"One does not, for all that, bear any less of a responsibility, beginning at birth, even if it is only the responsibility to repair an evil at the very moment in which no one can admit it" (Derrida 1994).

And listen to what Kostas said, last sentence before I closed the recorder, "I did it, they got a name. Until that moment they were ghosts," confirming Derrida, who said that mourning is the temptation to give ghosts an identity, to give a name to the grave and a location, to make sure they stay there. We fear, you see, haunted dreams.

Besides, why would I want to meet you so much? What is it that makes me carry your story for four years now, since that October, when only twelve people showed up at the open call made by my feminist collective to protest your triple femicide? I remember the disappointment. The despair with which we looked at each other in silence, the look that knows there are only twelve of us in an open assembly because a triple femicide of refugees at the border, no matter how horrible, mobilizes only a few of us, no matter how horrible, it is not a body of our own, it couldn't be us. We are not in the same position.

Sarah, a journalist who lives and works in Greece, felt the same despair and anger, she carried you, likewise, every step of the way, haunted. For three years now she has been looking for your tracks here in Greece, in Turkey and in Afghanistan. She told me that by Christmas she would have published her research, and we agreed that when I finish mine, we would go for a coffee and talk about you, sort of like a memorial service.

(Maybe it's called responsibility, the feeling of guilt, we killed you, we kill you every day, I mean whoever your killer is, is there a bigger murderer than closed borders?)

Hamlet is "out of joint" because he curses his own mission, the punishment that consists in having to punish, avenge, render justice, and redress history; and what he curses in his mission is this expiation of expiation itself; "The time is out of joint. O cursed spite, that ever I was born to set it right!". A call to put

time on the right path.[...] There is tragedy, there is essence of the tragic only on the condition of this originarity, more precisely of this pre-originary and properly spectral anteriority of the crime – the crime of the other, a misdeed whose event and reality, whose truth can never present themselves in flesh and blood, but can only allow themselves to be presumed, reconstructed, fantasized.

One does not, for all that, bear any less of a responsibility, beginning at birth, even if it is only the responsibility to repair an evil at the very moment in which no one can admit it, except in a self-confession that confesses the other, as if that amounted to the same. (Derrida 1994, 20–21)

I self-confess and confess the other; I call upon witnesses to testify a story that cannot be told, since you, the ultimate martyrs, cannot testify. I am traveling to Evros, I am looking for your traces, I am looking for your grave, to know where you are, not because I want to feel safe but in hope for a meeting, for the incalculable gift to cry over your graves, to mourn. And as if that amounted to the same, I will pull the threads on my hoop to stitch together traces, talks, interviews, photos, feelings, scraps of paper hastily written, to embroider a story, as if you would tell it, as if that amounted to the same. (A video by artist Tonia Ainot titled “A letter to ghosts” can be found on her YouTube channel).

**Ghosts will always find a way to return –
“the future belongs to them”
(Derrida 1994)**

I only managed to read again what I have written in my research on the triple femicide in Evros and on the archive, a few days before the conference QueerFemSEE in April 2023, worrying about my English, worrying about meeting them again, worrying about failing them again, not being able to make a safe passage in the afterlife for them. That night I received a phone call from a lawyer, whom I didn’t know before. She introduced herself as the lawyer of the one person who is in custody for the murder of Fahima, Farzana and Rabea. He was the lover of Fahima. He is not the killer, he is the survivor, the martyr, the one person who can tell the story, but no one listens. The subaltern cannot speak (Spivak 2018). The state won’t listen, the borders won’t listen, the judges, the police, in Greece, in Germany, in Turkey, no one will listen, except the person who is sharing with him the cell in prison. His fellow prisoner. He is the one paying for the lawyer. He is the only one who is listening. I guess, it takes one to listen to another.

The case is closed for just about anyone else, they have placed a person in the crime scene, he is Afghan, Muslim, poor, an illegal alien, he is alone, voiceless no matter how many times he raises his voice, and he is now in the hands of the Greek state in the town of Komotini, bare life (Agamben 1998), that’s all they need, case closed, filed, sealed, archived. This is Evros (Greek Council for Refugees 2023 & Human Rights Watch 2020), Europe’s wall, a state of

exception, a borderline. A location where necropolitics flood the crops under the eye of the cops. Case soon to be archived.

