

“We will remember, we will repast”: Performance and the Feeding of Collective Memory in *Re.Past.Malaga*

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What does it mean to perform and remember a group of people and an event that has seemingly been erased from the collective memory? This was the question that has preoccupied me since walking onto an island in the middle of the New Meadows River on July 12, 2018 to celebrate and remember the forced removal of 47 residents of Malaga Island over a century earlier, an event I never learned about in my many years of education in Maine. *Re.Past.Malaga*, the memorial meal on Malaga Island, used the mechanisms of performance to commemorate the lives and the tragedy of the residents of Malaga. The meal asked the participants to remember those who had been forcefully removed by the state of Maine in 1912 and to keep them in spirit with them throughout the performative meal, showing them a reverence and respect that was denied to them for almost a century and to bring their story to the contemporary moment.

Malaga Island sits in the middle of the New Meadows River, which flows out into Casco Bay on Maine’s coast. The island lies between Harpswell and Phippsburg, two of Maine’s many seaside communities that have depended upon alternatively the fishing and tourism industries for over a century. From the late 1860s until 1912, the islet was home to one of Maine’s small mixed-race communities, with 48 citizens living on the island in 1912.¹ In that same year, the governor of

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¹ This number is disputed. I am using the number referenced in *Re.Past.Malaga*, but others who have studied Malaga have given estimates from 45-49.

Maine, Frederick Plaisted, signed an order to evict the residents of Malaga from their homes, with most moving to the mainland and eight being sent to the Maine School for the Feeble-Minded in Pownal. The forced eviction was due to a number of factors: a concern from Phippsburg's white residents of both the loss of tourism due to the mixed-race community being visible from their shore and the possibility that Malaga and its residents could become wards of the town, racism and classism that was outwardly hostile towards the perceived low income community of Malaga with the rise of the eugenics movement in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and a shift in how Maine saw itself.² It is this final move that allowed Malaga and its racist, violent history to be successfully obscured in the official record and the collective memory of Maine for decades, with various fairly successful attempts to whitewash the history of the island.

This paper springs from both my professional experience and my personal connection to the subject. As a doctoral student at Northwestern University, I study the intersections of performance and public memory, making the performative meal on Malaga an interesting site where the works of theorists such as Conner-ton, Austin, Butler, Kirschenblatt-Gimblett, Schneider, Young, and Magelssen are useful to think through how the *Re.Past.Malaga* used performance as a medium for commemoration. By asking the participants to physically enter the space of Malaga, using food as a method of remembrance, and calling forward the names of those physically removed from the island in 1912, *Re.Past.Malaga* was a performative meal interested in the slippages in time that performance allows.³

My personal connection, or rather disconnection, is the other compelling aspect of the *Re.Past.Malaga* and how collective memory of an event can be shaped. I am a Mainer, and in the context of Maine culture, only a person who is born and raised in the state can claim the label of Mainer.⁴ My family has been in the region for centuries, and there are roads down in East Boothbay, Maine, that bear my family's name (of course, there were Indigenous communities there before my family, but the legacies of colonialism persist to the present day.) I went to Maine public schools, where I learned about the history of Maine—the Indigenous populations, the split from Massachusetts, the heroics of Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain at the Battle of Gettysburg, the adage in elections of “As goes Maine, so goes the nation.” I was, and am, someone who seeks out new knowledge and consider myself relatively well-read on my beloved home state, which is why I was blindsided by the story of Malaga.

² Kate McMahon, “The Use of Material Culture and Recovering Black Maine,” *Material Culture Review* 2013 77-78: 92-106. The archaeological work that was done on Malaga directly contradicted the narratives that were told of the residents of the island.

³ Rebecca Schneider, *Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment* (London and New York: Routledge, 2011).

⁴ This has led to the colloquial saying of Mainers: “Just because kittens are born in the oven doesn't make em biscuits.”

