Critical Addresses. The Archive-in-Practice

Edited by Leora Farber and Claire Jorgensen

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Contents

Introduction

> [A]s a disputed and shifting field of objects, ideas and propositions, the archive is constantly being remade and rethought, not only by the discovery of history-laden images and materials, but also by the development of alternative forms of interpretation that reshape the old and find new meanings where outmoded or exhausted models once stood (Garb 2013:29).

Over approximately the past two decades, following what Hal Foster (2006 [2004]) identifies as the 'archival impulse in contemporary art', many visual artists and theorists have, and continue to, critically reflect on institutional and personal archives, addressing these by using its fragments or traces in ways that potentially create new forms of engagement for the construction of identities, subjectivities and agencies. *Critical Addresses. The Archive-in-Practice* brings together a collection of addresses in which authors – three of whom take a practice-led approach to writing on their own creative practice – engage with the complexities of visual archives and the multiple interplay of identities, subjectivities and positionalities that these implicate.[1]

Observing that the archive is "[c]reated as much by state organisations and institutions as by individuals and groups", Charles Merewether (2006:10) identifies the archive as "constitut[ing] a repository or ordered system of documents and records both verbal and visual that is the foundation from which history is written".[2] The volume's thematic is grounded in, and its conceptual framing draws on, the vast context of scholarly work done on the archive as a key site of inquiry in fields such as anthropology, critical theory, history and visual art.[3] Addresses in this volume add to this body of scholarly work with a specific focus on visual archives, and primarily, but not exclusively, those archives in which lens-based technologies (hereafter 'photographies') are deployed. Given the significance of political and personal forms of archiving practices in postapartheid South Africa, and the possibilities that re-examinations of these archives hold for social transformation and the realisation of justice, the volume is focused on South African and African archives, and ways in which South African artists and authors are engaging with these. Authors consider contemporary possibilities for, and practices of, addressing archives in an African context; how these possibilities might impact on how archives are collated, disseminated, accessed and received; and what implications they may have for understanding the functions, meanings and significance of archives in this context.

In this volume, the archive is not considered as a discursive form in and of itself, but rather, following Michel Foucault (2006 [1969]:28), as an "underlying structure governing thought systems and values of any given society, in relation to its own people and others". These systems govern what is said and unsaid, recorded or unrecorded, pointing to the integral and matrixial relationship between discourse and power realised through the archive and "made possible through the nature of discursive practice and spaces themselves" (Foucault 2006 [1969]:28).

The archive is not considered as an inert repository for historical information (Stoler 2002:86) – a benign, transparent record, whose stable, definitive and static meaning is recounted from a position of 'neutrality' – but as aligned with dynamic, fluid processes of knowledge production, -systems and -formations. These processes may be described as rhizomatic as they are not organised around a singular, arborescent thread. Following the rhizome's heterogeneous system of propagation, the archive is seen to encompass multiple "directions in motion" (Deleuze & Guattari 1988:21). The term 'archive' as it is used in this volume therefore comprises a range of multi-faceted, subtly nuanced, often disputed, differentiated yet interwoven definitions, conceptualisations and meanings, within each of which alliances and connectivities may be discerned. Each point of identification connects to a range of other points and their offshoots that, like the rhizome's bulb and tuber, coalesce at nodes. At these intersections, further connections emerge to establish a decentred, non-hierarchical, complex matrix composed of "found yet constructed … public yet private" (Foster 2006:145) traces and fragments of memory, fiction and fact – at once painfully visible and intimate, or as invisible, perhaps unspoken, testimonies caught in a moment of emergence.

Within this already complex archival matrix, further interconnectivities between a range of addresses that emerge from multiple positionalities unfold in a similarly rhizomatic manner. Albeit in different ways, authors in this volume consider the archive as a repository of traces, which have the potential to be destabilised, thus signaling the construction at work in any single account of an historical narrative and remembrance. Through their addresses, they reveal that the processes of making, unmaking and remaking that Tamar Garb (2013:29) refers to can be effected through multiple exchanges between the subjectivities of the writer/visual or archival practitioner and the specters, ghosts and shadows of those subjectivities that haunt the archive itself.

The potential for creative, potentially subversive, intervention is intrinsic to understandings and constructions of the institutional archive. As Ulrich Baer and Shelley Rice (2011) note, while the archive is traditionally considered as a solid foundation for scholarly work, embedded within its structure is the potential for 'countering' the underpinning ideologies or subjective positions that it represents. Use of the term 'countering', however, implies that there is a definable institutive or authoritative archive that can be 'countered' and is based on the premise that the archive is a static repository, subject to being acted upon (subverted, deconstructed, challenged or overthrown) – neither of which are consistently the case. Embedded within its structure is the potential for multiple forms of addresses: countering the archive could be a relational process, as a theorist and/or practitioner may develop an understanding of, or sensitivity towards, the (haunted) presence of positionalities and subjectivities embedded within it, and may actively address these while being open to their reciprocal address. Therefore, in this volume, while several authors refer to the concept of a counter-archive, the concept is understood to encompass a range of more nuanced terms such as "reinventing" (Merewether 2006:10); "rethinking, reshaping, remaking" (Garb 2013:29); "refiguring" (Hamilton, Harris, Taylor, Pickover, Reid & Saleh 2002; Garb 2013); "revisioning, repurposing" (Kashmere 2010), and as involving the use of mechanisms such

as "empathic unsettlement" (LaCapra 2001) and "intimate exposures" (Bystrom & Nuttall 2013). This broad range of terminology offers insights into how the visual archive may be intervened with in ways that address the implicit codes and meanings that construct dominant or normative readings of 'official' archives. Such addresses present alternatives to, and/or bring the political/ideological underpinnings and power relations embedded in the archive into sharp focus.

In this volume, 'the archive' is thus considered as a multifaceted site of address through which identities and subjectivities are activated, constructed and contested. Our use of the term 'addresses' in the title connotes processes of exchange: acts of speaking of, to and 'with' the archive (dealing with, attending to, focusing upon, taking up); discursive engagements with archival materials (drawing on, working through, reading into, intervening with, reacting to, reinterpreting, reframing, reconfiguring, reactivating, reanimating, re-appropriating); and referential acts (referencing, pointing to or gesturing towards). 'Positionality' (Hall 1996) is situated in relation to possible spectral subjectivities present within the archive itself, and ways in which the authors activate their own subject positions as they engage with archival material.

Yesterday is old soil, turned over (and over) again (De Jager 2016:14).

The organisation of the volume into four thematically interwoven sections is intended to encourage interaction and exchange between the writers, so as to allow for a dynamic interplay between a plurality of addresses – acknowledging that addresses are dependent on multiple, shifting subject positions within one or more speakers, and the relational interchanges between them – and the archive under discussion. Often conveying a deep sense of investment in the archival sources they address, contributors slip between personal and theoretical engagements in their exploration of how the re-examination and encountering of archives might open up new possibilities for the construction of identities, subjectivities and agencies.

Maureen de Jager's poignant chapter, *Proposal for THE BOOK OF HOLES,* provides an opening into the interchanges to follow. De Jager (2016) uses the seemingly random holes made in the pages of British records on the South African War (1899–1902) as an incisive metaphor for holes found "in history, in memory, in archival reserves, in the very language through which the traumas of the past are articulated". The 172 colour photographs that she discusses, which document the holes made in the pages of the historical documents, track the path of the treasury tag cord that penetrates these holes, which, in turn, become metaphoric sites of (violent) wounding. While the tag ostensibly sutures or binds the pages of the historical documents together, supposedly to create a seamless historical narrative, it also ruptures the materiality of the page, thereby calling attention to the omissions, silences and empty spaces within the archive – the holes within the incompleteness of the whole.

De Jager's use of the holes found in the documents she investigates, as a metaphor of the gaps, slippages, exclusions, inconsistencies and inaccuracies in the archive itself, forms an underpinning thread that can be traced throughout this volume. Although the volume is widely scoped, covering a broad range of contemporary addresses and multiple archival forms, it is not intended to provide a 'snapshot' of either. As such, it does not attempt to 'fill the holes' within discourses on visual archives, but rather, in highlighting a diversity of archival practices, brings into view fragmented glimpses of archival addresses, primarily those currently being

undertaken by South African authors and practitioners. These, in turn, become partial points of identification that connect to a range of other points and their offshoots within a context beyond their immediacy.

The four sub-themes underpinning the volume may be likened to the treasury tag – itself a cord woven together from multiple strands – that sets a multiplicity of directions in motion, loosely binding interconnecting thoughts, memories and traces, while, to use Heidi Grunebaum's term (2015), further 'unseaming' the already fractured archival fabric. Within the politically and socially non-neutral discursive surface of the archive, the hole appears as the eruption of a fragment that allows for moments visibility and invisibility; a crack that allows the light in (Harris 2007:xi).

Under the rubric of the first thematic, *The (im)materiality of the archive*, Maureen de Jager, Say Burgin and Kent Williams consider the archive's immaterial aspects – spectralities that lie in its holes: in its palpable absences; unspoken testimonies, dislocated voices and lost narratives. Addresses grouped under the second thematic, *Public intimacies, personal exposures*, speak to particular forms of "intimate exposures" – a term used by Kerry Bystrom and Sarah Nuttall (2013:310) to describe "a set of diverse acts that involve revealing inner aspects and places of the self and self-making". These may be acts of personal self-exposure, or acts that place the private lives of others in the public realm. In this section, Karin Preller and Ernst van der Wal prise open the meanings and possibilities of making private histories public through the use of personal photographic archives. Both authors raise pertinent questions as to what the implications of exposing private recollections to a public space might be and how individual histories, identities and subjectivities can reflect broader collectives in which the personal may reflect the political.

In addresses grouped under the third section, entitled *Photographies, complicities and possibilities*, Heidi Grunebaum, Shashi Cullinan Cook, Annemi Conradie and Alexander Opper explore how personal narratives and histories portrayed through use of private archives, such as travel photographs or contemporary reworkings of the colonial ethnographic archive, may prompt understandings of tacit complicities with the political positions and power-relations embedded in the archive itself, and how personal complicities become enfolded into both the private and public realms. These addresses also foreground photographies' role in constructing identities and subjectivities in colonial and contemporary contexts, highlighting how the presence of the camera lens impacts on ways in which those imaged are represented and positioned. Opper specifically analyses photographies' potential to be both complicit with, and resistant to, 'official' archives.

In the final section, entitled *Affective encounters*, Yvette Greslé and Ruth Lipschitz offer deeply personal readings of their intimate encounters with the apartheid archive, with Greslé doing so through her imagined engagement with the contents of Penny Siopis's exhibition entitled *Three Essays on Shame* (2005), staged at the Freud Museum, London. Both authors provide a compellingly empathetic collision of visual description, personal imagination and intellection theorisation. Retrospectively recounting their encounters in a powerfully evocative, embodied manner, they not only convey their own, visceral, bodily responses to the apartheid archive, but potentially evoke similarly affective responses in the reader. Their disquieting textual and bodily testimonies thus bear witness to silences within the apartheid archives, whether these be through absences in historical records or in events of extreme brutality and trauma that register the unspeakable.

Same Mdluli's chapter, entitled *Curating the archive: rhythms of memory and justice in the work of Michelle Monareng*, returns literally and metaphorically to notion of the hole, drawing on the act of physically

digging into the ground as a metaphor for the unearthing of archives that have been "silenced and buried" (Merewether 2006:16). In Mdluli's address, these archives are those of South African artist Michelle Monareng's grandfather, which the artist uses in her video installation *Removal to Radium* (2013) to question issues of social justice for dispossession of the land and its restitution.

Critical Addresses. The Archive-in-Practice begins with and repeatedly returns to the notion of holes: holes in paper, holes in memories, holes in testimonials. The mechanisms used in the creation of historical archives – burying, hiding, sublimating, covering – are undone by rewinding these actions – opening, exposing, revealing, uncovering and recovering. Digging into the earth, like puncturing paper, displaces that which is removed, allowing for past invisibilities to become partially visible in the present. Similarly, archival addresses in this volume allow for processes of anamnesis: 'working through' the past from within the present; the treasury tag of its sub-themes rhizomatically rewinds, unfolds and folds in on itself; the end becomes the beginning in a non-linear cycle of inconclusiveness. Working with and through holes, the treasury tag tenuously links the scattered and incomplete remains of the past to the materiality of the present. And, it is precisely those imperfections of the past that point to the possibility of a hopeful future.

Leora Farber and Claire Jorgensen

Endnotes

1 The essays in this volume build on and, in instances, are extensions of, the papers, panel discussions and artists' presentations, comprising the platform entitled *Archival addresses: photographies, practices, positionalities*, convened by the Visual Identities in Art and Design Research Centre (VIAD) from 18 to 20 March 2015. Presenters and participants engaged with complexities of contemporary archival practices, and how these play out using lens-based and new media technologies. The platform was accompanied by the *Past Imperfect // Future Present* exhibition (2015, FADA Gallery, Johannesburg). These thematics are further explored in the special edition entitled Archival addresses: photographies, practices, positionalities. *Critical Arts 29*(S1).

2 By extension, the term 'archive' may refer to:
- A set of material documents housed in physical structures or on digital platforms;
- The architectural structure within which these material documents are housed – both of which implicate issues of accessibility, power and control; and
- The 'figurative archive' which, according to Ann Laura Stoler (2002:87), 'may serve as a strong metaphor for any corpus of selective forgettings and collections – and ... for the seductions and longings that such quests, accumulations and passions for the primary, originary and untouched entail.'

3 See, for instance, Foucault 2006 [1969]; Agamben 2006 [1989]; Merewether 2006. Academics, archivists and curators Carolyn Hamilton, Verne Harris, Jane Taylor (2002); Keith Dietrich and Andrew Bank (2008); Michael Godby (2013a, 2013b); and artists such as Penny Siopis have made significant contributions to furthering archival discourses in a South African context.

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The (im)materiality of the archive

Proposal for THE BOOK OF HOLES

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Abstract

The following chapter emerged out of a practice-based research encounter with a set of documents at the UK National Archives relating to the South African War – record WO 32/8061. Framed as a proposal for an 'artefact' and an 'essay' (which may or may not exist), the chapter points outside itself to another reality. As such, it thematises its own incompletion, as well as its entanglement within a context beyond its immediacy. These concerns are imperative to the chapter's focus, as it is essentially a meditation on 'holes' – in history, in memory, in archival reserves, in the very language through which the traumas of the past are articulated. Working with and through these lacunae – particularly as they pertain to the history of the South African War concentration camps – the chapter attempts to perform its own instability, irresolution and fracture. In the process, an argument is staged that interrupts itself repeatedly: personal interjections and ruminations (from 'the author') intercede in the reasoned coherence of 'the discussion', such that the line between 'objective researcher' and 'invested narrator' becomes blurred. In this respect, the chapter intimates that coming to terms with the past is not a matter of grappling objectively with unassailable truths (as if these were available in the first place). Rather, it entails a self-reflexive process that traces the 'holes in history' as meaningful aporias – as intervals in signification, at the limit-point of the sayable, wherein are held the "aspects of historical experience that are subjective, submerged, even silent" (Hirsch & Spitzer 2010:401).


WAR OFFICE

Part A: 'Artefact'

The reader encounters the following **artefact**: a neutral, somewhat nondescript solander box, in dark olive-green (a colour associated with official papers). It measures approximately 22cm (height) x 18cm (width) x 10cm (depth). There is nothing on the outside of the box to betray the contents, except a number embossed on the spine: WO 32/8061.

Opening the solander box (the lid of which pages to the left, like the cover of a book), the reader sees a tray with two compartments: on the left is a pair of neatly folded, white cotton gloves; on the right is a custom-made paper knife in polished steel. The blade of the paper knife is clean and sharp, but subtle detailing on the handle evokes associations of a bygone era. By lifting out the shallow tray, the reader gains access to the book beneath it. The book is in portrait format, roughly the dimensions of the solander box and about 6cm thick. It is hardcover with square binding, and clad in tawny brown book cloth. On the front, embossed in black in Gill Sans, is the full title:

WO 32/8061
[THE BOOK OF HOLES]

Putting on the cotton gloves and lifting out the book, the reader begins to page. At this stage she notices that many of the pages are uncut along the fore-edge: to access the contents she will need to take up the paper knife, insert the blade into each of these folded seams and rip. She will encounter slight resistance – the book is printed on 215gsm cotton paper – and will hear the unmistakable rasp of tearing paper. The act will need to be repeated at irregular intervals. Page … tear and page … tear and page … page … page … tear and page … and so on.

In this manner, with cotton gloves donned and paper knife slicing, the reader discloses the innards of the book: 172 sequential colour photographs, which document the holes indiscriminately made in a pile of historical documents (ostensibly for the purposes of binding them together). More specifically, the photographs track the path of a treasury tag feeding into these haphazard holes and the proximate sites of wounding. For example, they document where the woven cord has snagged and caught on the paper, rupturing the edges of a too-snug hole and meandering into the surrounds (like a river bursting its banks).

At times, the photographs include oblique and partial references to a larger context, via bits of text, scribbled notes and letterheads. A few pages in, the reader sees a British War Office crest, embossed as a letterhead on black-bordered stationery. Later she sees the handwritten words "South Africa" and then a typewritten, underlined heading: "Refugee Camps". Further along, a plethora of pages declare themselves "SECRET" or "CONFIDENTIAL" – but the photographs divulge nothing further, the contents of the communiqués having been excluded by the crop frame.