But if the archive is first the law of what can be said, the system that governs the appearance of statements as unique events, as Foucault puts it in his archaeology, then it is the law of what is excluded as well, the surface where statements shine, as it were, like stars, some that seem close to us shining brightly from afar off, while others that are in fact close to us are already growing pale (Foucault 1969). “Funny how you lose sight of some things and memory others,” mumbles Sethe in Morrison’s *Beloved* (Morrison 2020, 237). And the triple femicide of Fahima, Farzana and Rabea was barely seen in the horizon of our system. It has left no other trace, both in the archive and collective life, than their death register.

“The archive is, in this case, a death sentence, a tomb, a display of the violated body, an inventory of property, a medical treatise [...] an asterisk in the grand narrative of history,” says Hartman (2008, 2). Both the photographs and the objects that the coroner of Evros shared with me in his interview are the closest I got to a state archive during this research.¹ Evros is an open archive, a domain of sovereignty in which the rulers have the right to interpret and apply their interpretations to the public sphere. But if Evros constitutes a zone of exception in which sovereignty emerges anew, then the archive returns to its roots and, in defining them, determines what can and cannot be said, producing and reproducing sovereignty. Benjamin challenged Schmitt’s schema, in which the state of exception and normality are temporally and spatially situated and distinct. Instead, he argued, calling us to the present time, which “as a model of the messianic, sums up the history of all mankind” (Benjamin 2019, 721),² the situation we live in, in which the rule and the exception are not distinguished, is real. He will recognize, therefore, not a banality of evil, but a banality of normal. Like Venus of Saidiya Hartman (2008), an African girl tortured and killed while crossing the Middle Passage, like every life that leaves nothing but waste.

“Waste,” says Hartman, “is the interface of life and death. It incarnates all that has been rendered invisible, peripheral, or expendable to history writ large, that is, history as the tale of great men, empire, nation. It evokes the dull ordinary horror of what is vile, worthless, and contemptible – a pile of shit.

¹ Researching through a body of texts refereeing to the Archival and Emotional Turn and their interaction with feminist theory and practice in the study and perception of the archive, my thesis experimented on the techniques and technologies of the archive, for an impossible to tell story. The triple femicide of the Afghan women at the Greek borders in 2018, has left no other trace, both in the archive and collective life, than their death register. Employing research methods of post-colonial and feminist studies on the silence and the absence of the archive, like critical fabulation, and studying the biopolitical space on which the archive acts, an acquaint with the ghosts of the three women is attempted. Through a journey at the place of murder, talking to witnesses, memoirs and trauma excavation, an archive of feelings was made, hoping that (impossible) narration, vulnerable and incomplete archivization without arche, will contribute to the possibility of utopia.

² Sic, humankind

Waste is the remnant of all the lives that are outside of history and dissolved in utter amnesia” (Hartman 2007, 115).

Waste is the remnant of all the lives that are outside the archive, with a capital A, and as any other liminality, is included through its exclusion. In a Butlerian reading of Hartman, waste is what is produced through the repeated performance of dominant hegemonic ideals. The white Western body is produced at the very moment it expels non-white and non-Christian otherness from its normative domain, and the domain takes on a national character in this present conceptualization. The national is defined by what it expels within regulated frameworks. The production of waste becomes the constitutive condition of the Greek Orthodox nation. “When we set foot in another country, there is no immediate refuge for us. Today, we cease to be subjects. We become objects of negotiations! They see us as rejects and treat us like waste,” writes Parwana Amiri (2021, 35), a young refugee from Afghanistan, in her autobiographical notes from the Ritsona camp.

