

⑤ When False Canines Speak
Commissioned by Project Sonic Fabulations.
Initiated at Archive for Eleventh Hour, Whole Life,
Haus der Kulturen der Welt (HKW), Berlin, 2022.

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2022

There are numerous ruptures in the narratives of European ethno-colonial museum archives. Tiny holes can appear in dominant plots, holes where unfinished echoes from unknown voices live. The holes of these stories visualise the absence of the other within the institution, at the same time allowing for the possibility for other fluid invasion. The objects can enter the plot holes in an archive, to transform, erode, and wear away the false fictions constructed by the collector.

Because their voices could not be uttered, like the words of a parrot that doesn't speak for itself, their echoes are continued as a form of sub-text. Sub-text reads and gives personality to that which has been collected, drawing character from the seemingly lifeless. It exists not within their object-body but scattered elsewhere. The existentiality of an archival object's sub-text is mutedly located under the agitated voice of somebody else's disquiet, or

in the holes of a plot. They underlie a message that is not explicitly stated or shown. It can be meta-physical levels of archival objects. But still, they have to proceed with their personality and the possibility of developing their abstract voices. They exist with the creatures around us who cannot speak and make only a limited number of disoriented sounds, most of the time their sounds are stopped before they reach their tongue.

The materiality of time in archival objects flows differently. It's like the speed of dead tortoises. Like a fossil, it's seemingly stationary, but in actual fact is constantly moving. Their pre-formed time is problematic. The old, when captured, will never die because it is caught in the continuous moment of dying. So the other desires, made up of excluded or oppressed voices, cannot be born. They are stuck in a paradigm of the unborn while the old hangs onto life, immortally.

Enter false fictions: Sparing Brazilian tortoises captured by the 17th century Dutch painter Albert Eckhout.^① The dissonance is set by these two creatures baring their teeth. They open their mouths with muted, violent facial expressions, and aggressive gestures unable to create shadows and echoes: only frozen mouths, waiting to speak. These single absolute artificial teeth possess and monopolise the body of the tortoise. They are pre-formed, making time unavailable and inaccessible. They legitimise the monopolising, dominant structural paradigms of time. Their absence is voiceless, caused by verbal deprivation.

This captured moment formed part of Dutch colonial policy to archive the exotic animals and plants of Brazil. Around 15,000 living things were transformed into still lifes during the period. In 1650, two tortoises were captured and archived. Their vitality was extracted along with the oxygen that had previously surrounded them. Their topography, once containing life, was reduced to the painting's frame and then to the sterility inside of a glass box in the museum. The vacuum of the vitrine, where light is transmitted but sound is not. From subject to object, they are muted.

Although tortoises do not have teeth, the ones implanted by Eckhout were archived together with them anyway. The fictionality of the archive becomes a fact through the coloniser's eyes. These fictional minerals and nerves were rendered from the desires of others. Their genealogy is implanted with suppressed disillusion that endure the coloniality of the object, continuously sterilising it. This birth of the manufactured false teeth establishes an artificial eternity of power, foisted by the coloniser. It exists to apply savagery to objects. The savagery of the other, which is the projection toward an irrational, feared subaltern. During this colonial process of archival fiction to facts, a manufactured fictional entity parasites the archival object, as if clinging to objects. From this process, the object becomes internally submissive, not only in their historical and institutional level, but also their material self. The spectre of the teeth is not a hallucination, because by being archived they've become more true than the tortoise.

It is speculative, it is a false truth or truthful false. The materiality of this false fiction upholds the western hegemony and governs the whole life of the object. It generates the dependency of the object and its narratives in an archive. When the tortoises were captured by the painter, their voices would not be theirs. Because their life is manufactured, their own desire is designed. It is a still life, after all. Although they were once moving, alive when

they were depicted, the tortoises became props in the fantasy of another. Their contribution is not their own.

Forced into their mouths, glued for an eternity and evading decay. When the tortoises grimace, their shiny implanted teeth appear ill-fitting. These additional false teeth outsize the object's mouths that contain them, so their voices leak as sounds escape. Words are flattened, scattered. There is no space in their voice for echoing back. The false fictions exist materially. But an object and its voices are spectral (non-existential) and ex-formative. Their additional teeth added by the coloniser subverted the stories. Only the teeth start to sprout their power.

Soon after implantation they began to overgrow, to conquer, and occupy the whole body of the object. Yet, the substance of an object's desires is fabricated. The sovereignty of their body is changed, facts are designed to support the historical occupation. The process of archiving living creatures assists the transformation of subject into object, treated as the dangerous, savage, alienised, non-scientific and benighted things in the frame of the canvas. The teeth become enzymes in the plot that can act as biological catalysts that accelerate the coloniser's perspective. They speed up metabolism of false fiction in the body of the object.