LEFT: Figure 1. Maureen de Jager, *Record WO 32/8061 (2a)* detail, 2016 | Digital photograph | 30.48 x 40.64 cm | Courtesy the author

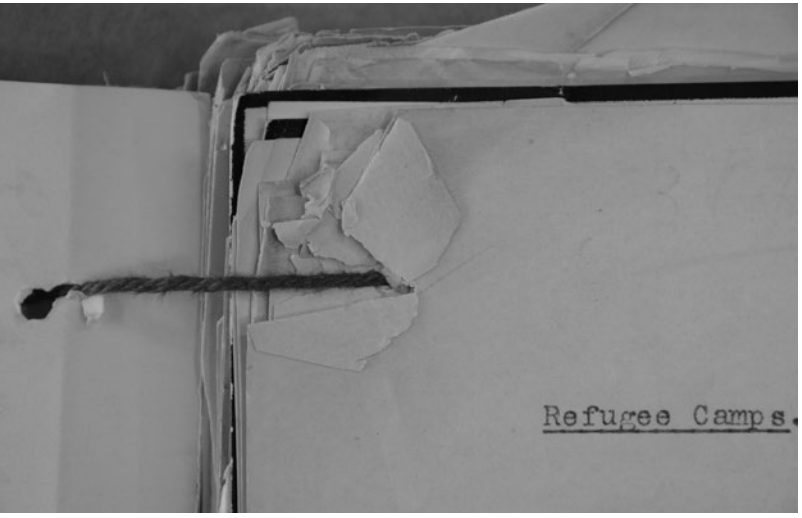
At the back of the book is the colophon, which, inter alia, references the source of the photographs as follows:

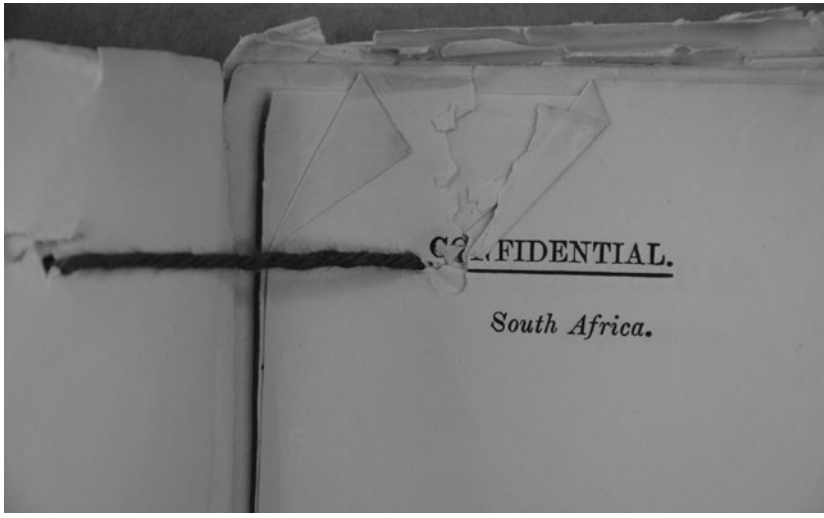
> Source:
> The National Archives of the UK (TNA), record WO 32/8061.
> Photographed by the artist: 8 October 2015.

Citable Reference	Description	Start date	End date
WO 32/8061	War Office and successors: Registered Files (General Series). | OVERSEAS: South Africa (Code 0(AU)): Boer War: Reports, accounts and recommendations concerning concentration (refugee) camps. | WO32/8059-8064 were attached when in use at the War Office. Held by: The National Archives	01/01/1901	31/12/1901

(http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/)

To the attentive reader, this information would shed light on the number in the title (WO 32/8061), situating **the artefact** in relation to archival practices as well as a particular history. In turn, it might deepen a reading of the holes as sites of wounding, and the tearing of the uncut pages as inherently violent. The white cotton gloves might acquire more sinister connotations – evoking care and preservation on the one hand, but also the threat of contamination (are they worn to protect the book or to protect the wearer?). The paper knife might distinguish itself more acutely as a weapon.





ABOVE: Figure 2. Maureen de Jager, *Record WO 32/8061 (2c)* detail, 2016 | Digital photograph | 30.48 x 40.64 cm | Courtesy the author

Part B: 'Essay'

Alongside **the artefact** (metaphorically rather than literally), the readers encounter **the essay**, understood as a "short piece of writing" but also as an "attempt or effort"; a "weighing up" (from the Late Latin *exagium*) but also, importantly, an "*experiment*" (Google Dictionary). In particular, **the essay** is an endeavour to meditate, experimentally, on the phenomenon of 'holes', proffering an argument that runs through and across and under the concerns of the artefact.

The essay is not an *explication* of **the artefact** (which would imply that the mute artefact 'comes first' and depends on textual explanation to give it meaning). Rather, **the essay** presents itself as a separate but overlapping exploration which speaks to, and draws from, **the artefact's** significance reciprocally, criss-crossing its path unpredictably.

> *(Indeed, the reader could encounter **the essay** and **the artefact** in any order. The designation 'Part A' and 'Part B' implies neither precedence nor pre-eminence.)*

Part B. THE BOOK OF HOLES (**the essay**) gestures obliquely to another oblique text: *The book of margins* by French Jewish poet and philosopher, Edmond Jabès. First published in two parts in 1975 and 1984, *The book of margins* is, in many ways, an older, distant cousin to THE BOOK OF HOLES (they are like unacquainted relatives meeting serendipitously, only to find themselves finishing each other's sentences).

These are Jabès's (1993:65) words:

> All that finally remains of the completed book is a gaping hole,
> the same dark hole that is covered by the sleeper's lids.

Mark C Taylor (1993:ix–x) notes that Jabès is preoccupied with the "problem of language", which he sees as irrevocably marked by silence, absence and loss in the face of unspeakable tragedy. In response to Theodore Adorno's dictum that, after Auschwitz, we can no longer write poetry, Jabès (cited in Taylor 1993:ix–x) insists: "after Auschwitz we *must* write poetry but with wounded words". In *The book of margins*, allusions to reading/writing as wounded (and wound*ing*) abound. For Jabès (1993:59), writing entails "breaking a word, letting words play in the breakage of a word". Elsewhere he observes, "Reading a text involves several degrees of violence; this is sufficient warning that there is danger in the house" (Jabès 1993:42).

> *(A reader encountering this quote having experienced **the artefact** might recall the implicit violence of tearing uncut pages – an action now glimpsed, retrospectively, through the keyhole of Jabès' warning. A reader yet to see **the artefact** might experience this confluence later.*
>
> *Either way, there is "danger in the house".)*

"Silence is the dried blood of the wound", says Jabès (1993:67).

Using Jabès as a starting point (or, more specifically, using the uncanny and serendipitous alignment between *The book of margins* and THE BOOK OF HOLES as a starting point), **the essay** meditates on silence (and silencing), wounds (and wounding) in relation to the witnessing of trauma, archival practices and historiography. Where *The book of margins* references, as its touchstone, the horror of Auschwitz, THE BOOK OF HOLES concerns itself primarily with an earlier, arguably less infamous tragedy – the South African War of 1899–1902 (otherwise known as the 'Anglo-Boer War' or simply 'Boer War' – as cited in the UK National Archives reference above).

At the heart of both – Auschwitz and the South African War – lies the distressing fact of lives senselessly lost in concentration camps. But this is also where the correlation ends, for the concentration camps of the South African War were not intentionally genocidal. (To what extent they were *unintentionally* genocidal is a matter of debate.)

The essay approaches its topic through the lens of "camp mythology": a term coined by Elizabeth van Heyningen (2013:1–22) to denote how particular, skewed conceptions of the South African War concentration camps came to be accepted as 'fact'. As Van Heyningen (2013:8) notes, the mythology of the camps was prefaced on exclusion – "of men, of blacks and of dissidents". In effect, it ratified a history full of holes and unacknowledged silences ("the dried blood of the wound").

In addressing itself to these absences, **the essay** seeks not to fill them (via a problematic revisionism), but to interrogate more broadly the link between history writing and mythology, drawing on Roland Barthes's (1972:143) conception of myth:

> Myth does not deny things, on the contrary, its function is to talk about them; simply, it purifies them, it makes them innocent, it gives them a natural and eternal justification, it gives them a clarity which is not that of an explanation but that of a statement of fact.

This type of 'flattening' is designed precisely to smooth over omissions and exclusions, presenting a version of events that is seamless, streamlined, self-evident and coherent. It is history "whitewashed", to cite Emily Jacir and Susan Buck-Morss (2011:35), cleansed "of that which is truly terrifying: ambiguity".

Holes in History (Testimony)

In 'weighing up' the holes in history (in *this* history, specifically), **the essay** must wrestle with the difficulty of proffering meaningful commentary: how does one approach the topic of a past so fraught and contested? For it is also a history full of *pain*, mythologised to perpetuate pain. Almost since their inception, there have been numerous attempts to 'tell the truth' of the South African War concentration camps, successively ballasting and unmooring this 'history'.

> *At this point, as 'author', I am compelled to declare a vested interest: a great-grandmother who survived the Winburg Concentration Camp (but buried four of her children there). So it is 'my' past too, an uncomfortable fact for an Anglicised Afrikaner.*

> *Four decades after the war, my great-grandmother wrote a memoir recounting her capture and internment – a personal narrative addressed to her surviving children. I searched her memoir for clues about my heritage, and found a private voice of suffering couched in a rhetoric of uncanny familiarity: her story is at once heartbreakingly sincere and tellingly generic, covering the same old ground as a plethora of women's testimonies ("the loss of home, the maltreatment of livestock, the brutality of British troops, the heartlessness of the camp staff, the discomfort of camp life, the poor quality of meat, the deaths of the children", and so forth (Van Heyningen 2013:15–16)). Although it moved me to tears, I am obliged to concede that my great-grandmother's memoir is quite* ***un****exceptional (but even to admit this seems like some sort of betrayal).*

Van Heyningen (2013:15) notes that the use of women's testimonies "as evidence for the trauma of the camps" was introduced by pro-Boer social reformer Emily Hobhouse, who encouraged Boer women "to tell their own stories" for the benefit of English audiences. Hobhouse insisted that these testimonies "told the unvarnished truth", implicitly espousing the view that testimony signals "a privileged mode of access to the past" (Grace 2012:108). According to this view, as summarised by Ernst van Alphen (1997:25),

> Best of all is the diary, because the writing of the diary all but coincides with the events of which testimony is given. The memoir ranks a good second in the hierarchy of genres. Although it was not written at the time of the event, and has therefore lost some of the diary's temporal connectedness, it is nevertheless direct in that it is told by someone who witnessed the events 'in person'. The fact that witness and narrator are identical provides trustworthiness and authenticity to the testimony.

Van Alphen (1997:25) discredits this naïve apprehension, arguing that "the experience of events is not 'naked' or factual at all; it cannot, in fact, be separated from the act of interpretation". In other words, "the experience of history depends on cultural and narrative frames", which inevitably mediate what and how the witness sees and remembers. Annie Coombes (2003:8) similarly suggests that, "all memory is unavoidably both borne out of individual subjective experience and shaped by collective consciousness and shared social processes".

Seen in this light, all testimonies are necessarily selective and exclusionary. This is particularly the case where trauma impedes memory; where, as Joan Gibbons (2007:74) suggests, "the magnitude of extreme trauma is so great that it can only ever be partially told". Dominick LaCapra (2004:117–119) describes trauma as a "radically disorientating experience" often involving a "dissociation between cognition and affect". As such, unresolved trauma is intrinsically "aporetic": "one typically can represent numbly or with aloofness what one cannot feel, and one feels overwhelmingly what one is unable to represent". In essence, the traumatic experience is and remains elusive. Attempts to render it intelligible "through a harmonizing or fetishistic narrative", though prosaically offering closure, merely mask the holes in comprehension by means of a "retrospective 'suturing'" (LaCapra 2004:119).

> *Several theorists (following Freud) have also commented on the 'belatedness' of traumatic memory. For Gibbons (2007:74), "recall of a traumatic event may not be admitted to the consciousness until a safe period of time after its occurrence, signalling the unpreparedness of the person/s involved at the time of its occurrence and their consequent inability to integrate the experience". In this scenario, the traumatic present would register as a blind-spot on the psyche, not just unsayable but* ***unseeable****, at least initially.*

I think of my great-grandmother, holding her tongue for forty-one years before committing words to her memories (and then writing with such vivid immediacy – as if the events she describes happened yesterday).

Holes in History (Mythology)

The essay goes on to examine how camp mythology was vindicated and sustained by 'memory work': by the transmission of testimonies evincing a 'collective memory', on the one hand; and, on the other hand, by practices of public memorialisation, as a means of actively remembering (and maintaining) the mythologised past.

By the 1930s, suggests Van Heyningen (2013:19), "the mythology of the camps was so firmly established that any attempt to offer an alternative perspective or question the received wisdom was met with suspicion". At the same time, "stories of British atrocities were developed and embroidered", and "Afrikaner writing became increasingly embittered" (Van Heyningen 2013:19). Van Heyningen cites Sarah Raal's memoir, *Met die boere in die veld* (1937), as a case in point. Replete with "lurid descriptions of suffering in the camps", it galvanised readers with the contention that "ground glass and vitriol were put into the sugar" (Van Heyningen 2013:19). Denials of such atrocities "served only to fuel Afrikaner nationalist anger that former inmates of the camps should be considered liars" (Van Heyningen 2013:20).

That same decade saw "the foundational event of Afrikaner nationalism – the Great Trek of 1838" celebrated across the country (Coombes 2003:26). Festivities included elaborate reconstructions of the Trek, and culminated in the laying of the foundation stone of the Voortrekker Monument in Pretoria in December 1938: "the centrepiece of an orchestrated mass spectacle of Afrikaner unity and power" (Coombes 2003:25).

This is the 'frame' within which my great-grandmother sat down to tap her memory and write her memoir in the early 1940s. It is against this backdrop, within a milieu of heightened Afrikaner patriotism and anti-British sentiment, that she set pen to paper.

Admittedly, her memoir was not intended for public dissemination (unlike Sarah Raal's). Nor does it read as overtly embittered or embellished (no mention of ground glass and vitriol). But it seems fair to say that her writing must have been influenced by the stories and sentiments doing the rounds – indeed, that her very recollection of what had occurred must have been tainted by the "cultural and narrative frames" within which she found herself. As Van Alphen (1997:63) puts it (citing James Young): "The motives of memory are never pure."

Alongside women's testimonies, the mythology of the camps was also entrenched through visual imagery – in particular, photographs taken in the camps purporting to show starving children – and through a fixation with the numbers and names of the white dead ("as if sheer numbers and names would in themselves establish and confirm the atrocity of the camps" (Van Heyningen 2013:17)). Shortly after the war, the numbers of Boer casualties were inscribed in stone on the *Vrouemonument* (Women's Monument) in Bloemfontein: 4,177 women and 22,074 children. In the 1960s, inscriptions in stone extended to individual names, and granite memorials listing the dead were erected in most of the Boer concentration camp cemeteries.

The fact that no comparable numbers and/or granite memorials existed to account for the lives lost in the black concentration camps is incriminating and indicative, itself in keeping with a 'camp mythology' that usurped the concentration camps of the South African War as exclusive to Afrikaner history. Van Heyningen mentions a single memorial to black victims erected at Brandfort at the time of the war's centenary (1999–2002). Thinly veiled as conciliatory, even the motives of this 'gesture' seem suspect: it was intended to unite "black and white" as "common victims of Britain's brutality" shortly after the African National Congress's accession to power (Van Heyningen 2013:321–322).

What does one do with this lacuna? In early 2012, my father and I visited the site of the Winburg Concentration Camp cemetery and commemorative wall. I wanted to put myself in the landscape that my great-grandmother writes about. I wanted to feel the names, engraved in granite, of the four De Jager children buried there. We had to drive through a rubbish dump to get to the cemetery; cattle grazed amongst the gravestones, most of which had been pillaged and vandalised. It struck me that this place, this commemorative wall with its (white Afrikaner) names, was itself becoming a lacuna of sorts: a no-go zone that the present negotiates its way around. We had been advised to stay away – because the site is 'unsafe' – but we went there anyway (just after dawn). I wandered around feeling lost and uneasy, as if out-of-synch both spatially and temporally.

(It occurred to me that, despite my bloodline, I am not quite 'at home' in this history, any more than this history seems 'at home' in contemporary Winburg.)

Holes in History (Orthodoxy)

Jacir and Buck-Morss (2011:35) regard the notion of collective memory with evident suspicion. They describe a process whereby individual stories of the remembered past become collectivised, whitewashed, stripped of ambiguity, and turned into legend. When legends are "appropriated by power and fixed to objects", they solidify into orthodoxy – "setting the parameters of right belief" and policing "how the past is to be read" (Jacir & Buck-Morss 2011:35). In turn, "history enters the magic circle of political theology: right belief legitimates power, which legitimates right belief" (Jacir & Buck-Morss 2011:35).

In response, **the essay** considers how the formation of camp mythology may be seen to mimic this process: how a "founding body of stories and ideas" came to acquire an ineluctable "scared meaning" (Van Heyningen 2013:2). The orthodoxy of this mythic past was underwritten not only by popular history (folklore, poetry, music, commemoration and so forth) but also by Afrikaner *volksgeskiedenis* – a branch of scholarship supposedly wedded to 'objective-scientific' truth but in fact heavily ideological ("a history infused with Romantic notions of God-fearing, intrepid nineteenth-century pioneers, great visionary leaders and loyal followers who, despite trials and tribulations, established a 'civilized' form of government in the interior", as summarised by Albert Grundlingh (cited in Van Heyningen 2013:20)).

According to Jacir and Buck-Morss (2011:35), "Orthodox remembrance is capable of performing murder on the material world … Collective memory becomes conformism. Anyone who remembers differently is suspect".

"Doors lock from the outside", they conclude.

Holes in History (Anarchy)

On the one hand, then, **the essay** interrogates how tentative stories solidify into oppressive orthodoxy. In presenting themselves as comprehensive and self-evident, orthodox historical narratives mask the lacunae and contradictions upon which they are erected, aggressively stifling the voices of 'anyone who remembers differently'.

But on the other hand, **the essay** also investigates the counter-impulse towards erasure operative in any orthodoxy: the slow undoing of certitude; the wearing-thin of evidence; the dismantling impetus of time and forgetting.

> *(Think of memorials taken over by garbage dumps.)*

Antoinette Burton (2005:2) identifies the archive as "a site of knowledge production, an arbiter of truth, and a mechanism for shaping the narratives of history". Comprising "traces of the past collected either intentionally or haphazardly as 'evidence'" (Burton 2005:3), archives are often aligned with orthodox remembrance: "they come into being in and as history as a result of specific political, cultural, and socioeconomic pressures". As such, archives are also inevitably "documents of exclusion" (Burton 2005:6), themselves incomplete and full of holes.