I did not learn about the story until I was working at a professional theatre in central Maine after college and one of the local housing hosts, who knew of my interest in history, mentioned Malaga Island to me and asked if I knew anything about it. When I answered no, she briefly sketched out the history for me and recommended Gary Schmidt's 2004 young adult novel *Lizzie Bright and the Buckminster Boy* as a primer for the history. The book, which gives a fictionalized account of the forced eviction of the residents of Malaga, ends with a historical note about what the author has and has not fictionalized.⁵ Beyond this work of historical fiction, the residents of Malaga have been discussed in the "official" collective memory only a scant few times: they received a formal apology in 2010 from then Governor of Maine John Baldacci, an exhibit at the Maine State Museum titled *Malaga Island: Fragmented Lives* in 2012, and artistic interpretations from painter Daniel Minter and poet Julia Bouwsma.⁶

I bring up my lack of knowledge of the horrors of Malaga and the very recent "uncovering" of the traumatic event for two reasons. The first is that it speaks to how recent the recovery work of the lives and memory of the inhabitants of Malaga was in time. I was in the Maine public school system until 2010, but never heard of the mixed-race community that was located thirty minutes from my home until well after I left. The performance of the *Re.Past.Malaga* on Malaga brought the narrative of the island forward to the present day in ways that go beyond reading a book or visiting an exhibit might for many reasons, but most specifically due to physical space: we had to go to Malaga itself to perform the meal. The second reason serves a more intellectual purpose. The lack of Malaga's story within the public imagination of the history of Maine leaves a gap within the collective memory, and efforts such as *Re.Past.Malaga* aid in placing Malaga back into the collective memory of Maine as a part of the state's un-whitewashed past.⁷

Malaga and the shifts in where it stands in the memories of Mainers is an example of two key sociological concepts related to collective memory:

⁵ Gary D. Schmidt, *Lizzie Bright and the Buckminster Boy* (New York: Clarion Books, 2004), 218-9.

⁶ The apology and the exhibit are covered in McMahon, "The Use of Material Culture and Recovering Black Maine," which also covers archaeological efforts on the island that led to the exhibit and other commemorative efforts, including a short documentary. Daniel Minter's paintings inspired by Malaga were used as artwork for *Re.Past.Malaga* and are on the cover of Julia Bouwsma's book of poetry about Malaga, *Midden*, published in 2018. I use official in quotations here to illustrate the difference between official commemorative practice and vernacular memory practices as first theorized in John E. Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1991).

⁷ Maine, per McMahon via the U.S. Census Bureau, is the least ethnically diverse state in the United States. McMahon, "The Use of Material Culture and Recovering Black Maine," 93.

narrativization and collective forgetting. Francesca Polletta used theories of narrativization to discuss how we collectively remember the sit-ins from the 1960s Civil Rights Movement, and ends her article with this guiding principle:

Stories, like other cultural forms, both reproduce the existing and provide tools for changing it. The key, of course, is to understand how and when they do each. And that requires grasping not only the formal features of narrative that distinguish it from other discursive forms, but the social conditions in which stories are more and less familiar, easily communicated, and authoritative.⁸

The story of Malaga is one that obscured and obfuscated for decades, and only with archaeological work, interviews with descendants, and changing social conditions has set the stage for Malaga to be brought back into the public consciousness, allowing for a performance like *Re.Past.Malaga* to occur. The other issue at hand, of course, is how Malaga was forgotten at all.

In Kate McMahon's article on the archaeological work conducted on Malaga Island, she notes that the tenants of Malaga were evicted due to the desired white-washed "imagined history of New England" that would not allow for a mixed-race community to exist near a possible popular tourist destination.⁹ Adding to this created historical narrative were societal pressures that allowed for the story of Malaga and its tenants to be forgotten in the larger collective memory. Barry Schwartz noted this as the issue of collective forgetting, where the attention to one set of people or conditions frames what is remembered about a specific history.¹⁰ While Schwartz is focused on how Rosa Parks became the singular symbol of the Montgomery Bus Boycott, his conceptualization of collective forgetting as an active process is useful for how to think of the story of Malaga Island, which remained out of the broader historical narrative for decades.¹¹

Collective remembering and forgetting is built on power structures that privilege certain narratives, and for the case of Malaga, it took almost a century for the story to be uncovered. Paul Connerton notes that much of what makes the act of collective memorialization successful is based within the body enacting certain rituals, and that within commemorative ceremonies master narratives emerge and are habituated through performance.¹² *Re.Past.Malaga*, as the bulk of this essay

⁸ Francesca Polletta, "It Was Like a Fever...': Narrative and Identity in Social Protest," *Social Problems* 45:2 (May 1998): 137-159, *JSTOR*, accessed November 5, 2018, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3097241>, 155.

