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Animating Exclusions:
Ali Kazimi's *Continuous Journey*
and the Virtualities of Racialized Exclusion

ABSTRACT:

In his 2004 documentary *Continuous Journey*, Ali Kazimi employs an innovative aesthetic of animated archival material to draw out the often suppressed links between the continuous-journey regulation of the 1908 *Immigration Act* and the Safe Third Country Agreement passed between Canada and the U.S. (2004). Taking the links between these two landmark policies as its point of reference, this essay draws out both Kazimi's provocative animation of Canadian immigration history and the virtualities of racialization and exclusion (Deleuze 1994). First, we consider the virtual aspects of the exclusions of Canadian immigration and refugee policy. *Continuous Journey* actualizes and reanimates the virtualized legacies of these exclusions in a manner that challenges Canada's celebratory mythos of inclusivity and its denial of racialized practices. We also examine Kazimi's intervention within intercultural video art and its mobilization of tactics of virtuality within discourses of anti-imperial transnationalism.

RÉSUMÉ

Dans son documentaire, Continuous Journey (2004), Ali Kazimi emploie un esthétisme innovateur de matériel archivé d'animation pour mettre en évidence les liens souvent étouffés entre la *continuous-journey regulation* du 1908 Immigration Act et le Safe Third Country Agreement conclus entre le Canada et les États-Unis (2004). Prenant ces liens comme points de repère, ce texte se réfère à la fois à l'animation provocatrice de Kazimi au sujet de l'histoire migrante canadienne et, aux virtualités de la racialisation et de l'exclusion (Deleuze). Dans un premier temps, nous considérons les aspects virtuels des exclusions de la politique canadienne de l'immigration et des réfugiés. Continuous Journey actualise et revitalise les

héritages virtualisés de ces pratiques racisées. Nous observons aussi l'intervention de Kazimi dans l'art video interculturel et sa mobilisation de tactiques de la virtualité à l'intérieur des discours de transnationalisme anti-impérial.

In his 2004 documentary *Continuous Journey*, filmmaker Ali Kazimi employs an innovative aesthetic of animated archival material to draw out often-suppressed links between the continuous-journey regulation of the 1908 *Immigration Act*, which legislated that migrants could only arrive in Canada by way of a continuous journey with no stop-overs, and the Safe Third Country Agreement recently passed between Canada and the United States (2004). Taking the links between these two landmark pieces of Canadian immigration policy as its point of reference, this essay explores Kazimi's provocative animation of Canadian immigration history as well as what we call the virtualities of racialization and exclusion. We draw on and rework Gilles Deleuze's approach to the virtual as a set of forces or potentialities that evade visible or sensory form yet exert real effects—a play of presence and absence, of what Richard Fung has called "invisible evidence."[1]

Continuous Journey describes the *Komagata Maru* as the first ship carrying migrants to be turned away by the Canadian government. Prior to being sold to the Japanese, the ship had transported thousands of European immigrants to Canada without incident. In 1914, the ship challenged the 1908 continuous-journey regulation, which was designed to prevent South Asian immigration in particular. Sikh businessman Gurdit Singh chartered the ship to sail from Japan fully cognizant that it would be challenging this regulation. It carried 376 predominantly Sikh, as well as Muslim and Hindu migrants from India who had been left stranded in various Asian port cities by the regulation. On the basis of Kazimi's intricate primary historical research, *Continuous Journey* unfolds the story of the political and legal quagmire that the *Komagata Maru* sailed into when it arrived in Vancouver in 1914, along with the forces and actors who constructed and contested it. The film traces the legal and extra-legal manoeuvres the Canadian government undertook (including attacks by a navy vessel) to turn the ship away without allowing it to land or allowing any of its passengers, save two, to disembark. The ship was marooned in the harbour for 61 days while its increasingly desperate passengers were held incommunicado and with dwindling supplies. Kazimi shows how the migrants were turned away because of a racialized legal distinction between subjects of the British empire and their legitimized movements through the empire.[2]

Deleuze's sense of virtuality evokes aspects of the historical formulation and contemporary operation of Canadian immigration and refugee policy. The virtual exclusions of immigration policy allow contemporary policy discourses to maintain a celebratory mythos of inclusivity that denies and erases racializing and

exclusionary effects and practices. *Continuous Journey* actualizes and reanimates the virtualized legacies of these exclusions while building on new aesthetic and political strategies in the reactivation of buried histories of Canadian immigration, which Kazimi shows to be deeply embedded in transpacific circuits and movements of empire. We examine Kazimi's intervention within larger questions regarding the place and contribution of intercultural video art—like the work of Montreal-based video artist Leila Sujir and U.K.-based Black Audio Film Collective member John Akomfrah—within discourses of anti-imperial transnationalism. Specifically, we draw on Laura Marks's analysis of the transnational object. Such is the paucity of archival material and the dearth of visible evidence of the *Komagata Maru* that Kazimi alters the space *within* the film, imbuing it with a haunting sense of virtuality, which Kazimi calls the simultaneity of absence and presence. This approach to the archive resonates with tactics used by other filmmakers to document the erasure of the bodies of migrant workers, legacies of anti-imperial resistance and historical violences that caused these erasures.

The *Komagata Maru* and the Continuous Journey Regulation

Continuous Journey's genealogy of the British imperial subject evocatively connects the history of racialized exclusion in Canadian immigration policy to the larger transpacific, transnational circuits of empire. Exclusionary policies in Canada, the violence of the British imperial project in India, the fate of the migrants on the *Komagata Maru* and the incipient anti-imperialist, diasporic resistance of the North American-born Gadhar party[3] are intricately linked through a layered narrative that shifts spaces and temporal frames to trace out the global routes and forces that trapped the ship in a legal no-man's land. Such a transnational lens reveals a buried legacy of anti-imperial resistance by members of the local British Columbian South Asian community connected to the Gadhar movement, one that simultaneously challenged the continuous-journey regulation, British imperialism and exclusionary communalist tendencies in India. Tragically, it is the imperial authorities' fear of the growing influence of the Gadhar movement that seals the fate of the *Komagata Maru*'s passengers, who are targeted as threats to the empire on both sides of the Pacific.

