choosing to write about breast cancer in the first-person singular. Sontag suppresses her private experience and runs through literature’s records of diseases — mainly tuberculosis and cancer — to show how these have been bent into societal metaphors, often to the detriment of the sick. Boyer, instead, conjures a wide-ranging selection of writers dealing with illness — spanning from Aelius Aristides to John Donne, from Emily Dickinson to Kathy Acker — to better gauge her own experience and the mutated conditions of being a sick body at this point in history.

Like Audre Lorde in her 1980 work *The Cancer Journals*, Boyer writes in the first person; yet while Lorde wrote in a period in which a cautious silence surrounded breast cancer, Boyer’s voice has to struggle against the present-day ‘din of breast cancer’s extraordinary production of language’. *The Undying* is, therefore, also an exposé of the ‘weft of all competing lies’ and mystifications that seek to deflect cancer’s disenchantments — ‘the sharpened optics of life without futurity’. This drive to unmask permeates the book, which works to pull apart delusional recipes for survival through ‘neoliberal self-management’, rationales based on ‘genetic fatalism’ that occlude etiologies of environmental intoxication, the deceptions of alternative medical environments and the profit-driven machines that are breast cancer charities, whose ‘pink ribbons adorn the objects and processes that kill people’. (In 2014, as Boyer notes, Komen foundation partnered with the Baker Hughes corporation to produce a thousand breast-cancer-pink fracking drills.)

As Anne Boyer was pumped with highly-toxic medicine manufactured by extractive industries, her desire to survive clashed with her effort to ‘unravel survival’s ethics’.

Among the targets of Boyer’s passionate confutation are philosophical truisms concerning pain. Against the widely held notion that pain destroys language (Elaine Scarry) or that pain is incommunicable (Hannah Arendt), Boyer probes language for its capacity to describe the sensations and ruminations of her suffering body. Her quest for a shared and faithful language is all the more poignant because, beyond any truism, she wrestles with the objective cognitive damage caused by chemotherapy. From transcribing passages that capture the misspellings of ‘pain’s naked grammar’ to inventing linguistic metrics that replace conventional numerical scales of pain, Boyer’s prose poetry is a vivid attempt to convey suffering as something we have in common.

For all its situated singularity, then, *The Undying* is not an individual tale of redemption, nor an atomised story of suffering. Countering the lonesome desolation of illness that oncological praxis and society’s own entrenched custom of segregation work to produce, Boyer strives to address and call into being a collectivity of the sick. In the revelatory light of ‘pain’s leaking democracy’, the book attests to the vital need for collective and social remedies for healing not just our sick bodies but the sick world we inhabit too.


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Film

15th Berwick Film & Media Arts Festival

While the world takes a fascist turn along the sharpening of borders and boundaries, the promise of ‘securing’ sovereign states continues to be ground for politicised point-scoring. Differing histories of these subjects emerged during the 15th Berwick Film & Media Arts Festival. Held in the border town between England and Scotland — famously a battleground, Berwick often changed hands violently several times during the border wars — such themes formed a backdrop that resonated with the current and contentious separation of the UK from the EU. But the festival partly eschewed these themes to connect to broader global concerns, extending beyond modern nation states. After four centuries of battle, for the time being at least, the calm after the storm in this coastal, sleepy settlement of Berwick was mercifully palpable.

Indeed, the Festival incorporated a different kind of crossing-over of boundaries, one which allowed for the less restricted possibility of spirit worlds. The programme evoked the intersection between our human sense of sight and invisibility, informed by theories of animism — the belief that all phenomena has the potential to have a soul. The exhibition included a more esoteric Southeast Asian anarchist pulse in the curatorial project ‘Animistic Apparatus’ by May Adadol Ingawanij with Julian Ross. The exhibition drew on a Thai ritual practice where offerings are made to spirits, often in the form of food, theatre or, here, projectionist cinema. With many artworks and installations presented in outdoor locations, one often would walk the empty streets of Berwick, as if perhaps in Bangkok, happening upon outdoor cinemas largely empty of an audience. This ghostly quality was resonant in Ingawanij and Ross’s programme, however, drives a complex reversion of long-form cinema’s demands on the viewer — one that keeps playing regardless of your attention or, indeed, presence.

