Spectral Bodies: Women's Resistance Across Time in North America

Whitney C. Evanson

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SPECTRAL BODIES: WOMEN'S RESISTANCE ACROSS TIME IN NORTH AMERICA

by

WHITNEY C. EVANSON

A master’s capstone submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Liberal Studies in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, The City University of New York 2017
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Whitney C. Evanson

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Liberal Studies in satisfaction of the capstone requirement for the degree of Master of Arts.

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Abstract

SPECTRAL BODIES: WOMEN'S RESISTANCE ACROSS TIME IN NORTH AMERICA

by

Whitney C. Evanson

Advisor: Distinguished Professor Nancy K. Miller

This project contrasts the lived experiences of feminists within the EZLN in Mexico with the historical persecution of community outsiders during the Salem witch trials. I want to explore the differences between a radical political and social movement (the EZLN), and the radical shift in history in which women were accused of witchcraft based on hysteria and rumors. There are parallels between the witch trials and the causes of the Zapatista movement in the ways that women's bodies were treated--their political usefulness to create fear and obedience from citizens by murdering them for their defiance, burying them in shallow graves. Although these women are from different regions, and these historical events took place hundreds of years apart, there are striking similarities. How has women's autonomy developed from the time of the Salem witch trials to the place of women in grassroots movements?

Women did not have rights to own land in the seventeenth century early colonies of the United States, and women who joined the Zapatistas movement sought autonomy and equality to take charge of their own bodies, their own lives. The peasant origins of women in the Chiapas region constellates the lack of power given to women of the
seventeenth century, and the struggle for family owned land was at tension with political power and capital of land ownership. Going further into these parallels, I want to ask the following: What is the difference between the colonized and colonizers? Why are the female collaborators of the EZLN left out of the mainstream and not seen as leaders within the grassroots movement? Why were women the main targets for the Salem witch trials? How did the trials begin, and what made them cease or begin to fall away from the mainstream? Are these areas, the Chiapas in Mexico, and Salem, Massachusetts, in any way connected to the origins of these women's struggles and stories? In what ways can we look back in history, and connect these stories, and are women gaining equality, or have women achieved the autonomy they seek? Through these themes, I will be creating a series of analogue photographs which I will take, hand process the film, and make prints for in conversation with the themes of: the female body, reproduction, use of the body to control and manipulate, ties between women and nature, ritual, and objectification. How are cultural identity, time, and place echoed throughout history, in collective memory and in tying the past to the present?
Acknowledgements

My interest in Law & Society was met with equal fervor to my interest in Gender and Women’s studies. I needed interdisciplinary flexibility to draw these connections regarding time, place, and human rights—to constellate the ways in which women and colonized peoples’ bodies have been regarded throughout history. The Master of Liberal Studies program offers this type academic freedom. I have a passion for human rights advocacy, and for researching the historical, political, and economic influences that create and shape legal systems—legal systems which, even with the best intentions, often serve to oppress the most invisible and marginalized groups of people. Many thanks to my advising Professor, Doctor Nancy K. Miller, for believing in me and my research. No one accomplishes anything alone, and I would not have been here, in New York, let alone pursuing my Master’s degree without the unconditional love and support of my family and friends, here and abroad.
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Introduction

I chose the Capstone project to connect myself with my work mentally, physically, and personally. By utilizing the interdisciplinary approach of the MALS track, I officially chose the Law and Society track, simultaneously fulfilling the requirements of the Women and Gender Studies track. I made connections through studying the history of feminism and global feminism within the Gender and Women Studies program to the required courses in the Law and Society track. Law and Society is a scholarly pursuit “in the ‘place of the law’ within social, political, economic and cultural life” as defined by the Law and Society Association. Feminism, however, is not an easily definable concept. There are many facets and movements, ideologies, and theories of different kinds of feminism. The overarching theme, and Merriam-Webster dictionary definition of feminism is “the theory of the political, economic, and social equality of the sexes, [and an] organized activity on behalf of women’s rights and interests” (Merriam-Webster’s online dictionary, n.d.). Through my own experiences as a cis-female¹, and in researching and studying gender and women’s studies, I find this definition lacking.