Butler (2008) calls what is excluded during the construction of the sovereign, the abject, which is pushed into the zone of the uninhabitability and constitutes the defining limit of the subject’s domain. “It will constitute that site of dreaded identification against which – and by virtue of which the domain of the subject will circumscribe its own claim to autonomy and to life” (Butler, 2008, 45). A definition also for national borders, the river Evros, its islands, the Wall, the fascist interwar period inspired and never abolished law for “Preemption Safety Zone” within the villages of Evros, and every other point beyond which the culturally inconceivable body is repelled. From this site, the waste, the garbage, the abject, will disrupt with the same manic repetitiveness of the performativity – “I only managed to cross the borders on the third attempt”³ – the regulatory violence that eliminates them. From this site, from Butler’s zone of the uninhabitability, the ghosts of Fahima, Farzana, and Rabea return as shadows to disturb the ultimately not so solid archival taxonomies.

[They return] to provoke archival trouble

To set free the very future of an out-of-joint concept, torn between the real and the potential, between that which includes and that which tends to exclude. In the state archives there was waste, like that leather belt from west Africa, a charm that was worn around a body, for a safe passage, and now can be found at the archive of the coroner in Evros, but no stories that could resurrect the dead, except the stories that I was willing to narrate, to come up with, to fantasize.

Fact is simply fiction endorsed with state power, to maintain a fidelity to a certain set of archival limits. Are we going to be consigned forever to tell the same kinds of stories? Given the violence and power that has engendered this limit, why should I be faithful to that limit? Why should I respect that? (Hartman 2020)

³ Oral interview excerpt with a woman refugee; interviewer: Eirini Dafermou.

[breathe]

Those I wanted to harm were not within my reach. Those I wanted to rescue were gone (Hartman 2007, 55).

[breathe, again]

Waste is the connecting line between life and death, it's the archival *entre les* of Derrida (1996), the dichotomy between life and death drive. Hartman's waste, Butler's abject, the ghosts. And what is a ghost if not the waste product or undesirable residue of *bildung*?⁴ (Cheah 2003, 385) – and would it be fair to say, of citizenship? Derrida insists, however, on an incarnated materiality, “for there to be a ghost, there must be a return to a body, but to a body that is more abstract than ever” (1994, 26). The non-typical archive, the one built from the pile of debris before Benjamin's *Angel of History*, is the “artifactual prosthetic body” (Derrida 1994, 126) in which the ghost is incarnated and resides. This was also my attempt in this story, to build a body of an archive from everything I collected on my journey to Evros. “There is no archive without a place of consignment, without a technique of repetition, and without a certain exteriority. No archive without outside,” (Derrida 1996, 28) and my own archival gesture, an exergue on the paths archived by the refugees of Evros, comes to tell a story that cannot be told. A memory of death. A rememory, as Toni Morrison said, a tale that comes after, belated because traumatic, haunted because of the needy dead, demanding a way out of my mouth, for the disremembered and the unaccounted for (Morrison 2020).

In Agamben's work *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive* (2002), he grapples with the problem of the witness (who can testify a memory of death?), the Jewish prisoners in the death camps of Nazi Germany, those who survived to testify the horror of the camps and speak for those who did not survive. “At first glance, we would say it is the man – the survivor – who testifies for the non-human, the *Muselmann*;⁵” the non-human who obstinately appears as human. Is it safe to say, the ghost? In the context of the above

⁴ *Bildung* refers to the German tradition of self-cultivation (as related to the German for: creation, image, shape), wherein philosophy and education are linked in a manner that refers to a process of both personal and cultural maturation. This maturation is a harmonization of the individual's mind and heart and in a unification of selfhood and identity within the broader society (from Wikipedia, accessed 6.7.2024). Looking at the idea of *Bildung* from a national colonial point, as Cheah proposes in his book (2003), one can argue that it is the self-actualization within the borders of a national identity, rather than a cosmopolitan, and as such it constructs otherness at the periphery of its performativity. It produces the residue, the abject, the alien, which is not virtuous enough to receive communion of the global (colonial) European spirit.