Continuous Journey depicts the administrative veneer through which this exclusion was enacted in Canadian immigration policy, and the mechanisms employed to keep the racialized basis of this restriction unnamed. Because any public espousal of the racist underpinnings of the continuous-journey regulation would have political repercussions throughout the empire, and thus threaten the British imperial project in India, the policy could not be one of open exclusion. It had to be concealed or, as historian Hugh Johnston puts it in the film, it had to be one that could be *denied*. *Continuous Journey* shows how the government's tactic of refusing to grant landing to the ship, holding it at bay for two months without

ever declaring its passengers excluded, kept the migrants in a state of legal exception in which they had no grounds to go to court. These policy mechanisms of veiled, suppressed racialization—that enact without naming, that can be denied, operating as they do through endless deferral—define the virtualities of Canadian immigration policy. The film suggestively retraces the particularities of Canadian practices of racialized exclusion in the context of global movements of empire and reveals their legacies and continuities in the present.

Spectral/Virtual Racisms

The formal aesthetic strategies hauntingly enacted in *Continuous Journey* are not incidental to the political dilemmas posed by the effaced histories of exclusion that the film confronts. Indeed, the plays of absence and presence, the layered use of animated images to create a space of emergence for buried histories whose representational traces have been neglected or destroyed, the tactical creation of an emergent archive of sorts—all become necessary strategies insofar as they capture, mimic and actualize the virtual operations and workings of racialized exclusions in Canadian immigration practices.

Deleuze has theorized the virtual in conjunction with what he calls the actual, which encompasses tangible, concrete entities that have a sensory or material form. The virtual is not a representation of the actual; rather, both interact as aspects of the real.

> The virtual is opposed not to the real but to the actual. The virtual is fully real in so far as it is virtual…. Indeed, the virtual must be defined as strictly a part of the real object—as though the object had one part of itself in the virtual into which it plunged as though into an objective dimension. (Deleuze 1994: 209)

But unlike the actual, the virtual can produce images but cannot be imaged itself: "the virtual can give rise to images but it is difficult to determine how an image can be given of it or how it can itself be an image" (Badiou 1999: 52).

Many theorists have drawn on and developed Deleuzian conceptions of the virtual in affirmative and transformative terms, in which the virtual is framed as the source of new political potentials. Elizabeth Grosz describes this as "the space of emergence of the new, the unthought, the unrealized, which at every moment loads the present with supplementarity…" (Grosz 2001: 78). This reading of the virtual is important to our engagement with Kazimi's project, but we depart from a more utopian rendering to also consider the virtual as a source of powerful potential for exclusion.[4] From this point of view, the virtual constitutes a space of emergence of new forms of exclusion, along with buried, shadowed histories that continue to haunt and inflect the present. This more critical rendering of virtuality arises from the questions of documentation, documentary practices and governmental policy that *Continuous Journey* raises.

This reading of the virtual in terms of exclusion is useful in considering processes of documentation. In the documentation of historical events, what is included in the archive and what is excluded? Both the included and the excluded events are part of the real, but thinking through this question in terms of the relationship between the virtual and the actual foregrounds the tensions of speaking to those exclusions within documentary modes of representation—both in terms of processes of historical exclusion and in terms of documentary strategies to recover lost histories. In attempting to actualize these exclusions, documentary filmmakers tend to confront the limits of realist modes of documentary representation, as Kazimi did with the almost absent visual archive of the *Komagata Maru* incident.

According to Rob Shields, "Deleuze speaks of actualization as a dramatization that enacts a simulation rather than a copy of an original image (as in the case of realization)" (Shields 2003: 33). In *Continuous Journey*, this form of non-mimetic actualization surfaces through its animation of archival stills. The virtual emerges in this animated movement between successive archival images. Kazimi resorted to the animation of archival stills as a formal strategy because of the dearth of pictorial documentation of the event; his use of animation also calls into question the reasons for this lack of documentation. The relationship between the virtual and the actual within the archive offers another lens to foreground the systematic exclusions of migrant and colonized peoples from official archives. This formal strategy offers a means to address the lack of representation "from below" in the archive, calling attention to this absence without trying to speak for the migrants, to cast them as mute, abject victims, or to deny this archival absence. Although the inaccessible, unascertainable nature of the identities of many passengers on the *Komagata Maru* comprise an appalling caesura in the archive, their effaced subjectivities constitute a virtual force hauntingly actualized in the animation of the few stills available.

Immigration policies can be considered to operate virtually in at least two mutually reinforcing ways. First, immigration policies are formulated to regulate and limit virtualities of mobility as vital fields of potential. At the same time, such policies operate precisely by enacting some of the virtual and often ghostly dimensions of their own discourse. The ways in which the racialized effects of policy exclusions operate virtually, leaving race unnamed and unspecified in the policy text while enacting highly racialized practices and effects, mirrors the Anglo-Canadian tradition of "polite racism": a racism without recourse to explicit naming or to an overtly racist terminology.

With respect to the first form of virtuality, these immigration policies are formulated to impinge upon and regulate the capacity of specific populations to embark upon legitimized forms of movement. This is particularly the case with interdiction policies, including those at work in both the continuous-journey regulation and the Safe Third Country Agreement. Both policies seek to regulate and limit potential movement, travel and border-crossings in a pre-emptive manner. This

may be done through specific rules regarding what forms of travel and which routes are deemed legitimate or illegitimate forms of arrival. It may also be enacted through sanctions or fines against transportation carriers (airlines, steamship lines) which transport undocumented migrants, applied by so-called "migration integrity specialists" (as they are called by Citizenship and Immigration Canada) who intercept undocumented migrants at international points of departure. Interdiction policies also operate through directives to carriers to redirect routes of transport in specified ways, as with the directive issued in tandem with the continuous-journey regulation that shut down all direct, continuous means of transport from the Indian subcontinent.[5] These virtual workings of interdiction policies operate through a pre-emptive and deterrent logic, seeking to deter and limit potential movements of people before they occur. By couching the policy in terms of administratively permissible forms of movement and travel, the racialized effects of limiting specific populations with respect to the movements they undertake remain unnamed and unspecified.

