

## Postmemory in the North



# Postmemory in the North

## VIDEO EXHIBITION

27 June – 4 August | Monday – Thursday | 10am-5pm

Holocaust Centre North  
University of Huddersfield

### video works by **Ben Spatz**

with **Nazlıhan Eda Erçin & Agnieszka Mendel**

accompanying texts by **Lindsey Dodd**

programme design by Paula Kolar

#### works presented in the Toni Schiff Auditorium:

**Postmemory: Fragments** (46:10)

Ben Spatz with Nazlıhan Eda Erçin & Agnieszka Mendel

**Postmemory: Crypt** (47:22)

Ben Spatz with Nazlıhan Eda Erçin & Agnieszka Mendel

#### also on display:

**Diaspora: An Illuminated Video** (30:48)

Ben Spatz with Nazlıhan Eda Erçin, Agnieszka Mendel & Elaine Spatz-Rabinowitz

**Działoszyce: Song, Border, Body** (17:38)

Nazlıhan Eda Erçin with Agnieszka Mendel & Ben Spatz

### guest talk by **Nafhesa Ali**

Wednesday 29 June @ 17:30

'There were bodies everywhere': childhood memories of Partition, gendered sexualities and (inter)generational ageing in the UK.

How do memories of the past impact on ageing experiences in the present and on (inter)generational relationships? Trauma, memories from the place of birth and passing on transnational (inter)generational gendered identities will be explored in this talk, in relation to older South Asian migrant women (between sixty and eighty years old) who settled in the UK and have lived here for the majority of their adult lives.



stills from 'Diaspora' and 'Działoszyce'

## Artist Statement

I grew up with the weight of Holocaust postmemory, both implicit and explicit. In 2012, when I began to investigate the politics of jewish\* identity through artistic research, I did not intend to deal with the Holocaust directly. But, as Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett once asked: Isn't every jewish cultural project in europe necessarily a project of Holocaust memory?

Today it is impossible for me to speak of Holocaust memory without invoking the prior genocides of european colonialism and slavery; ongoing indigenous erasure and antiblack violence, from the united states to the mediterranean sea; the twisting of history to justify further catastrophe in israel/palestine; and the present and future of a climate catastrophe caused by extractive capitalism. With the current rise of nationalism and fascism across the world, we must ask ourselves what it means to say: "never again."

The videos presented in this exhibition follow the encounters of the 2017 Judaica project lab team with ruined and partially restored synagogues in the rural *świętokrzyskie* region of poland, where we undertook a kind of *research on place* as well as memory. In these unique places, we encountered the relics of genocide alongside museum exhibitions, archival traces, and objects ranging from the mundane and the kitschy to the downright racist.

In these practice sessions, we lay our songs and our bodies against the particularities of each site. We did not plan what would happen or draw explicit distinctions between memory and imagination, tradition and invention, the proper and the improper. We worked with care, supporting each other in our practices. As each of us takes the role of performer in turn, we perceive different aspects of the place and respond in different ways. Two new video works, *Postmemory: Fragments* and *Postmemory: Crypt*, have been created for this exhibition.

The songs we sing in these videos come from a variety of sources. Some were selected for the Judaica project, as part of its methodology. Others arise from our individual histories of personal and artistic research. Through the process of video editing, I cast about again in the ruins for a different way of becoming present and a different way of grappling with history.

This work is done in solidarity with decolonial movements and explorations throughout the world, as a search for jewishness beyond the nation-state and even beyond diaspora.



\* Since 2017, I lowercase "jewish" to avoid the implications of orthodoxy and nationalism. Since 2020, I lowercase all religious, national, and racial identity terms; sometimes also the names of places.

## Video Works

### **Postmemory: Fragments** (46:10)

Ben Spatz with Nazlihan Eda Erçin and Agnieszka Mendel (2022)

*Postmemory: Fragments* was recorded on 8 September 2017 at the ruined and partially restored synagogue in Szydłów, Poland, which is now a community centre. The main room hosts an exhibition of jewish cultural and ritual objects, as well as sculptures by Kazimierz Gustaw Zemła, including a four-meter tall statue of Moses called *Decalogue*. When we visited, the room was filled with canvasses that had been left by a community painting class.