⁵ *Muselmann* (German plural *Muselmänner*) was a term used amongst prisoners of German Nazi concentration camps during the Holocaust of World War II to refer to those suffering from a combination of starvation (known also as “hunger disease”) and exhaustion, as well as those who were resigned to their impending death. The *Muselmann* prisoners exhibited severe emaciation and physical weakness, an apathetic listlessness regarding their own fate, and unresponsiveness to their surroundings owing to their barbaric treatment (Wikipedia, accessed on 2/10/2024).

reasoning, the refugee from Iran I interviewed during my research, a woman who crossed Evros, survived and agreed to talk to me about her journey, testifies “instead of,” lends her voice to the non-human, to the ghosts of Fahima, Farzana, and Rabea, so that her testimony will be deposited, archived – not by herself in the end, but by me, as what would then be a testimony of three women – a practice that quite disrupts Agamben’s framework. It is perhaps Agamben’s anxiety, and previous to him, Levi’s, about who bears witness, who testifies, whose voice is heard, which carries within it an essentialist idea of the archive, to such extent that while it opens the door to ghosts, it ultimately does not allow the non-human to freely cross the threshold of narration without the responsibility of bringing evidence before the court of History with a capital H.

But what if we trust ghosts?

Hartman (2007) grapples with the limits of the archive in her decision to trace the steps of those who were ensnared in the pathways of the slave trade and when they reached the fortresses of the colonizers on the shores of the Atlantic, they were already slaves. The dive she seeks into Africa’s past is linked to the persistent leverage in the work of what she calls the “afterlife of slavery,” the long-term impact of racism on the lives of black Americans: vulnerable, marginalized, and constantly exposed to death. She excavates the memory of slavery, building an archive of feelings from rememory, travel diaries, discussions, visits to monuments, photographs, and narratives, crafted by herself for those who can no longer speak. She rememories “at the intersection of personal experience and cultural or collective memory” (King 2000, 150).

And I, too, stitched together an archive for the triple femicide of Fahima, Farzana and Rabea, because of my desire to excavate the wound and transgress boundaries, to move into the position of the dispossessed, somewhat responding to the call of bell hooks (1990, 145): “Language is also a place of struggle.” Narrate a story that does not belong to me is my own journey, my movement (to), that requires “pushing against oppressive boundaries, set by race, sex, and class domination. Initially then it is a defiant political gesture. Moving we confront the reality of choice and location” (hooks 1990, 145). An archival gesture, from a white Western feminist, citizen of the state that murdered them, subject of rights precisely over their own embodied murderous border. Their dead bodies constitute my civil rights – and I desperately desire to move to a place of radical openness, politically resisting, in solidarity with the oppressed, to a site where transformation is possible.

Being aware of the possible violence inherent in even well-intentioned rhetoric – language is also a place of privilege – taking as much distance I can from any “empathetic identification,” as Hartman would put it, one can only hope to shed light on the positionality from which they write and offer their narrative, that of a feminist researcher, one can only hope to offer their

endeavor to those wishing to read it. From that place, I collected discourses, words, feelings, photographs, personal diaries, testimonies from those who survived, the martyrs, and interviews from residents of Evros, to trespass the borders of an absent archive,

– an archive is never empty as it always remains open –

seeking the recurring, the repetition, in testimonies and traces, forming an archive of feelings (Cvetkovich 2003), an im-possible narrative for the journey and the borders, so that I can speak the language of ghosts, so that I can critically fabulate the story of three women from Afghanistan who were murdered in Evros. Unapologetically unassimilated with the methods and methodologies of writing history, after all, who do we tell our stories for?

I am thinking that maybe this reconstruction of memory, such an attempt for rememory, comes as an act of resistance, the responsibility of doing my part, in an evolving and forever happening construction of an innocent future for Greece, where the past is absent or romanticized. Where killings at the borders and in camps, institutional racism and European policies of white supremacy, as well as everyday social violence against the bodies of migrants and refugees, will be recorded in the future by the assimilated survivors and their oppressors, banqueters in common events sponsored by some foundation, told as tragic stories, like the time when 700 people drowned in Pylos (Amnesty International 2023). They will go down in history as isolated unfortunate incidents but in no way as the systematic and systemic reconstruction of today's reality, in no way as the deliberate construction of a revised reality in which the segregation between bodies that matter and those that don't, the racist border regime, appears and is perceived as natural, normal, continuously produced and reproduced without interruption.