⁹ McMahon, "The Use of Material Culture and Recovering Black Maine," 99.

¹⁰ Barry Schwartz, "Collective Forgetting and the Symbolic Power of Oneness: The Strange Apotheosis of Rosa Parks," *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 72:2 (June 2009): 123-142, *JSTOR*, accessed November 5, 2018, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25593914>.

¹¹ McMahon, "The Use of Material Culture and Recovering Black Maine," 101-102.

¹² Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989,) 70-71.

will show, actively used performance and commemoration to fight against the force of collective forgetting and hegemonic narratives that have hidden the story of Malaga from the historical narrative of Maine.

Re.Past.Malaga was a performance and performative. It was a performance in the traditional theatrical sense of actors performing in front of an assembled audience and performative in the Austinean sense of the dinner was a *doing*, a performative utterance calling memorial practice into being.¹³ In this next segment of my essay, I will unpack what occurred at the performative dinner, and will continue to use my own personal experience of the performance as both a means of gathering information and as a guide through the experience, taking a note from Scott Magelssen in being “explicit about the ways in which my individuated ‘self’ made meaning in these events.”¹⁴ As a participant observer of *Re.Past.Malaga*, there are certain moments that struck me as both a theatre scholar and as a Mainer coming to terms with what it means to learn of a history previously unknown. Using performance through the sharing of food as a means of collectively remembering the trauma of Malaga allowed for a more diverse tactic of commemoration beyond an exhibit or a memorial plaque, reviving a communal tradition on an island that had not seen a meal in over a century.¹⁵

Re.Past.Malaga began on the mainland. Participants gathered at a local church in Phippsburg, chattering about bug spray and the reasons we were there. When asked, I spoke of my interest in public memory and performance. The other reason, and the reason I knew of the event at all, was that my mother’s employer is a neighbor of Myron M. Beasley, the curator of the event and a performance studies scholar. Beasley had invited my mother and me to the performative dinner once he knew of my research interests. The participants took a van to the shore, unsure about what exactly was going to happen once we arrived on the dock. We were shepherded into skippers from local residents who work alongside members of the Maine Coast Heritage Trust, who brought us over to Malaga.

Malaga is only accessible by boat. The boat ride allowed for participants to imagine what it may have been like to make this trip at the turn of the twentieth century as Malaga residents did before their forced departure, which began the immersion of *Re.Past.Malaga*. The performance echoes Magelssen’s conceptions of *simming*, which he defines as “a simulated, immersive, performative

¹³ J.L. Austin, *How to Do Things With Words* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962) 6-10.

¹⁴ Scott Magelssen, *Simming: Participatory Performance and the Making of Meaning* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2014), ix.

¹⁵ There has been substantial work done on public commemoration honor those who have been forgotten in dominant narratives. While there is not space in this essay to go in depth, the works of Marita Sturken, Erika Doss, and Carole Blair were particularly useful when considering the case of Malaga.

environment.”¹⁶ In particular, Magelssen’s notions of what simmings provide for those who experience them is useful in thinking about both the boat ride over to Malaga and *Re.Past.Malaga* itself. Magelssen writes:

Simmings both represent and adapt events that have been experienced *before* (including those projected vicariously into the imminent future), and each time engage in a performative relationship with those events, and, rather than looking to faithful re-creation as a criterion for success, instead can be judged by the ways in which they create new experiences that draw on, play with, wink at, or otherwise comment on the events they reference.¹⁷

Re.Past.Malaga asked participants to not only journey to the island of Malaga as a collective group, but to memorialize and create new meaning from the experience, which purported to not fully recreate a meal on Malaga, but rather commemorate and honor the lives of those who were forcibly removed from the island with a meal that they themselves might have prepared a century ago.