The word "fragments" refers to the juxtaposition of dissimilar things, the fragmented space of memory and contemporary community this place has become. The idea of the fragment has been part of my artistic practice for decades, perhaps since I encountered Tim Etchells' book on artistic fragments more than two decades ago. In the Judaica project we worked with "song fragments," or what we also called "crumbs of song." Fragments are a key image in jewish mysticism, following the kabbalistic story of the breaking of unity into shards or sparks.

### **Postmemory: Crypt** (47:22)

Ben Spatz with Nazlihan Eda Erçin and Agnieszka Mendel (2022)

*Postmemory: Crypt* was recorded on 12 September 2017 at the ruined and partially restored synagogue in Pińczów, one of the oldest in Poland. The main hall contains an exhibition about the Jews of Pińczów. Since 2005 this synagogue houses two stained glass windows created by the artist Jacek Nowak, while a project to restore the wall paintings and other architectural elements was carried out by the World Monuments Fund.

The word "crypt" refers to the physical structure and somatic texture of this synagogue, its coldness and its abandoned inner chamber. Of course, it also refers to the contemporary status of such synagogues as places of death, memorials to genocide. More recently, I have been thinking about another meaning of crypt, the cryptic or cryptographic, as in the identities of "crypto-jews": those who are jewish but, for whatever reason, find themselves "passing" as members of christianity, or what we would now call whiteness.

### **Diaspora: An Illuminated Video** (30:48)

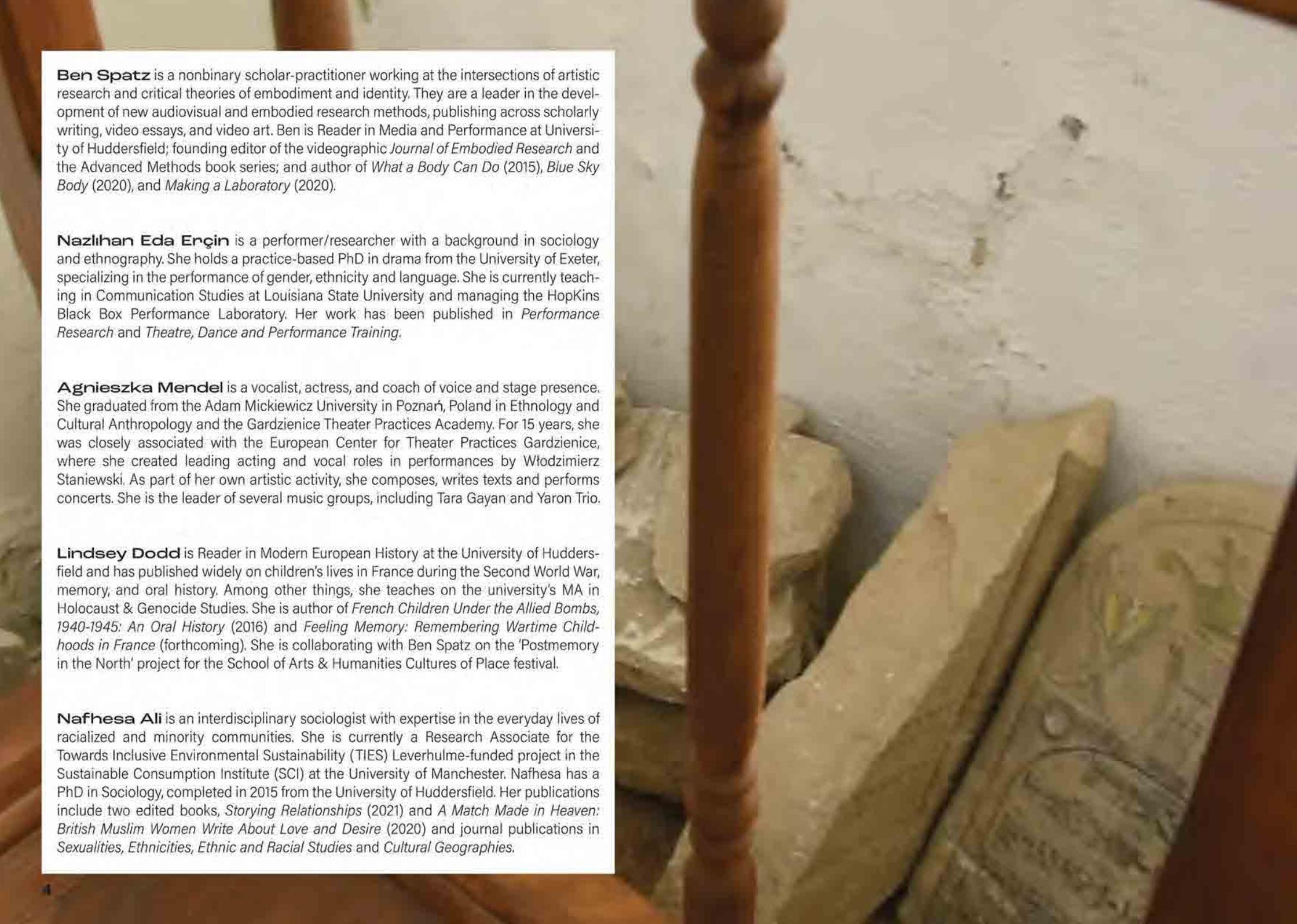
Ben Spatz with Nazlihan Eda Erçin, Agnieszka Mendel & Elaine Spatz-Rabinowitz