Of course, the effects of interdiction policies never live up to their pre-emptive promise of deterring or halting the mobility of would-be migrants. As Nandita Sharma and others have shown, they instead produce "illegalized" and precarious movements along with a vast population of undocumented "illegal" non-status peoples (Sharma 2006: 24-25). In this sense, the production of undocumented peoples and their "illegalized" movements are the virtual racialized effects of policies of interdiction and others policies of border control. Undocumented populations, and the role their labour and production plays in official economies, inhabit a kind of shadow zone where they are at once a crucial, vital productive force in the economy and at the same time underground, ghostly, invisible with respect to the governmental regimes of seeing and recording (statistics, administrative documents), except at their point of expulsion (detention, deportation).[6]

The virtualized operation of such policies of interdiction and regulation of legitimized mobility is intensifying at present, through increasing bilateral and transnational collaborations around interdiction policies and other strategies (visas, travel routes, readmission agreements) for limiting movement across transnational spaces. This is particularly evidenced by the multilateral Safe Third Country agreements implemented by the European Union in the 1990s[7] and between Canada and the U.S. (2004). By acting on the routes and means of migrant mobility, these policies are spatialized along geopolitical and ultimately racialized routes of passage between destination countries, transit/buffer zones where border rejections, detention and deportations are enacted, and the source countries and zones from which racialized populations originate.

The second intersecting sense of virtuality through which immigration policies operate relates to the unmarked nature through which racialized and other forms of exclusion are enacted in policy. This is the case with policies that operate

virtually, effecting exclusions while leaving them "unnamed" in the letter of the policy text, enacting "a racist strategy without naming race" as Radhika Mongia has written of the continuous-journey regulation (Mongia 2003: 206). These exist in contrast to the explicitly exclusionary immigration policies that marked the pre-1960s policy overhaul of the *Immigration Act*. These policies formally referred to race, nationality and ethnicity as grounds for exclusion in the policy text, the most notable being Section 38c that was first enshrined in the *Immigration Act* of 1910 (and that remained effective into the 1960s) (Jakubowski 1997) and the *Chinese Exclusion Acts* of 1885 and 1924.

The celebratory mythos of Canadian progress that lies at the core of liberal democratic and nationalist narratives of the nation, herald the elimination of these explicitly racialized policies in the 1960s as the end of Canadian racism in immigration policy and the country's opening to the world. Yet, as Kazimi's excavation of the *Komagata Maru* event of 1914 so poignantly shows, explicitly exclusionary policies always coexisted with policies such as the continuous-journey regulation that produced equally exclusionary effects in a less overt, virtualized form. In this way, the abolition of overtly racialized policies in the 1960s did not amount to the end of racist policies. Virtualized policies of exclusion persist, informing many provisions of the newest Canadian immigration regime implemented through the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* and Safe Third Country Agreement.

The virtual poetics at work in *Continuous Journey* enact a critical and volatile excavation of these shadowed histories of exclusion, actualizing their virtual and suppressed legacies and continuities. Rob Shields notes that the relationship between the virtual and the actual is a close one, the passage from one to the other involving a constant movement of virtualization and actualization. He argues that the virtual can be actualized through performative acts; actualization is performative, "an inventive drama" (Deleuze 1988: 101; Shields 2006: 285). Through its haunting animations and painstaking performative reconstructions, *Continuous Journey* powerfully actualizes the virtualized exclusionary histories and effects of Canadian immigration policy, placing them at the centre of transnational migration flows shaped by empire. The challenges posed by the film's production show that such acts of actualization remain politically volatile in a racialized Canadian political landscape that continues to enact virtualized forms of exclusion through the very celebration of its openness and embrace of immigration (Folson 2004; Vukov 2003).

The strategies adopted in *Continuous Journey* to actualize these buried legacies are strategies of necessity and invention, the outcome of challenges that attest to how much such a project runs against the grain of Canadian nationalist narratives. To begin with, Kazimi faced the challenge of an all-but-absent archive, building a film out of a suppressed historical event for which the visual documentation appeared

to be nil. For many of the central characters, Kazimi was able to find one still image at best, some of them photographs, others surviving only as photocopies or sketches. By building the dilemma of the absent visual archive into the diegetic narrative of *Continuous Journey*, Kazimi confronts his viewers with the challenges posed by the virtualized nature of the event and the political forces that expelled the *Komagata Maru* on both sides of the Pacific: Canada's racialized immigration policies and British imperial forces in India. His own search for visual traces of the event, his desire for an archive, indexes the mechanisms of historical erasure.

Rather than turning to re-enactment or recreation, strategies that were emphatically rejected by Kazimi (2005), the film indexes the ghostly event of the *Komagata Maru* in a number of ways. In addition to Kazimi's narrative of his search for a visual archive, *Continuous Journey* presents the archival images and texts from that time that *are* available in the institutional archive of the nation, recontextualizing them and substituting them for the event itself. The barroom rendition of "White Canada Forever," a popular song of the day rearranged and rerecorded for the film, accompanies footage of boxing matches and Prime Ministerial golfing parties filmed at the precise moment that the *Komagata Maru* sits stranded in the Vancouver Harbour, unremarked and unfilmed. These archival traces offer stark evidence of the constructed and partial nature of the official national historical record, foregrounding what the archive is unable or refuses to show, based on the fixations and fetishes of what it does show: a white Canada forever. Against the grain of conventional documentary uses of archival footage, Kazimi foregrounds his use of unconnected, non-indexical footage to visualize the narrative he has no other means to tell. The strange, rather uncanny affective quality of displacement this produces in the viewer is a constant trace and reminder of the historical erasures at play.

Reanimating the Archive

One of the striking characteristics of *Continuous Journey* is the way Kazimi makes use of this paucity of archival material. He not only repeats, tints and crops images, he animates them, creating illusions of movement within photographs of the ship, docks and streets. What this communicates about the archive and the structure of documentary cinema resonates with the play between presence and absence, past and present and the virtuality of history's force, also evident at the level of policy.