I am approaching this project with an Anarcha-feminist lens. Anarcha-feminism, also called anarchist feminism and anarcho-feminism, combines anarchism with feminism. It generally views patriarchy as a manifestation of involuntary coercive

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hierarchy, that should be replaced by decentralized free association. Anarcha-feminists believe that the struggle against patriarchy is an essential part of class conflict and the anarchist struggle against the state. In essence, this philosophy sees anarchist struggle as a necessary component of feminist struggle and vice versa. L. Susan Brown claims that

"as anarchism is a political philosophy that opposes all relationships of power, it is inherently feminist. Contrary to popular belief and contemporary association with radical feminism, anarcha-feminism is not an inherently militant party. It is described to be an anti-authoritarianism, anti-capitalism, anti-oppressive philosophy, with the goal of creating an ‘equal ground’ between males and females. The term anarcha-feminism suggests the social freedom and liberty of women, without needed dependence upon other groups or parties.” Patriarchy is defined as a social system in which males hold predominate in roles of political leadership, moral authority, social privilege and control of property. Patriarchy is a manifestation of involuntary coercive hierarchy, that should be replaced by decentralized free association” (“Anarcha-feminism", n.d.).

There is a commonality between women’s: bodies, legal rights, social roles, and oppression for colonized women and the colonizing women. The individual, historical, and socioeconomic factors vary greatly, and are not something I am trying to homogenize. I want to represent and respect these women and their experiences, past,
present, and future. In the photographic series created for this project I wanted to use photography to convey a sense of loss, with memory, time, and space. For this project I bring together the concepts and philosophical idea of ‘singularity of photography’ through the problems that photography gives to the beholder of the photograph.

“Singularity is not wholly dependent on the photograph as a material of perceptual object, it must be located elsewhere. The writings of [Walter] Benjamin and [Roland] Barthes suggest that the figurative space of singularity is the relation between the photograph, its referent or sitter and the beholder of the image” (Yacovone 8). The theory of singularity in photography which Kathrin Yacavone uses in her theoretical analysis text, *Benjamin, Barthes and the Singularity of Photography*, tie together the common threads of Benjamin and Barthes theories on photography. I am using her analysis within my theoretical synthesis for the conceptual photographs I have taken for this project.

Each photograph in the eight photo series is taken on black and white film, and contain specific objects which have been removed during a long-exposure of the image. This gives the photographs a transparent or ghost like quality to certain objects within each image. The objects, which are listed and given metaphorical references to the overarching themes of this project, are described in detail in this paper.
Part I
Historical Connections

The photograph is literally an emanation of the referent. From a real body, which was there, proceed radiations which ultimately touch me, who am here; the duration of the transmission is insignificant; the photograph of the missing being, as Sontag says, will touch me like the delayed rays of a star.

— Roland Barthes, Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography

How are cultural identity, time and place echoed throughout history? How does cultural identity create collective memory—tying the past to the present? Analogue photography can achieve this by creating visual, subjective records for visual memory. Analogue photography uses light to solidify a moment. Time and space are suspended, and the physical image, frozen in time, remain. Memory is allowed subjection, however, relying on the photograph to tell us the story or trigger the memory can also create a misremembering of events passed. The image can be repeated on and on once the film has been developed. What happens to a memory connected to an image? Neurologically, and psychologically, memory is unreliable and easily rewritten by other experiences overlapping and creating muddied interpretations of what seem, in ones mind, very real and finite. One can turn the photo negative into a positive, using photo paper, or digitally scanning the film negative. The repetition has many options, and relays the
Kathrin Yacavone’s text, *Benjamin, Barthes and the Singularity of Photography* has a nuanced perspective of Walter Benjamin and Roland Barthes’ philosophical approaches on photography. “In other words, Benjamin and Barthes write on photography in part to redeem that which has to be rescued from the flux of transience and contingency that photography is thought both picture and arrest [...] Benjamin’s and Barthes writings are most notably prompted, almost necessarily, by the powerfully felt ontological, phenomenological and psychological effects of the photographic image” (Yacavone 9).