"This is not a story to pass on," Toni Morrison repeats again and again at the last two pages of *Beloved*. This is not a story to pass on, this is not a story to pass on, and the story she refers to is the aftermath of slavery, is the ever-persisting racism, that passes on and on and on, and maybe words, and books, and ghosts can make it stop, or at least reveal it to its reality. "Usually, slavery is an abstract concept. The purpose of making the ghost real is making history possible, making memory real" (Morrison quoted in Wyatt 1993).

Hartman is "forced" to invent the stories of African women, while she is taking the journey along the Atlantic slave route, as no autobiographical accounts of female captives' survivors of the Middle Passage has reached us today. It's the absent archive that leads to the inevitable return of Venus, as a ghost that haunts the present, as bare life. It is an attempt to unhook two girls from the violent narrative of their deaths, from the violence of the archive, exploring the im-possibility of producing another narration, another archivization. It is Hartman's need to create space for forbidden mourning. In Cvetkovich's words, "[A]t the heart of the archive are practices of mourning, and the successful archive enables the work of mourning" (2003, 271).

“The responsibility to repair an evil at the very moment in which no one can admit it, except in a self-confession that confesses the other, as if that amounted to the same” (Derrida 1994, 21), calls the ghosts of Fahima, Farzana and Rabea on stage, and I take upon the role of stage manager, a witness of rememory, of recollecting and remembering, of reassembling (Morrison 2019) what was left for me to find, “an imprint of painful events on the mind and on the world” (King 2000, 161).

A narration that arose from an encounter with nothing else but the sign of violence, a short story in which faces, inclinations and time alternate, forms, materials, feelings, Freud’s mystic writing-pad (2010), a game that wants to bring the past-present in the now, a game that keeps the archive open, like a promise, the method that Hartman pins as critical fabulation, Morrison as rememory, Cvetkovich as archive of feelings, and what Derrida calls utopia. The hope that an (impossible) narration, a vulnerable and incomplete archivization without arche, will contribute to the possibility of utopia.

It could open the possibility for “change,” not only by speculating about the future but by engaging ourselves in speculating the past, much like the biographical temporality for the populations that have been considered expendable, as Halberstam discusses in his book *In Queer Time and Place* (2005), carrying always in mind that those who left without a trace might willfully did so, might willfully defied any encounter with arche and history.

By pushing the archive to its limit (for when you strip away the power relations that hold the pen that writes, what remains of the archive if not the narration of the hegemony?), Hartman produces a counter-history at the intersection between novel and history, to shed light on what she calls the “afterlife of slavery.” She writes with and against the record, wanting to provoke trouble, attempts an im-possible writing, given that ghosts rarely speak, of a past that cannot be recovered, nor changed, wanting to imagine the in between, the *entre les*, to write a cultural history of captives while admitting it as impossible, to narrate what cannot be said, hoping to influence today, or as Butler put it, “The question she returns to again and again is: Did slavery ever really end?” (Hartman 2020). And what is slavery, she wonders through the words of John, in her book “lose your mother,” if not “when other people decide whether you live or die,” what is slavery if not the necropolitics of today’s fascism, what is slavery if not the immigration/refugee’s politics of European Union, if not the borders, camps and prison industrial complex?

[breathe]

When I said to Tonia I wish I had time and knew how to make a video for the letter, and she replied let’s do it, and she did it, in less than two days, I didn’t realize that we were adding a little bit more to this open archive, I didn’t realize until I saw the first sample, that now we can send this video all over the world,

I mean, I always said that as feminists we will never be alone, even in the darkest of times, we have comrades all over the world,

assemblies, squats, community centers, libraries, networks under the most oppressing regimes, grassroots festivals, journals, archives,

Fahima, Farzana and Rabea can now travel, the borders have opened, the fucking visa is granted.