There is a surreal quality to the use of animated archival pictures as the camera zooms through to the vanishing point on the docks, as clouds speed across the sky behind the heads of the passengers of the *Komagata Maru*, as figures float across the screen. This surreal quality is fuelled by and is a tenuous manifestation of the virtual forces of history and violence haunting this event. The actualization of these forces calls to attention the inextricability of present and past and the fraught process of reconstruction that Kazimi performs. Here, he draws on the

lexicon of representational practices of other documentary filmmakers like the Black Audio Film Collective, Leila Sujir and his own previous work.

It is in the haunting archival animations of *Continuous Journey* that the full force of the film's actualization of this buried history coalesces in an astonishingly inventive form. Piecing together the sparse black and white still images of the event and animating them through simple stop motion and other digital techniques, the film literally sets these archival remnants into motion, animating them in order to reanimate a suppressed history. At other moments, the sudden zooms across still photographs of the ship's passengers convey a desire to animate these lost figures, to breathe motion into them. Fragments of text culled from policy documents and newspaper headlines are resurrected and launched into movement. The strange, rather jarring yet ghostly effect of such erased historical figures as Gurdit Singh rendered as animated stick figures foregrounds the eerie historical ventriloquism that the director had to engage in order to begin to piece together, let alone make sense of, the traumatic event. The staccato motions of the animated figures underline the sense that this is a miniaturized history. Susan Stewart has written that "even to speak of the miniature is to begin with imitation, with the second-handedness and distance of the model…. The dream of animation here is equally the terror caused by animation, the terror of the doll, for such movement would only cause the obliteration of the subject" (Stewart 1984: 171-72). Stewart here is referring to a transcendent, omniscient imperial subject implied in the very act of miniaturization; setting the miniature into motion threatens such mastery. *Continuous Journey* both draws on and confronts this Victorian imperialist mini-ature aesthetic, turning it on its head by animating these miniaturized figures to materialize an erased anti-imperialist legacy.

Given the desperate measures called for in retrieving and reanimating the traces of the *Komagata Maru*, the setting of these two-dimensional black and white archival reproductions into motion both indexes and works to undo the obliteration of other subjects and of the racialized impacts and resistance to the continuous-journey regulation. The second-handedness and imitative quality of the archival images only serve to heighten the alchemical effects of their animation and the power with which these fragmentary remnants-in-motion actualize a virtual, buried history. Brian Massumi argues that the virtual does not appear in static form or inherent content, but in the movement between samples, in "the twists and folds of formed content" (Massumi 2002: 133). In this sense, the very practice of animation itself is exemplary of the virtual, the transition between static images creating a sense of movement within the interstices. It is in *Continuous Journey*'s animation of these rare, decaying archival images, the creation of movement between these static samples, between these faded archival stills put into motion, that the spectres of this exclusionary, racialized history appear.

The power of these archival animations lies not only in their representational value as images, but as recollection objects (Deleuze 1989: 47-50; Marks 2000: 37, 50), indexing the traces of a suppressed past for which the official modes of direct representation have been destroyed or denied (the invisible evidence Fung refers to). Their role as recollection objects imbues the animations with a charged and visceral quality, the affective traces of the director's desire for an archive of the virtualized, disappeared tracks of the event. Kazimi has spoken of the visceral nature of his experience of the archive in his own research process for the film, of how he wanted to build that visceral-ness of the archive into the film itself (Kazimi 2005). The affects of this particular archive emanate and radiate from the ghostly movements of the strange, animated archival stick figures, flickering, virtual traces that were never destined to be represented at all in the official record, let alone in this way.

The most striking punctum in the animation of *Continuous Journey* is when the photograph of Gurdit Singh fills the screen and, looking at the camera, his eyes blink. This image of Gurdit Singh, animated to blink, repeats constantly through the film, often with no break or acknowledgement in the commentary. Why is this image so consistently jarring? And what is achieved by the visceral shock of this animation? The implications of animating Gurdit Singh's nearly century-old photograph to blink are key to understanding the role of the archive in *Continuous Journey*. It is a play between reconstruction and decay, recuperation and loss. It queries the distinction between animated and already-moving images and their ability to recuperate the events they record.

Whether successful, animating an archival image is a gesture towards recuperation or rescue. The pixilation and faded quality of the decomposing image is stalled by its new movement and circulation, and yet its poignancy resides in the fragility of its rescue. This act of animation does not deny the decay of the image; it adds a

Fig. 1 Gurdit Singh, his son, and passengers on the Komagata Maru. *Photo courtesy Ali Kazimi.*
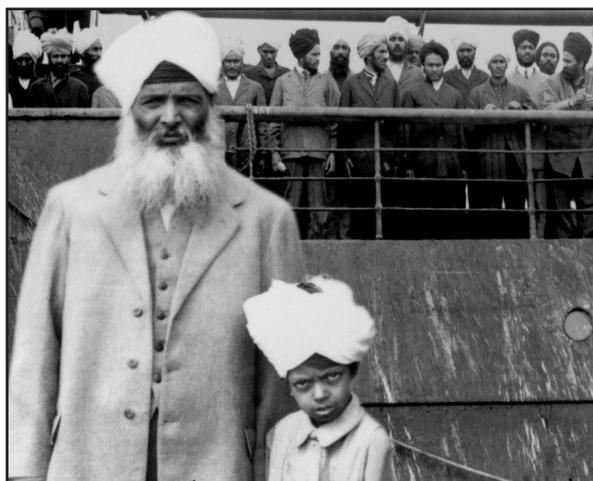
new level of movement. There is a materialist line that can be drawn between this kind of animation and experimental documentaries that emphasize the decayed quality of archival film, like Chris Marker's *Grin Without a Cat* (2001[1978]), or the Black Audio film collective's *Handsworth Songs* (1986). *Handsworth Songs* is made up of both news/official footage and home movies following the 1983 race riots in Birmingham. The lack of access to more official coverage is highlighted by slowing down the clips, creating a funereal pace and distorting the image and sound. In other words, *Handsworth Songs'* technique of tearing up the cinematic image and exposing it as decayed, is an important prehistory to the animated archival image, in that the latter mobilizes this aura of decay in the process of animating it.