Once we reached the island, we stepped onto one of the shell middens that make up the shoreline of Malaga and made our way to the clearing that formed the space for *Re.Past.Malaga*. Along our woody walk stood cutouts constructed, designed and painting by Saleha Belgaumi. The silhouettes were but a reminder of those who lived and worked on the island and their absence from the space that made *Re.Past.Malaga* necessary. Reflecting back on the experience, Rebecca Schneider’s discussion of reanimation in *Performing Remains* is useful for understanding how both the cutouts and other moments of the *Re.Past.Malaga* articulated meanings through performance. Schneider writes: “Repetition, or *ritual remains by means of performance*, takes on increased importance. In this case, live performance is the still that articulates not a distinction between remaining and disappearing, or life and death, but an inter(in)animation of registers that is ongoing by passing on.”¹⁸ The cutouts, an artistic representation of bodies long gone from the space, served as a reminder of “inter(in)animation” through the collapsing of time, placing physical manifestations of those who should have never been removed from the island back in their intended place.¹⁹ To see them in the space reminded us as we walked from the shell midden to the gathering space on the island of the purpose of the performative dinner; to reanimate the island with the presence of those gathered and the memory of those removed from the small island over a century before.

The scenography of *Re.Past.Malaga* lent itself to this consistent slippage of time. To enter the gathering space, participants of *Re.Past.Malaga* entered through the frame of a small house, much like ones that might have been on the island in

¹⁶ Magelssen, *Simming*, 3.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 10.

¹⁸ Schneider, *Performing Remains*, 147.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

1912, with walls covered with muslin that presented artwork suggesting the inhabitants of Malaga. When participants entered into the gathering space, they were greeted by two long tables set with flowers and china place settings for 47 people, significant as 47 was the number of residents on the island at the time of eviction in 1912 and china found on the island disproved the false idea of an impoverished community.²⁰ Next to the house participants stepped through stood a lectern with a microphone and a pathway to where food and drink were being prepared. We took our seats, and the tables began to fill as more participants arrived by boat, beginning to fill the space with conversation about the warm, sunny day, the green landscape of Malaga, and general chit chat.

While waiting for *Re.Past.Malaga* to begin, I took a few minutes to read the program that was placed at each table setting, as is customary to do before most theatrical productions. The program, which was on fine linen paper and letterpressed, featured the artwork of Minter, a piece called *Malaga Girl* that also graces the cover of Julia Bouwsma's book of poetry on Malaga. I first read the director/curatorial note from Beasley, which opened with William Faulkner's famous quote "The past is never dead. It's not even the past."²¹ Beasley's program note sketches out a brief history of the eviction of Malaga Island, the efforts to commemorate the tragedy, and an overview of what a repast is in the African American tradition, defining it as "a meal to commemorate the dead and to celebrate the living and the cycle of life" and connecting it to how the enslaved were able to honor their dead in a system that denied them this right.²²

He ends his introduction on a note that evokes what *Re.Past.Malaga* was meant to do: "Our Re:Past honoring the people of Malaga is a performative meal that not only remembers them but just as importantly respects and celebrates them. It also serves as an admonition to us that the past is never dead. It's not even the past."²³ The invocation of Faulkner's famous quotation speaks to the ways in which *Re.Past.Malaga* sought to make meaning through performance and food, as food is often a tangible link between past, present, and future as generations share meals and recipes.²⁴

²⁰ This number comes from the *Re.Past.Malaga* program, which listed the residents of the island at the time of eviction.

²¹ Myron Beasley, *Re.Past.Malaga* program, 3.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid., 4.

²⁴ There has been a significant amount of scholarship on the relationship between food and memory which I will not detail here, expect to say that my thinking in this regard was informed by rhetorical scholar Rosalyn Collings Eves' article "A Recipe for Remembrance: Memory and Identity in African-American Women's Cookbooks," which examined cookbooks as a means of community building and remembrance among African American women.