*Diaspora* was recorded on 3 August 2017 in the Patrick Stewart Building, University of Huddersfield. It was published in the journal *Global Performance Studies* 2.1 (2018).

### **Działoszyce: Song, Border, Body** (17:38)

Nazlihan Eda Erçin with Agnieszka Mendel and Ben Spatz

*Działoszyce* was recorded on 8 September 2017 at the ruined synagogue in Działoszyce, Poland. It premiered online in the 1st International Ecoperformance Festival, São Paulo, Brazil (2021). This video work was composed and annotated by Nazlihan Eda Erçin.



**Ben Spatz** is a nonbinary scholar-practitioner working at the intersections of artistic research and critical theories of embodiment and identity. They are a leader in the development of new audiovisual and embodied research methods, publishing across scholarly writing, video essays, and video art. Ben is Reader in Media and Performance at University of Huddersfield; founding editor of the videographic *Journal of Embodied Research* and the Advanced Methods book series; and author of *What a Body Can Do* (2015), *Blue Sky Body* (2020), and *Making a Laboratory* (2020).

**Nazlihan Eda Erçin** is a performer/researcher with a background in sociology and ethnography. She holds a practice-based PhD in drama from the University of Exeter, specializing in the performance of gender, ethnicity and language. She is currently teaching in Communication Studies at Louisiana State University and managing the HopKins Black Box Performance Laboratory. Her work has been published in *Performance Research* and *Theatre, Dance and Performance Training*.

**Agnieszka Mendel** is a vocalist, actress, and coach of voice and stage presence. She graduated from the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, Poland in Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology and the Gardzienice Theater Practices Academy. For 15 years, she was closely associated with the European Center for Theater Practices Gardzienice, where she created leading acting and vocal roles in performances by Włodzimierz Staniewski. As part of her own artistic activity, she composes, writes texts and performs concerts. She is the leader of several music groups, including Tara Gayan and Yaron Trio.

**Lindsey Dodd** is Reader in Modern European History at the University of Huddersfield and has published widely on children's lives in France during the Second World War, memory, and oral history. Among other things, she teaches on the university's MA in Holocaust & Genocide Studies. She is author of *French Children Under the Allied Bombs, 1940-1945: An Oral History* (2016) and *Feeling Memory: Remembering Wartime Childhoods in France* (forthcoming). She is collaborating with Ben Spatz on the 'Postmemory in the North' project for the School of Arts & Humanities Cultures of Place festival.

**Nafhesa Ali** is an interdisciplinary sociologist with expertise in the everyday lives of racialized and minority communities. She is currently a Research Associate for the Towards Inclusive Environmental Sustainability (TIES) Leverhulme-funded project in the Sustainable Consumption Institute (SCI) at the University of Manchester. Nafhesa has a PhD in Sociology, completed in 2015 from the University of Huddersfield. Her publications include two edited books, *Storying Relationships* (2021) and *A Match Made in Heaven: British Muslim Women Write About Love and Desire* (2020) and journal publications in *Sexualities*, *Ethnicities*, *Ethnic and Racial Studies* and *Cultural Geographies*.