What are traditions? Where do they come from? What sacrifices are being made in the struggles and complications that come with keeping, or in some instances, rejecting your culture or your oppressor/oppressor’s culture? Is it still a tradition if it has come from colonized ideologies? How do you make it your own? How does a community make their traditions their own? Sylvia Marcos wrote on the topic of feminism with indigenous women of Mexico. Marcos wanted to address the dominant discourse of Western feminism while also describing the “other woman” and the “indigenous other” within patriarchal and societal oppressions.

“Feminism conjures up a promise to resist the various forms of oppression women face, but feminism’s capacity to fulfill this promise has been undermined by its failure to deal with the different gendered experiences that arise in variations of class, race, and ethnicity. In Mexico, a certain hegemonic feminism often reproduces the relationship that Chandra
Mohanty speaks of when describing the links between First and Third World feminist discourse. She argues that Western feminist discourse has produced a ‘...composite, singular Third World woman who is a 'powerless' victim of male dominance and patriarchal oppression’ (Mohanty, 1983.) Urban feminist analysis has given rise to a hegemony which has often defined indigenous feminism as the 'other': exotic, strangely rooted in 'culture' and powerless if not non existent (Jaidopolu, 2000.)” (Marcos 1). There are various global issues based on experience and location, time period, gender identity, being able-bodied, class, culture, and religion.

Marcos describes the complexities of the Mexican women’s movement before the Zapatista uprising in 1994. Various intersections of oppression came from Spanish colonization, Catholicism, and indigenous Mesoamerican traditions. It is within these complex entanglements that the very existence of capitalism and patriarchy is able to perpetuate and continue. There cannot be a clear and unified form of resistance that encompasses every part of the ripple effects of patriarchy and capitalism. Grassroots movements like the EZLN have worked against oppressive systems of government since their official uprising in 1994. “The Zapatista Army of National Liberation (Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional, EZLN), is a revolutionary leftist political and militant group based in Chiapas, the southernmost state of Mexico” (“Zapatista Army of National Liberation” 2017). The Zapatistas formed in rejection of the Mexican state, and officially segregated from the state of Mexico in resistance to colonized oppression. Jocelyn Cohn
and Eve Mitchell wrote a four part paper describing the continued lack of definition to “patriarchy on the left” and refer to the relation of capital and patriarchy as

“understood through the form of organization of our labor; it is historically and logically developed, rooted in the capitalist division of labor. As a total social relation, it is a process that contains many elements, moments, and forms, many of which appear to contradict one another. Patriarchy is part of the production and reproduction of current society, and cannot be abolished separate from the abolition of capitalism itself” (Cohn&Mitchell, 7).

Going back to Marcos, in her analysis of indigenous women they become the ‘other’ in lieu of feminism as a more generalized and homogenized Western—and predominantly white feminist discourse, she speaks from her own experiences as well describing the difficulties in creating solidarity for feminists that do not fit within the agendas and experiences of the blanketed term ‘feminism’.

“Feminisms in Mexico are often submerged in practices that follow quite mimetically international feminist theories and priorities. We are inserted into the dominant global international feminist discourse, and a certain sort of feminist movement in Mexico is derivative of the US movement. The pressure of intellectual and activist trends, and the resources to continue with concrete activism, are allocated by agencies that define
priorities and targets. Often, they have little to do with the context of indigenous women's feminist practices. The NGOization and transnationalization of the Latin American feminist field appeared to have led increasing numbers of feminists to privilege some spaces of feminist politics, such as the state and the international policy arenas” (Marcos, 2005).

The magnitude of problems given with breaking down and allowing the histories of oppression of women and marginalized peoples creates a multifaceted narrative that cannot be described or resolved under one umbrella theory. Feminism alone cannot encompass the centuries of oppression on a global scale. Before further analysis within the political histories of the EZLN and the Salem witch trials, I want to retrace the history of controlling the economy through land globally and historically. Historically the ownership of land and the labor of men and women predated the notion of capitalism. The economy relies on the control of land and the control of bodies—particularly, the control of women’s bodies. Industrialization gave rise to capitalism, nationalism, reproduction of goods and materials from automation and mechanization. The ‘duties’ of a wife and mother, and the class systems were shifted and redefined with capitalism. Sylvia Federici’s radical-historical text, *Caliban and the Witch*, traces control of women’s bodies and minds from the Peasants’ Revolt in the Middle Ages, to witch hunts and trials, and finally the rationalization of social reproduction. Federici reverses the often referred to “progressiveness” of industrialization and includes the control of women’s bodies.
“It was in response to this crisis that the European ruling class launched the global offensive that in the course of at least three centuries was to change the history of the planet, laying the foundation of the capitalist world-system, in the relentless attempt to appropriate new sources of wealth, expand its economic basis, and bring new workers under its command” (Federici, 2014).