The use of a repast as a means of remembrance for the destruction of a mixed-race community in the now whitest state in the United States was a useful and meaningful form on the part of Beasley and his collaborators, and made me consider why the repast was chosen, particularly given the other commemorative practices that have been used to bring the story of Malaga into the public discourse. My own research interests led me to look at the work of Harvey Young as a means of addressing why a repast would be an effective strategy of remembrance for the people of Malaga. Young articulates a theorization of critical memory in the performance of black bodies in connection to Pierre Bourdieu's articulation of habitus that, for me, proved to be useful in thinking through the question of *Re.Past.Malaga* as performance.²⁵ In Young's introduction, he writes:

Critical memory invites consideration of past practices that have affected the lives and shaped the experiences of black folk. It looks back in time, from a present-day perspective, and not only accounts for the evolution in culture but also enables an imagining of what life would be like had things been different. The appeal of critical memory is that it grants access to past experiences of select individuals. At the same time, it does not blind us to their (or our) present reality.²⁶

As Beasley articulated in his introduction, the repast was and is an essential practice in African American culture, which makes critical memory an intriguing means by which to view *Re.Past.Malaga*. Young identifies critical memory as a way of "reflecting upon and sharing recollections of embodied black experience," which is at the core of what the repast is intended to do.²⁷ While *Re.Past.Malaga* could not bring the collective experiences of the residents of Malaga into the present moment, it was designed to bring participants into the physical space of the island, focus on individual stories, and share food as a community in order to reframe the story of Malaga within a tradition that many members of the island would have known.

Re.Past.Malaga began with song, fitting for a performative meal. Two singers stepped up to the lectern and began to sing "Ain't No Grave Hold My Body Down" as high school students dressed in 1910s clothing began to serve beverages that would have been consumed on Malaga in 1912.²⁸ While this particular scenario could come across as fairly ironic, the action itself evoked the slippage of time in the gathering space as music, drink, actor, and spectator began to create a

²⁵ Harvey Young, *Embodying Black Experience: Stillness, Critical Memory, and the Black Body* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010).

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 19-20.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 19.

²⁸ The high school students who served the participants attend Maine Arts Academy (formerly Snow Pond Arts Academy), a charter school in Sidney, Maine located roughly an hour away from Phippsburg.

moment of co-performance to remember the residents of Malaga, an action that was reinforced throughout the entire dinner.²⁹

The food was at the center of *Re.Past.Malaga*, as would be expected from a memorial meal meant to celebrate the residents of Malaga through community building. As the students poured the beverages of dry hopped cider and Nazinscot Farm sun tea, I took the moment to read the menu of the food that we would be served.³⁰ On the menu listing, the program gave the reasoning of food as central to *Re.Past.Malaga* as food is a way for those of us in the present to understand the lives of those we were memorializing, and that “in a repast, the food is served to comfort and invoke the memory of those lost and to nourish the soul of the living. The menu assembled today is a memorial to the residents of Malaga.”³¹ As I read through the list of foods, many of them were familiar to me, unsurprising given that I grew up in a small coastal community that exists in the same foodways as Malaga did. Chowder, beans, cornbread, and bread pudding were all foods that I had consumed my whole life, but reading them in the program, and later consuming them, took on new meanings.

In the months since participating in *Re.Past.Malaga*, I have thought a considerable amount on how food functioned in the performance of the *Re.Past.Malaga*. To think through that particular relationship, the work of Barbara Kirschenblatt-Gimblett becomes useful. Kirschenblatt-Gimblett theorize about the relationship between food and performance in “Playing to the Senses: Food as a Performance Medium.”³² In the article, Kirschenblatt-Gimblett outlines three principles where food and performance converge. The first is that to both eat and perform is to do: “to execute, to carry out to completion, to discharge a duty- in other words, all that governs the production, presentation and disposal of food.”³³ The second overlap Kirschenblatt-Gimblett defines is that to perform and to eat is to behave, in connection to both Erving Goffmann’s performance in everyday life and Bourdieu’s habitus in relation to social practice.³⁴ The final juncture Kirschenblatt-Gimblett identifies is that to perform and to consume is to show: “When doing and behaving are displayed, when they are shown, when participants are invited

²⁹ In this case, I am using “co-performance” from Dwight Conquergood and D. Soyini Madison’s conceptions of co-performative witnessing. While I would not fully describe *Re.Past.Malaga* as a moment of co-performative witnessing, there was a definitive blurring of lines between performer and spectator. See D. Soyini Madison, “CO-PERFORMATIVE WITNESSING.” *Cultural Studies* 21, no. 6 (2007): 826-31.

