

all constructing an ethics of research aimed toward reparation and restitution as forms of knowledge and understanding.

This thinking ultimately stems from my concern with the embodiments and entanglements that carers inhabit. In the simple act of revisiting a photograph of my child every day, sometimes in the company of other people's children, I began to understand how caregiving acts as a germ for scholarly empathy, imagination, and collaboration—with figures in the present and the past. Caregiving, both laborious and life-giving, impacts not only what and why we study but how we decide to understand, feel, and narrate. By contributing to the construction of an ethic in this way, scholarly caregiving creates epistemic power through a scholarly practice of mutual aid and, from that foundation, scaffolds futures.

Insinuating the Invisible Lilian Chee

"What interests the historian of everyday life is the *invisible*." ⁴¹

Cecil Asong is a thirty-nine-year-old woman from the small township of Zarraga (population 27,000) in the Province of Iloilo in the Philippines. She has two teenage daughters—the younger, in secondary school, is still doing home-based learning, and the elder has just begun her tertiary education. The girls have no internet access at home. They make do by sharing the service with a neighbor. Cecil's husband is a farmer of a smallholding. He grows vegetables, and they have two pigs. Cecil's mother-in-law stays close to help with the girls. They are a close-knit family. Cecil is intelligent, resourceful, tenacious, and reliable. She is good with children. I know all this because she has been living with my family in Singapore for the last eight years as our domestic helper. Without her labor I would not be able to write this brief statement about caregiving and the significance of "repair" in an academic context. With my adult asthma risks and the family choosing not to go out so as to minimize my chances of falling seriously ill during the pandemic, she has also been staying at home with us since March 2020. We owe her a huge debt of care.

I begin with a brief biography of the foreign domestic worker, an essential component of affective care work in Singapore. On arrival in Singapore, these women are trained to assimilate and adapt to local conditions. The list of words in Figure 5 is an excerpt from a vocabulary sheet given to them by their local agents. ^{fig.5} They are encouraged to learn local dialects and languages, practice social etiquette, intuit instructions, and anticipate needs. The high wages are enticing enough for them to leave behind their own children, spouses, previous lives, and histories. Subsequently, they live within an impasse, ⁴² with a contracted

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⁴¹ Paul Leuilliot, preface to Guy Thuillier, *Pour une histoire du quotidien au XIX^e siècle en Nivernais* (Paris: Mouton, 1977), xi–xii, cited in Michel de Certeau, Luce Giard, and Pierre Mayol, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Vol. 2, *Living and Cooking* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 3.

⁴² Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press Books, 2011).

sense of personal space and sociality. We, in turn, know little of their lives, loves, dreams, and desires.

The active import of foreign domestic workers to Singapore began when local women were encouraged to join the manufacturing workforce in the 1970s. ⁴³ In 1978, the Foreign

43 See Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, "Foreign Domestic Workers in Singapore: Social and Historical Perspectives" (2016), National University of Singapore, https://lkyspp.nus.edu.sg/docs/default-source/case-studies/fdws_in_singapore.pdf?sfvrsn=2ac5960b_2 (accessed February 12, 2022).

fig.5 Vocabulary sheet for foreign domestic workers. Source: Anthea Phua, "How to Live with Another" (Master's thesis, National University of Singapore, 2021)

44 See Theresa W. Devasahayam, "Placement and/or Protection? Singapore's Labour Policies and Practices for Temporary Women Migrant Workers," *Journal of the Asia Pacific Economy* 15, no. 1 (2010), 45–58, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13547860903488229>.

45 Yufeng Kok, "Businesses, Families Would Have Been Severely Hit if Singapore Had Closed Borders to Migrant Workers: MOM," *Straits Times*, May 18, 2021.

46 In older public housing, the ground floor covered open space (called "void decks") that had amenities such as benches, tables, and the area around the (now defunct) public phone. These were occupied by domestic workers. For a discourse on the void deck, see Lilian Chee, "Keeping Cats, Hoarding Things: Domestic Situations in the Public Spaces of the Singaporean Housing Block," *Journal of Architecture* 22, no. 6 (2017), 1041–65, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13602365.2017.1362024>.