But if the sanction of orthodoxy maintains the partial archive (using its powers to govern access and to destroy potentially injurious records), then the threat of its collapse is also what renders archives precarious – as ruptures in the status quo reverberate through the halls of records, and books go up in smoke. Jacir and Buck-Morss (2011:37) contend that archives survive "by chance", in a context where "disappearance is the rule":

> Annihilation is the fate of whole cities, obliterating far more of the human record than is preserved. Wars and disasters of nature are indifferent destroyers. Human intention is at work as well. Heresy, degeneracy, blasphemy, treason, disbelief – these are just some of the threats to orthodoxy that call for destruction of the human record.
>
> *I am reminded of Jabès's (1993:42) suggestions that "reading a text involves several degrees of violence". 8 October 2015 – I am seated at desk 33C in the UK National Archives Reading Room, engaged in minor violence. It is a sunny autumn day in London and dappled light falls from the slanted windows across my desk. I am taking in the smell and texture of old paper, the sound of brittle folios as I page. Even before I register what I am looking at, my body absorbs these sense impressions.*

Even left to their own devices (untouched by destructive human intention), archives necessarily gravitate towards erasure. They are temporal and unstable: as tenuous, in many ways, as memory.

But arguably it is precisely here, in their incompletion and brittleness, that archives may be seen to 'speak' – not about the timeless truths of history, but, on the contrary, about "the limits of what is thinkable and sayable" (Merewether 2006a:17). To engage with archives in this way – against the grain of the search for

presence – is to embrace a process, as artist Renée Green (2006:49) does, that involves "the probing of inbetween spaces, which can appear to be holes, aporias, absences":

> For example between what is said and what can be comprehended; between an event and its re-interpretation; … between organizing systems and their confoundation; between what is seen and what is believed; between what is heard and what is felt.

This approach would necessitate interpreting the "gaps and absences" in archives as "a form of evidence, but evidence of their own … incompleteness" (Merewether 2006b:135). In many respects, it aligns with Dori Laub's conviction (as elucidated by Hirsch & Spitzer 2010:401) that the value of testimony lies not in its historical veracity, but in what it might disclose "about the *meaning* of an event, and about the process of its recall in the present". Testimony matters (as does the archive), precisely *because of* its probable inconsistencies, factual inaccuracies and gaps.

By extension, apprehending history with and through its lacunae engenders an "enlarged notion of truth", which stresses "aspects of historical experience that are subjective, submerged, even silent" (Hirsch & Spitzer 2010:401). It breathes new life into the mythologised past – in part, by recognising history itself as unstable and "in transit" (LaCapra 2004:1). In the process, it also recognises the inadequacy of language to 'give voice' to the vicissitudes of experience, without relegating the witness to a space of either positivistic recall or interminable silence. It enables us to speak our history with wounded words.

In this sense (and in tentative conclusion), THE BOOK OF HOLES (**the essay**) aspires to model itself on the example set by Jabès (1993:106), whereby "making a book could mean exchanging the *void of writing* for *writing the void"*.

Postscript (some reflections on a methodology, after the fact)

One of the anonymous reviewers of this chapter concluded his/her report with the following provocation: "If there is a hole in something, what has happened to the bit that was taken out of that something, to make what is perceived to be a hole? In a grave, for example, what happens to the dirt that is 'displaced' by the insertion of the coffin?"

In many ways, this postscript speaks to that uncanny remainder – the displaced dirt of the grave. Like all postscripts, it directs itself to the question of leftovers, of loose ends and afterthoughts, of inelegant excess. It aspires to offer an ending-post-ending, with which to corral the wayward aspirations of imprecise ideas (no, that's *not* what I mean, the postscript implores the reader-reviewer, insistently).

That the history of the South African War is conflicted, unresolved, ambiguous and full of holes goes (largely) without saying. So what indeed *might* one say about this tragic past, beyond a banal admission of its complexity? How might one begin to (re)think and (re)write and (re)figure the war, without lapsing into the positivism it so patently resists? For the more avidly I research my subject, the more resolutely its 'truth' refuses to disclose itself (although its horror is everywhere in evidence).

Perhaps, like all traumatic pasts, this particular past is itself a displaced remainder; a mound of excavated

earth that refuses to be sublimated back into the grave. The operations of history – digging, unearthing and burying; digging, unearthing and burying again – conjure melancholic dust clouds but cannot lay the past to rest. "History … is unfinished in the sense that the future always uses its past in new ways", says historian Peter Gay (cited in Antze & Lambek 1996:xi). Yesterday is old soil, turned over (and over) again.

Taking the 'unfinished' nature of history as my starting point, my approach is to work with and through the past's inconclusiveness, rather than against it. In this respect, I draw impetus from self-confessed epistemic sceptic Alan Munslow (2010:213), who apprehends history as an elaborate confabulation, "not the past resurrected". For Munslow (2010:3-4), the past is fundamentally unknowable – indeed it "does not exist … *before* it is '(hi)storied'" – and this renders the romance of 'objective' history untenable. "We cannot be 'in touch' with the past in any way that is unmediated by historiography, language, emplotment, voice, ideology, perspective or physical and/or mental states of tiredness, ennui and so on", he insists; "there is no possibility of bringing the past back to the present" (Munslow 2010:36).

And yet, for Munslow, this state of affairs is neither distressing nor lamentable. Instead, the recognition that we construct "the-past-*as*-history" liberates one to consciously produce "the-past-*as*-history-*as*-artwork", a "fictive, self-conscious, subjective-emotional, imaginative and carefully authored expression" (Munslow 2010:viii, 127, 138). It enables a way of 'doing history' marked by "a healthy undecidability" (Munslow 2010:7), an open-endedness that is 'healthy' precisely because the 'history artwork' declares its creative licence (its holes and embellishments; its inevitable agendas). "In one sense", ventures Munslow (2010:139), "the most responsible attitude of the future historian is to acknowledge that history is always about morphing the past".

But this responsibility is not to be taken lightly. In the absence of those outmoded ballasts, "objectivity and the correspondence theory of truth" (Munslow 2010:5, 7), the history artwork is about far more than "understanding defined as comprehension"; it is also about "discernment, sympathy, empathy, and the historian's ethical choices" – qualities which Munslow deems essential if history is to be "emancipatory, liberating and socially valuable beyond the confines of empiricism and inference of likely meaning".

In short, like all artworks worth their weight, the history artwork has both the capacity and responsibility to produce an affective 'jolt', one that "does not so much reveal truth as thrust us involuntarily into a mode of critical inquiry" (Bennett 2005:11). In the process, it does not delimit thought by dictating the 'truth' of what has been; rather it entails a creative, responsible, ethically aware envisaging of the past that opens up future interpretative engagements.

In this sense, then, the history artwork always *proposes*, intimating that the perplexing task of looking back can and should redirect us forwards, towards the limitless potentialities of a history forever in the making.

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‘Evok[ing] the whole’

RE-THINKING ARCHIVAL EXCLUSIONS

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Abstract

Calling attention to ‘gaps’ within institutional archival holdings has proven to be an effective means of addressing some of the inequalities produced through archival practices and institutions. As a strategy used to assess holdings critically and to establish new archives, it has been vital to re-thinking the function and scope of archives, particularly those curated and housed by state and municipal governments. Without diminishing the usefulness of this strategy, I raise certain questions about what I see as the epistemic weaknesses it entails, including around issues of perspective, arrangement and access. To the extent that it does not leave room to interrogate how gaps are *made*, the discursive strategy of ‘the gap’ tends to re-inscribe the epistemic viewpoint that sees archives and their gaps as ‘natural’ or ‘innocent’. Moreover, without troubling larger archival structures such as cataloguing and other descriptive processes, the gap strategy may miss opportunities to democratise further the knowledge produced of, by, and through, the archive – opportunities that would, of necessity, entail both broader and deeper engagement with materials by users. Thinking through the archival context of the United Kingdom in particular, I suggest some ways to re-theorise the relationship between archives and exclusions. Drawing on ideas and examples from the work of Birmingham-based photographer, Vanley Burke and a relatively new methodology called ‘Revisiting Archive Collections’, I argue that more epistemologically rigorous strategies (than the discursive strategy of ‘the gap’) enable crucial shifts – away from questions of quantity and towards questions of the quality of archivists’ and users’ engagements with the archive.

One associated tendency of what is often referred to as the 'postmodern' archival turn of recent years (see Cook 2001; Harris 1997; Nesmith 2002) – a turn that, arguably, pivoted around the publication of Jacques Derrida's *Archive fever* in 1996 – has been the attention paid to the 'gaps' and 'silences' within collections, especially with regard to race, ethnicity and gender. The culling of papers, the discarding or intentional destruction of materials, the race and gender positioning of interviewers and interviewees – all create particular histories. Despite these inevitable exclusions and oversights, narratives may still be touted as 'official', 'normative' or 'authentic' by authoritative or state-sanctioned institutions. Indeed, it has been in part because of this growing understanding of what is lacking in the archives that many newer collections and organisations have developed to 'fill in' these gaps, often through the creation of new collections or repositories. In other words, a discourse has emerged that highlights what is lacking in the archives as a way of advocating the creation or inclusion of new materials or the creation of new repositories and collections – the discursive strategy of 'the gap'.

This strategy has been useful, for instance, for London-based archival platform, Autograph ABP, which began in 1988 with a mission to "challenge and confront the exclusion of Black photographers from the mainstream" in the context of the United Kingdom (UK) (Hylton 2008:90). As former Autograph ABP curator Richard Hylton (2008) writes, this was not a straightforward effort. In the early 2000s, when mounting pressure on arts funders to diversify their recipients made the organisation suddenly very attractive to anxious funding bodies, curators at Autograph ABP such as Hylton (2008:88) attempted to organise programmes that would "resist, as best they could, speaking for or through the prosaic language of diversity politics." They sensed a dynamic in the arts and heritage sector that Roshi Naidoo (2016:506) has described as "patterns of power relations [that] maintain the status quo through, rather than despite, policies and practices that purport to do the opposite". For Autograph ABP, inclusion and visibility were not to be sought through co-optation, but rather through confrontation.

Autograph ABP's ([sa] Who we are) Archive and Research Centre aims to "address a gap in the visual representation of Britain's cultural history and its diverse communities". Its research project *The Missing Chapter*[1] for instance, seeks especially to:

> [Re]search significant archival bodies of photographs relevant to the black experience in Britain prior to 1945 held in different national and personal collections. The selected images, many of which have not been seen before, or were inaccessible or unpublished, form *The Missing Chapter Image Portfolio*. ([sa] *The Missing Chapter*).

Autograph ABP works to preserve and curate these images across a range of exhibitions and other public-facing events. In this way, *The Missing Chapter* addresses racialised gaps within archives by excavating existing holdings and recuperating materials that do indeed exist but are underutilised or not well known. In other ways, Autograph ABP creates wholly new repositories in order to address such gaps. In another aspect of *The Missing Chapter*, Autograph ABP collaborates with UK-based activist and academic Vron Ware[2] to digitise her body of documentary photography produced in the late 1970s and early 1980s while working with the long-running anti-fascist magazine *Searchlight* (Ware 1992:24).[3] Both Ware's photographic archive and the larger *Missing Chapter* project are positioned, as Autograph ABP ([sa] Vron Ware negatives …) states on its

website, as addressing "a visual heritage that is fragmented and often dislocated." Thus, the discursive strategy of 'the gap' as highlighted by this project may be mobilised to address questions regarding what materials are or are not held within archives, as well as what materials are properly preserved, and thus usable within archives in the UK.

Indeed, Autograph ABP's work often highlights that there are multiple ways to understand archival gaps and silences. Likewise, the photographer Vanley Burke and his commentators have long situated his work against dominant representations of black peoples in the UK, particularly those of African-Caribbean descent (Bailey & Hall 1992; Beauchamp-Byrd 1997; Connell 2012; Hunter 2015; Sealy 1993). For example, perhaps his most well-known work, Burke's photography of the Handsworth area of Birmingham, "used the documentary form to articulate a political statement about making visible black images and black image-makers" (Bailey & Hall 1992:18). As Kieran Connell (2012:146) points out, Burke's determination to record black lives and to make them visible suggests that such a process of documentation is a "neutral process". And yet, as both an archivist and artist, Burke raises issues of domination and exclusions: "History is written by the victors, and I think it is very important we write some of our own history ourselves so we can't complain that it is lost" (Burke cited in Ellis-Peterson 2015:[sp]). Although Burke has a large collection of his photographs, posters, fliers and other ephemera housed at the Birmingham Central Library (UK), for many years his flat has archived the lion's share of the contents and stories he fears losing: "This whole flat and archive is part of that rewriting of history" (Burke cited in Ellis Peterson 2015:[sp]). Birmingham's Ikon Gallery recently recreated Burke's home and the contents thereof in its exhibition, *At Home with Vanley Burke* (2015), thereby spotlighting what it referred to as Burke's "vital archival impulse" (Ikon Gallery [sa] At home …). For Burke, archiving many of these objects over the past three or four decades – newspapers, fliers, menus, cassettes, masks – has been an act of resistance against those institutions who might ascribe little value or significance to them. As Burke explains in the press release for the exhibition, "History is part of a lived experience … it's those objects which might look so insignificant, so kitsch, but to a lot of people it contains so much information about how their parents lived" (Ikon Gallery [sa]).

Thus, Autograph ABP and Burke make clear that archives such as theirs work to challenge a particular aspect of racial dominance that is reproduced through ways of not-knowing – what might aptly be thought of as the 'epistemic whiteness' of the archive, or, to borrow Charles Mills's (1997:18) well-known term, "an epistemology of ignorance" within the archive. The archival practices of 'official' or 'traditional' archives, particularly within archives of the state, often exclude the lived experiences of racialised subjects, creating gaps, silences or voids. Part of the power of Ware's photographs and Burke's fliers, newspapers and paraffin lamps, then, is that they speak amidst silences; they do not allow omissions.

Certainly, the crucial archival work of both Burke and Autograph ABP cannot be understood solely in terms of addressing archival gaps. Making it clear that the histories narrated through his photography are not merely meant to challenge exclusions within dominant narratives, Burke's work is also of, and for, his subjects. According to Burke: "The photographs are very much a part of a documentation process which we as black people need to go through, and it is not an attempt to show the black community to the wider community, this is where we are, it is more importantly a record!" (Birmingham City Council [sa] The Vanley Burke archive). Thus, reliance on the discursive strategy of 'the gap' is never complete or simplistic, and indeed, references

to archival gaps very often sit alongside a sense that there are multiple ways of viewing – and of viewing the significance – of archival materials and holdings.

Yet, locating gaps in archival knowledge has had major social value and epistemic impact, especially amongst heritage and cultural workers. The discursive strategy of 'the gap' has proven vital to re-thinking the function and scope of archives, particularly those curated and housed by state and municipal governments. It has also been crucial to the establishment of alternative, or parallel, institutions such as Autograph ABP – institutions that centre on historically marginalised peoples and experiences, and which prompt reconsiderations of archival practices. Without diminishing the value of this discursive strategy, in my discussion to follow, I raise some questions about what I see as the epistemic weaknesses it entails. To the extent that it does not leave room to interrogate how gaps are *made*, the discursive strategy of 'the gap' tends to re-inscribe the epistemic viewpoint that sees archives and their gaps as 'natural' or 'innocent'. Moreover, without troubling larger archival structures such as cataloguing and other descriptive processes, this strategy may miss opportunities to democratise further the knowledge produced of, by and through the archive – opportunities that would, of necessity, entail both broader and deeper engagement with materials by users. In short, I argue that there are problems of perspective, arrangement and access that the gap strategy may not simply miss, but to which it may contribute. Thinking through the archival context of the UK in particular, I also suggest some ways to re-theorise the relationship between archives and exclusions.

In many ways, the idea of archival 'gaps' – as with other putative 'gaps' in knowledge – suggests a quantification of sorts. The strategy implies that there is a finiteness to knowledge; that if the gaps can be filled in, a 'true' body of knowledge can be realised. Read in this context, knowledge becomes something like a dam, and official or state-sanctioned archives have holes. The simple fix is to find materials that can fit those holes. The knowledge is 'out there'; it exists. It must simply be 'found'. Quantifying archival knowledge in such a way not only reifies knowledge; it leaves room for the idea that eventually, and perhaps within a relatively short period of time, all those gaps will be filled in; a smooth terrain of finite knowledge can and will be achieved. Within the discursive strategy of 'the gap', archives are seen as incomplete but capable of being completed.

The ostensible possibility of such a completion reflects a larger issue around the inability of the gap strategy to highlight the labour and intentionality that go into the making of exclusions. While the reproduction of inequalities is discussed as a significant *effect* of archival gaps, the very creation of the gaps often goes without interrogation. Instead, the gaps may be seen as a 'simple' or even 'innocent' by-product of archival practices. However, what Elaine Swan (2010:478) writes about ignoring – that it "takes labor. In fact, it takes resources, skill, techniques, argument, and justification" – also applies to archival exclusions. A case in point, is the confession by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (UK) in 2011 that an archive of over 2 000 boxes relating to 37 former British colonies was held, unbeknownst to the public, in Hanslope Park, the repository for British colonial papers. Among other acts of colonial violence, the files reveal British torture of participants in the Mau Mau rebellion in Kenya; plans made in the early 1940s to test poisonous gas in present-day Botswana; and the targeted killing of Communist rebels in colonial Malay. The labour that went into the official ignorance of this archive involved destroying incriminating documents prior to repatriating the archives, violating the UK Public Records Act, denying the existence of the archives in the face of Freedom of Information requests, and alleging that the archival materials had simply gone missing.[4]

As historian Caroline Elkins (2012:[sa]) makes clear, an official colonial record was in fact curated in order to include holes:

> For decades, the British government has crafted and affirmed its own fictions of colonial benevolence. Its officials – both at home and in far-flung colonies – intensely managed a system of document culling, destruction, and removal in the waning days of imperial rule. Anything that might 'embarrass' [her Majesty's government] was largely scrubbed, or sequestered, from the record. A colonial archive eventually made its way to Kew [where the National Archives are held]. Devoid of countless incriminating documents, it offers a particular reality about Britain's past, a past that was carefully tended long before the sun set on Britain's empire.