Carefully placed along Berwick’s town walls and towers — stone defensive structures built in the 14th century — video installations extended the idea of thresholds, including Tantachai Bandasak’s *Central Region*, 2019, which layered images of ancient border stones from Sam Neua in Laos. In contrast with the
local coastal ramparts, these Laotian stones were subjected to renewed warfare through Cold War bombing that decimated the surrounding land and people a mere 56 years ago. These border stones marked territorial lines but also formed part of a more fluid notion of area. Bandasak layered the images of the stones to create a palimpsest. The stones are reminiscent of older, premodern articulations of power in Southeast Asia where territories were not centralised but dispersed with no distinct boundary between different centres. Indeed, in political scientist James Scott’s research into the Zomia zone – a stateless territory traversing highland Southeast Asia – he revises the narrative of the unassimilated ‘barbarians’ that inhabit this area. Instead of being positioned as primitive bystanders to Cold War country boundaries, their practices of swidden agriculture and highland mobility made them into anarchists: knowingly aware of state apparatuses, they developed a model that consciously escaped societal and geographic rules.

There were further animations within the Festival through live workshops and performances, including the Taipei-based artist duo lololol. In an old gym, audience members were invited to think through a Taoist framework about energy fields produced by projection equipment. Again, this highlighted the autonomous potential of film equipment as carrying energy or even a soul, as listeners and viewers in their own right. Similarly, artist George Clark’s project Double Ghosts, 2019, brought together fragments of film, video and sounds from diverse geographical reference points from Paris to Taipei – the spirit world seemingly needs no borders. At one point during a night-time performance, a projector’s chi was measured through radio frequency before the artist ventured outdoors to a wood, shouting several computer commands.

These more ‘live’ aspects of ‘Animistic Apparatus’ only heightened the animistic potential of the Festival’s main programme, which sought to overlap themes of borders, social justice and divine intervention. This year’s artist-in-profile Marwa Arsanios’s selection of films related to the Lebanon border with Kurdistan and Syria and was comfortable among the thematics of ‘Animistic Apparatus’, particularly her film Who is afraid of ideology?, 2019, which had shots of mountainous highlands and narratives of survival farming practices from a women-only village as a kind of circumstantial radical movement which took on an anarchist flavour, not unlike the highland strategies of the Zomia zone ungovernables.

The limitations of state apparatuses was further explored through Lav Diaz’s film The Halt, 2019. This new work is a more digestible 283 minutes compared with Diaz’s other films, which defy both cinema and the notion of film as something to be attentively and studiously sat through. The narrative tells of a despotic regime which has taken over Southeast Asia. In one particular scene, Nirv, the dictator of this modern-day Manila, stares out from a balcony, his every move surveyed by drones. His confidants, executioners and female lovers bear with his tantrums until ultimately we see him breakdown in the middle of an empty street in front of his army. This ‘powerful’ dictator going into a toddler-like fit of anger is silly, and is clearly intended to be satirical, but it is also strangely – without wishing to be – human.

The borderline between the animate and inanimate became even more potent during Diaz’s A Lullaby to the Sorrowsful Mystery, 2016, projected outdoors along Berwick’s fortified walls in the dead of night. It was already nearing midnight when I arrived during a film scene in which the characters were discussing coffee (but details became vague as time went on into the night). Instead, I returned at sunrise to try to catch the last act, strolling through the town under an eerie silence. I arrived just as the credits rolled, however, standing there with a handful of others. Realising that only the insomniacs had made it through the film’s impressive 8 hours and 5 minutes – a full sleep cycle – I asked one of the audience members what I had missed. He casually answered: ‘Only a revolution.’ All while we were sleeping.