³⁰ Beasley, *Re.Past.Malaga* program, 6.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, “Playing to the Senses: Food as a Performance Medium,” *Performance Research*, 4:1, 1999, accessed November 25, 2018, 1-30, DOI: 10.1080/13528165.1999.10871639.

³³ Ibid., 1.

³⁴ Ibid., 1-2.

to exercise discernment, evaluation and appreciation, food events move towards the theatrical and, more specifically, towards the spectacular. It is here that taste as a sensory experience and taste as an aesthetic faculty converge."³⁵

It is this final point of Kirschenblatt-Gimblett's that is beneficial when considering how food functions as a means of performance in *Re.Past.Malaga*. The chef and culinary expert, Leslie Oster, in collaboration with research from Beasley based all food that was consumed during the *Re.Past.Malaga* on the archaeological evidence found on the island and research into what those who lived on Malaga would have prepared and consumed in their day to day lives.³⁶ Participants of the meal on Malaga collectively shared food as almost all courses were served "family-style," that is, not individually portioned, and while eating the delicious food actively discussed how it tasted and what its origins were; in essence, sharing a communal meal to remember and reflect on those whose lives we were stepping into for a moment.

This moment, as well as much of the performative dinner, can be understood through the work of Joseph Roach and his conception of surrogation, which Roach defines a process that "does not begin or end but continues as actual or perceived vacancies occur in the network of relations that constitute that social fabric. Into the cavities created by loss through death or other forms of departure...survivors attempt to fit satisfactory alternatives."³⁷ Despite the fact that many participants of *Re.Past.Malaga* did not have a connection to the island or its evicted residents, in the moment that we shared food, we were acting as surrogates for those whose lives we were commemorating. The purpose of food within *Re.Past.Malaga* acted as an agent of both performance and remembrance, allowing participants to tactilely engage with through consuming food, actively feeding the collective memory of Malaga.

While the *Re.Past.Malaga* was centered on food, the specters of performance and memory permeated the formal aspects of the event. After drinks and chowder were served and the first song concluded, the Hon. Craig Hickman, a Maine State Representative, stood at the lectern to begin the proceedings.³⁸ Hickman spoke about how and why we were gathered, and read from the memorial section program. What struck me from this welcome were the words that were printed in the

³⁵ Ibid., 2.

³⁶ Beasley, *Re.Past.Malaga* program, 6; "Recipe: easy salmon and salt cod chowder," *Portland Press Herald*, July 22, 2018, accessed November 15, 2018, www.pressherald.com/2018/07/22/recipe-easy-salmon-and-salt-cod-chowder/.

³⁷ Joseph Roach, *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996,) 2.

³⁸ I know of Craig through my work at Theater at Monmouth, where he served on the Board, but on the day of the *Re.Past.Malaga* he was recovering from a serious burn injuries from the day before, making it seem like a miracle that he was present with us at all.

program and spoken by Hickman at the end of this welcome, which directly related to the centrality of memorialization and Malaga:

Memorials focus our memories, today we, collectively participate in a memorial for the people of Malaga.

Memorials are not merely celebrations; they are also sites where melancholy settles, pain persists, and trauma is performed.

Individuals must embrace pain, suffering, and death to move forward. -Maya Lin

We assemble, we assemble to acknowledge the true stories and to disrupt the myths.

By assembling we memorialize.

We will call out their names, we will hear narratives, we will eat food.

We will remember, we will repast.