The turn to the decayed image in the work of Marker or the Black Audio Film Collective highlights the need to trouble the relationship between the recording subject and the recorded object, especially when the latter is separated by history. *Continuous Journey* draws on the potency of decay and the breakdown of the image as literal artifact, but then in the same stroke confers a secondary agency, subjectivity and movement.

Transnational Traces/presence and Absence

These concerns around representation and history, presence and absence, are formally ingrained in *Continuous Journey*. As Laura Marks points out, these concerns with history and representation are part of the formal properties of cinema. Intercultural cinema amplifies the already latent capacity of film and video to translate imperfectly (Marks 2000: 89). Cinema inhabits the liminal space between language and image, she states, and so it marks the point at which events and objects are narrated. What this imperfect translation communicates is both what emerges as an alternative to the originally intended representation and the instability and inaccessibility of the event itself. Marks evokes Bhabha's contention that the fixity of stereotypes emerges from the instability of intercultural encounter.

According to Marks, then, the cinematic image evokes traces of the event only to inevitably obscure it. This alternation of presence and absence manifest at the level of image is the creation of a fetish of the event. Cinema, like the photograph, has an indexical relationship to the event that literally leaves its imprint (fossil-like) on its surface. Although the transparency of this rendition is debatable, Marks states that in the case of intercultural cinema or a minority history, there are so few such artifacts that their imprints are vitally important to speak of those histories. This weak indexicality has what she calls a radioactivity, a rootless energy that renders the event more rather than less obscure.

What renders these images dangerous and rootless is their separation from memory. At the individual level they are recollection-images, which float, unteth-

ered, from remembering bodies and subjectivities. At the collective level, they are dialectical images that mark the losses that follow colonial capitalism (Marks 2000: 51).[8] When thinking about the visualization of archival material, the images that lack adequate explanation are the ones that are the most potent, as they call attention to how they lack bodies, memories and experiences to ground them. Consequently, this disjuncture, like that of the time image, mobilizes the viewing body to compensate for these lacks. Although the viewing body is not the body that houses the memory of the images, the affection-image mobilizes the viewing body into a state of remembering. A kind of visceral connect-the-dots that makes traces of the event both material and present, in the wake of its very inaccessibility. Marks describes how memory operates through systematic displacement. The social conditions that produce collective mourning, displaced onto an image of an individual, produces a response in the viewer that connects to the collective event through the image of the individual (76).

This speaks to one element of the puzzle that underlies the blinking photograph: the distance between the viewer and the image is both expanded as incommensurable, and collapsed in the intimacy of the affect generated by the blink. It also fits within the language of distance and loss that informs *Continuous Journey*'s search for archival evidence. Kazimi locates his own experiences in this exploration, drawing links between the defeat of secularism in India and legislations like the continuous-journey regulation. What he shows, evoking the cinematic language of Marker and Akomfrah, is images of the India of his student days in 1983— before Operation Bluestar, the assassination of Indira Gandhi, race riots across the country. Blurry, aged and dreamlike moving images of happy young people on the street, friends on swings, all melt as his voiceover speaks of the destruction of their secular hopes. Similarly, he depicts himself sitting helplessly in front of an empty microfiche projector when he speaks of the lack of evidence. This is not mimetic illustration. Rather, his body and his memories anthropomorphize a larger historical concern.

This activation of the archive makes the boundary between the animated and the non-animated parts of the documentary more blurred. For example, the memorial plaque that commemorates the tragedy of the *Komagata Maru* is so tiny that the camera cannot even focus on it.[9] In the archive, no one can put a picture to Munshi Singh's face, even though he was one of only two passengers to disembark the *Komagata Maru* to stand as the sole test case whose trial would decide the fate of all passengers. His trial set a precedent for immigration policy long after the ship sailed back toward India, yet he remains unidentified, inscrutable. These effacements and erasures are performed in the animated landscapes in which bodies of migrants disappear from the shore. They are not only animations. They have, in Marks's sense, a trace of anim*ism*, or contact with the event of erasure and expulsion. This endows the animation of archival images with the resonance of other rituals, repeating events with a fetishistic aura. The disruptive blink finds

its visual counterpart in the transitions of the film to archival material, where they unsettlingly flicker to bright white before settling in. More conceptually, this visual counterpart is found in the figures from the photographs that float from one context to another before also "settling" in the background of the image from which they are cropped. Formally, the kinds of movement introduced into the animation of these images resonate with the representational strategies deployed in *Continuous Journey* and the unfolding of its substantive narrative. A dizzying vertigo follows a theatrical, even vitrine-like presentation of these artifacts.

Continuous Journey presents archival information as a collaged *tableau vivant*: where the unlikely juxtaposition of characters, cropped from various photographs, stand against sometimes unlikely backdrops, and sometimes in front of backgrounds that they spill out from. Past and present collide outside of non-animated juxtapositions as well: the voiceover account of Mewa Singh's trial is paired with the almost banal footage of the courthouse where his trial took place, now the Vancouver Art Gallery, where kids skateboard across the stairs on a summer afternoon. Disrupting slightly this image is a small trace of the past in the tiny, nearly forgotten replica of the *Komagata Maru* on the roof of the building. This play between the inscrutable distance of actual traces and that of the insider's knowledge that the voice-over presents, fuels the ways in which these *tableaux vivants* operate: the proximity created by cropping the figures and the distance of their staged quality. This is exacerbated by the use of titles that identify the "characters" in this episode. Large and graphic, they dominate the screen so they act, not quite as inter-titles, nor quite as specimen labels, but something in between: a screen, or even a frame through which the characters and the images are visible.

This static "presentation" of images is also manifest in slightly uncanny compositions where figures plausibly populate a street or a dock, but seem to leave no shadows as they float above the ground. When they disappear and reappear their presence seems all the more tenuous. This tenuousness is exacerbated in the quick zooms through the landscape towards the vanishing point of the composition. The sense of vertigo and disorientation that it engenders repeats in the speeding clouds over the one iconic picture of the ship, the sped-up view of the harbour in Vancouver, the anti-Hitchcockian distancing effect of zooming in and out from the cropped figures, the fluttering of one hundred newspapers in archival footage. This movement is experienced as a force that splits these images open and vividly conjures the experience of time passing, of the force of history that pulls present and past together through the affect of the viewer.