[breathe]

Ann Cvetkovich concludes in her *Archive of Feelings*:

Thinking of the archive as a memorial to the dead, one that must perform the work of mourning at a personal level, is yet another reminder of why, however respectable certain kinds of gay and lesbian archives become, there will remain a need for grassroots and community-based archives. The importance of fantasy as a way of creating history from absences, so evident in queer documentary and other cultural genres, demands creative and alternative archives. In the case of both traumatic and gay and lesbian histories, grassroots archives and the archives preserved by cultural forms move past the impossibility of the archive articulated by Derrida toward collections of texts and objects that embody the sentiments and obsessions of archive fever. (Cvetkovich 2003, 271)

That is to say, of resistance, of going against the grain, of survival and passion, of rabbia e amore, of *στοργή*,⁶ with a capital O.

When it comes to the archive, the question will always be, what does it do, its modality, not what it is. And this archive wanted to tell a story impossible to tell. We have to imagine Fahima, Farzana and Rabea alive, it is an act of resistance against the violence of the Archive. That is against the violence of the bourgeois, racist, patriarchal state.

[breathe]

Cvetkovich writes that Hartman claims for a utopia, a politics that juxtaposes despair and hope, perhaps because organizing despair into (political) action is the only hope. Hartman's call to imagine the women of the slave archives alive, my response to it, to imagine Fahima, Farzana, and Rabea alive, the method of critical fabulation, rememory, and the attempt for an archive that renders justice to the vulnerable and the ephemeral, to the disremembered and the unaccounted for, is a call to exit from logocentric writing, a theory of bodies meeting outside the Archons' house. There, we will encounter bodies "trembling from the cold, this cold that pierces your bones,"⁷ abandoned on islands, hidden in the thickets, waiting for the night. There, in the "out of," that does not care to prove itself to Authority, does not surrender to positivism, that "out of" which can write letters to ghosts,

⁶ *Στοργή* reads Greek for affection and *οργή* is Greek for wrath, written like this *στοργή*, with a capital O, combining both words, encapsulates the feelings of an international feminist movement, that is filled with affection and wrath at the same time. In Greece, it was coined for the first time on September 2019 during the one-year commemoration of the killing of queer activist and drag performer Zak Kostopoulos/Zackie Oh!

⁷ Oral interview excerpt with a woman refugee; interviewer: Eirini Dafermou.

there, the stories that can be constructed are infinite, not for the future, but for the past. This territory of the past that refuses to be forgotten, “beyond the prescribed boundaries of the archive and is enabled to haunt the present in such ways as to open or reassemble possibilities (both present and future-directed) for other lives, for living otherwise” (Athanasidou 2020, 102).

If we consider justice based on the gift, as Derrida (1994) calls us to do, and before him Heidegger, beyond the law and its state, if we consider justice as a relationship with the other, justice as a relationship with the ghosts of three murdered women, then it becomes the thread that embroiders the *atrandedé*, the *entre deux*, with a needle passed on – was it a story after all? – from generation to generation, then it opens the im-possibility of a future, where justice will be rendered at the form of a shadow in lace-trimmed chests. Then justice is the archive that “pre-occupies the future,” as Derrida (1996) would put it, both a promise and a threat. The promise that this story won’t pass on and it will not be disremembered either (Morrison 2020). Instead of established regimes of truth, always ready to prove their power in document X, series Y, archive with capital A, let us imagine the archive as dispersion, wide, fragmentary, incomplete, gendered, racialized, and class-conscious. An archive that liberates archival gestures from anxiety proof (for whom?) and produces unapologetically low theory, multiple networks and relationalities, an archive that can coexist within, but primarily outside the House of the Archons, as a permanent threat and boundary.

Let’s imagine it vulnerable, full of wonders and scattered enchantments. In this archive fits the travel diary to Evros, the discussions at the café in the village where they were murdered, the letter I address to Farzana, Fahima, and Rabea, my tears over their graves, the embraces with the people who spoke to me, the storks I saw for the first time in my life, the war against refugees at the border, everything. Above all, their story, as I imagined it, after I gathered all my notes, my will to imagine them alive, so they could tell me how they crossed the river, what their lives were like, who they were. Themselves, alive. It fits the promise for tomorrow – meaning the messianic time of hope, the time of the specters. The future belongs to ghosts.

This is not a story to pass on.