47 Roland Barthes, *How to Live Together: Novelistic Simulations of Some Everyday Spaces*, trans. Kate Briggs (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 89.

SALAM / UCARAN					
BAHASA INDONESIA	BAHASA INGGRIS	BACAAN MANDARIN	BAHASA KANTONESE	BAHASA BOKKIAN	BAHASA MANDARIN
Apa Kabar	How are You	Ni Hau	Nei Hou	Li Ho	您好
Maaf	Sorry	Tue Pu Jhi / Pau Chien	To Em Ji	To Em Ju	對不起 / 抱歉
Pemis/ Terima Kasih	Excuse Me	Ching Wen	Em Koi	Chia Meng	請問
Sampai Jumpa ...	See You ...	Cai Cien	Coi Kin	Cai Kien	再見
Selamat	Congratulation	Kong Si	Kung Hei	Kiong Hi	恭喜
Selamat Datang	Welcome	Huan Ying	Fun Ying	Fan Ying	歡迎
Selamat Jalan	Goodbye	Man Cou / Cai Cien	Man Man Hang	Man Man Kia	慢走 / 再見
Selamat Makan	Have Nice Meal	Jing Man Yong	Jing man-man sik	Chin Jai Ciek	請隨意
Selamat Malam	Good Evening	Wan An	Man On	Mi Si Ca	晚安
Selamat Pagi	Good Morning	Cau An	Cou San	Dhau Ca	早安
Selamat Siang	Good Afternoon	U An	Em On	E Po	午安
Selamat Tahun Baru	Happy New Year	Sin Nen Cin Pu	Sen Nin Failok	Sin Ni Quelek	新年進步
Selamat Tidur	Good Night	Wan An	Co Dao	Al Gun	晚安
Selamat Ulang Tahun	Happy Birthday	Sen Re Kwai Lok	Sang Yat Failok	Sin Lik Quelek	生日快樂
Silahkan	Please	Ching	Jing	Jia	請
Tak Apa-apa	Nevermind	Mei Kuan Si / Pu Yau Ching	Mo Man dai	Bo We Kin	沒關係 / 不要緊
Terima Kasih	Thank You	Sie Sie	To Chie	To Sia	謝謝
Terima Kasih Kembali	You Are Well Come	Pu Ghe Jhi / Pu Kan Tang	Em Sai Hak Hi	Mien Ghe Ghi	不客氣

Chinese words maid must know:	
Mop the floor	抹地 (ma di)
Sweep the floor	掃地 (sao di)
Cooking	煮飯 (co fan)
Fold Clothes	折衣服 (ze yi fu)
Iron Clothes	燙衣服 (tang yi fu)
Shower/ Bathe	沖凉 (cong liang)
Sleep	睡覺 (shui jiao)
Wash clothes	洗衣 (ai yi)
Washing Machine	洗衣機 (ai yi ji)
Wash dishes	洗碗 (ai wan)
Wash hands	洗手 (xi shou)
Cut fruits	切水果 (qie shui guo)
Eat	吃飯 (chi fan)
Water	水 (shui)
Salt	盐 (yan)
Sugar	糖 (tang)
Keep	收 (shou)
Push	推 (tui)
Pull	拉 (la)
Open door	开门 (kai men)
Close door	关门 (guan men)
Lock the door	鎖門 (suo men)
Open windows	开窗 (kai chuang)
Close windows	关窗 (guan chuang)
Living Room	客厅 (ke ting)
Dining Room	餐厅 (fan ting)
Bed Room	房間 (fang jian)
Table	桌子 (zao zi)
Bed	床 (chuang)
Chair	椅子 (yi zi)
Tissue	紙巾 (zhi jin)
Wet Tissue	濕紙巾 (shi zhi jin)
Morning	早上 (zao shang)
Afternoon	下午 (xia wu)
Night	晚上 (wan shang)
Go upstairs	上楼 (sang lou)
Go downstairs	下楼 (xia lou)