This alternation of stasis and motion follows Marks's productive comparison between the dialectical and the recollection image (Marks 2000: 27, 64). The recollection image, created in what Deleuze calls anyspace, transient spaces, produces a state of contemplation and inaction that witnesses the severing of

memory from its referent. The dialectical image, on the other hand, disrupts the smoothing tendency of memory and releases memory (or *mémoire involuntaire*). The exposure of experience is shocking given the state of alienation inherent in capitalism. This state of shock is social because it disrupts social anaesthesia and reveals underlying relations of control. This sense of shock is what produces the sense of vertigo that spins the viewer through the images, jolting them out of the state of contemplation that the *tableaux*-as-recollection-images have induced.

The forces that are being released in these recollection-images, these sparse archival traces, have a world-historical quality. These images are what Marks calls transnational objects, which, following Appadurai and Simmel, she sees encoded and condensed, journeying across the globe and across history, taxonomizing and recording the sweep of colonialism and capitalism that brought these migrants to Vancouver's coast. It's a product of capitalism, Marks points out, as workers and labourers not only follow the flow of commodities, but are themselves abstracted as commodities. The transnational object collapses and sublimates labour into the object or commodity (Marks 2000: 78).

Marks points out that materializing and focusing on the routes of passage of the commodity form runs the risk of dematerializing the object itself, of making it a transparent effect of the flow of goods and people. This is especially dangerous when the commodity form of their labour value has engulfed the subjectivities of displaced workers. Consequently the delicate balance that Benjamin strikes is crucial in his valorization of both de- and re-mythologizing the commodity form that (among other effects) accords the object an irrational and magical excess that exceeds narration.

This balance between surreality, the erasure of labouring bodies and the need for testimonials informs the visual language of animation in Leila Sujir's *Dreams of the Night Cleaners*, in a way that speaks to the use of the non-rational in animations in *Continuous Journey*. These surreal moments of non-rational or affective flights of fancy, those virtual traces of colonized histories that are impossible to capture empirically, can be conveyed and actualized. *Night Cleaners* emphasizes both the surreal and the nightmarish in documenting the experiences of immigrant workers in Canada. As Shields notes, dreams and memories are classic instances of the virtual (Shields 2006: 284). Sujir's piece mines these virtual repositories of the lives of immigrant workers for both their utopian and dystopian dimensions. As one of the characters states: "This country at a distance is a wonderful dream … close up I began to see the nightmare" (Sujir 1997)—a statement which evokes the equal materiality of geographical space and of dreams and nightmares.

Night Cleaners' surreal animation is inextricable from its depiction of the abject quality of immigrant work, moving between the experience of two workers: a night cleaner with an MA in economics from India and a second generation office worker in the same company. During one encounter, they summarize key

experiences of invisible labour as both abject and invisible. The night cleaner says: "When I clean I get *dirty* and because we clean they say we *are* dirty" while the office worker replies, "Sometimes I feel cut off from my body as if I have no body. I'm not at home in my own body. It's as if I've lost my body. Sometimes I feel like I'm floating in a nightmare and there's a storm coming."

Although *Night Cleaners* does not gloss over the class differences that produce these different experiences, it does suggest that the experience of migrant labour is at once abject and invisible/disembodied. This balance finds its surreal counterpart in the "Eggplant Story," a sequence in which a frail woman flies though the city in the form of an eggplant, ruminating about lost and recovered histories.[10] The poignancy of this sequence lies in the absurdity of the flying eggplant and the inexorableness of racism, loss and death that haunts this character throughout the film. It is as though this space can only be represented by a surreal object that stands as a fragile proxy to the tragedy that is displaced only slightly by its incongruent absurdity. Similarly, the narrator of the documentary emerges in incongruent special effects: in a window opening out of a bottle of household cleansers, speaking of mythical deified forces such as Shiva the destroyer who can clean history. The absurdity renders her immanent: she witnesses and comments on the events, but does not explain or resolve anything. If anything, the poetic non-linear narration adds to the sense of disorientation.

The animation of *Night Cleaners* provides a direction with which to think about the transnational object and the photograph that blinks. It highlights how the non-rational and the surreal consitute key strategies in the recuperation of the often-erased subjectivity of the migrant worker, who is both inside and outside the experience of European identity.[11] Marks points out that European enlightenment consciousness was premised on seeing peasants and colonized peoples as mired in their bodies, as opposed to the enlightenment sense of self as cerebral, prioritizing the distance senses (Marks 2000: 80, 87, 119). The fetish is created in the clash of cultures, but is also created by the outward movement of what was once inside. The body without organs crystallizes internal states as it expels them: like tears that materialize sorrow.[12] This expulsion creates a state of longing for what has been lost or expelled.

If the body without organs is a stand-in for the logic of capital and the crystallized tear is the uneasy and tenuous body of labour, then the state of longing and perpetual erasure makes sense. The expulsion of the bodily, the abject miring of the body to the outside labourers across to other shores and outside the city tenements makes embodiment something that is alienated, longed for and loathed.

Present Pasts and the Safe Third Country Agreement

A faded, sepia-coloured ship, the *Komagata Maru*, floats and idles in the crisp blue waves and sharp digital colours of the Vancouver harbour of the present. A recurring montage technique employed in *Continuous Journey* involves the intercutting, dissolving and overlaying of archival and contemporary footage. A brightly coloured boat race in today's harbour dissolves into the grey, flickering, staccato movements of a boat race of the past, another fragment of archival found footage that is mobilized in a story it was never meant to tell. These sequences trace and evoke the continuities between past and present through an effect that makes them appear ghostly, yet tangible. This actualization of the trajectories between the past and the present of the *Komagata Maru*, the phantom, immobile version of the ship still haunting the waters that flow across the static demarcations of the nation's borders, is politically charged—knowingly and defiantly so.