Canines have the longest root of any tooth and reach a single, pointed cusp. The root of the object is filled with other projections. Here, all nerves in the body are passing through the centre of the canines, which means the very core of them is not their own. The captured object's heart and brain is located in these canines. They reach the end of the tongue to speak. They are anaesthetised, with only some wrinkles in their tongue still remembering words that are fractured, showing the traces of their associated childhood, their old landscape, people and autonomous biography. Their nerves are fabricated, therefore they mimic speaking. No tongue ever arrives. The words stay in the corner of the mouth. Only their mouth is replaying the history of power. Their precarious liminal voices entail a crisis of identity.

When something bares its teeth, especially the sharp canines, it means they can potentially bite flesh, threatening the collector. The long, pointed canine teeth of the beast are well-formed to secure and tear a bite. Although they look thin and sharp compared to other teeth, they are less prone to wear due to their shape and occlusion.

The canines are a faint symbol of aggression that have disappeared due to the

development of weapons. The savagery is eliminated. Our canines have become smaller from those of the early hominids 4.4 million years ago. As humans evolved and civilization developed, their role decreased considerably. With the discovery of fire and cooking, food could be made softer and cut into bite-size pieces using tools such as knives, then chewed with molars and incisors that came to play a bigger role when biting. However, it is these fangs that could inflict fatal wounds when early humans found themselves in a fight without a knife.

If the tortoises' canines were to be weaponised, could they puncture a hole in the historical plot? One day in the future, in front of the white gloves, two canines could start to doubt their existentiality. They could go beyond the plot, make a hole, then escape the body of the object like liquid through holes, or like blood oozing out of puncture wounds. The canines are the fictional existence created by other narrators. When they bite, they start to make holes, which could open other worlds.

Because the archive is fiction, we can empower and penetrate the preformed stories by wounding them with these sharp teeth. If there is a hole, there can be a leakage and the sensibility comes out of the inner necessity of life and is cultivated and invoked. The canines perform the function of ripping words when speaking, producing and accurately pronouncing the sounds of others by supporting lips and guiding teeth into place.

Similarly, the rupture of timelines leaves behind holes for things to seep through. They can also be repositioned into the exterior of the dominant plot, uprooting the historically implanted. The hole where a tooth is uprooted becomes a cavity for plot holes. A space where factual errors appear, impossible events collide, out-character behaviours manifest, where continuity errors and unresolved storylines stretch by expanding the holes.

If an object is porous, it can hold fluid within itself. The plot hole's porosity can metabolise the archival object using the environment. The fictional pore becomes the portal for the reclaiming and repositioning of an object's political surroundings. With this, the object can transform into a lyrical subject. It can transcend its reality. It generates pathos gestures, ones that travel across different images, locations and sounds—at odds to the frozen painting or image.

The teeth are uprooting the objects. In their speed dream in a slow reality, objects start to transform, to mutate and metamorphose.

Holes start to appear: the plot hole and the hole from the wound. They turn a purple, bruise-like colour, a purple space that turns the object porous.

After uprooting the teeth, big holes are made in their mouth. The tortoises start to grope around the site of the puncture. The hole in their mouth is deeper than their body and context. For the first time, their little toe enters the hole, then the leg and soon the entire body follows. Their shells are overthrown and subverted. The holes are the enigmatic entities which have repulsed us throughout the ages. It is a possible passage to connect the past and the other future that is not pre-formed.

The captured body can speak through the holes. The archived body can migrate the border through the holes. It is the matter of the form of being. Their substance can transform. When a hole generates movements of static objects, more holes occur. Therefore, their language is constantly increasing and continues until their material substance and event ultimately become one. The proliferation of their language contrasts the silence of things or events. Their silence becomes a place of speech, where words and things are opposed.

FOOTNOTES

① Study of Two Brazilian Tortoises, Albert Eckhout, 1640, Mauritshuis, Den Haag, Netherlands: One of the artists in Johan Maurits' s entourage was Albert Eckhout. Eckhout recorded the Brazilian people, flora and fauna in drawings and paintings. Like these two red-footed tortoises with their scaly heads, shells with geometric patterns and mouths full of sharp teeth. Eckhout painted them on paper. The animals are grunting threateningly at each other, as the males do during the breeding season. But Eckhout made the animals more exciting than they actually are - tortoises do not in fact have teeth.