To configure archival knowledge on British colonies as a sort of terrain with potholes does not relate effectively the immense effort and purpose that go into the making of those potholes. Not the least happenstance, the supposed 'gaps' within Britain's colonial records were directly related to the 'fictions' it sought to assemble. While it is true that archives are assembled through inclusions and exclusions – this is the architecture of all archives, not just colonial archives – what is included in archives and what is not should not be treated as given, innocent or clear-cut. Relations of domination and power play out, in part, via knowledge construction – meaning that archival boundaries are inevitably manipulated, and often deliberately.

The gap strategy lacks the impetus needed to attend to these manipulations – both those that have created gaps and those that have 'plugged' them. So while gesturing towards what lies outside of archival boundaries highlights important issues of representation and inclusion, epistemologically speaking, the discursive strategy of 'the gap' generally also keeps existing archives and archival practices intact. Yet, the organisation, labelling and interpretive frameworks that construct collections – those papers and artefacts that *are there* – often also require challenging. Moreover, in keeping those existing practices and materials intact and unquestioned, the gap strategy in fact reproduces the dominant epistemological standpoint of the archive. If a gap merely requires a plug, there is little need to re-think the larger structure. Therefore, while what is often needed is a shift in archival practices – including the descriptive, cataloguing practices that constitute archives – the gap strategy often forsakes this more robust reconsideration of the archive.

Practitioners and theorists, using a postmodern position (see, for example, Duff & Harris 2002; Nesmith 2002; Newman 2012), widely acknowledge that the descriptions created by archivists about collections do not reflect a neutral, unattached illustration on the part of a trained professional. New methodological approaches, including for example Revisiting Archive Collections, have developed in the hope that 'bottom up' practices of community engagement and co-curation can create more multi-sensorial and democratic archives. First developed in 2005 by the Museums, Libraries, Archives Council and Collections Trust (UK), Revisiting Collections is a method that seeks to engage museum users with collections as co-participants in the curation and ownership of materials. Through various means – for instance, individual or group interaction with and comment on objects, or the development of focus groups that reflect on specific exhibits (oftentimes exhibits with which the group has a particular relationship) – Revisiting Collections involves the knowledge and perspectives of a wider public in the re-creation of library, museum and other collections. Revisiting Archive Collections grew out of this methodology, but focuses on archival holdings with a view to including users'

"information systematically into their archival descriptions and finding aids" (Collections Trust 2009:8).[5] In seeking the "systematic incorporation of user-generated contributions into catalogues" (Newman 2012:63) through both cognitive and affective strategies, Revisiting Archive Collections not only strives to 'add on' a diversity of perspectives to those crucial aspects of archive organisation (such as descriptions and finding aids), but it also de-centres the expertise and perspective of trained archivists. These methods take as their starting point the notion that the interpretive capacities of users should inform and help to constitute collections. Revisiting Collections and Revisiting Archive Collections thus highlight the *partial*, rather than *expert*, perspective of the professional staff of archives, museums and collections in ways that have transformative implications for the organisation and accessibility of materials.

Indeed, Revisiting Archive Collections is rooted in attempts to push beyond the limits of the gap strategy in ways that both de-centre the epistemological standpoint of the archive and democratise knowledge produced about archival holdings. As the Collections Trust (2009:4) writes:

> [M]any curators and archivists believed the limited content of their existing collections to be a real barrier to engagement for new and diverse audiences. They felt not enough had been collected directly from new or minority communities to reflect their own cultures, lives and experience. Revisiting Collections's starting point is that 'traditional' social and local history collections, as well as many specialist collections, hold a richness of objects, images, documents and information that reflect and reveal not only the shared concerns and experience of all humanity, but more specifically: Britain's position at the centre of world-wide empire and trade, including the trade in human beings; the centuries old diversity of our population in terms of ethnicity, culture, faith, sexuality, wealth and well being; and the international influences that have shaped our industry and culture, product design, craft skills, science, technology and the use of materials. Beyond this, the methodology recognises that many museums and archive services, both rural and urban, are located at the heart of communities whose members could bring a wealth of new understanding and expertise to the interpretation of collections.

Jon Newman's (2012) examination of the Mandeville Legacy project provides a case in point. Developed in the lead up to the London Olympics in 2012 – and still running – the Mandeville Legacy seeks, as its website attests, to highlight and historicise Buckinghamshire (in the Southeast of England) "as the birthplace of the Paralympic movement" (Mandeville Legacy [sa] About). Its 'Revisiting Collections across the South East' project involved one of "the first opportunit[ies] for a large-scale and funded take-up by record offices" of Revisiting Collections and Revisiting Archive Collections (Newman 2012:58). About ten museums and archives in the region

> worked with people with a range of physical disabilities, learning difficulties and mental health issues in looking at historic records of disability and using [Revisiting Archive Collections] to capture their responses and contributions to these records. The results are being incorporated into both online resources and exhibitions specifically for 2012 as well as into archive and museum catalogues, subject guides and other finding aids so that the projects will leave a legacy of new knowledge and understanding about the collections used (Newman 2012:57–58).

As one strategy for 'revisiting' collections, a number of institutions in the area organised focus groups of "young people and adults with a range of physical disabilities, learning difficulties and mental health issues who had been either patients or pupils at the institutions whose records were being used, or who had worked at or attended similar institutions" (Newman 2012:66). What participants shared in these sessions highlights new ways of understanding some of the archival materials. In this way, the Mandeville Legacy project shifts the interpretive impetus from one of an expertise *on* to an expertise *through*. The project's website captures the power of this shift concisely in stating that, "By working with people who in some way have direct experience of the subject material, rather than archive or museum specialists, this process brings a wealth of new understanding and expertise to the interpretation of collections" (Mandeville Legacy [sa] Revisiting collections across the South East).

Insofar as it conceives of archival problems in terms of their absences, the discursive strategy of 'the gap' leaves little room for such critical and democratic reflection on what *is* in the archive – the ways in which archival materials that are 'there' may be both a product of and productive of inequities. To the extent that it perpetuates an idea of archives as near (but not at) completion, the gap strategy obfuscates those systems, values and methods that contribute to the inaccessibility of the archive. In line with the Revisiting Archive Collections methodology, resistant practices that do not reify knowledge, do not assume archives are in the process of becoming complete, and which address larger issues of curation and access are needed.

In creating such new strategies for confronting the power relations and inequities created by archives and archival practices, I return to the ideas that Burke suggests about his own archival and artistic practices. Again, Burke's discursive deployment of the gap strategy is not exclusive of other ways of understanding archives and their exclusions and epistemological underpinnings. Burke suggests different points of emphasis in terms of how his work and archival holdings may be understood. He prompts questions about archival holdings themselves, pointing to the premise that black British peoples, for instance, are already collecting, already archiving. How one might understand the items that are being collected, what sense is made of them and who helps to create that knowledge – these are some of the questions undergirding Burke's 'archival impulse'.

Burke offers, for instance, the prism of 'the everyday' as a way to assess archives and their holdings. Burke has long situated his photography in these terms: "I made a conscious decision to shy away from the spectacular. I wanted to concentrate all my efforts on the ordinary, and hopefully let the ordinary become extraordinary" (Burke cited in Connell 2012:145). The objects of everyday life similarly constitute his archival holdings. Ordinary objects tell of the everyday life of black British peoples – both the everyday experiences of black Brummies (in the case of Burke's hometown, Birmingham) and of everyday struggle (as seen, for instance, through his photographs that document demonstrations and protests). In part, it is vital to reflect on the everyday-ness of black life in Birmingham because of the ways in which archives have generally represented racialised lives. Another key collection in Birmingham Central Library – the library that also houses Burke's collection – for instance, is that of Birmingham-based photographer, Benjamin Stone (Birmingham City Council [sa] The Benjamin Stone collection), who, in his late nineteenth-century photographic collection entitled 'Types of Races of Mankind', attempts to construct a racial typography (Connecting Histories [sa] The races of mankind). Burke's collection speaks against the epistemological standpoint of colonialism at work in Stone's photography in important ways (Courtman 1999; Myers & Grosvenor 2011).[6] Burke's collection

demonstrates that black life is not lived simply through histories of racial discrimination, and that the colonialist's gaze and knowledge need not represent the starting point of archival engagement. Furthermore, Burke's emphasis on the everyday goes beyond the tendency to frame black life as essentially about resistance. What comes through via Burke's paraffin lamps, cassette tapes, and photos of weddings, funerals and demonstrations, is a much fuller sense of life as being about pleasure, about work, about relationships. As such, they speak against the racial epistemology often set up through 'official' archives, in which the lives of black British people 'appear' largely through notions and historical documents of race and racial discrimination.

Another epistemological notion that Burke offers refers to *wholeness*. For instance, he has reflected upon the quality of knowledge produced by objects that were once a part of his exhibitions and now are within his personal holdings. His exhibition entitled *Sugar Coated Tears* held at the Wolverhampton Art Gallery (UK) in 2007 was part of a number of remembrances that marked the bicentenary of the abolition of the slave trade in Britain. For this exhibition, Burke collaborated with blacksmith Lofty Wright in order "to re-create instruments of punishment and restraint based on historical documentation", including chains, punishment collars and branding irons (Green 2008:97). Coated in a sugary substance, these objects were hung, dripping, from the ceiling.[7] In his article about Burke's motivations for collaborating on this project, scholar Andy Green emphasises a knowledge gap. From interviews with Burke, Green (2008:190) suggests that Burke:

> sought to combat what he sees as a lack of public knowledge about how the area's [the West Midlands] industrial history is entangled in dominant narratives of empire and slavery. By telling a story other than one that celebrates abolition and discounts the involvement of enslaved Africans, Burke's installation is more about 'letting the average person on the street know that Birmingham wouldn't be Birmingham if it wasn't for the slave trade'.[8]

This "lack of public knowledge" notwithstanding, Green (2008:198) again quotes Burke as he emphasises a different epistemic dynamic at play with the interactive objects in *Sugar Coated Tears*:

> Words on the one hand describe a situation, but the actual objects when you are able to touch them, to feel them, *they evoke the whole*, if you like, reality of the slave trade, how brutal it was, how barbaric it was that, you know, a metal object of this nature should be placed around someone's neck because they choose to run away from violence.

Clearly Burke's archive of ephemeral material raises questions about *how* one comes to understand and theorise race, how racial epistemologies are produced. For Burke, there is an affective dimension to learning when people encounter his exhibition. Understanding the West Midland's relationship to the slave trade is important, but the quality of that learning is also crucial. To Burke, emotionality – a sense of 'how brutal [the slave trade] was' – should be part of attempts to tackle the 'lack of public knowledge'.

In many ways, the above examples of Revisiting Archive Collections and of Burke's recreated archive in *Sugar Coated Tears* enable a shift from a quantifying way of viewing archival collections to a qualitative one. In shifting away from questions of *how much* archives hold in relation to racialised lives and living – questions

that certainly should not be done away with entirely – these examples point to questions of *how both users and archivists engage with archives*. They flag epistemological limitations within the discursive strategy of 'the gap', and gesture towards different ways that archival materials might be engaged – which, in turn, signifies different ways in which knowledge and understanding of historical worlds might be gained. Burke's archive resists not only the notion that black British lives are only archivally lived through race and the resistances forged against racial injustice, but as an archivist, he pushes against the notion that epistemologies are, can or should be solely about cognition. Burke's everyday objects – his resistant, everyday archive – points to the fact that learning is always multi-dimensional. Ways of knowing have always been formed through the cognitive *and* the affective.

Endnotes

1 *The Missing Chapter* research project locates and preserves photographic collections that document black life in Great Britain. Autograph ABP has begun to develop a programme of events, including exhibitions and "large scale image projections in public spaces", that highlights the collections "unearthed" (Autograph ABP [sa]. *The Missing Chapter*).

2 Vron Ware (1992:24) worked for *Searchlight* magazine for six years, "graduating from office girl to editor", as she recalls. Through her work for *Searchlight*, as well as her efforts with other anti-racist, feminist and anti-fascist groups, Ware photographed a movement that arose in the 1970s in opposition to the growing far-right party, the National Front – a party still in existence and which has espoused xenophobic and racist platforms historically (see Ware 1992:24–27). Ware went on to become an academic and has published ground-breaking work in the field of critical whiteness studies (see Ware (1992); Ware & Back (2001)). As an incomplete project, there seems to be little to no critical reception to Ware's photographic work. A small number of the photographs currently being digitised by Autograph ABP can be found on their website (see Autograph ABP ([sa] Vron Ware negatives …).

3 As Daniel Jones (2015), archivist for the *Searchlight* Archive at Northampton University (UK), writes, *Searchlight* magazine was founded in 1975. It grew out of an anti-fascist organisation, also called Searchlight, which was founded in 1964 and reported on far right groups in the UK. As Jones (2015:211) writes, Searchlight's success in exposing the operations of the National Front led to the creation of the monthly magazine "dedicated to monitoring and reporting on the far right".

4 See, McSmith 2011; Cobain, Bowcott & Norton-Taylor 2012; Norton-Taylor 2012; Bowcott 2012; Owen 2012.

5 See also Reed 2013.

6 In an exhibition entitled *From Negative Stereotype to Positive Image* (1993), Burke's photographic work on Birmingham was juxtaposed with that by Stonean Ernest Dychein in order to "illustrate very different photographic practices, from the imperial gaze of ethnographic 'typing' (including photographs of schools in the Caribbean) to black photo-documentary" (Myers & Grosvenor 2011:155–156).

7 See Wolverhampton Art Gallery, *Sugar Coated Tears*.

8 Green quotes Burke from an unpublished interview he held with him.

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Uncritical optimism

ARCHIVE, ACCESS AND DIALOGUE IN A NEW DEMOCRATIC SOUTH AFRICA

Kent Williams, Independent researcher

Abstract

In this chapter, I explore the state of postapartheid archiving practices in South Africa, with reference to the principles of access and dialogue. With a specific focus on lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transgender, intersex, queer (LGBTI+) visual activist Zanele Muholi's contribution to the Gay and Lesbian Memory in Action (GALA) archive, I discuss whether – as suggested in the *State of the archives: an analysis of South Africa's national archival system* (Archival Platform 2014:ii) – "Apartheid-era patterns of archival use and accessibility have proved resilient [and] archives remain the domain of elites". I propose that during South Africa's transition into democracy in 1994 – a time when new archival legislation was being realised – there was a lack of criticality directed towards the formation of state practices that would challenge apartheid master narratives sufficiently. I enquire into the silencing effects that the new democratic South Africa's discourse of 'uncritical optimism' has had on reversing tangibly the experiences of communities marginalised by the apartheid government. By contrast, in spite of inadequate state support, GALA, together with visual activists such as Muholi, has succeeded in making marginalised voices relevant, which is one of the core objectives of the National Archives and Record Service of South Africa Act (Act No. 43 of 1996). The partnership between GALA and Muholi serves as a potent example of the manner in which visual artists and archivists can allow for an engagement with the immateriality of the archive to create (curate) a space in which social transformation and dialogue are realised – in this particular case, it is primarily the historical marginalisation of LGBTI+ communities in South Africa that is confronted. In this chapter, I use the collaboration between Muholi and GALA as an example of the power of the archive in realising transformation and the role that visual artists can play in furthering this potential. I introduce Rocky Williams's (2003:280) notion of "a [reconstitution] of the questions" as a core concept, with the view to developing this concept here and in future publications. Considering issues of access and expanding on that of dialogue, I propose that ways of realising archival transformation and the transformative potential of archives lie "not in a reformulation of answers, but in a reconstitution of questions that underpin much of the logic and methodology of [archival] thinking" (Williams 2003:280).

Introduction: 'living-in-being-stopped'

Access and dialogue[1] are critical within a broader discourse of transformation in South Africa, and especially within the context of this discussion regarding South African archival practice. French philosopher, Michel Foucault (2006 [1996]:28), captures the essence of this argument by stating that archives are inextricably bound to questions of "what is said and unsaid, recorded or unrecorded", and consequently who is included or excluded from the norms and narratives that dominate society. The apartheid archive and the continued legacy of the hetero-patriarchal white narrative around which it was structured is a prime example of Foucault's claim.[2] Issues of access and dialogue, in response to ongoing legacies of institutionalised hetero-patriarchal whiteness within South African tertiary education institutions, come to the fore with ongoing student protests at the time of writing, propelling South Africans to reflect on the state of transformation in the country (#RhodesMustFall Campaign, early 2015; #FeesMustFall Campaign, late 2015–ongoing). A similar malaise of exclusion and lack of transformation towards institutionalised hetero-patriarchal whiteness permeates a number of existing South African archives, archival practice and theory. To what extent does South Africa in 2016 mirror the country envisioned in The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996:1), wherein a stated aim is to "heal the divisions of the past and establish a society based on democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights"?

As Danai Mupotsa (2015:[sp]) argues with regard to the student protests, "what the students were able to demonstrate was the violence of living-in-being stopped. The protests are mobilised in an environment of dramatic stoppages". Mupotsa (2015:[sp]) explains 'living-in-being stopped' or 'stoppage' as the "workings of institutionalised hetero-patriarchal whiteness". She uses this idea to describe the ways in which people who do not 'fit' within the aforementioned framework are "well versed in being stopped" through the denial of access. Stoppage, according to Mupotsa (2015:[sp]), resonates with marginalisation and with not having the social, cultural, intellectual or economic capital to be deemed part of the dominant or normative body of society. Thus living-in-being-stopped is an experience of exclusion and non-access.