Number	
1. It	6. Li
2. di	7. Ci
3. sa	8. Pa
4. si	9. kau
5. go	10. Cap

Teochew Words	
Learn	O
Cup	Pue
Chopsticks	Te
Bowl	Wia
Spoon	Long ci
Fans	Huang si
Light	Chang
Shower	chang e
Up stairs	Lau tng
Down stairs	Lau e
Joss sticks	Hio Hio
Chairs	i
Table	gheng lny
Door	huang
Windows	ting mung
Go shop	ka hong the tiang
Hi home	la lai
Go out	chu te
Orange	he him ka
Pray	kai pe kong

TEOCHEN WORDS	
fish	He
Vegetable	Cai
Apple	Sa-gyue
Banana	ka
Fruits	chikue
Chicken	kie
Duck	AK
Pork	Te bok
Go (with)	ka la
Buy water	hang xio
Buy mutton	hang sai
Cat fish	Cen peng
Eat porridge	gan gao
Morning	cha ki
Afternoon	e hua
Night	he sun
Off the light	kie tiang
On the light	kai tiang
First floor	it lau
Third floor	sa lau
Second floor	sin lau
Wash cloth	sue sa
Map the floor	ze to e
Iron the cloth	ue sa
Ground floor	lau e
Drink water	he cai
Shower	chang ek

Domestic Worker Scheme was introduced with five thousand women enrolled from overseas. ⁴⁴ In 2020, despite travel restrictions, 247,400 foreign women — mostly from neighboring South-east Asian countries, including Indonesia, the Philippines, and Myanmar — worked as domestic helpers in Singapore. ⁴⁵

The reality is that the Singaporean "family unit" is increasingly incomplete without a domestic helper. Housing 82 percent of the resident population, the Housing and Development Board's incessant research into occupancy configurations (nuclear family, extended family, aging householders, and singles, although marriage remains a precondition for subsidized private housing) has far-reaching outcomes. Yet, these women do not figure as residents in the official statistics. Sleeping on roll-up mattresses, pull-out or foldable beds in shared bedrooms, kitchens, living rooms, and illegally in windowless bomb shelters, they are still accommodated tenuously, consistent with their moniker, "transient foreign worker." ⁴⁶

In *How to Live Together*, Roland Barthes states that reciprocity, such as feelings of attachment or friendship, can exist only within the same social rank and class. ⁴⁷ I am painfully aware that my need for paid help at home both sustains Cecil's family and curtails her freedom. No matter how long a helper stays with the family, or even when she becomes co-opted as a beloved member, an unbridgeable gulf remains, cut deep by profound differences in education, class, and racial discrimination.

Perpetuating a colonial legacy of “servants,” the figure of the domestic helper is not new. British expatriate families had live-in local servants. Subsequently, wealthier Chinese families employed poorer families as domestic help.

The repair work in this specific instance first involves recognition and inclusion — that is, naming the persons we rely on and making space for them reciprocally in the knowledges we create. Action can be taken in how I, as an academic, designer, mother, and employer, choose to talk about and to include Cecil and her fellow workers in the stories I tell, the classes I teach, the design projects I supervise, and the research I conduct. ⁴⁸ **fig.6** Second, repair can be sustained at the level of embodied and lived knowledge creation. The insertion of the domestic helper into architectural scholarship requires tactical intervention and invention. I borrow from Michel de Certeau and Luce Giard, who argue that the study of the everyday ordinary (for this is where we find the missing helper) is a “practical science of the singular,” emphasizing particularity and concreteness of situations over abstractions made from research tools ill-suited to capture the “inventive proliferations” of everyday domestic life. ⁴⁹ In defining the tactical (as opposed to “the strategic”), de Certeau gives the French example of *la perruque*. *La perruque* is when the worker steals time in the course of their work by improvising with leftovers to create something that cannot be economically or financially quantified. ⁵⁰ De Certeau’s “economy of the gift” and “ethics of tenacity” are insightful. ⁵¹ I interpret these as the creative clearing of domestic time and space for the mutual exchange of talents and, with that, the beginnings of solidarity.