The very notion of capitalism had yet to be defined, and happened, globally, and expanded with colonization and imperialism over the coming centuries leading away from the peasant revolts in the fourteenth century in England.

“[T]he concept of ‘transition’ then, helps us to think of a prolonged process of change and of societies in which capitalist accumulation coexisted with political formations not yet predominately capitalistic. The term, however, suggested gradual, linear historical development, whereas the period it named was among the bloodiest and most discontinuous in world history—one that apocalyptic transformations and which historians can only describe in the harshest terms: the Iron Age (Kamen), the Age of Plunder (Hoskins), and the Age of the Whip (Stone)” (Federici, 2014).

Federici’s historical analysis of terminology points to the violence and hardship of gaining capital and displacing the “feudal reaction” of the worker to the capitalistic
worker—the worker continues to be exploited for their labor. I argue that this continued exploitation and control of the proletariat body has not necessarily improved over the centuries. Industrialization has provided humans conveniences that are supposed to provide efficiency and improvement of human life. Less time in the fields should have evolved into less time in an office or in the factory. By what metric is there progress, and how does it establish well-being? The Zapatista uprising did not begin until a little over three hundred years after the Salem witch trials. Many issues of social control, patriarchy, social relations, and lack of clear legal boundaries not to mention corruption in the legal system, were in many ways unchanged during these three hundred years.

“Marx introduced the concept of ‘primitive accumulation’ at the end of Capital Volume I to describe the social and economic restructuring that the European ruling class initiated in response to its accumulation crisis, and to establish (in polemic with Adam Smith) that: (i) capitalism could not have developed without a prior concentration of capital and labor; and that (ii) the divorcing of the workers from the means of production, not the abstinence of the rich, is the source of capitalist wealth” (Federici, 2014).

Continuing on extrapolation of Marx’s theory of controlling the means of production, and the exploitation and alienation of workers has far more intricacies today, than in Marx’s time. While there is still capitalism, and worker exploitation, Federici sees the ‘invisible’ worker: wives and mother’s. Capitalism and patriarchy work
in tandem to ensure that men’s wages can rise, while the wife or mother are at home, working for free. This tension, Federici sees as purposeful, and traces it back to a time after peasants were thrown off of their land, and women and men, who once worked in the field’s together, are now being gendered in their labor once the balance of needed work, and early industrialization come to Europe. This also aligns with colonization, and the destruction of indigenous cultures and peoples throughout Africa, the Middle East, and eventually, to America. This simultaneous alienation and oppression to women, women and men of color, and the enforcement of Western culture and values, and most importantly: Western hierarchies, spreading throughout the world. During the witch-hunts of the 16th and 17th centuries, the power relations between men and women were used to control and suppress female sexuality. “For women, then, the 16th and 17th centuries did inaugurate an age of sexual repression. Censorship and prohibition did come to define their relationship with sexuality. With Michel Foucault’s critique of the ‘repressive hypothesis’ in mind, we must also insist that it was not the Catholic pastoral, nor the confession, that best demonstrate how ‘Power,’ at the dawn of the modern era, made it compulsory for people to speak of sex (Foucault 1978: 116). The ‘discursive explosion’ on sex, that Foucault detected in this time, was in no place more powerfully exhibited than in the torture chambers of the witch-hunt (Federici, 2014). The control of women and blaming them, solely, for not only being tempted by the devil to do sexually ‘devious’ deeds, or to woo men, were also responsible for what Foucault does not discuss, the “transformation of human sexuality into work” (Federici, 2014).
The radical shift in history from accusing women of witchcraft based on hysteria and rumors during the Salem witch trials, and the grassroots movements of the Zapatistas having their own feminist uprising are seemingly unrelated. There are parallels between the witch trials and the Zapatista movement, the way that women's bodies were treated— their political usefulness to create fear and obedience from citizens by murdering them for their defiance, and burying them in shallow graves. Although these women are from different regions, and these historical events took place hundreds of years apart, there are striking similarities. How has women's autonomy changed or been more recognized from the time of the Salem witch trials, to the role of women in grassroots movements? There are expected roles women have within these communities. They are supposed to bear children, raise them properly, under guidelines of their social and political time and place. These intricacies of culture and expectations are about control; control over a woman’s body and its utility to procreate and continue the bloodlines of men, and to control their minds so that they continue to do their Patriarchal duties, without question, without concern for their own autonomy.