One of the primary objectives of the National Archives and Record Service of South Africa Act (Act No. 43 of 1996) (hereafter Act No. 43 of 1996*)* was to actively document "the voices and the experiences of those either excluded from or marginalised in the colonial or apartheid archive" (Archival Platform 2014:i).[3] By contrast, I argue that the continued marginalisation of lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transgender, intersex, queer (LGBTI+) communities and the absence of state involvement and dialogue in collecting records and supporting archives that relate to LGBTI+ narratives, demonstrates the failure of the Act to do so.[4] There is a 'violence of living-in-being stopped' (Mupotsa 2015:[sp]) that comes with the lack of national attention given to archiving the herstories of LGBTI+ communities.[5] Although Mupotsa (2015:[sp]) makes no direct link between 'institutionalised hetero-patriarchal whiteness' and insufficient transformation within South African archival practice, she does reflect on how an historical legacy of whiteness within academic and state systems continues to deny the lived experiences of 'previously' marginalised communities.[6]

However, while the postapartheid state has reneged on many of its commitments to realise societal transformation through the transformative potential of the archive, there are artists and activists who are dedicated to writing LGBTI+ *her*stories back into South African *his*tory, as a way of opening dialogues with

South Africans and with the South African state. For example, black South African artist and LGBTI+ visual activist, Zanele Muholi is committed to recording LGBTI+ experiences both through her practice, and in terms of her collaboration with the Gay and Lesbian Memory in Action (GALA) archive – to whom she has chosen to entrust the majority of her work (GALA 2015:[sp]).[7] In their collaboration, Muholi and GALA engage with the (im) materiality of the apartheid archive – the intangible traces of which are currently haunting South African society – by preserving and promoting the physical, material presence of Muholi's activist artworks. They are thus curating an archive that rewrites and challenges the exclusionary legacy of the apartheid archive and its accompanying hetero-patriarchal white narrative, while also challenging hostile perceptions towards non-heteronormative sexualities on the African continent, as expressed in recent state policies in Nigeria, Uganda and Kenya.[8]

Same-sexuality as 'unAfrican'

It is arguable that on the part of the state, willingness toward dialogue and a mutual relationship with the LGBTI+ community has never really existed. Instead, as the current director of GALA, Anthony Marion (2015) suggests, LGBTI+ records "have often existed under a criminal lens" – that is to say that up until 1998, when cross-dressing and sodomy were legalised, records of LGBTI+ activities existed primarily as 'criminal' records rather than as the herstories of marginalised communities. However, even with post-1998 legal recognition of LGBTI+ activities, same-sexuality continues to be labeled by both South African state and 'traditional' leaders as 'unAfrican'. Consequently, as Marion and former director of GALA, Ruth Morgan (2006:34) note, there has been

> a general absence of proper information and records management, and a corresponding need for training; difficulties patterning with mainstream institutions and human rights organisations on these issues due to state homophobia; a failure to preserve the history of same-sexuality in Africa, particularly oral sources; and the fact that LGBTI communities often do not value their histories and culture, and so do not see the purpose of archiving.

Accordingly, GALA established the *Sangoma* project in 1999, which has had "implications for both power and politics" (Marion & Morgan 2006:32). The project has, through the recording of oral narrative, aimed to disprove the notion that same-sexuality is unAfrican. Amongst the most respected and powerful leaders in African society, *sangomas* with same-sexuality orientation have voiced their narratives, demonstrating that same-sexuality is *not* unAfrican (Marion & Morgan 2006:32). The *Sangoma* project demonstrates a way in which the archive can address the need for an archiving process that gives primacy to what Verne Harris (2002:77) terms as "African ways of knowing". Arguably, the current failure of the national archives to deliver on the promises made in Act No. 43 of 1996 extends beyond practical deficiencies and towards inept theoretical and methodological foundations that rest upon western epistemology. In discussing what it might mean to be an African archivist, Harris and Sello Hatang (2000:50) argue that oral history is the *only* move that has been made toward inclusion and access in terms of an archival process that rejects western models of archiving and presents African solutions to African realities. Latin American cultural studies theorist, Nelly Richard's (1994:465) comment is pertinent in this regard:

> As long as imported theories and cultural movements remain divorced from the opposition of forces which are the only means of lending specific importance and historical density to the signs produced in Latin American cultures, they act as little more than orthopedic aides within the contexts of those cultures. Characteristically, this kind of production exhausts itself in mere formal repetition or 'doctrinal mannerism'.

Archivists can ill-afford to emulate this 'doctrinal mannerism'. Moreover, archival theorist, Carolyn Hamilton (cited in Marion & Morgan 2006:32), suggests that when archiving oral history, recording is "insufficient on its own and needs to be linked to the material world". In response, GALA has adopted a creative research approach through which audio and video recording is used to document not only the voices, but also the lives and contextual fluidities of LGBTI+ individuals. Their approach resonates with Harris and Hatang's (2000:32) argument, as well as with the suggestion made in the *State of the archives: an analysis of South Africa's national archival system* that: "The challenge in the present is to consider whether the thinking and the ideals that framed the conceptualisation of the national archival system in the 1990s remain appropriate and relevant today" (Archival Platform 2014:32).

The *Sangoma* project and GALA's relationship with LGBTI+ visual activists indicates the ways in which archival transformation and the transformative potential of archives can be realised on both a practical and theoretical level. However, in order to secure the future of these art-archive unions practically, there needs to be a mutual working relationship between political and civilian sectors. The active involvement of parliamentary representatives, archival practitioners and civilians can bring about archival transformation in a bid to end LGBTI+ communities' experiences of living-in-being-stopped. Former director of Civil-Military Relations at the University of Pretoria, Rocky Williams (2003:280) remarks on the ways in which transformation should be realised within Southern African defence forces. Williams's (2003:280) ideas can be applied to the state of archives in South Africa insofar as he argues that the solutions to transformation: "lie not in a reformulation of answers, but in a [reconstitution] of questions that underpin much of the logic and methodology of [archival] thinking".[9]

Transformative objectives: challenging the power of the apartheid archive

On this note, Harris and Christopher Merrett (1994:686) posit that archives need to be accessible in order for people to be able to use them in exercising their constitutional rights; they argue for transparency and mutual dialogue between government bodies, national archivists and civilians. Harris and Merrett (1994:686) further propose that the forms of access and accountability that this type of mutual relationship promotes are crucial to democracy and transformation: "[O]ne of the critical gauges of democracy is the degree to which the public's right of access to such records is recognised". In acknowledgement of the necessity to maintain and promote the archive, Act No. 43 of 1996 (as amended by Cultural Laws Amendment Act 36 of 2001), starts with the commitment to "provide for a National Archives and Record Service (NARSSA); the proper management and care of the records of governmental bodies; and the preservation and use of national archival heritage; and to provide for matters herewith."

The Act stipulates that there is an undertaking from those involved in NARSSA to maintain and preserve

records properly in order for them to be accessed by the public, as a matter of national heritage. Although the Act comprises 20 sections, it is the third, fifth and twelfth sections in particular that promise to deliver transformation and social justice through access; the recording of marginalised narratives; and mutual dialogue, or co-operation between national bodies, archivists and the public (Act No. 43 of 1996). In this respect, the Act was created with a clear understanding of the power of the archive either to perpetuate or to challenge dominant societal discourse(s).

However, although Act No. 43 of 1996 aimed to promote an 'archival' culture of access and dialogue, it was created during a period of what I term 'uncritical optimism' in South Africa. As argued in the second chapter of the *State of the archives* (Archival Platform 2014:32), after the first democratic elections in 1994, South Africans were attuned to a discourse of optimism. The commitments set out in Act No. 43 of 1996 are indicative of this optimism. On the contrary, the subsequent lack of governmental support and implementation of this Act indicates the inadequate criticality and forward thinking under which it was conceptualised. As expressed in the *State of the archives* (Archival Platform 2014:ii), "the system [in 2014] fares poorly when measured against the key objectives of the 1990s". Reasons for this are far-reaching, as archivists have not been equipped with the resources they were promised and the number of available staff has not matched the sheer volume of archival material needed to process it. On the other hand, staff possessing archiving skills are not given adequate incentive to maintain archives as "NARSSA lost the will and the capacity to play a national leadership role" (Archival Platform 2014:32).

Whereas, at its inception, Act No. 43 of 1996 was geared toward using archives as a vehicle for "redress and reparation", currently, archiving in South Africa is not reflective of social reform or society in general. In 1994, Harris and Merret (1994:685) looked forward to the transformation of apartheid patterns of "official secrecy" through the imminent creation of Act No. 43 of 1996. By contrast, the recent Protection of State Information Act 41 of 2013 has re-enforced these patterns. The Protection of State Information Act, against the aspirations of Act No. 43 of 1996, is a haunting example of the absence of mutual dialogue between the state and the public. It evokes recent apartheid memories of being denied access to information, reifying an environment in which living-in-being-stopped is a daily spectre.

Notwithstanding the fact that Act No. 43 of 1996 was realised with transformative intentions, this was done without proper management or planning resources set in place for the future. In retrospect, there are dangerous effects of the discourse of optimism that characterised the 1990s, which was precipitated by key moments including: Nelson Mandela's release from prison; the success of the first democratic elections; and the country's ability to transition into an arguably 'free and fair' society, without having descended into civil war as many doomsday critics had predicted. At the time, the Truth and Reconciliation Committee (TRC 1996) hearings were believed to have been at the heart of this transition. Even South Africa's victory in the 1995 Rugby World Cup seemed to accelerate the national unity and social cohesion towards which the new, democratically elected government was striving.

Literary theorist, Njabulo Ndebele's (1991) ideas expressed in his essay 'Against pamphleteering the future' – a text that was originally written in the 1980s – seem prophetic upon reflection. Looking towards the future of a liberated South Africa, Ndebele warns against the creation of laws, legislations and a general societal discourse founded upon undisciplined reflection and insufficient criticality. In the optimistic discourse of the

1990s, the many acts and commitments made with the intention of bringing about a democratic South Africa did not respond to Ndebele's (1991:153) call for "disciplined reflection" on either a practical or theoretical level. Thus, currently, South Africa, and its archives in particular, is faced with the detritus of this 'uncritical optimism'.

Since the early 2000s, there has been a growing body of academic critique on the ways in which dominant national and international discourses on the 'Rainbow Nation' erased narratives and herstories involved in the fraught post-1990 South African negotiations (see for instance, Rotberg & Thompson 2000; Mamdani 2002; Driver 2005). More recently, Carli Coetzee (2014) looks at narratives that were sidelined and silenced by apartheid laws and the processes of deletion that took place during new democratic South Africa social initiatives, such as the TRC hearings. Her focus on forms of overlooking (that took place after the first democratic elections) resonates with exclusionary apartheid systems and augments an analysis of South Africa's uncritical optimism in 1996. In the *State of the archives* (Archival Platform 2014:ii), a similar point is made regarding the practices of exclusion that have continued in postapartheid archiving: insufficient support in archiving marginalised narratives has resulted in the erasure of "documentary memory" from South African society, while "Apartheid-era patterns of archival use and accessibility have proved resilient. Archives remain the domain of elites".[10] It is thus arguable that the narratives around which state archives have been constructed for democratic South Africa attempted to rewrite *his*tory according to new dominant forces, which could (can) challenge old master narratives, yet continue to neglect peripheral narratives. In the case of LGBTI+ *her*stories, these stories do not easily 'fit' into what is conceivably a hegemonic hetero-patriarchal narrative that deems same sexuality as unAfrican.

Curating the Gay and Lesbian Memory in Action (GALA)

Act No. 43 of 1996's 'failure to launch' has forced individuals to attend to the preservation of public memory, without the aid or funding of national archival bodies. GALA is one such prime example. GALA archivist Linda Chernis (2015) reflects on the difficulty of keeping an archive such as GALA afloat when, on a national level, and even a private one, "very few donors are interested in LGBTI+ archives". Act No. 43 of 1996 (Section 3d) commits to "document aspects of the nation's experience neglected by archives repositories in the past". By contrast, GALA was created in reaction against the critical lack of national attention to "address the erasure of the representation of the stories and experiences of LGBTI people from official archives, histories and other spaces in Africa" (GALA 2015:[sp]).

GALA is the only archive of its kind on the African continent, which is in itself testament to the marginalised position of LGBTI+ narratives in South African and African public discourse. It is critical that these herstories be preserved, promoted and recognised in order to "heal the divisions of the past and establish a society based on democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights" (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa 1996:1). Marion and Morgan (2006:30) capture the ways in which the preservation and promotion of LGBTI+ narratives enables social justice as follows:

> All our programmes are designed to generate new archival material that includes the voices of the most marginalised sectors of our community. Our programmes are also designed to make this material available to the LGBTI community, as well as the general public, for educational purposes and to raise awareness of LGBTI issues. In so doing, GALA contributes to the wider struggle for justice and advances the rights of the LGBTI community.

In reaction against the 'state homophobia' that LGBTI+ communities in South Africa endure, GALA has committed to work actively with queer African writers and artists, such as Muholi, thus adopting an approach of mutual dialogue between artist and archivist, and confronting the "lack of research and archival material informing policy and legislation on same-sexuality in Africa" (Marion & Morgan 2006:34–35). Their approach resonates with Harris's (2010) vision for archives to bring about tangible societal transformation and social justice by making the voices of the voiceless heard. Although GALA is committed to this vision, they do so without the aid or support of the National Archivist.[11] Whereas GALA has secured the support of independent donors, a large number of South African archives that work in conjunction with visual activists and artists – for example, the *Ar(t)chive* – are not in the same position.[12] In this way, old exclusionary narratives are re-enforced, denying marginalised members of society a voice and undermining the transformative potential of archives. Moreover, despite the transparency and co-operation between archivists and LGBTI+ artists/visual activists, responses such as Arts and Culture Minister's, Lulu Xingwana, to Muholi's series *Being* (2007) in 2009, demonstrate the failure of the state to make marginalised voices relevant.

At the group exhibition *Innovative Women* (2009, Constitutional Court, Johannesburg), curated by Bongi Bengu, Xingwana was outraged at the "immorality" of Muholi's *Being* series, depicting women in same-sex erotic relationships (cited in Van Wyk 2010:[sp]).[13] One photographic triptych in particular captures female couples in a series of three different, intimate sexual positions. The first and last photograph are rendered in black and white, with each couple in a foetal embrace, their nude bodies sleek and illuminated against the creased black sheets upon which they rest. The starkness of these two black-and-white photographs frame and enhance the colour image at the centre of the triptych, which shows a couple nudging their noses together, with the figure on the left skimming her hand over her partner's head, who in turn, drapes her arm over her lover's breast, locking the two in a gentle caress. Although the women depicted in each photograph are clearly nude, very little of their bodies, besides an elongated back, crooked leg and bare stomach, is exposed. Rather than being explicit, "pornographic" or "offensive", as Xingwana (cited in Van Wyk 2010:[sp]) declares, the triptych is a muted, poignant, and sensuous reflection of the love shared between two women in moments of postcoital intimacy. Xingwana's comments expose the resistance of national bodies to support the visibility of LGBTI+ communities, and the role of the state in perpetuating the myth that same-sexuality is unAfrican. Ironically, Muholi (2007:[sp]) created the work with the explicit intention of "erasing the very stigmatisation of our sexualities as 'unAfrican', even as our very existence disrupts dominant (hetero)sexualities, patriarchies and oppressions that were not of our own making".

Thus with regard to unsettling the hetero-patriarchal legacy of the apartheid archive, the state has ignored its undertaking, as stated in Act No. 43 of 1996 (Section 3d), to promote, document, and make accessible "aspects of the nation's experience neglected by archives repositories in the past". The Minister's reaction to

Muholi's activist work resonates with exclusionary master narratives that push the archiving of marginalised voices further away from the main body. In fact, in many cases LGBTI+ documents from local communities are given to GALA for 'safe-keeping', in fear of state bodies seizing and/or erasing these testaments (Marion & Morgan 2006:34). Consequently, GALA is unwavering in its support of activists such as Muholi and in its role in creating collaborative opportunities to curate an archive that destabilises the patriarchal narratives by which South Africa's past and present continue to be governed. GALA and Muholi's tangible, material, and visual engagement with the transformative potential of the archive is evidence of the critical role that archivists and the arts can play in LGBTI+ activism. Marion and Morgan (2006:30–31) recognise this when they state that GALA is "aware of [its] unique role and power in being able to use the space of the archive to resist and dispel the politically expedient myth that homosexuality is unAfrican."

The *Being* series is indicative of Muholi's intention to enter into dialogue with dominant narratives that deem same-sexuality as unAfrican. Besides her collaboration with GALA, Muholi uses the visual arts as a way to activate discussion between her subjects, viewers and LGBTI+ communities – in other words, in her photographic portraits of same-sex individuals and couples, Muholi makes visible her subjects' faces, emotions and relationships to the receivers of her work. Muholi, as a South African photographer and activist, is acclaimed internationally for an *oeuvre* built around creating visibility for lesbian and transgender individuals. In addition, having exhibited globally, from South Africa to the United States and across Europe, means that her subjects' experiences enter into discussion with viewers worldwide, propelling them to react, reflect and return to the narratives she puts forward.

Reconstituting the questions

As posited in the introduction to this chapter, recent student protests have enabled a moment of much-needed critical reflection on the state of transformation in South Africa. Transformation discourse extends beyond legal jargon and toward the very real actions that state institutions must carry out if they are to support constitutional democracy. However, as I have argued, archiving in South Africa is a victim of the uncritical optimism that characterised discourse in the 1990s. It is under this generally optimistic attitude that Act No. 43 of 1996 was conceptualised. The Act and the national bodies expected to enforce it have failed South African archiving owing to poor support and lack of forward thinking in terms of practical resource management. As a result, individuals and independent bodies such as Muholi and GALA have carried the weight of documenting and archiving marginalised narratives without the support of state funding or resources, and only limited private funding, which suggests that this malaise is present beyond the state. Despite the power of artist-archivist collaborations, state interest in continuing this work is insufficient. The archival work carried out by GALA and Muholi in South African LGBTI+ communities can arguably transform public perception of oppressive, exclusionary narratives, including those such as same-sexuality being unAfrican. However, in order to both challenge and change a normative framework dominated by hetero-patriarchal whiteness, it is imperative for dialogue to exist between the state and marginalised communities. Dialogue initiates questions and debate, which in turn makes visible the experiences of individuals who are excluded from dominant societal discourse.

The archive plays a critical role in preserving these questions so that previously 'silenced' narratives are at the forefront of present debate, and accessed and engaged with in the future.

Editor's note: Images that were to accompany this publication have been withheld in order to respect and preserve the identities and safety of those represented in the work.

Endnotes

1 While I question the state of transformation within South African archival practice, it is my sense that 'transformation', although pivotal to realising democracy, has become somewhat of a 'buzz-word' over the past decade. I therefore explore this notion as entangled/intertwined specifically with principles of access and dialogue.