## Postmemory

By Lindsey Dodd

## a dialogue of concept, song and history

In *The Generation of Postmemory* (Columbia University Press, 2012), Marianne Hirsch explains her concept as follows:

'Postmemory' describes the relationship that the 'generation after' bears to the personal, collective, and cultural trauma of those who came before—to experiences they 'remember' only by means of the stories, images, and behaviors among which they grew up. But these experiences were transmitted to them so deeply and affectively as to *seem* to constitute memories in their own right. (p5)

Postmemory describes a kind of personal (rather than collective) remembering performed by the generations which come after. It may manifest as forms of memory, as behaviours, or it may be held in objects, images, places and so on. It is, in its stricter sense, a feeling of knowing a past as though the memory of it is one's own. Postmemory may be characterized as familial, transmitted down family lines, and this is, perhaps, its most evident form. But Hirsch also writes of 'affiliative structures of memory beyond the familial' and of 'connective memory work' (p21). Thus, postmemory may also encompass communities of care and alliance which feel and remember with and for others. Such communities support and bolster important reparative work. But there are reasons to tread carefully. Hirsch asks:

What do we owe the victims? How can we best carry their stories forward, without appropriating them, without unduly calling attention to ourselves, and without, in turn, having our own stories displaced by them? How are we implicated in the aftermath of crimes we did not ourselves witness? (p2)

This question is a burning one for descendants of the second or even third generations. Yet for those people who are not directly descended from Holocaust victims and survivors, the issue of owing something to this suffering is also relevant. But is owing quite the right word here? Is it indeed a feeling of duty or something else? A desire? A responsibility? A need? A wish? A whim? A penance? A fantasy? A hope? I do not want or seek other people's suffering, nor do I pretend to feel it. I am mindful of Hirsch's point about appropriation, and gaps and chasms. I am distant. Why do I seek to care, though? While Hirsch's generation has been directly shaped by their parents' experiences, are not all of us who come after 'shaped, however indirectly, by traumatic fragments of events' (p5), especially when our work brings us into contact with wide-ranging traumatic residues and echoes? And although these traumatic fragments may 'defy narrative reconstruction,' they exist affectively nonetheless.

I am shaped by the knowledge I have; not in the same way as Marianne Hirsch, say, or as Ben Spatz, or as anyone with their own connection to this past. But I am not untouched by it, and it affects what I am capable of knowing, thinking and feeling. This is not a question of appro-

priation as a facile kind of empathy; it's a question of alongside-ness which recognizes separation; of sympathy and an ethics of care. Hirsch comments on engaging 'in patterns of affiliation beyond the familial, forming alternate attachments across lines of difference' (p16): with this, Postmemory in the North takes this concept into different contextual realms, to see where new attachments may form and grow.

Likening postmemory to a Post-it note, Hirsch writes:

Post-its, of course, often hold afterthoughts that can easily become unglued and disconnected from their source. If a Post-it falls off, the post-concept must persist on its own, and in that precarious position it can also acquire its own independent qualities. (p5)

A concept has its own life: it can evolve and develop. Postmemory will stretch and grow as we use it. If, as Hirsch suggests, postmemory is 'a structure of inter- and transgenerational return of traumatic knowledge and embodied experience' (p6), then such elasticity is inherent: we are dealing with multiple combinations – assemblages, perhaps – of generationality, memory, trauma, knowledge, experience and embodiment. The image/metaphors which my own engagement with the synagogue songworks have generated are, perhaps, some of postmemory's lines of flight, sparking their way to other constellations of experience. And indeed, postmemory should move away from dominant forms of Holocaust memory which, as Hirsch rightly states, may engender the occlusion of 'other, more proximate histories of violence' (p20). We can thus extend postmemory to the intergenerational remembering of suffering during and after the Partition of India and Pakistan, as one example. The way painful memories surface and manifest, inhabit and cling, reshape and mutate in the everyday lives of diasporic populations is a context with relevance in the United Kingdom and in the Huddersfield region specifically.

Marianne Hirsch issued a call to historians to broaden our repertoire: my recent work on affective historiography – writing histories through feeling – has been doing just that. Traditionally, historians are positivists: they demand evidence. But where is the evidence for that which, as Hirsch writes, 'exceed[s] comprehension' or 'def[ies] narrative reconstruction'? (p5) Nonrepresentational and affective methodologies 'can shift the frames of intelligibility so as to allow new experiences to emerge, experiences that have heretofore remained unspoken, or even unthought' (p18). For an historian, what evidence can derive from this songwork? Hirsch states that working with the ideas of postmemory, and broadening our historiographical repertoire may open a space

for the consideration of affect, embodiment, privacy, and intimacy as concerns of history, and [...] shift our attention to the minute events of daily life. (p16)

My engagement as an historian with the synagogue songwork videos at Szydłów and Pińczów synagogues has been an experiment in affective historiography, and an attempt to broaden the repertoire of historical concern in ways which are productive and therefore valuable, as well as interesting and thought-provoking.