There are several moments in which the film actualizes the continuities between historical and present-day virtualized forms of exclusion in Canadian immigration policy. In its closing sequences, *Continuous Journey* shifts its temporal frame, tracing the connections between past and present through the interdiction policy measures that shaped the continuous-journey regulation and the recently passed Canada-U.S. Safe Third Country Agreement of 2004.[13] Specifically, Kazimi shows how the same forms of covert, virtualized racisms shape the seemingly neutral administrative measures defining illegitimate modes of entry based on travel routes into the country: in the first case by requiring a continuous mode of travel to Canada while shutting down the only continuous route and then applying the provision only against South Asians (or *Hindoos* as they were then referred to uniformly); in the second by disallowing refugees from making a refugee claim in Canada if they arrive in the United States first. Kazimi emphasizes the links between the policies in the voiceover, stating that "refugees who do not make a *continuous journey* to Canada ... will be turned back at the border" (Kazimi 2004). Refugee activists have shown that the Safe Third Country Agreement disqualifies any form of land travel to Canada for many Latin American refugee claimants (very few of whom are able to arrive by other means), effectively closing the Canadian border to their legitimate entry. In the year that the Safe Third Country Agreement was implemented, Colombian refugee claims, that had accounted for the largest number of claims in 2004, dropped by 70 per cent within six months (Dench and Goldman 2005).[14] In *Continuous Journey*, the role played by the *Komagata Maru* within larger anti-imperial resistance movements is connected to contemporary activism opposing what Kazimi calls a new empire, specifically opposition to the U.S. war on Iraq and to racialized immigration policies by activist groups such as *No One Is Illegal*.[15]

Kazimi has said that he intentionally avoided using the terms "race" and "racism" in his reanimation of the *Komagata Maru* event (Kazimi 2005). He wanted the

film to focus on the process through which these racialized exclusions were enacted rather than becoming fixed on the naming of racism. Kazimi sees the fact that race was never named in the continuous-journey regulation as key to its racialized effects. In this sense, his approach both mirrors and challenges the virtualized workings of racialized exclusion in the continuous-journey regulation. In the closing sequences of the film, lawyer Audrey Macklin and historian Hugh Johnston speak of the racist migration policies through which Canada was constituted. These two explicit mentions of racism in the eighty-seven minute film, along with the film's connections between the racialized interdiction policies of the past and today, became major points of contention with the film's broadcaster, who wanted them removed from the film. Kazimi refused.[16] *Continuous Journey*'s moments of actualization make explicit the virtual forms of racism in Canada's past and present in ways that are still volatile.

Ghost Ships: Suspended and Perpetual Movements

Ultimately, it is through the animated images of the *Komagata Maru*, hovering and idling as its passengers grow hungrier and increasingly desperate with no landing in sight—that the virtualized operations of racial exclusion in Canada come most starkly into view. Like the electronic flying *Komagata Maru* rendered in Leila Sujir's *Dreams of the Night Cleaners*, *Continuous Journey*'s reanimation sets the ship back into motion only to leave it hanging, powerfully evoking the state of suspension through which Canadian racialized exclusions operate. Kazimi sees this figure of the suspended ship as an image of contemporary racism in Canada, capturing how racialized power in Canada works by wearing people down, putting them off, leaving them in a state of limbo or perpetual holding pattern, without having to pronounce or invoke explicitly racist logics (Kazimi 2005). This confirms the continuities between the *Komagata Maru* and the exclusions of contemporary immigration policy, which increasingly operate through administrative and enforcement measures designed to deter and exhaust immigrant and refugee claimants, placing them in perpetual states of limbo and spaces of enclosure, endlessly deferring and postponing any semblance of due process, until they abandon ship and retreat. The song performed by Shahid Ali Khan throughout the soundscape of the film also builds this quality of suspension, of being caught in no-man's territory and unable to land, into the texture of the film.

Continuous Journey offers a glimpse of another hovering embodiment of the Komagata Maru in the form of the tiny replica on the roof of the Vancouver Art Gallery. Ken Lum's public art sculptural installation *Four Boats Stranded: Red and Yellow, Black and White* (2001) also connects the historical legacy of the *Komagata Maru* and the colonization of First Nations to contemporary practices of racialized exclusion in Canadian immigration through the installation of four boats on each corner of the art gallery.[17] On the corner directly adjacent to the hovering *Komagata*

Maru sits a sculpture of the cargo ship that brought 599 Fujian Chinese migrants to the shores of British Columbia in the summer of 1999. The vast majority were detained in provincial prisons and deported in an exceptional group expulsion procedure following a vast media and public outcry about the invasion of the west coast by "illegals." As *Continuous Journey* shows, the installation of Lum's project on the Vancouver Art Gallery is a particularly resonant site—the building formerly housed the provincial courthouse where the trial of Mewa Singh was held in the violent aftermath of the forced return of the *Komagata Maru* to India and the Budge Budge Massacre that awaited its passengers. Lum's sculptures are also miniature replicas of the ships; as miniatures, they "bring historical events 'to life', to immediacy" (Stewart 1984: 60). The strategy of miniaturization here foregrounds the contamination of the racialized legacies of the past into a present haunted by the hovering ghost ships, the unwanted remainders, of then and now.

More than an hour into *Continuous Journey*, Kazimi discovers, mislabelled in the archive, the only existing film stock of the *Komagata Maru*. As the ship, the real ship, sails, really sails, a *bhajan* performed by Shahid Ali Khan is played:

> Tell me
> Which shore should I go to?
> We strangers have
> No country of our own.[18]

Finding the "real" footage does not mark a homecoming in the narrative in the film; it marks the impossibility of place for the people on that boat. The continuous journey is just that, a meditation on the forces that render some perpetually homeless and on the move, and this fragile indexicality, the grey ship that sails without a soul in sight, is remote and inaccessible. Yet, somewhat paradoxically,

Fig. 2 The Komagata Maru.
  Photo courtesy Ali Kazimi.

the moment this lost footage is discovered and revealed to the viewer is an affectively charged one, producing a turning point in the film precisely because of the tension between the remote footage of the actual ship that could be any ship and the ghostly puppet personifications of passengers animated by Kazimi. In his revelation of the footage of the actual ship, accompanied by the haunting tones of the *bhajan*, the full intensity of the desire for an index of the event, however thin and mute, is powerfully unleashed. The found footage of the ship becomes endowed with a charged mythicality that floods the viewer with a visceral sense of its inaccessibility.