2 I draw here on Leswin Laubscher's (2013:2) theorisation of the apartheid archive: "The archive is never a removed, simple repository of a past, but is in a meaningful and dynamic relation to a society and people's political and social present and aspirational future." In this sense, the apartheid archive is the intangible social memory that was created from the tangible collection and preservation of experiences and narratives that only fitted in with the apartheid government's vision of 'normativity'. I focus on those narratives that were excluded physically from state archives. For example, despite the presence of LGBTI+ magazines, literature and photographs, this material was purposefully expunged from apartheid state archives as a way of controlling collective societal memory in the future, and 'erasing' LGBTI+ experience. The same can be said for documents recording the experiences of black South Africans under apartheid, hence the Truth and Reconciliation (TRC) hearings in 1996 that aimed to retrieve and record these narratives.

3 The *State of the archives* (Archival Platform 2014:9) provides a useful framework to understanding what exactly is referred to when speaking of the colonial and subsequently the apartheid archive:

> South Africa's national archival system has its origins in the legislative and administrative mechanisms that regulated colonial rule, which saw extensive official and non-official record generation and keeping: by, among others, British colonial officials, missionaries, travellers, public figures and scholars. At the same time as records of the activities of the aforesaid were being generated and preserved, a concept of archives as the place where the paper-based records of what European settlers did was taking root. Simultaneously, Africans entered the archive in commissioned ethnological and other surveys that were instrumental in establishing authority over the land and its people, entrenching difference, maintaining control and reinforcing a particular hierarchy of knowledge. They also entered the archive through other deliberate and inadvertent ways, such as court records and correspondence with officialdom. Yet even when Africans entered the domain of the archive, their voices were framed within institutional settings in which power relations were uneven, such that their voices are often sublimated in records that have survived. The hierarchy of knowledge saw the consignment of forms of knowledge production practised by Africans to the domain of ethnology whereas archives became the preserve of a small, predominantly white, elite.

4 This statement has particular resonance when considering that GALA was created in response to, and continues to exist as a result of insufficient national attention given to LGBTI+ narratives (Marion 2015).

5 My commitment to feminism and its potential to bind theory together with practice influences my use of the word '*herstory',* as opposed to '*history'.* Born out of the feminist movements of the 1970s and 1980s, the term '*herstory*': remains relevant in exposing the hetero-patriarchy that continues to dominate different facets of society, from spoken language to written records, which prioritise the voice and lived experience of men over women. In addition, the word carries more weight within the context of this essay, as one of the archives upon which GALA is modeled is the

Lesbian Herstory Archives, United States, established in the 1970s. It is the largest existing collection of materials by and about lesbians (Lesbian Herstory Archives 2015).

6 The inverted commas placed around 'previously' indicate that although the postapartheid state aimed to end the marginalisation of communities ostracised by the apartheid government, this marginalisation continues to the present day.

7 GALA is a non-governmental organisation that, since its establishment in 1997, has operated with the financial and practical support of foundations and institutions such as Astraea, The Lesbian Foundation for Justice, as well as the Embassy of France in South Africa. Other funders include UNESCO, Hivos, Other: The Other Foundation, SAIH, Foundation for Human Rights, Aids Foundation South Africa, The DiDiRi Collective, IGLHRC, WHEAT, and Love Not Hate (GALA 2015).

8 Homosexuality is illegal in Algeria, Angola, Botswana, Burundi, Cameroon, Comoros, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Liberia, Libya, Malawi, Mauritania, Mauritius, Morocco, Namibia, Nigeria, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Swaziland, Tanzania, The Gambia, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. In Uganda, prison sentences for homosexual sex range up to seven years, while in Northern Nigeria, homosexuality is punishable by the death sentence. Those 'promoting' or supporting same-sex relationships can also expect imprisonment in these two countries (Amnesty International 2015:[sp]).

9 Williams's original statement reads: "In essence the answer to these intellectual challenges lie not in a reformulation of answers, but in a reconstruction of the questions that underpin much of the logic and methodology of defence thinking." (Williams 2003:280). For the purposes of this chapter I choose to adopt and adapt his notion of 'a [reconstitution] of the questions' to include the added nuance of reconstructing or changing the very form of an institution, an organisation or a group. According to my argument, to change the nature of archival thinking through a reconstitution of the questions is thus to challenge the very structure by which the institution has been imagined.

10 'Elites' is a problematic word to use here, as it tends to reinforce class and access divisions. At the same time however, those to whom the statement refers are South Africans who do not experience difficulty in gaining access to different forms of intellectual, social, cultural and economic capital – arguably white South Africans, as well as citizens in government and academic positions of power.

11 According to Act No. 43 of 1996 (2004:4–5), the National Archivist is bound to
   a. take such measures as are necessary to arrange, describe and retrieve records
   b. provide information, consultation, research and other services related to records
   c. with special emphasis on activities designed to reach out to less privileged sectors of society, make known information concerning records by means such as publications, exhibitions and the lending of records
   d. require of a person who has made use of records in the custody of the National Archives while researching a publication or dissertation to furnish a copy of the publication or dissertation to the National Archives
   e. generally, take such other steps and perform such other acts as may be necessary for or conducive to the achievement of the objects of the National Archives.

12 The *Ar(t)chive* is an archive based in the Wits School of Arts, University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. Driven by Wits Master's graduate, Jessica Denyschen and theatre journalist and dance writer Adrienne Sichel, the mission statement reads: "South African contemporary theatre dance is as complexly political and culturally diverse as the country it has evolved in over the past 40 years. The Ar(t)chive endeavors to bring together various strands of this living heritage in a physical and virtual memory bank" (Denyschen & Sichel 2016:[sp]).

13 An exhibition co-sponsored by the South African Department of Arts and Culture, featuring ten black contemporary female artists from different parts of South Africa.

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Public intimacies, personal exposures

Inscribing ‘whiteness’ in paint

ENGAGING A PERSONAL ARCHIVE

Karin Preller, Independent researcher

Abstract

In this chapter, I engage with practical and theoretical research processes that have informed a series of paintings, mainly autobiographical, that I developed from 2001 to 2016. Rooted in the concept of practice-led research as theorised by Maarit Mäkelä (2007), I examine the interaction between practice and theory, thinking and making, in locating questions of memory and nostalgia against personal narratives of absence and presence. The surfaces of what initially appear as photorealist paintings chronicling personal archives of family albums and home-video stills, reveal their potential as signifiers of uncomfortable complicities and a ‘charmed life’. Caught disquietly between painted and photographic layers, the canvas operates as a ‘laboured surface’ upon which private and personal archives of affect enter into the public realm of galleries and exhibitions. The placement of selected examples of my artworks, alongside works by artists such as Santu Mofokeng, under a rubric of counter-archival practice in the exhibition *Past Imperfect // Future Present* (2015, FADA Gallery, Johannesburg), does little to quieten this conflict. In considering the nature (and specifically ‘whiteness’) of my painted archives, I reflect on the discomfort and disturbance of memories recovered and *not* recovered; on what drove me to examine and interrogate this personal archive.

Introduction

In this chapter, I engage with practical and theoretical research processes that have informed my artistic practice since 2001. While the *content* of the paintings is mainly autobiographical, the approach to my artistic practice (which encompasses both creative and textual processes) is rooted in the context of practice-led research (PLR)[1] and particularly 'auto-ethnography' (a methodology common to PLR). I begin by summarising previous writings on my artwork in which I explore questions of memory and nostalgia inscribed in the surfaces of what initially appear to be photorealist paintings (see Preller 2001a, 2005, 2010a). The interaction between painting and photography is relevant to my process of chronicling personal archives of family albums and home-video stills. In addition, here I consider ways in which my personal archive (comprising both the selected photographs I used as source material and the paintings in which they are reconstituted) acts not only as an on-going 'production', but also a personal 'reworking' through, and documentation of, my past. This past is located contextually in a history tainted with poignant nostalgia, rooted in personal memories and in my positioning as a white child growing up during the apartheid era. The particular placement of my artworks, namely *Year-end party, Johannesburg, 1960s* (2014), *Chinese restaurant, 1970* (2014), and *The neighbours IV* (2014) (Figs. 1, 2 & 3), alongside works by artists such as Santu Mofokeng's *The Black Photo Album / Look at Me: 1890–1950* (1999),[2] under a rubric of counter-archival practice in the exhibition *Past Imperfect // Future Present* (2015, FADA Gallery, Johannesburg, hereafter *Past Imperfect*), does little to quieten this conflict. The focus of this chapter is to consider the nature (and specifically 'whiteness') of my painted archive critically, as well as the ways in which the canvas surfaces reveal their potential as signifiers of uncomfortable complicities and a 'charmed life'. I reflect on the discomfort and disturbance of memories recovered and not recovered; on what drove me to examine and interrogate this archive in many exhibitions held between 2001 and 2016.

I see my personal archive (both the selected photographs used as source material and paintings rendered from the photographs) as a re-telling of my past, but to what end? My investigation hinges on self-reflexive knowledge gained though on-going processes of artmaking and theorising, and critical reflections on, as well as taking ownership of, a past that cannot be undone, but which can be documented, recorded and therefore situated in broader societal contexts. In previous writings, I have dealt with my 'relationship' to my paintings tangentially, and how my critical thinking and *positionality* towards this on-going body of work changes over the course of different exhibitions and temporal contexts (see Preller 2001a, 2005, 2010a). The placement of my work in exhibitions such as *Past Imperfect* highlights my positionality as a white, middle class, Afrikaans-speaking woman, who grew up at the height of apartheid in the 1960s. Yet, inasmuch as my own *voice* is highlighted in the creation of my paintings-as-archive, my identity is not fixed or essential. As Stuart Hall (1996:201) notes,

> identity is not as transparent or unproblematic as we think. Perhaps, instead of thinking of identity as an already established historical fact … we should think, instead, of identity as a 'production', which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation.

Significantly, two separate archives are relevant to this discussion. The first is my source material of snapshots and film stills, and the second is my paintings, which represent a reinvestigation of the source material 'twice removed' from the captured moment. Hal Foster's (2006 [2004]:145, emphasis added) words, which he uses with reference to various archival strategies, are also applicable to my paintings: "the work in question is archival since it not only draws on informal archives but *produces them as well*, and underscores the nature of all archival materials as found yet constructed, factual yet fictive, public yet private". In quoting Foster's words 'produces them as well', I mean that all archives are originally fragments, or fragmented. My paintings result in a new archive, created using processes of cropping and reproducing photographs personally selected from family archives. The personal archive is thus enunciated through my own constantly shifting voice (Hall 1996:201). To quote Antoinette du Plessis (2010), speaking about my work shown on the *City and Suburban* exhibition (2010, Standard Bank Gallery, Johannesburg):

> These reconstructed images are anything but neutral, despite the deadpan silence of their finely worked surfaces. They are charged with discomfort, displacement and distance brought along by the passage of time. They chronicle ordinary lived moments of individuals, paused and rewound; interrupted narratives; lost stories.

My past is retold through the laborious painting of what appears initially as photorealist canvases (see Preller 2010). In investing in a 'combination' of painted and photographic surfaces, this painterly labour becomes a catalyst for the *punctum* (Barthes 1993:49), thereby altering a sense of the original image. My desire is to register in paint Roland Barthes's (1993:43) "blind field", which points to that exceeding the obvious. The painterly surface is the 'sight' and 'site' of photographic and painted layers, the former referring to the indexical nature of the photograph and the latter to the physical, embodied activity of painting.

In reading Barthes's *Camera lucida* (1993), I identify with reflections of the 'unnameable' in certain photographs when looking at my own source material. Barthes (1993:69) searches for the 'essence' of his mother and finds it in a photograph of her taken before his birth. It is this aspect of his work that influenced my thinking – those photographs in which he found a 'blind spot' – the *punctum*, which falls outside the descriptive or narrative content of a photograph. Significantly, Barthes's (1993:96) *punctum* lies not only in details that disturb, but in *time* itself. In the face of the photograph of his mother, Barthes (1993:96) states: "I tell myself: she is going to die. I shudder … *over a catastrophe that has already occurred*. Whether or not the subject is already dead, every photograph is this catastrophe".

For me, paintings can be a vehicle to register and convey the trauma and loss felt when looking at my images. This encompasses consideration of both the nature of photography and painting, and how labour involved in a specific kind of photo-based painting potentially renders the surface of the painting as a signifier in itself (see Preller 2005, 2010a). This inquiry into labour involves explicit reference to physical experiences of time in relation to both the production and interpretation of the artwork. The painstaking, labour-intensive manipulation of paint on canvas to render a convincing translation of the photograph becomes the antithesis of the ephemeral fragility of the snapshot.[3] As Penny Siopis (2005:37) states:

> Painting is a carnal document. Unlike photography, painting doesn't have an indexical relationship to its referent. But painting is an index of another sort, literally the trace of someone (the artist or whoever worked the painting) having acted on the surface and left tracks of that action.

My painted archives and works exhibited on *Past Imperfect* should be seen against the importance of previous research regarding the intertwined processes of making and thinking.[4] Crucially, *writing* about these archives and processes allows me to stand back and reflect on the nature of this personal archive.

In the three paintings referred to above, I explore autobiographical relationships between painting, photography and memory through the prism of family archives of snapshots and home-movie stills dating from the 1940s to the 1970s – many of which were photographed before I was born and include people and places that I did not know.[5] The *punctum* flits in and out of events and places, captured in 'ordinary' images not necessarily based only on familiar people or close family, but which speak to a sense of everyday family life. *Details* matter; a dress for example, facets of a building, a pot plant, or a piece of furniture. Seemingly banal, often overlooked details evoke suddenly sharp yet distant memories, often far more poignantly than the entire photograph and the moment it captured.

Photographs more obviously relating to the 'description' of my life interest me. The selection process involves photographs in which some detail – of a place, an event, a person – strike a chord; a gesture or a glance, a technical rupture (blur) in the photograph defines what I remember of people or places. Each image reworked contains a particular *punctum*, not only of the personal but also of the social milieu in which I grew up. I start the process of working with 'familiar' photos, selecting and re-selecting, pausing and contemplating, and in so doing, discover huge gaps in my memory. Processes of looking, enlarging, cropping and painting fill in some of those gaps, yet disturbingly *add* further gaps in memory; the result is a combination of the 'pleasure' of discovery, but also the pain of intractable voids.

Similarly, some photographs, or elements therein, do *not* interest me, or sometimes disturbed me *precisely* because of the expected poses, placements, places, angles or time of day. The paintings discussed fall into the framework of a 'family album' in terms of personal memories treasured and filed away in albums and boxes, but with alterations resulting from my search for the *punctum*. They reflect my interest and intrigue in particular details, rather than the whole: where shadow and light are highlighted in *Year-end Party;* the bamboo curtain and still life in *Chinese Restaurant*; and architecture, lawns, hosepipes and taps in *The neighbours IV*. *Year-end Party, 1960s* is based on a photograph of my mother at one of the many parties held by the company where she worked for over 40 years. Taken by a photographer for publication in the company magazine, the original uncropped photograph shows her posing next to 'Father Christmas', with actual donations for charity in the foreground. In pinpointing the *punctum*, I crop the photograph, placing emphasis on her dress (I remember my cousins and I dressing up in my mother's clothes and this dress was a favourite) and obliquely on the Christmas decorations. *Chinese restaurant, 1970* emerges from a photograph taken for my aunt and uncle's wedding anniversary, held at a Chinese restaurant that they regularly frequented in Johannesburg. The image is cropped to emphasise both my aunt (her always-distinctive black-and-white attire) and foreground the still life of Chinese bowls, cutlery and bamboo curtain – in other words, those people and details that particularly intrigue me. The still life of Chinese bowls and cutlery is sharply evocative of evenings out with my parents. *The neighbours IV* is based on a photograph taken in the 1960s, a year or two after we

had moved into our newly built family home in Montgomery Park, Johannesburg. As an only child (and my father being an avid photographer and home movie enthusiast), I appear in countless photographs, but here, I deliberately crop the photograph to emphasise the architectural similarity of our neighbouring houses. Original snapshots reveal what John Cavill (1965:83) describes as one of the "sprawling, grid-iron suburbs" that sprung up on the outskirts of the city, catering to the penchant of white South Africans "to live in a house with a garden". The paintings are characteristic of the selective narratives in annual hardcover publications extolling the virtues and achievements of various sectors of South Africa's white community (such as *South Africa Today 1965*), as well as photo albums of that period. Fragments of the everyday lives of the inhabitants become visual manifestations of identity constructed as much through physical structures as through the kinds of publications referred to above. Whiteness and the ideology of apartheid is implied in the particular structures of the houses and the 'safety' of the 'whites only' suburb within which not everyone could live or move freely.[6]

ABOVE: Figure 1. Karin Preller, *Year-end Party, Johannesburg, 1960s*, 2014 | Oil on canvas | 130 x 88 cm (framed) | Collection of the artist | Courtesy the artist


K.Preller 2014

My initial hesitancy to engage my personal archive was based primarily on the fear that personal feelings of trauma and loss would translate as nothing more than sentimental or nostalgic replications of 'old family photographs rendered in paint', while key for me is the *trauma and loss* inherent in each image. This hesitancy is also inevitably and irrevocably the result of a past lived as a white, middle class child and woman in apartheid South Africa. In this context, fraught with prejudice and the negation of identities other than those classified as 'white', I know that using my particular family photographs as subject matter is personally challenging, and might open up readings and responses that counter my intentions. A private life always traverses the public; more so once it is exhibited in the public domain.

I had a protected childhood whilst growing up in Johannesburg: attending a 'whites only' primary school in the suburb of Langlaagte and high school in the inner-city area of Braamfontein; taking the 'whites only' train to my grandparents' home in Langlaagte; catching the 'whites only' bus when we moved to Montgomery Park. It could be called 'charmed', if it is possible to make this kind of statement where personal realities are concerned. However, apart from subjective experiences of my life 'lived' through photographs and films, I sensed from an early age, and more so as I grew into early adulthood, that there were unexplained discrepancies in that life of privilege. This sense of inexplicable disjuncture is echoed in a still from Penny Siopis's video *My Lovely Day* (1997), in which the artist, as a child, is shown playing in a garden, wearing a black bathing costume. The subtitle "But you play as if nothing is happening around you" accompanies the image. *My Lovely Day* is made up of footage from her mother's 8mm home videos. Siopis retains the particular sound of the projector, the dust motes and markings, indicating the original and finished project as a construction – memories constructed not only by the video itself, but also by the subtitles ('voices') superimposed on the images.