## Towards an affective historiography

By Lindsey Dodd

How might these songwork videos – artistic, abstract, and distant in time, place and person – be of use to an historian? History is grounded in evidence. It tells stories of what was, not of what is, and it bases them on fact. In its traditional form, history seeks to represent faithfully the events of the past in the present, as fully and accurately as extant sources allow. But there are more ways of approaching our understanding of the past. Recently, I have turned towards thinking affectively: what can we know through feeling? How can becoming better attuned to the felt realm help us think or know differently? What could I learn from Ben Spatz, Nazlıhan Eda Erçin and Agnieszka Mendel singing, moving, feeling their way around two synagogues in Poland in 2017? How could it enrich my thinking? My engagement with these videos developed as a process of layering, moving from the sensory and affective, to dialogue and consolidation, to tentative interpretation and budding lines of flight away from this context.

In early 2022 I watched a series of extracts from the songworks made by Ben Spatz, Nazlıhan Eda Erçin and Agnieszka Mendel at Szydłów and Pińczów synagogues. These songworks are extracts from longer recordings which have since been re-edited for the Postmemory in the North exhibition. As I watched, I scribbled notes in pencil on folded sheets of paper, rendering sounds and images into words. These were my words, carried along by my knowledge and practice as an historian and scholar of affective methodologies. I noted freely, messily, what I experienced visually, auditorily and affectively as I watched. I was both a filter and a tool. Difficult though it was, I tried to write what I saw and heard directly. I tried to detach evaluation and interpretation from experience. I tried not to think but instead just to do. Each video became an unwitting poem: a distillation of my experience. Resonant intensities emerged around bodies, buildings, voice and gaze, shadows, and around me, an outsider. I added a second layer more consciously: with the songworks in mind but drawing on my distillations, I pulled my recent writing on affect and history, and ideas from others, into dialogue with them. This consolidated a sense of connection and of purpose: an affective kind of historiographical writing began to seem possible. Finally, with Marianne Hirsch's book *The Generation of Postmemory* to hand, I focused on the most striking, stickiest images that the songwork videos had imprinted on me, and the ideas with most intensity. I wondered what they might be made to mean as metaphors in relation to postmemory.

These usable image/metaphors can tell a story of a questing: a postmemorial exploration of knowledge, identity and possibility. The singers are tentative, probing with their bodies and voices the spaces and objects in which memory might be lodged; which memory, and indeed whose, is another matter. What is certain is that new memorial layers now dwell in these crumbling, beautiful buildings, and that other rememberers distant in time, place and person are being pulled into an assemblage which they had not anticipated.

The songs flow like a liquid into the voids of these synagogues, under the flaking paintwork, into the cracks and through the cobwebs. They re-place memories here. Probably, though, this is not about memory. Not quite, anyway. Postmemories not quite memories; they are a kind of knowledge. So by finding, placing, re-placing and generating memories at Szydłów

and Pińczów, and in Huddersfield too, what is being found, placed, re-placed and generated is a kind of knowledge. Affective knowledge is knowledge known (or present, available, experienced) because it is felt. This knowledge is embodied by the searchers – the singers – but it is generable by other searchers – me and you, who may or may not sing – further down the affiliative line, who may encounter it through these films. This knowledge is illusive and allusive. It is generated in between the singer, the watcher and the place; between my time, their time, the time before and all the times in between. It is subjective and relational, contingent on the people involved. Each of the image/metaphors which I have derived from this layering process contains something of hope and intention, of failure and false starts, and of quite optimistic transformations.



**Probably, though, this is not about memory.  
Not quite, anyway. Postmemories not quite  
memories; they are a kind of knowledge.**



כִּי תִשָּׂא יְדֵי כְלֵמֶת לְמִשְׁכָּנֶךָ

Their songs haunt, lament the body of the place, its paint the colour of flesh and blood,  
 Of life.  
 Of flesh.  
 The place is a body, peeling and flaking;  
 The body hurts.  
 Words I cannot read, signs and symbols,  
 Signs and symbols peel from the ceiling,  
 The ceiling peels and flakes.  
 Peeling, flaking  
 Of memory and knowledge.  
 The body hurts.