If the real footage confronts the viewer with distance, the blinking photograph pulls us back. Animated and with the aura of animism, it looks back at us in its fleeting moment of existence. Although Gurdit Singh blinks and blinks again unpredictably, the disorienting affect finds its home in the viewer's body when his son's photograph blinks towards the end of the film, as the *Komagata Maru* reaches Bengal. Fearing that the politics that the *Komagata Maru* represented might fuel insurrectionary movements on Indian soil, the British government attempts to nip its subversive potential in the bud. And so the ship is diverted by the British authorities from Calcutta to a small coastal town called Budge Budge. When it arrives at the coast, the unsuspecting passengers are surrounded by British troops who open fire on the ship and kill twenty-six people. More than two-dozen passengers are reported missing after the massacre.

The viewer is told that Gurdit Singh's son is snatched away in the gunfire when the *Komagata Maru* reaches the shore of Budge Budge, and then is lost by the narrative. The lost body of the son, the ghost traces of his embodiment, are condensed into the affect created by his blink, registering the shock of the loss of possibly fifty men, women and children, in a digressed, ambushed and silenced appendix to this narrative. The larger historical erasure of labouring migrant bodies and their resistance to imperial projects, the miredness of bodies rendered other in the logic of imperialism and capital, the state of longing for the lost body within the logic of capital; they are all mobilized in that moment when the subjectivity of Gurdit Singh's son is both found and forever lost.

Notes

1. Fung organized a panel at the 2005 Visible Evidence conference entitled "Invisible Evidence," that explored some of the tactics adopted by media artists working on diaspora histories who often "deal with absences, silences, fissures and contradictions within/around archival traces of these histories." Kazimi was one of the panel presenters (*Visible Evidence XII: International Conference on the Role of Film, Video, and other Media as witness and voice of social reality*. Concordia University, Montreal, QC).

2. Significantly, Kazimi shows how the legal arguments used to establish this racialized distinction among British subjects were based on the precedent of the prior application of this distinction to so-called Native Indians in Canada.

3. The Ghadar Party was a secular organization founded in the United States and Canada in 1913 and was a keen advocate of the anticolonial movement in India.

4. For more on the relationship between virtuality and representations of colonial conquest in new media work, see Hameed (forthcoming).

5. Kazimi shows how the Canadian government forced Canadian Pacific to shut down the only direct transport line between India and Canada at the same time that it issued the continuous-journey regulation.

6. A key instance of this invisibility came to light in the wake of the September 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Centre in New York, when relatives of the undocumented cafeteria, cleaning and maintenance workers killed had extreme difficulty locating their remains or accessing any forms of aid as there were no documentary or administrative traces of these migrant workers to be found in the governmental system. See Campbell 2001.

7. The first Safe Third Country clause in the European context was introduced in Germany's asylum law restrictions of 1993. It declared all countries bordering Germany to be safe third countries, and primarily targeted the influx of displaced Balkan refugees fleeing the wars in the former Yugoslavia. Other European countries soon followed suit. It has become a central policy mechanism of the emerging migration regime of the European Union.

8. Briefly, the movement image makes the viewer aware of the relationship between movement and time, while the time image heightens and explodes the presence of time. In other words, in the time image, there is time and movement within the clips, but editing creates a second level of awareness of time passed. Recollection images, on the other hand are images and memories that have become separated from the remembering body. See Deleuze (1989), Colebrook (2002).

9. To date, the only official markings of this incident are two memorial plaques in Vancouver, in Portal Park near the Gateway to the Pacific and at the Ross Street Gurdwara. A memorial to the Budge Budge Massacre of the *Komagata Maru*'s passengers also stands at Budge Budge Harbour, Calcutta India.

10. An early version of the script for the *Dreams of the Night Cleaners*, including "The Eggplant Story," is available in the journal *Tessera* (Sujir 1992).

11. This is one set of strategies among many in the diverse ways that migrant subjectivity is actualized, from self-organized activist mobilizing around migrant justice to the simple (and often not so simple) exercise of what Mezzadra calls "the right to escape." For more on such manifestations of migrant subjectivity, see Mezzadra (2004), Mezzadra and Nielson (2003), and Ahooja et al. (2006).

12. The term "body without organs" is used by Deleuze and Guattari in *Anti-Oedipus* (2003). Taken from Antonin Artaud's *Theatre of Cruelty*, it connotes both the upside and the abyssal qualities of pure possibility and flow. In *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari link this ambivalent notion of flow with the circulation of capital. Like the body without organs, the capitalist machine or socius is a desiring body that aspires to pure flow, but

in this instance has to constantly change its form in order to bypass the resisting bodies of exploited labour (many thanks to colleagues in Social and Political Thought at York University for insight on this connection).

13. For a more detailed analysis of the connections and the differences between Canadian immigration policies during the respective historical periods of the continuous-journey regulation and the Safe Third Country Agreement, see Vukov (2007), which examines the transition in immigration policy from an era of largely explicit eugenic racism, to a biopolitical state racism in the 1960s.

14. A recent report on the effects of the Safe Third Country Agreement on refugee claimants refused entry to Canada and directed back to the United States shows that many of them are detained in U.S. prisons due to the arbitrary detention policies espoused by the American government. See *Bordering on Failure* (Harvard Law Student Advocates for Human Rights et al. 2006).

15. For more on *No One Is Illegal*, see Ahooja et al. (2006) along with Lowry and Nyers (2003).

16. The broadcaster subsequently backed out of airing the feature length documentary, burying a shortened hour-long version of the film in a late night slot in the television schedule with little promotion. *Continuous Journey* was produced in association with TVOntario.

17. Lum's installation includes miniature stylized versions of a First Nations longboat, the Fujian ghost ship of 2001, the *Komagata Maru*, and British colonial explorer Captain Vancouver's ship.

18. "Sade Pardesian" (SOCAN 2004). Performed by Shahid Ali Khan and produced by Phil Strong.

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