Going through and using original sources such as photographs and home videos from my childhood is disturbing to me. My father was an accountant, and for a large part of his life worked for the former West Rand Bantu Administration Board, first in Orlando in Soweto and later in Albert Street, Johannesburg. While in primary school, I often accompanied him to his office in Orlando, visiting our domestic worker in Soweto. However, when I was in standard six in 1976, things changed and I sensed from the hushed tones of conversations that something was amiss. My father could no longer work in Soweto; I remember information being withheld during that period. My position remained 'privileged', a luxury ever-present throughout tertiary education and early adulthood, and remains so now. As always inscribed in my personal history, it can never be wished away.

What initially interested me about my family archive was the banality of images that become objects in themselves. This banality is reflective of the selected and fragmented nature of the family album (Hirsch 1997:127; Sontag 1980:8). It is a 'banality' that disturbs me; the archive registers my childhood as a period characterised by 'innocence' and by the inertia of the South African white suburban middle class of the 1960s; of events and outings mediated through the lens of the camera. The absences and omissions in the photograph (Hirsch 1997:117) are arguably more palpable in the painted image than in the snapshot.[7] As explained in previous writings (see Preller 2010a), the process of 'making' hinges on the *painted surface* becoming a signifier in itself, so that, as Maarit Mäkelä (2007:157) articulates with reference to PLR, "the final products

LEFT: Figure 2. Karin Preller, *Chinese Restaurant, 1970*, 2014 | Oil on canvas | 130 x 112 cm (framed) | Private collection | Courtesy the artist

[the paintings] can be seen as revealing their stories, i.e. the knowledge they embody".[8]

Juxtaposed with other works on *Past Imperfect,* the banality, but also, crucially, the 'whiteness' inherent in my paintings and their history is made more poignantly 'visible'. In terms of a postcolonial investigation, my paintings could be open to accusations of restaging nostalgia and loss of white privilege; as celebrating remnants of a 'charmed life' – in effect, as apartheid *constituted visually*. Moreover, this 'charmed life' cannot be negated through transformation processes; it remains contested and fragile. As Vron Ware (2013) and Sarah Nuttall (2001) argue, however, white privilege can be dissected and interrogated.

Placed in the context of *Past Imperfect*, my paintings and positionality stand in relation to the work of other artists exhibited. Both the publication and selected sides of South African photographer Santu Mofokeng's *The Black Photo Album / Look at Me: 1890–1950* (1999), displayed in the darkened space downstairs in the FADA Gallery, are a stark reminder of different positionalities and subjectivities, made visible in the dialogue between diverse archives. Mofokeng (1999:[sp]) disrupts the notion of the 'colonial gaze' with his restaging of re-photographed portraits from 1890 to 1950 of black working- and middle-class families, "commissioned, requested, or tacitly sanctioned" by the sitters themselves and, as such, belonging in the private domain. In Mofokeng's work, the 'stagedness' of formal posing and compositional strategies are highlighted. The 'invisibility' of a black middle class, recuperated by Mofokeng, contrasts starkly with the 'natural' and 'given' documentation of white families as the 'norm' – *and here I mean the 'norm' for the white generation of which I was a part* – a generation that grew up in apartheid as if with blinkers, not 'seeing', not knowing.

Mofokeng disrupts and destabilises the private family image, recuperating images 'invisible' to (most) white viewers at the time they were taken. When exhibited alongside works such as *The Black Photo Album*, my work – by the very *fact* that whiteness has been so meticulously inscribed on the surface of the canvas – becomes *as* destabilising of identity, and 'whiteness' in particular. Previous textual research highlights palpable absences in my paintings when exhibited in the public domain (Preller 2001a, 2005, 2010a). This is reinforced when the works are exhibited on a show dealing explicitly with archives; with identities stated and problematised. Significantly, while there are no easy answers, there can be an "acknowledgement by whites of whiteness, of the complicity of whiteness in terror and suffering" (Barolsky 2016:18). Ware (2013) and Nuttall (2001) reiterate this concept in their investigations of the significance of 'texts' examining whiteness. It is also the crux of Catherine Russell's (1999) analysis of 'autoethnography'.

While the complexities of 'ethnography', 'autobiography' and 'autoethnography' cannot be unpacked here, the latter is of crucial importance to my work. Russell (1999:1), in a discussion of the emergence and significance of autobiography as an "ethnographic mode of self-presentation", focuses on "a new autobiography" termed 'autoethnography', wherein a subject that engages in autobiography (the author) fully inscribes her or himself into the text. "[A]utobiography becomes ethnographic at the point where the [artist] understands his or her personal history to be implicated in larger social formations and historical process" (Russell 1999:1). As Russell (1999:2) continues, "A common feature of autoethnography is the first-person voice-over that is intently and unambiguously subjective". My process of making, thinking and then *writing* about my work, falls firmly into this category. Within autoethnography, the subjective 'voice' "understands itself as culturally constituted" (Russell 1999:3); it is, as I understand my process, "enmeshed with historical processes and cultural differences" (Russell 1999:4).

As a loosely formulated subject of inquiry, critical whiteness studies is instrumental in re-examining whiteness as a category that can and should be disrupted. Both postcolonialism (see for instance, Moore-Gilbert 1977) and critical whiteness studies (see for instance, Dyer 1977; Ware 1992; Frankenburg 1993) arguably disrupt paradigms of power. While critical whiteness studies per se, as it emerged predominantly in Europe and America, did not inform my work initially, the awareness that I was working specifically with my own (white) history was always present. In hindsight, I realise that the negotiation of 'whiteness' in South Africa (pre- and postapartheid) lies at the heart of my work. As articulated by film theorist Richard Dyer

ABOVE: Figure 3. Karin Preller, *The Neighbours IV*, 2014 | Oil on canvas | 60 x 70 cm (framed) | Collection of the artist | Courtesy the artist

(1997:2–3), whiteness studies makes *whiteness* the object of critical reading. He focuses, as do most northern critical whiteness studies scholars, on the 'invisibility' of whiteness rather than the 'visibility' of blackness; on whiteness as the norm; "not raced"; not labelled. By its invisibility, whiteness, he argues, has allowed powers of colonisation and domination to be upheld, becoming a yardstick against which difference is measured and articulated (Dyer 1997:45).

In contrast to this view of the 'normativity' of whiteness, 'whiteness' in South Africa is particularly marked. As Liese van der Watt (2001:65) points out, the 'invisibility' of whiteness is not as apparent in South Africa as in Europe and America; whiteness in South Africa has been marked historically as privileged. Ironically, while whiteness was indeed the norm for a privileged minority in apartheid South Africa, in that one can speak of the 'invisibility' of blackness (*if you were white*) under apartheid, I suggest that it is even more markedly and excruciatingly visible during the period of South Africa's democratisation. Deep-rooted traumas dissipated the initial euphoria of the so-called 'rainbow nation', with many current debates and on-going racial tensions still based on racialised identities. Furthermore, as Nicky Falkof (2016:165) points out, Dyer "does not address the vital point that whiteness is not invisible to people who don't possess it; indeed, the discussion around the question runs the risk that the imaginary reader is always white".

Through exhibitions and platforms such as *Past Imperfect,* it becomes poignantly evident that no work remains bound by its materiality, its status as an object, or by a specific time frame (Sontag 1980:22). The paintings continue to be positioned or repositioned in new periods and contexts as a traversed 'site', informed by and inter-woven with other texts where the boundaries of the frame no longer enclose the work. It is not only what lies outside the frame – what the artist has chosen *not* to show – but rather, lies in spaces of the interaction with the other works. Meaning lies exclusively with neither artist, viewer nor critic, but is constantly shifting; the work takes on different nuances each time it is exhibited or viewed in different contexts.

While reviewers often refer to the 'enigmatic' or nostalgic nature of my paintings, they tend to place emphasis on memory lost and regained. For some viewers, the paintings might constitute the primary nostalgic *punctum*; for others they become a mirror of privileged white hegemony that characterised the lived reality of apartheid South Africa. Kathryn Smith (2001) cuts through the emphases on nostalgia by remarking on two salient aspects pertinent to my paintings on the *Past Imperfect* exhibition. With regard to the interaction between painting and photography, she states that

> there is something uncomfortable about the space you sense lies between the original photograph and Preller's resurrection of its image as a monochromatic painting. … There are two kinds of images here: the posed, either formally or informally, and those that mark occasions, whether it's shopping downtown or at a dinner. Throughout, detail implicitly reveals the Calvinism informing this particular familial masquerade. Gloves are worn when shopping and people are seen to occupy roles that don't challenge the expected. The banal, and the style of execution which is strangely devoid of personality, seem to make public a conservatism that is difficult to identify specifically, but it is pervasive (Smith 2001).

Smith's reading of the paintings as reflective of 'Calvinism' and 'conservatism' is indicative of the extent to which knowledge of a particular historical context shapes responses to the work. While photographs are

powerful repositories of memory, here reminiscent of a 'charmed life', Smith reads 'outside the frame'. In previous writings, I point out that what lies 'outside the frame', what is *not* shown, is critically important to me (Preller 2010a). Whether private or public, I suggest that it is what is *not* visible that makes these paintings 'uncomfortable' and poignant; one could speak of a 'charmed life' and/or complicities with, or at least ignorance of, troubling realities not shown. In fact, Smith's review startled me because it identified *exactly* the past that I knew I was exploring as being simultaneously charmed and disquieting.

With regard to Smith's reference to the 'style' as 'strangely devoid of personality': while my obsession to reinterpret and 'restage' the photograph emerges from an often 'clinical' process of measuring, checking and rechecking, the deceptively seamless act of blurring and accentuating brush marks in places, results in embodied indexical traces. The 'expressive' is deliberately negated and therefore, for me, ironically accentuated. It is in this process of making that I find the dis-location of narrative, the inability of the snapshot to convey anything but a *staged reality* – and it is this 'staging' that becomes more pronounced in the context of a platform and exhibition such as *Past Imperfect.*

When in dialogue with other works on the exhibition, my paintings reveal "the complexities of contemporary archival practices, and how these play out using lens-based and new-media technologies" (Farber 2015:1). Through his work, Mofokeng powerfully challenges and subverts visualities and absences remaining entrenched in cultural and historical memory. At first glance, my work does not fall into that category; it is a white history restaged – but perhaps it is *exactly* this restaging that is also subversive. My painted archive remains, for me, forever double-edged: defined by the 'pleasure' of having engaged and worked through a personal history, and the pain of 'seeing' the complicities of whiteness in South Africa's traumatic history.

Whiteness remains contested, still implicated in oppression and privilege. Vanessa Barolsky (2016:18) refers to "the treacherous terrain of 'whiteness' in South Africa today". As Barolsky (2016:18) states:

> Being white is deeply morally ambiguous in South Africa right now. Adhered to our pale skins are a host of ideological and historical markers that define us, irrevocably, as part of the oppressive class. This is not to say that there is no room for agency, for distancing whiteness from this disturbing moral history.

However, she continues that calls for amnesia, to forget the past, cannot hold, and notes that an "obliteration of consciousness, a whiting out" is simply a "denial of self" (Barolsky 2016:18). Condemnations of the "quiet superiority" (Barolsky 2016:18) of whiteness were physically demonstrated in both the recent #RhodesMustFall (2015) and on-going #FeesMustFall campaigns across South African universities. Emerging in 2015, the latter campaign continues at the time of writing, a large part of the discontent resulting from students who still feel marginalised and oppressed by the institution of whiteness, regardless of other complicating factors in the current political landscape.

A past fraught with inequalities and privilege cannot be reversed and should never be forgotten. But it can, as Ware (2013:2) notes, be 'resisted'. Ironically, one means of 'resistance' of a past embedded in apartheid could be to 'restage' whiteness, to 'rework' it deliberately, visually or otherwise; to make it *visible;* to acknowledge it in a deliberately self-reflective manner. Ware's (2013:2) discussion examines

> the technique of self-disclosure in life-writing against racism as a means to illustrate the tentacles of power and privilege on many levels and suggests a way of reading and interpreting self-narratives as a means to work through the psychological, material and symbolic processes entailed in a struggle for change.

Ware's enquiry is framed, in part, against the works of South African writer Antjie Krog. Krog's publications, particularly *Begging to be black* (2009), are reflective of her position as a white, Afrikaans-speaking woman; an attempt at understanding that position in the context of the complexities of South African history. And she deals with this by *writing through it*. To quote Ware (2013:5):

> Krog frames her project as one that is both ontological, expressed as a search for a different kind of self, and epistemological, in the sense that this is about a different way of knowing. This task requires a deep reckoning with aspects of the past, her own as well as the catastrophic legacies of European colonial expansion and apartheid.

While I hesitate to compare my enterprise with Krog's, a similar investigation takes place though my painting process, 'inscribing' my past in paint on the surface of many canvases. Although initial processes are a 'working through' of my past and the ways in which that shapes my identity, it is the nature of both photography and painting as *representations,* as *constructions* of identity (depending on the photographer's or viewer's positionalities) that becomes the subject of the paintings as much as the images selected from the original source material. As Andreas Huyssen (1995:3, emphasis added) notes: "The twilight of memory is not just the result of a somehow natural general forgetting that could be counteracted through some form of a more reliable representation. Rather, it is given in the very *structures of representation itself."* The instability of *any* archive became acutely visible in dialogues with other histories; other perspectives; an intertwining of histories played out in the space of exhibitions such as *Past Imperfect*.

Endnotes

1 In my understanding of PLR, I follow Maarit Mäkelä (2007), who describes this approach to research as a process of inquiry where "both the meaning of making and its products (i.e. artefacts) [are] regarded as an essential part". She suggests that "an artefact can embody a greater range of roles: as an object made by an artist-researcher during the process of research, it can also be seen as a method of collecting and preserving information and understanding. Thus, the process of making and its products are strongly connected with the source of knowledge" (Mäkelä 2007:158).

2 While my work stands in dialogue with all of the artists on this exhibition, in this chapter I refer only to Mofokeng's *The Black Photo Album*, which relates specifically to my work.

3 The concept of 'labour' was meant not only as the 'skill' involved in the actual moment of painting, but also the labour preceding the painting; the 'skill' being something that is acquired slowly, through repetition and experience – the 'working through' and control of paint according to the 'dictates' of a particular technique. It is also something that defies easy explanation. The significance of labour involves an explicit reference to the physical experience of time, both as far as the production and interpretation of the artwork is concerned.

4 Personal processes of working and theorising are explicated in previous research (see Preller 2001a, 2005, 2010a).
5 The three paintings discussed form part of a series of works presented in numerous solo exhibitions, including: *Family Album* (2001), ABSA Gallery, Johannesburg; *Snapshots* (2007), gordart, Johannesburg; *Aperture* (2008), Fried Contemporary, Pretoria; *Stills* (2009), Artspace (now Lizamore & Associates), Johannesburg; *City and Suburban* (2010b), Standard Bank Gallery, Johannesburg; *Stilled Lives* (2015), Lizamore & Associates, Johannesburg.
6 I think here of David Goldblatt's series of photographs entitled *The Structure of Things Then* (1998), in which seemingly innocuous images of buildings carry with them the connotations of the structures and strictures of apartheid.
7 This was more fully discussed in previous research (see Preller 2001a, 2005, 2010). In Preller (2001a:52) I refer to the fact that "painting is *more readily* accepted as 'mediated' and therefore 'makes visible' [and accentuates] the photographic mediation – almost setting 'reality at a double remove".
8 The surface of the paintings reveals the complexities inherent both in photography and in painting, and allow for the articulation of the dialogue between practice and theory – a process of "knowing through making" (Mäkelä 2007:157).

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Personal photographic archives and the recollection of trans masculinities

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Abstract

The archive as mnemonic device and taxonomic structure plays a significant role in the visualisation of identity. In this chapter, I draw on the personal photographic archives of three trans men to suggest ways of understanding archives as discursive and visual practices through which narratives of self can be brought to the fore and shared. I consider how these participants negotiate the roles of author, archivist and photographer in the creation of their personal photographic archives, and how such archives intersect with discourses on social memory and intersubjective recollection. By considering the act of archive-making as a creative and transformative endeavour, I am interested in how ideas surrounding a trans (gender) self is interpreted, recorded and disclosed. Insofar as the archive facilitates a meeting point between the self and the other, my focus in this chapter is on how trans masculinities are made visible when entering an archival schema.

Introduction

Creating an archive on the life of a human subject and collecting the visual traces and narratives that such a life produces is not always an easy process. It calls for a sense of purpose and control that, at the outset of such projects, is often more imagined than real. In this sense, to commence is a gesture, like taking a finger and tracing an imaginary circle, and anticipating something arising from this invisible space. Despite the fact that archives are often created and used with the assumption that they can exert control over a given subject matter, my interest in this chapter is on archival gestures that are never completely knowable, traceable or discernible. My interest in the archive as a device and medium for recollection is geared towards forms of personal remembrance that exist outside (or at the edge) of official, institutionalised and/or state-sanctioned archival structures. As an aspect of the knowledge economy, the idea of 'archive' is entrenched by discourses of disclosure and justified belief. At the same time, the archive has also been sedimented in popular rhetoric as synonymous with processes of recollection – as Okwui Enwezor (2008:35) maintains, "so thoroughly has the archive been domesticated that it has come to serve as a shorthand for memory". My focus in this chapter straddles an understanding of archives both as sources of history (or rather, histories), and as a rhetoric for recollection by being concerned with forms of personal and often private archivisation through which varying degrees of exposure and authority are granted to the processes and holdings that comprise such collections.