By Lindsey Dodd. From the songwork: Dust and clay, Płoczwów synagogue



### The peeling and flaking of memory and knowledge

From these images, a feeling arose which suggested the process of the natural, but painful, erosion of knowledge and memory over time. This is a starting point for re-placing knowledge and memory into the synagogues through the songwork. As the experiential and phenomenological knowledge and memory of situated experience recedes – as it flakes and peels, revealing, perhaps, something underneath, as it disintegrates into the atmosphere, becomes dust – this loss hurts. The place where it was held is pained; it does not disintegrate quietly or go with good grace. Layers are underneath: something new, something other, and that is fine. It is how things are. But the dead layers are gone, and that hurts.

By Lindsey Dodd. From songwork: Warming my bones. Reaching a painting through a song: I need you, Szyców synagogue



### As two in gaze and voice

This image/metaphor suggests the impossibility of identity, as in being the same. It rejects empathy as facile, and embraces the necessary side-by-sideness of an alliance which does not pretend to share in experience. This experience can be powerfully connective; it is the precondition of affiliative postmemory. It is about sympathetic companionship and a plea never to usurp experience or to make unfounded assumptions about that which one cannot know; to recognise that one walks alongside and not in the shoes of someone who has experienced suffering or antecedental suffering.

They are parallel, together,  
 but they gaze differently at the world  
 I am lost by her experience.  
 Together, in tune,  
 but regarding the world differently  
 As two in gaze and voice.

They try to fill the doorway – the room is empty beyond, and grey.  
 They are watched. Another voice joins.  
 They feel the edges of this space. Try to fit into it –  
 A stopper or a gateway?  
 Why this doorway? A gap, a door, their fingers feel all sides of the  
 doorframe.  
 They support themselves in this frame. It holds them:  
 Their balance, their pressure, their effort.



By Lindsey Dodd, from the songwork *Dust and clay*, Pinczów synagogue

Do members of postmemorial generations act as stoppers or as gateways? Do they prevent something flowing, something from being seen, something coming to light? Or do they open up ways of seeing and viewing? They probably do both. Two points arise: one is the control and ownership that postmemorial generations have, and the way in which they gain and enact that control and ownership; the other is how that control and ownership affects them, is embodied by them, and is a question of balance, pressure and effort. They might wish to caress the antecedental past because it is something precious. There is also a sense that their antecedental past supports them, holds them up, but not without an effort on their part.

### A stopper or a gateway

By Lindsey Dodd, from the songwork *In contact with stone cold*, Pinczów synagogue



### The light seems brighter when she leaves

This is both uplifting and melancholy. Is there a need, at some point in life, to shed some of the burden – of worrying? Of feeling sad? Of feeling guilty? Or of questing and searching? – in order to gain clarity, or lightness: a brighter light, and a lighter load? Perhaps this means handing over something to someone else, whether another generation, or an outsider. This act is neither to ignore, bury or silence, or even to retreat, but to shed something in order to shed light, to see better, by letting in some of the light.

She ceases, pants, holds the wall, confused removes her shoes.  
 Layers of light –

She undoes her top and leaves.

The light seems brighter when she leaves –

Light floods in.

As she sheds her layers, her shoes, this place is illuminated.

They crawl into light.  
 The shadow of the window, the bars are written in light and dark on  
 the swirling, knotty grain of the floor.  
 Within a shadow frame  
 – their shadow sharp in bright light –  
 They touch shadow and light, fingers feeling textures  
 Light fills and –  
 This ceiling is devoid of decoration.  
 Window panes, shadows of a grid, a cage.  
 They become enlivened and sing – their shadow is encased in light;  
 Walking loudly, in a frenzy, calling to the ceiling, sinking under its  
 weight, rubbing at their cheeks, their strike their cheeks.