**Part II:**

**Political and Philosophical Connections**

*The Photograph is an extended, loaded evidence — as if it caricatured not the figure of what it represents (quite the converse) but its very existence ...* The Photograph then becomes a bizarre *(i)medium*(i), a new form of hallucination: false on the level of perception, true on the level of time: a temporal hallucination, so to speak, a modest *(o)shared*(i) hallucination (on the one hand 'it is not there,' on the other 'but it has indeed been'): a mad image, chafed by reality.

— Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*
In what ways can we look back in history, and connect these stories, and are women gaining equality, or have women achieved the autonomy they seek? With these themes in mind, I created a series of analogue photographs. I wanted to explore the conditions within Benjamin and Barthes concepts of ‘relational dynamic’ and the ‘experiential singularity of photography’ (Yacavone 8). The photographs taken in this project were taken through an extensive process that I created to represent the self identified female body, reproduction, use of the body to control and manipulate, ties between women and nature, ritual, and objectification.

I began my process with a specific set of materials, a ritual, and specific photographic tools. I wanted to push against my discomfort in front of the camera. I placed myself as the subject, the sitter, and the object. After hand-processing\(^2\) these photographs, I would also play the part of the beholder of the image. In this way I am both the ‘figurative space of singularity’ and the ‘relation between the photograph’ (Yacavone 8). My process for creating the images was technical, intensive, and intentional. I would begin by mounting a medium format\(^3\) film camera onto a tripod, load the film into the back of the camera, and use a light meter to measure how

\(^2\) Hand processing, here is a reference to the process of developing photographic images by hand. Using the exposed film, it is unloaded in a light-safe darkroom, onto a spool, and placed inside of a light-safe container. Using a chemical process of film developer, stop bath, and fixer, the images are revealed by the developer which leaves the exposed parts of the film in a negative image on each frame of the film.

\(^3\) Medium format is a film format in still photography and the related cameras and equipment that use film. Generally, the term applies to film and digital cameras and equipment that use film and digital cameras that record images on media larger than 24 by 36mm (full-frame) (used in 35mm photography), but smaller than 4 by 5 inches (which is considered to be large-format photography), Wikipedia (19 January 2017). Medium format (film). Retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Medium_format_(film).
to set the shutter speed and f-stop (aperture) for the photograph. I also used the timer on my phone to time the total time of the photograph for each frame, and to discern how long to keep certain objects in the frame. By taking or adding objects to each frame, I would create a ‘ghosting” of the object in the image. I also used a shutter release cable, which is a device that can be connected to the shutter of the camera. There is a cable that extends from the camera, which has a button on the end, and once pressed, it releases the shutter. The shutter release cable also has the ability to be released and continue to hold the release button engaged so that the photographer can move away from the camera. I used this for each shot, for which I was able to move away from the camera, while keeping an eye on the timer, and removing or adding objects to the frame.

In each photograph, (and below in figure 1), there is at least one object that can be seen as floating, and/or transparent. In figure 1, the resin skull is placed in front of the antique bottle, which contains two lotus pods. Once I started to take the photo, using the timer and the shutter release cable, I would begin to add or subtract objects from the frame. Depending on which objects I wanted to become transparent. I wanted the beholder of the images to see through to another object, or to see that the object was once part of the scene—leaving a trace of itself in the image. With each image, I began by setting up a scene using the same few, ritualistic objects. The objects were chosen for specific reasons for fulfillment of the conceptual metaphors each object represents.
Resin Skull Image from photo series

Below the list of objects I will denote the objects purpose, and the conceptual purpose behind their placement in the photo series. There are a total of eight images in the series, and each image has been selected from ten different rolls of film.