“Come back to our village,

I will come back to see the storks,

They will leave soon, you barely caught them,

I will come back next summer with the storks,

They are the only ones who come and sit, they honor us so much, they don’t think much about it, they have their nest ready, they will come back next year with their children.”

(Our conversation’s end with Eugenia, in a village in Evros, the day I saw storks for the first time in my life, one of the few free creatures up there. Oh, if only I were a stork, if I didn’t care about borders, if I had my nest ready and no one asked where I came from)

- Agamben, Giorgio. 1998. *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Agamben, Giorgio. 2002. *Remnants of Auschwitz: the witness and the archive*. New York: Zone Books, Imp.
- Amiri, Parwana. 2021. *Ζωές σε αναστολή: γράμματα στον κόσμο από τη Ριτσώνα*. Θεσσαλονίκη: Ακυβέρνητες πολιτείες.
- Amnesty International. 2023. Greece: six months on, no justice for Pylos Shipwreck. AI, December 2023. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2023/12/greece-6-months-on-no-justice-for-pylos-shipwreck/>
- Athanasίου, Athena. 2020. "(Im)possible Breathing: On Courage and Criticality in the Ghostly Historical Present". *Redescriptions: Political Thought, Conceptual History and Feminist Theory* 23 (2): 92–106. <http://doi.org/10.33134/rds.337>
- Benjamin, Walter. 2019. *Walter Benjamin Κείμενα 1934-1940, επιλογή*. Αθήνα: Άγρα.
- Butler, Judith. 2004. *Precarious Life: the power of mourning and violence*. London: Verso.
- Butler, Judith. 2008. *Σώματα με σημασία: οριοθετήσεις του «φύλου» στο λόγο*. translation Πελαγία Μαρκέτου. Αθήνα: Εκκρεμές.
- Cheah, Pheng 2003. *Spectral Nationality*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Cvetkovich, Ann. 2003. *An archive of feelings: trauma, sexuality, and lesbian cultures*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Derrida, Jacques. 1996. *Η έννοια του αρχείου*. translation Κωστής Παπαγιώργης. Αθήνα: Εκκρεμές.
- Derrida, Jacques. 1994. *Specters of Marx*. New York: Routledge.
- Foucault, Michel. 1969. *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. New York: Routledge.
- Freud, Sigmund. 2010. Σημείωση για το μαγικό σημειωματάριο. *Αληθεια*, 4(5): 43–47.
- Greek Council for Refugees. 2023. At Europe's borders: between impunity and criminalization. *GCR*, March 2023. https://gcr.gr/wp-content/uploads/GCR_Push-back_Criminalization_Report.pdf
- Halberstam, Jack. 2005. *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives*. New York: New York University Press.
- Hartman, Saidiya. 2007. *Lose Your Mother: A Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route*. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux.
- Hartman, Saidiya. 2008. Venus in Two Acts. *Small Axe* 12(2): 1–14.
- Hartman, Saidiya. 2020. How Saidiya Hartman Retells the History of Black Life (A. Okeowo, Interviewer). *New Yorker*, October 19. <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2020/10/26/how-saidiya-hartman-retells-the-history-of-black-life>
- hooks, bell. 1990. *Yearning: race, gender and cultural politics*. Boston: South End Press.
- Human Rights Watch. 2020. Greece: Violence Against Asylum Seekers at Border, *HRW* March 17. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/03/17/greece-violence-against-asylum-seekers-border>
- King, Nicola. 2000. *Memory, Narrative, Identity: Remembering the Self*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Morrison, Toni. 2019. "I wanted to carve out a world both culture specific and race-free": an essay by Toni Morrison. *The Guardian*, August 8. <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2019/aug/08/toni-morrison-remembering-essay>
- Morrison, Toni. 2020 (1987). *Beloved*. London: Penguin.
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. 2018 (1998). *Μπορούν οι υποτελείς να ομιλούν;* Τρίκαλα, εκδόσεις Επέκεινα.
- Wyatt, Jean. 1993. Giving Body to the Word: The Maternal Symbolic in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*. *PMLA* 108(3): 474–488.