Feasting in the name of our ancestors; we will pour libation.³⁹

Beasley, through Hickman, raised the stakes of *Re.Past.Malaga* and made the connections between performance, consumption, and collective memory for Malaga. *Re.Past.Malaga* gathered an assortment of people to remember a small community wiped off the map of Maine, left behind in the collective memory of a state that only recognized the horrific event almost a century after it occurred. The act of memorialization, for me, mixed the personal and the professional. I sat between my mother and a descendant of one of the families evicted from Malaga considering what it means to memorialize a group of people I had never met, whose story I did not hear for systemic purposes, but as a scholar of performance and memory, it is this tension that makes *Re.Past.Malaga* an intriguing example of what it means to collectively remember a group whose story was purposefully obfuscated.

After the welcome, *Re.Past.Malaga* continued with the passing out of the appetizer of salmon and cod chowder and a reading from one of the high school performers, who told the assembled the story of one of the Malaga residents, Eliza Griffin, a story of an industrious woman that stood in sharp contrast to the stories that were told of Malaga residents leading up to and for years after their forced removal from the island.⁴⁰ From this singular story, the performance moved to its most participatory moment: the reading out of the names of the residents of the island. The participants of *Re.Past.Malaga* were asked by Hickman to open their programs and have each person seated at the two tables read one of the names out loud, going in turn down the list until every person who resided on Malaga at the time of the eviction in 1912's name had been called.

³⁹ Beasley, *Re.Past.Malaga* program, 9.

⁴⁰ McMahon, "The Use of Material Culture and Recovering Black Maine," 102.

I mark this as the most participatory performative moment of *Re.Past.Malaga* for two key reasons. The first is that the calling, or hailing of names, is inherently a performative utterance, as theorized by Judith Butler in *Bodies That Matter*.⁴¹ By asking participants to take the time to not only read the name but to speak it out loud, Beasley, through the instruction by Hickman, created a moment where each individual participant felt a brief moment of connection with a Malaga resident. The naming of each individual by a participant in *Re.Past.Malaga* took on the cadence of a ritual, as Connerton opined, asking the collective to reflect on each name read aloud, waiting in suspension until it is their turn to read from the list, creating linkages between past and present with a list of names and a performative utterance.⁴²

This calling of the names also played a crucial second role in *Re.Past.Malaga* in that it created a slippage in time where the 47 participants of the meal and the others assembled to help could collectively remember the residents of Malaga, not as an abstraction, but rather as real individuals. The names were grouped by families that lived on the island and reading through the list as participants were reading names aloud it became increasingly clear, to me at least, how a small community like this could have functioned on this small island, how relationships formed, how truly unjust it was that they were removed from this island.⁴³ I read the name that fell to me, "Marks, James Henry," as loudly and clearly as I could. His name was among what was clearly the rest of his family in the list, and from the woman who sat next to me at *Re.Past.Malaga* we as a collective group learned that the next name on the list, "Marks, William Allen (Willie)," was the baby of this particular family, which was the family sent to the Maine School for the Feeble-Minded upon eviction from Malaga.⁴⁴ Willie would live his entire life there.

In that moment and in the rest of *Re.Past.Malaga*, the group gathered on Malaga were collectively participating in memorializing a set of individuals that had been seemingly forgotten by history. The rest of the performance unfolded with song, poetry, and the sharing of memories from both descendants and those involved with unraveling the history of Malaga almost 100 years after the removal. We shared food that connected past and present, engaging in what Schneider articulated in her study of reenactment as the promise of "the act of revolving, or turning, or pivoting off a linear track, [which] may not be 'merely' nostalgic, if

⁴¹ Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 122-4.

⁴² Connerton, *How Societies Remember*, 58-59. The act of calling of names as a performative act of indexing has been discussed for other moments of public commemoration, in particular the NAMES Project AIDS Quilt, see Peter S. Hawkins, "Naming Names: The Art of Memory and the NAMES Project AIDS Quilt," *Critical Inquiry* 19, no. 4 (1993): 752-79.

⁴³ Beasley, *Re.Past.Malaga* program, 5.