**List of objects used in photos:**

- Black Candle in brass candle holder
  - Replica resin human skull
- Handmade Nepalese wool blanket
- Antique apothecary bottle x 2
- Resin hand rolled incense: Sage, Copal, Taos Pine, Piñon
  - Lotus seed head x 2
• Dried yarrow
• Dried peach hypericum berries (St. John’s Wart)
• Dried Sea Lavender
• Handmade floral crown with dried: baby’s breath, eucalyptus flower, noble fir
• Black curtain
• Small antique wooden table, used for altar/ritual practice
• ‘The Self’ (my own body/visage)

Each of these objects have their own medicinal properties. In ancient herbal medicine practices passed down through the centuries, they also are said to contain magical properties. The dried flowers are all used in herbal medicine and were dried for the purpose of ritual practice and symbolic importance. Lotus seeds and pods are part of traditional Chinese medicine and used as astringents that benefit the spleen, kidney, and heart (Dharmananda, 2002). The dried pods that were used in the photo series are sans lotus seeds. The empty pods represent a metaphor of the missing information and records of the accused in the Salem witch trials, and the displaced bodies of indigenous people. During the Salem witch trials meticulous records were kept for the accused, the trials, and the interrogations. However, the histories of the accused themselves, especially the first, Tituba, are non-existent. Tituba was not an immigrant, but a slave, taken from what historians guess was Barbados. She was woman of color, and from unknown origins, and a slave to Samuel Parris. Parris’s daughter Betty Parris, and her cousin Abigail Williams were the first to report having ‘fits’ and exhibited bizarre behavior.
“[d]escribed as Indian no fewer than 15 times in the court papers, she went on to shift-shape herself. As scholars have noted, falling prey to a multi-century game of telephone, Tituba evolved over two centuries from Indian to half-Indian to half-black to black, with assists from Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (who seemed to have plucked her from Macbeth), historian George Bancroft and William Carlos Williams. By the time Arthur Miller wrote The Crucible, in 1952, Tituba was a ‘Negro slave’ (Schiff 2015).

Using a woman of color with no political or social agency was an easy scapegoat, and one origin of the hysteria that would take over the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Tituba was the first accused, and one of the last to be released after fifteen months of imprisonment. Her history post trial and release is unknown, just as her existence and life before being enslaved. Her record in history is that of witch-hunts, which were a global reaction of moral panic, and her stories, which changed multiple times over the course of her trials, historians believe were a result of being punished and coerced by Samuel Parris. “Tituba’s details too grew more and more lush with each retelling, as forced confessions will. Whether she was coerced or whether she willingly collaborated, she gave her interrogators what she knew they wanted” (Schiff, 2015).

Returning to the objects and materials used in the photo series, the dried flowers and herbs were used in reference to their medicinal properties in women’s health, and
use in magic rituals and ancient cultures. Yarrow has been used in herbal medicine in North American indigenous tribes, and has an ancient origins and a myriad of medicinal properties. Yarrow is anti-inflammatory and used for menstrual cramps. It can be used topically or ingested. Sea Lavender has similar herbal properties, however, it is not as versatile or widely used in herbal medicine. St. John’s Wart is another multifaceted herbal plant. The main uses for St. John’s Wart are treatment of depression and relief of all pre-menstrual symptoms. Baby’s breath is used for creating harmony and creative flow when used in conjunction with other herbs related to the planet Venus. Venus is significant in many ancient cultures. Eucalyptus is used for protection, and in conjunction with other herbs in ritual magic (Gladstar, 1993). The Noble Fir was a symbol of immortality and Medieval herbalists used it for it’s healing properties. Today it is commonly used for muscle and joint pain, a source of vitamin C and chest colds. Ritualistically Noble Fir is burned as incense to clear the energy in the room (Gladstar, 1993). I used the incense of Copal, Taos Pine, and Piñon to create an experience and ritual for each image that could place me, physically and mentally in the headspace to focus on the intentions of my project. Incense have a long and rich history throughout ancient cultures and religions. “Combustible bouquets were used by the ancient Egyptians, who employed incense within both pragmatic and mystical capacities” (“Incense”, 2017).