By Lindsey Dodd, from the songworks *Trans/space, Szydłów synagoga & Floors and windows, Pińczów Synagoga*

**Within a shadow frame** Postmemorial generations and their members may live within shadow frames created not just by the past, but by their present questing. What casts the shadow frame? What is cast by it? Is it the person or the past? Or the interpretive weight of retelling the past, or of trying to make sense? Shadow frames create borders of light and dark, and someone may be trapped inside – although the frame is a shadow; intangible, unreal, an illusion of light. It may disappear or mutate. Shadow frames may act as barriers inside which people feel they should or must operate. The presence of individuals may also throw a shadow frame across the past, casting both light and dark in their shape. Shadow frames may cast their somatic effects into lives as well, as disquiet, a burdensome weight or self-attack.

By Lindsey Dodd, from the songworks *Follow the voice, Pińczów synagoga*



### She sings and makes voices, metamorphosis

Here we encounter a rapid, inexplicable, varied form of vocalized expression, that was embedded and embodied in place and face, but which was not a song. This was an experience of becoming; bits of everything were in everything else, and everything was tending towards something else. It was multiplicitous; it was full; transformations were happening as the singer moved on unseen lines, near-simultaneously and always holding what came before, from status to status, pulled or drawn where an affective flow led her. This forced a recognition of the sheer impossibility of interpretive fixity: a tendency towards movement rather than stasis. The singer was becoming the life of this place, tending towards it in its multiple forms, times and objects. In becoming, the life of this place entered her too. Here is a moment of inter-affectivity in a visceral, embodied form. It evokes the becoming-tendency of research and researcher, and the becoming-tendency of affective practices. To do affective research, we must tend elsewhere, and embrace openly happenstance, flow and unknowability.

A cry of horror – animal – bird call – a door squeaks open – an animal – a baby – a song, a singer, opera, scales – off – just off – clicking – horses' hooves – a dog barks – a Christian church – shift elsewhere – from grimace to horror – grimace to horror – a gargoyle – stuck – voice creaks – the beauty of this ceiling – sound leaps up – sounds make scales, make tunes – metamorphosis – animals, laugh, monkey, squawk.

She sings. She makes voices. Metamorphosis. All life was here.



By Lindsey Dodd, from the songworks *Dust and clay*, *Wieżów synagogue*, and *Echo and Distance*, *Szydłów synagogue*

**A questing is happening here**

A postmemorial generation might struggle to fill the empty spaces left by missing people and missing parts of culture, but also the spaces and gaps in knowledge. Groping fingers touch the walls of what is known, trying to discern shapes and consolidate what is there, and feel into the dents and divots. What groping fingers cannot touch, sound strives to fill. The voice enters all spaces, into the nooks and crannies and even the fingerprint swirls of the groping fingers themselves. Filling these spaces, mostly, must fail; sound ceases, it bounces back. Knowledge cannot stretch that far. But it is the act of searching, seeking, feeling gingerly and tenderly, touching and sensing texture, that matters. Doing the work of feeling, of running hands over stone and of probing the walls with song, takes them somewhere and creates, for them, a knowledge that differentiates what was from what is (existence), what was from what could be (permission), and what was from what might be (possibility). Questing is a leap into possibility and potential, and its achievements are always inconclusive.

It is a struggle to fill this space, a puzzle.  
 Not filling, then, but questing, seeking.  
*Tâtonner.*  
 In a doorway, on a threshold.  
 The space fills with voice,  
 Voice and arms reach up, reach down,  
 reach around.  
 Voice and arms quest:  
 A questing is happening here.

Black absorbs her song.  
 She speaks of light, she touches the painting  
 – an eye? –

Looking out from within the darkness, dark is differentiated by light,  
 by her touch, her voice  
 – What looks out?

This darkness is differentiated.

By Lindsey Dodd, from the songwork *Light is born*, *Szydłów synagogue*



**Darkness is differentiated**

In contradiction, perhaps, to shedding something which may act as a constraint, here there is a sense that by engaging, doing, singing, feeling, searching and questing into something that appears very dark that the darkness can be differentiated. It is not brighter, but it is differentiated. What appears to be wholly black, wholly lost and wholly depleting may be found to have something else to offer. But it is only through effort – affective effort – that the darkness of a damaged or damaging past can be differentiated, and made, productively, generatively, creatively, into something else.

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The performance of return (the actual visits to the destroyed villages) is not a display of nostalgia or an act of mourning. Rather, it is framed and takes place in a temporality of becoming.

— Gil Z. Hochberg, *Becoming Palestine*

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