⁴⁴ McMahon, "The Use of Material Culture and Recovering Black Maine," 100.

nostalgia implies a melancholic attachment to loss and an assumed impossibility of return.⁴⁵ *Re.Past.Malaga* held this implied sense of nostalgia, to be sure, but the act of creating slippages in time fostered a moment for those assembled to collectively remember those forcibly removed from Malaga, and for one afternoon bringing life back to a small island on the coast of Maine.

The last performative act of *Re.Past.Malaga* was one of removal. The participants sat at the tables and watched the high school students disassemble the small house we had all walked through to enter the gathering space, again with action set to song. On instructions from Hickman, we were asked to remove the chairs we sat on and bring them to the shell lined shore, acting as stagehands in clearing the gathering space for its next action. The performance was over and as we exited, we aided in cleaning up the imprint that we had left for the afternoon. Reflecting back on this moment, it was striking to watch these students take apart this house, particularly in the wake of the rest of the moments of *Re.Past.Malaga*. As the students physically removed what could be considered a temporary memorial to the everyday lives of the people of Malaga, I considered how these same students had read aloud, in the style of Julia Bouwsma's poem, the list of archaeological objects that were found on the island.⁴⁶ All that was left of Malaga's residents were fragments of a life, and even as we as a collective had taken the time and energy to remember them, it too was ending, as all performances do.

Reflecting back on *Re.Past.Malaga* as an act of collective, performative remembering, it is intriguing to consider the potentials and possible liabilities for performance as a mechanism of collective memory. This potentiality of performance as a means of how and why we remember is what drives my research, but the experience of *Re.Past.Malaga* called into question the limits of what a performance can do for cases like Malaga. I was lucky to attend the performative meal, but an act like this is inherently inaccessible to the larger public due to financial constraints and the environmental safety of the island, which is under the protection of the Maine Coast Heritage Trust.⁴⁷ The act of remembering Malaga prompted further research on my part into its history and telling others in my life of Malaga, all of whom had also never heard of it. Even articles like this can only capture my own experience of *Re.Past.Malaga*, which was colored by my deep connection to the state of Maine and my research interests. *Re.Past.Malaga* was a success as an act of remembrance because of its ultimate limits; through a one-time

⁴⁵ Schneider, *Performing Remains*, 182-3.

⁴⁶ Julia Bouwsma, *Midden* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2018), 7.

⁴⁷ "Malaga Island," Maine Coast Heritage Trust, accessed December 6, 2018, <https://mcht.org/preserves/malaga-island>. Their website refers to the story of Malaga as "unfortunate," which is an interesting choice of language which I will not parse further here.

only performance on the island itself the island was able to come alive again, a small community briefly surrogated into the space.⁴⁸

Re.Past.Malaga also stands out as an intriguing example of connecting what James Young and Jeffrey Olick have separately defined as two cultural approaches to public memory: collected and collective.⁴⁹ Whereas prior to the performative meal the memory of Malaga was, for me, a set of individualized, collected memories captured in books and museum exhibits, *Re.Past.Malaga* served to manufacture and call forth a collective, societal memory of the events on Malaga, bringing new players into the space to build on preexisting knowledge to create a collective memory framework that allows for Malaga to exist beyond its geographic bounds for a moment in time. In Young's seminal book on Holocaust memorials *The Texture of Memory*, he writes: "Instead of allowing the past to rigidify in its monumental forms, we would vivify memory through the memory-work itself — whereby events, their recollection, and the role monuments play in our lives remain animate, never completed."⁵⁰ *Re.Past.Malaga* allowed for Malaga to be repopulated for one summer afternoon over a century after it was forcibly vacated to remember and celebrate those who once inhabited the island. The act of collective remembrance through performance brought the residents of Malaga, ever so briefly, into the present moment on their island over a century after their forced removal.

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⁴⁸ Roach, *Cities of the Dead*.

⁴⁹ Jeffrey K. Olick, "Collective Memory: The Two Cultures," *Sociological Theory*, 17:3 (Nov. 1999): 333-348, *JSTOR*, accessed October 25, 2018, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/370189>.

⁵⁰ James E. Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 15.

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