Shooting the images on film was an intentional decision for this project. Memory and time are not relayed the same way in a digital image, which is captured in pixels and stored on a memory card. The information is being recorded digitally, and can only be
read digitally. With analogue photography the image is created by crystalizing the moment on film using light and mirrors. The memory is physical and you can see it on the film negative.

“They pertain, for instance, to the temporality inherent in the actual workings of the photographic medium (including the development process in the case of non-digital photography), the actual physical as well as mental, storage and retrieval of photographs and the temporal and imaginative dynamics of their viewing” (Yacavone, 2012).

Camera optics inside of an analogue camera were made to work akin to the way the human eye works. Images are made from pulling in the light, reflecting it upside down creating an image. “There is a long-standing tradition of comparing the camera’s optics and the development process with with neurophysiological mental process of perceiving and remembering” (Yacavone, 2012). With the images taken for this project, I have attempted to physically place the viewer in a suspension of time and space with ritualistic objects that obscure time and space. Colonized women’s histories have been lost over the centuries and some cultures have an oral history as opposed to a written history. Who are the people writing and recording the histories of the oppressed?

Women were of use for their labor and their bodies, which were both useful and punishable. At the same time that women and homosexuals were being burned at the stake, colonized Africans, and slave trade were being justified through the moral panic
and the devil’s influence over all women. “The Devil was portrayed as a black man and
black people were increasingly treated like devils” (Federici, 2014). As this history is
unfolding for women, and all people of color, the permanence of racism, patriarchy, and
capital is established. The privatization of land and agriculture tie land owners and
those with more capital and control of the means of production to feel threatened by
those who do not have the same level of socioeconomic status.

“The Zapatista Army of National Liberation, or EZLN, is a guerrilla army
but also a broad, grassroots social movement. Chiapas is one of the poorest
states in Mexico and has a high concentration of indigenous people. The
EZLN comes out of the legacy of indigenous resistance and the Mexican
Revolution. It’s named after Emiliano Zapata, a hero of the Mexican
Revolution, and takes up his banner of ‘land and freedom’” (Klein, 2015).

Part III
Conclusion

Señores, you don’t seem to understand. I am a farmer. My father was a farmer and his
father was a farmer as far back as we know. You don’t seem to understand that we don’t
want your welfare handouts, your political positions are meaningless to us, and your
factory jobs are what we oppose – we want our sons and daughters, their sons and
daughters to continue to be farmers on our own lands with our own languages and our
own cultures and our own traditions. This is what we are fighting for -this is what we are
willing to die for. — (anonymous Zapatista farmer)
In regards to my own work on the images within this project, my hope is that the images provide a conceptual connection of the self and the other. I wanted to represent time and space as temporal and subjective. The ghosted objects, including using my self and my body, are a representation of the memories left by those who came before us, and also a metaphor for the invisible, or less visible histories of oppressed peoples. The indigenous people of the Chiapas, the Native peoples of the United States, the slaves of the colonizers of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, and eventually, women and men of the colony that provided a misdirection for land grabbing and economic viability. The women who were accused of witchcraft were invisible to the labor capital of their economic time, however, they became visible in lieu of their relevance as pawns in the struggle for land ownership. Expansion as industrialization became more prevalent, which also displaced the Mayan peoples of the Chiapas.
“The controversies surrounding the accusations, trials, and executions in Salem, 1962, continue to fascinate historians and we continue to ask why, in a society that should have known better, did this happen? Economic and physiological causes aside, the Salem witchcraft trials continue to act as a parable of caution against extremism in judicial processes” (Saxon 2015). Women were not only fighting for their culture, but for their land. The same thing was happening in Salem, women, with far less rights to their autonomy, or land, were being targeted (mostly, there were males accused of witchcraft as well, but not nearly to the extent that women were accused.) The women of the EZLN had to not only find the feminist voice in their own political, radical movement, but for their indigenous rights, and to take on giving all women and LGBTQ peoples of Mexico a voice, a place, and most importantly, equality. Women’s bodies have always been a source of political and economic capital.