Cecil and I have a shared interest in plants. Planting edible crops between ornamental plants in our small, walled, urban



garden has yielded surprising harvests of basil leaves, limes, and water spinach. Between house chores, she teaches me how to mend broken branches and rejuvenate orchids. Working together in our jungle-garden has nurtured friendship and healing. Through

cooking, we discover shared ingredients, cooking methods, and necessary improvisations for heirloom recipes. Cooking revives family stories — hers and mine. She creates, mends, and makes at a domestic scale. Her sustainability is actionable, grounded,

⁴⁸ See Anthea Phua, *How to Live with Another* (2021), <http://www.presidentsmedals.com/Entry-56191> (accessed February 12, 2022). See also Lilian Chee and Silvia Federici, “We need forms of reproduction that do not separate us from each other,” in “Contemporary Feminist Spatial Practice,” special issue, *Arch+* 246 (February 2022), 66–75.

⁴⁹ De Certeau, Giard, and Mayol, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Vol 2, 256.

⁵⁰ Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Vol. 1 (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988), 25–26.

⁵¹ De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Vol. 1, 26.

fig.6 Cecil and George harvesting herbs in the back garden during the covid pandemic. Photograph: Lilian Chee, 2020

and real. She influences us. While it may not be the sort of transgression that de Certeau intended, these micro-tactics upend household routines and social hierarchies because they are creative, generative, and generous.

This version of *la perruque* changes the worker and her employer. At the same time, this discourse must also insinuate itself into wider public practice — it must change the way we think about design, transform the making of policy, become intrinsic to our pedagogy, and figure in our writing. Caring for the stranger without draws one closer to one's own past. Perhaps this is the most significant threshold that we need to mentally overcome before reparation can begin, for everyone.

Unruly Sites of Repair: Rwanda, 1994–2019

Delia Duong Ba Wendel

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I am an architectural historian and cultural geographer who explores the spatialization of peacebuilding in relation to unresolved histories of harm and the legacies of uneven redress. I work primarily in Rwanda, where I have been reflecting on the unruly nature of repair after the 1994 genocide. *Repair* implies efforts to mend or compensate for harms that result from crimes and a range of wrongs not necessarily recognized by law, including psychosocial injuries, nonprosecutable forms of state terror, and structural oppression. Repair is both an individual matter and a fundamentally social dilemma concerned with issues of redress for whole groups of people. Forms of repair range from material payments and redistributive policies to truth-telling and forms of recognition, mutual aid, and the restoration of relationships. Repair is no easy task; it is unruly. Nonetheless, individuals and communities seek repair to fulfill the possibility to endure; to feed bodies in need of some measure of acknowledgment of wrongs, restitution, and perhaps healing. Endeavoring to repair recognizes both the impossibility and necessity of that task.

A memorial can be a potent act of communal repair. Memorials also resist notions of repair as inevitable, immediately accessible, or achieved through techno-scientific acts of reconstruction. Rwanda's genocide memorials are distinct sites: they conserve places of killing and victims' remains in attempts to materialize collective memory of Tutsi survival and erasure. Among them, the Murambi Genocide Memorial is prominent for its display of mummified genocide victims at the massacre site. Attempting to understand the ethical and political motivations behind the conservation of genocide victims and sites compels engagement with the views and experiences of individuals who did that memory work. Doing so has led me to an intimate historiography of repair. ⁵²

⁵² My approach to writing what I call "reparative histories" (Delia Duong Ba Wendel, *Rwanda's Genocide History: Between Justice and Sovereignty* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, forthcoming 2023)) is informed by the work of Yvette Abrahams, Ariella Azoulay, Catherine Hall, Saidiya Hartman, and Toni Morrison.