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The Found Archive of Hani Jawherieh

A double negative is a grammatical use of two negatives resulting in an affirmative meaning. In the Middle East there are further variations on its use in various dialects. It neatly conveys the complex effect created by Hani Jawherieh’s films, photographs and the re-mediation of his analogue archive through the digital format of this exhibition. Staged as part of the London Palestine Film Festival, it was made possible through the restoration of Jawherieh’s films that were found by his daughter Hiba among the items salvaged by her mother, Hind, on escaping Amman en route to Beirut. The latter became home to the Palestine Film Institute, formerly the Palestine Film Unit, founded by Jawherieh, Sulafa Jadallah and Mustafa Abu Ali in 1968, as part of the PLO, and rooted firmly in the politics of the resistance movement. Its logo of two film reels with a Kalashnikov nestled between them and an olive
The sense of the exhibition conveying a meaning equivalent to a double negative comes about inevitably because of the diminished resources and platforms through which a Palestinian history can be seen.

branch is present in the exhibition amongst a display of contact sheets, a broken camera used by Jawherieh when he was killed by a missile in 1976, and digital screenings of the restored films, including a video-essay produced by the curator Azza El-Hassan in collaboration with Hiba. Watching the film Palestine in the Eye, 1976, produced by Jawherieh’s friends to commemorate his life, creates a sliver of political history for the viewer. Shots taken from Jawherieh’s films of resistance fighters shot from below give a sense of monumentality, and the accompanying voice-over, which uses terms such as ‘the imperialist enemy’ or ‘the capitalist project of the US’, brings to mind, for this reviewer at least, Tricontinentalism, the project of third-world communism that reached its apogee of militant refusal of rampant capitalism in the 1970s. Israel is never mentioned directly, rather the international scope of the resistance movement is emphasised, placing the project within this wider history of a now defunct third-world communism.

The sense of the exhibition conveying a meaning equivalent to a double negative comes about inevitably because of the diminished resources and platforms through which a Palestinian history can be seen. Jawherieh’s death is notable in this regard: the film he was shooting was confiscated by the Israeli military, who then refused to release it, although his camera embedded with shrapnel – with damage to its surfaces – was released to his widow after she requested its return in 1982. The military’s desire to possess this film and prevent it being made public conveys the double or perhaps even multiple levels of negation that Palestinians struggle to overcome when faced with the an imposed representation of their people as being illiterate and ragged peasants which began to circulate in the aftermath of the events of 1967. Israel’s invasion of the West Bank and Gaza is central to the images that Jawherieh is well known for, particularly of the movement by many Palestinians across the Allenby Bridge. Likewise, the restored film Jerusalem, Flowers of all Cities, 1969, is notable for the overlay of a song that evokes the militant poetics of the resistance movement, seen as a nostalgic ode to the city where Jawherieh grew up and from which he was exiled. This is perhaps the most surprising aspect of the exhibition: early photographs by the film-maker of his everyday life as a resident of Jerusalem, taken during the early to mid 1950s and presented alongside shots of contemporary Jerusalem before and after its invasion by Israel, reveal a multi-faith and cosmopolitan cityscape.

The militant poetics of the PLO within the broader scope of Tricontinentalism speaks to the centrality of Arab masculinity as the political focus of representation as a site of contestation. But this is offset by a politics of care within a feminist poetics in the exhibition. Reproductions of his photo album as a teenager and subsequently as husband and father, with accompanying hand-written texts, draw out a different register. Restoration and continuity across generations of the Palestinian visual archive is undertaken by the women in Jawherieh’s life and the curator, inserting the feminine and the maternal in the old politics of the left, which nicely complements an apocryphal story: we are told that Jawherieh accompanied every photograph, every significant film shot, with a small dance in celebration, marking the build-up of an archive of a history that was being effaced all around him. If a phenomenological condition of seeing involves the whole body, then the co-equivalence created by the body of the spectator in the exhibition and the act of seeing through Jawherieh’s eyes speaks to the power of the archive as being as much a personal as a collective witness – doubly affirmative.

The Void Project’s ‘The Found Archive of Hani Jawherieh’ took place at P21 Gallery, London, 7-30 November.

Amna Malik is an art historian and writer based in London and Oxford.

Hani Jawherieh, Training Camp, Jordan, 1969

**Threading Forms** at London Art Fair 2020 presents:

**Alice Kettle: Within each other, portraits of ourselves**

Threading Forms is curated by Candida Stevens, bringing together a selection of galleries and artists who embrace the potential and challenge the limitations of thread in contemporary art. Alice Kettle’s ‘Within each other…’ is supported using public funding by the National Lottery through Arts Council England.