In total, I shot ten rolls of medium format film, and each roll contains fifteen exposures. Out of the 150 images shot, I have narrowed down my images for this project to just eight images. One of the most difficult things about analogue photography is that even with years of experience, you are never guaranteed perfect images. Nor are you always capable of relaying what your mind perceived as the image, versus what the camera captures, and the film produces. Matching what your intentions and mind have set out to do are never easy or always attainable. The darkroom with which I volunteer and hand process my film and prints at, caught on fire due to an electrical problem. The fire was minimal, and no one was hurt (thankfully), however, this took a turn for my project, and at once point I thought if I continued to wait to be able to process my film
by hand, that I would not know how much more I needed to shoot in order to achieve my goals for this project. My entire photographic endeavor was experimental, and I kept logs regarding: total time lapsed in each exposure, aperture, shutter speed, and how long each object was in frame or placed in the frame. There were no guarantees for my process, and each roll gave varied results. Due to a chemical mixup I lost three rolls of film, and countless hours of work and experimentation. It was a setback along with the electrical fire that truly shook the foundation of my research and project. I am glad that I persisted, and that I continued to pursue capturing time and space, and the allegorical displacement of bodies and objectification.

Given more time, and in retrospect to my discoveries during this project, I would like to have had the time to compare my photo logs with time and space with other photographers who use long exposures in their work. In an ideal world with funding and more time, I would have also liked to have traveled to Massachusetts and researched more in person and with Librarians and historians who have worked on researching the Salem witch trials. I would have also liked to travel to the Chiapas and interviewed and spent time with the Zapatistas. I believe that spending time in the actual environments, whether historical events have long since passed, like in Salem for example, would have been invaluable to my research.
Continuation of Project

I want to continue with this project and continue shooting more long exposures and experiment further with different types of film formats, and larger format cameras. I would also like to actually spend time researching the Massachusetts Bay Colony, as well as visit the places where the accused once lived, and where the trials took place. I have only visited Salem twice, and the visits were useful in my research, but I was not able to stay for a long enough period of time to do extensive research or interviews.

I want to visit the Chiapas and go the Zapatista immersive language school. They offer teaching Spanish as well as indigenous languages and traditions. From their official website: “Schools for Chiapas urges everyone to consider attending CELMRAZ and is proud to have played a small role in the establishment of this important indigenous run institution. During the summer of 1999 Schools for Chiapas sent our first language school team to Chiapas with the goal of helping establish a language school in Oventic. We continued to provide support for CELMRAZ through out it’s formative years. Today the center is fully run by the Mayan education system of the highlands of Chiapas. We invite you and your family and friends to join us and the Zapatistas in the joyful struggle to build a new and better world” (School for the Chiapas. Retrieved from http://www.schoolsforchiapas.org/who-we-are/) As there are still struggles to decolonize our minds, our institutions, and global histories, there is still oppression at all intersections of human life. I want to continue researching, writing, and connecting with people to work against systems of oppression.
Part IV

Image Gallery

“In deciding how a picture should look, in preferring one exposure to another, photographers are always imposing standards on their subjects. Although there is a sense in which the camera does indeed capture reality, not just interpret it, photographs are as much an interpretation of the world as paintings and drawings are. Those occasions when the taking of photographs is relatively undiscriminating, promiscuous, or self-effacing do not lessen the didacticism of the whole enterprise. This very passivity -- and ubiquity -- of the photographic record is photography’s ‘message,’ its aggression.”

--Susan Sontag, On Photography

Below are the images that I have chosen to represent this project. The order of the images and their contents are intentional, and described in depth in Part II, pages thirteen through nineteen. I would prefer that they speak to the reader of this project along with the writing as opposed to in-depth insight into each image. Rather than considering each individual photograph, viewers should consider the objects in the pictures and their relationships to each other within the picture and between the series of photographs as a whole.
I.
II.
III.
VII.
VIII.
Works Cited

Books

Online dictionaries, Scholarly Articles and Wikipedia