This chapter draws on doctoral research[1] that I conducted into the photographic representation and recollection of trans masculinities (Van der Wal 2013), in which the participating research subjects used narrative accounts to give a sense of their relationship to the medium of photography. As the basis of this research into personal forms of archival recollection, I facilitated a process whereby three trans men were asked to select specific photographs from their personal photographic collections as an archive of their own making. These participants chose to be identified by their personal names – Robert, Munir and Charl – and they also preferred to be acknowledged as trans men, even though they might use other terms to identify themselves in everyday society. They worked for a South African trans advocacy and support group called *Genderdynamix*, where Robert was employed as an advocacy manager. As a professional photographer and a self-identified trans activist, Robert was interested in my research as a tool for creating awareness about South African trans identities, and he was willing to participate by sharing and talking about his personal photographic collection. Robert also identified other trans men whom he knew through *Genderdynamix,* and asked them whether they would be willing to meet with me. Charl and Munir were the first to contact me, and after meeting them and talking about their relationship with photography, I decided to focus on the personal archives of these three participants. The process that informed my selection of these personal archives was, from the outset, an idiosyncratic one – I never tried to locate a specific 'type' of trans person to write on but, as I met each of these individuals and our relationship developed, our conversations started to centre on ideas around trans masculinity as a complex site of empowerment and vulnerability.

During a series of interviews that were conducted over a period of two years (beginning in 2011), Robert, Munir and Charl used narrative accounts to give a sense of their relationship to the medium of photography. These participants were asked to consider their personal photographic collections as archives; that is, as a compilation of records that, in conjunction with their narrative accounts, provide information about their

identities and lives. This project thus presented a platform for imagining and constructing their photographic collections within an archival schema. Firstly, this entailed a process of selecting, interpreting and compiling photographs as the source material from which a life narrative might be read. Secondly, these personal archives facilitated the transference of information from their own possession to a public record. This study thus involved a *procedure of making the private public in such a way that knowledge is preserved for posterity*, with the idea that the selected images and the interviews would be shared with the readers of any published document (be it a thesis or in any other academic publication). In this manner, the idea of 'archive' is constituted in the images and narratives that the participants share with such an anticipated audience and readership, which, in effect, preserves those histories in a public way.

My project, as I explained it to these participants, was concerned with the manner in which they use photography as a vehicle for the recollection of their gender identities, and the manner in which they store, categorise and display (or archive) such photographs. Their responses to this explanation were diverse, both in terms of their relationship to the photographic medium, their own understanding of their roles as archivists, as well as their interpretation of their identities as trans men. During the interviews it emerged that varying degrees of visibility were afforded to the photographs that they chose to discuss – while some images were specifically pointed out for their ability to convey a sense of self that the participants found conducive to creating a personal, social or political identity, the participants did not share other examples out of fear that these images might put them at risk. Affected by shifting states of visibility, the participants' personal archives seemed to sanction certain representations of self, while others were denied exposure.

As the basis of this chapter, it is specifically the former mode of archivisation – the act of pushing an image of self to the fore – that is of importance. In this chapter, I draw on particular conversations that I had with Robert, Munir and Charl (2011) during my doctoral research, in which they strategically chose certain images that they found conducive towards understanding their experience of masculinity. While Robert and Munir selected a vast range of images, Charl only chose a few.[2] From this wider selection, each of the participants chose one photograph that they highlighted as being important for the intimacy that this image facilitates within their personal archives. These images were shared for the affecting relationship that they illustrate between a (trans/male) self and a larger archival whole. In the following section, these archives are grounded in relevant theoretical frameworks that speak to an understanding of the intimate, but also precarious nature of such collections. From this basis, the individual archival accounts that were proffered by the three research participants are examined for their visual recollection of identity.

Participating in an archive: theories on (re)collection

> We have archives – we preserve archives – because there is something in them that defies understanding but that we want to grasp (Rapaport 1998:68).

The archive as mnemonic device and taxonomic structure plays a significant role in the visualisation of identity. My contention is that archives provide discursive and visual material through which narratives of self can be

uncovered, traced, erased and renegotiated through intersubjective participation by both the creator and viewer of a particular archival construction. As such, my investigation of the personal photographic archives of the three research participants is concerned with their formation as a space where information is assembled with the idea that it renders something knowable and traceable. Such an endeavour arises from (and responds critically to) an historical understanding of archives in the western world for their role in actively "providing the stuff from which histories are constructed" (Ferreira-Buckly 1999:578). As record-keeping practices and institutions, archives served (and to a considerable degree still serve) as the foundation for collecting and disseminating 'evidence', as their imagined ability to accumulate, trade in and, decisively, fabricate 'truth' rendered them the utopian "nerve centre for all possible knowledge" (Richards 1992:104). At the same time, photography has also played a central role in archival discourses for disseminating ideas surrounding the 'truthfulness' and 'authority' of the visual document.[3]

Critical inquiries into the archive as institutional anamnesis characterises contemporary writing, as the various discourses that inform its genesis and genealogy are increasingly viewed with suspicion. Scholars from a wide range of fields have started to destabilise those archival structures that upheld colonialist, positivist and/or modernist preoccupations with taxonomies of 'authenticity' and 'universality'. In a broader sense, such a process of archival reconfiguration is important as it allows for a rethinking of the role of memory, which bears significantly on the contemporary South African context. Colonial discourses and apartheid have left an indelible mark on local processes of mnemonic recollection and, as Kenneth Christie (2000:8) argues, "South Africa is a country where the notion of 'fractured' memory is given new meaning. Memory is not fractured here; rather it is splintered, rent apart, torn into a multitude of pieces". The theme of picking up shards of memory surfaces frequently in writings that deal with South Africa's fragmented mnemonic relation to its colonial and apartheid past – by using memory as a means of countering silence and amnesia (Brink 1998) and as a tool for opposing grand narratives (Lewis 2000); by disclosing personal memories to the public in order be held accountable for them (Cassin 2001); or by trying to find shared memories amidst divergent and conflicting histories (Nuttall & Coetzee 1998). These ideas show a concern with recollective/archival processes as vehicles for rethinking South African identities collectively and publically within a democratic framework.

With certain identities being deprived of visual and discursive space for expression, local archiving practices show a growing need for finding documents/images to verify historic existence. One such platform for rethinking memory is provided by the establishment of 'other', unofficial archives that feed off the visual and discursive material neglected or censored by normative institutions. This phenomenon is particularly relevant to the South African context where marginalised identities (be they sexual, racial, cultural and so forth) are conspicuous in their radical absence or distortion. On the one hand, such archival enquiries speak of a larger reaction to essentialist claims and acts of censorship that pervade archival institutions – see, for example, the work of Agamben (1999, 2000) and Villarejo (2002), which focuses on processes of erasure and vilification that occur within institutional archives. In addition, there has also been a growing body of archival research and platforms specifically concerned with previously ignored or repressed histories – see the work of Arondekar (2005); Lukenbill (2002); Cvetkovich (2003); Epprecht (2004) and Reid (2005), amongst others, which touch on the absence of lesbian, bisexual, gay and transgendered subjects within the state-sanctioned and/or colonial archive. Such an interest in the discursive and visual erasure of such subjects can also be seen

in the establishment of various 'alternative' archives in South Africa.[4]

While such an endeavour for creating alternative archival bodies speaks to a definite need for critical remembrance and excavation, another framework for thinking about contemporary archive-making practices is a perspective on recollection as shaped by processes of exchange. Here, the idea of social memory as an archival endeavour to trace, record and recount collectively is of value. For Susannah Radstone (2000), social memory points towards an intersubjective relationship that is facilitated through the exchange of memory between different subjects, as it is supported by (inter alia) institutions of recollection, such as archives (see also Fentress & Wickham 1992; Gedi & Elam 1996; Olick & Robbins 1998). Hence, the act of recollection can be seen as a "social bond" (Papoulias 2003:117) through which the exchange of stories of self and other is made possible. This idea also resonates with Jonathan Boyarin's (1994:26) argument that "memory cannot be strictly individual, inasmuch as it is symbolic and hence intersubjective. Nor can it be literally collective, since it is not superorganic but embodied". These viewpoints posit recollection (that is, the process and product of recalling histories and stories) as located somewhere between the subject and the social, the discursive and the embodied.

By seeing recollection as an intersubjective practice, Jens Brockmeier (2010) also posits narrative as a central part of memory making – for him, the act of telling/showing one's story provides the human subject with a means of contextualising memories and ideas of self. Narrative processes of recollection are specifically highlighted by Brockmeier for their potential to disrupt the traditional notion of memory as a storage space – an idea that he labels the "archival model" of memory.[5] This archival model is critiqued for its accentuation of memory "as a static and stable place of storage, where past perceptions and experiences are retained and from where they can be retrieved" (Brockmeier 2010:10). Along these lines, conception of 'the archive' and 'the human' as insular structures is destabilised by emphasising recollection as the basis for intersubjective relationships – the human being does not *recollect* memory, Brockmeier argues, but he/she rather *renegotiates* their sense of history and of self through processes of narrative interaction. Such an idea of the archive as, firstly, an intersubjective practice and, secondly, a space of creative renegotiation/recreation is of central importance to this chapter, and it forms the basis of my discussion of the participants' photographic archives that follows in the next section.

'Here I am, this is me' – finding the man in the archive

When confronted with the task of assuming/imagining the role of the archivist, the three participants chose images strategically that spoke of their own interpretation of, and control over, their lives. Hence, these images were invested with the power of framing, through narrative, an account of self that the participants wanted to share and remember *with* an audience. In this creative process of selecting, editing, translating and compiling visual documents, the very practice of archiving emerged as profoundly intersubjective, insofar as it necessitates an understanding of the archive as simultaneously geared towards the self as well as an other – an audience (or even an idea of 'an other') to whom this account of self is directed. The notion of sharing an archive is thus important when reading the selected images – these photographs are meant to be read as vehicles for remembering the self in a specific way.

Robert's, Munir's and Charl's archives are orientated towards an autobiographic presentation of self, as they serve the purpose of lending substance (or proof) of a certain identity. As such, these archives present a conspicuously gendered form of archivisation – one that counters (gendered) ambivalence and uncertainty by presenting the subject as *he* emerges from the narratives and photographs. For Robert, the idea of being an archivist resonates strongly with his perceived ability for understanding and utilising visual documents as recollective devices strategically – that is, as media that 'remembers' a particular (masculine) account of self. This act of making an image 'remember correctly' is strongly infused by Robert's perceived capacity to *be persuasive* when framing or fixing the meaning of a given image. As such, the way in which an image is selected, represented and described is of critical value for ascertaining a mode of controlled recollection.

This idea can be seen in one of the images that Robert selected for his archive (Fig. 1). This image, which Robert (2011) calls the "honeymoon" photograph, is the first that he selected for his archive, and he emphasises its value by describing it as a "milestone photograph". The value that Robert attaches to this image is perhaps nowhere more apparent than in the way that it is displayed and archived. According to Robert

ABOVE: Figure 1. Robert, Honeymoon, undated | Digital photograph | Courtesy the artist

(2011), this is the only framed photograph that he has in his home, and it stands next to his bed. It therefore occupies a central and coveted position in his living environment. While "it is a little kitsch when people place framed pictures of themselves throughout their home … this is an image of which I will never tire", Robert (2011) claims, hence its prominent display.

When discussing this image, he highlights his role in setting it up in such a way that the romantic nature of the event is accentuated. To Robert (2011), the significance of this image lies in the "constructed truth" that it contains. Part of the reason why he appreciates this image is his ability to recognise different frames of reality that informs its meaning[6] – he knows why and how this image was constructed, and which realities are occluded in its construction and its subsequent display. For example, he knows that, despite the affection that this picture alludes to, his wife was "grumpy" and not in the mood for a romantic photograph. To Robert (2011), this image is "filled with irony" and, for all the value that he invests in the romantic aspects that surround this image, part of its personal worth is based on the conflicting realities that he managed to control and manipulate. His role as creator is pronounced as the construction and interpretation of this image is based on an idea of having inside knowledge – of knowing what 'really' happened when the photograph was taken, and how a different reality is created when presented to an outside audience. For Robert (2011), the photograph becomes "representative of *the* moment"; yet this moment is based on a suggested reality and an implied reading of the image.

Part of its suggestive value also depends upon the image's ability to frame him as masculine – as Robert contends, such honeymoon images are linked intricately to a display of masculinity as they allude to the consummation of his role as a man. In this regard, Figure 1 serves a socio-symbolic function, as it references an initiation into his role as husband and, by implication, as man. This demonstration of his masculinity is directly geared towards a future audience – as Robert (2011) argues, this is an image that "you will display … and you will show … to your children". In terms of the anticipated audience of this image, Robert (2011) regards it as a photograph that he will share with anyone – the image is "all-appealing" and its "story" (its representation of the "romantic" moment between him and his wife) can be shared with any person who is interested. In addition to such a general audience, Robert also alludes to children as a possible result of, and future audience for, the union that is depicted between him and his wife. These children would, in effect, also form part of the public audience for whom his personal photographic archive is intended. This reference accentuates an idea of domestic masculinity – of Robert's role as husband and, possibly, as father – that bolsters and draws from the romance of the depicted honeymoon scene. Its symbolic value as a sign of his masculinity is thus based on its ability to function in a public archive (of being shared with a viewer), and on an anticipated audience's reading of this image as a sign of masculinity. The historic value of this image is predicted and, to a large degree, projected on to the future.[7]

By sharing this image with an audience, Robert seems intent on raising the spectator's awareness of the degree to which he is recognised and accepted as a man. Robert appears in control as the image is set on demonstrating his hold over his own masculinity. As he (Robert 2011) contends, he uses images to capture certain aspects to create an archival "safe space" for himself and other trans men – a space of recognition and protection where his experience of masculinity emerges in conjunction with (and despite of) the audience's knowledge of his transness. Such an archival safe space is strongly geared towards an intersubjective

understanding of recollection, as it necessitates an understanding of the archive as simultaneously directed towards the self as well as an other – an audience to whom this account of self is directed. Here, a system of recollection is facilitated that has a profound social dimension – as this particular image demonstrates, concurrent processes of *sharing and participating* in a sense of self are at play when using photography as an archival document.

The notion of sharing an archive is perhaps nowhere more conspicuous than in Munir's allusion to an archive that is reflected by (and exists within, so to speak) one of his chosen images. Figure 2 is the result of a process in which Munir converted two existing photographs (which were taken at a film festival in Cape Town, with him posing on the right alongside an anonymous female friend) into the current image by inserting these photographs into a digital template that he found on the internet. The resulting image shows the hands of an anonymous viewer who is apparently contemplating Munir's photographs. As suggested in the background, these two photographs form part of the photographic archive of another person, as they were selected (the template seems to suggest) from the box of photographs in the left-hand corner. In this careful blend of 'fact' and 'fiction', of

ABOVE: Figure 2. Munir, undated | Digital photograph | Courtesy the author

imagining a personal past within an archival replica, a public/personal meta-narrative is created that speaks of and is geared towards an audience. While this image draws upon a public template (one that is available to anyone who uses the internet, and that other people have most likely also used), the narrative that is created is made personal by the fact that specific images can be inserted into it. This template thus seems to create the opportunity for imagining the personal within a public setting, and of using its frame of generalisation to highlight the individual as a social being. It is, however, important to note that the use of a template in this image is not always conspicuous to the viewer, as it operates (on a technical level at least) in a seamless manner.[8]

On one level, a person is implied, one who is holding these photographs and, in Munir's (2011) words, who is "admiring" them. At the same time, the viewer of this image is implicated by being placed in a position that coincides with the gaze of the portrayed admirer (the template seems to suggest that the position of this admirer is interchangeable with that of the viewer). The hands of the portrayed admirer/archivist act as placeholders as they allow (and urge) the viewer to participate in this archival fantasy. The depicted scene of domesticity (with flowers, perfume bottles and a cup of tea) also seems to speak of such an attempt at inviting the viewer into an environment that is supposedly 'safe' and homelike. In this way, Munir is depicted as a subject who is worthy of admiration, while a viewer is called upon to participate in this gesture of endearment – this portrayal thus involves a form of interpellation that calls into being both the subject and an audience. The emphasis that is placed on sharing an idea of 'archive' thus demonstrates how this image is geared towards not only supplementing and repairing the archive of the subject, but also the archive of an anonymous other. It seems as if this image speaks of a perceived gap that might exist in different archives – be it in Munir's own archive, a family archive, or even a larger archive of public knowledge/acknowledgement.

Similar to Robert's chosen image, Munir's ability to pass (as male) within a photographic archive is particularly pronounced. Munir's archive presents a clearly delineated version of his life as a man, and as such, he chooses not to make any visual reference to a pre-transition or transitioning subjectivity. His interpretation of a masculine, post-transition self is a central theme that recurs throughout his analysis of his archive. When discussing the communicative value of Figure 2, for example, Munir chooses to underscore the ability of the image to convey a masculine version of self. The significance of this image lies in his ability to recognise and assert himself as a man – in his words: "that's me … a guy standing there because of the slacks and the shirt and the tie, and with a woman on my side. That definitely describes masculinity – I'm like a *man* standing there" (Munir 2011). Munir (2011) makes repeated reference to a feeling of happiness and contentment that pervades his experience of the image and the event that it portrays. Many of these emotions are attached to the "ease" and "comfort" with which he represented himself as male at the event. The certainty with which he identifies himself and the emotions attached to such a form of identification are thus ascribed to his ability to inhabit, display *and recollect* the space of 'man' convincingly and unambiguously. In all, Munir's treatment of this image echoes Robert's (2011) idea of an archival "safe space", as Munir (2011) sees this image as representative of a "comfort zone"; a recollected moment where "I'm at ease and comfortable with myself and the space that I am in".

Charl's archive shows a similar predilection for enabling its subject to find and negotiate a space of safety where he can pass as a man. While his archive contains a photograph of a pre-transition self (Fig. 3), this image is deliberately chosen for its ability to be read as an indicator of his latent masculinity. Charl (2011) places much importance on his ability to pass within everyday society, and his archive reflects a concern with not being read

as trans. As passing is treated as an achievement, and in some cases a necessity, Charl's need to be read as a man resounds both in his contact with people in public spaces, as well as in his presentation of self within his photographic archive. This idea is echoed in Charl's (2011) response to a question about how important it is for him to pass as male in everyday society:

> It is very important. For that reason I always get worried when I do decide to shave, I get worried that they might see the feminine coming through. So as far as possible, I shave very seldom, because when you see the beard, you see a male … Basically I stay in stealth, because I do need to be accepted. I don't often wear casual clothes, because jeans are too unisex, I need to wear something that makes people immediately see me as a male. So people look at me and think that I am very formal, but actually I am not being formal, I'm just looking after myself.

Despite the importance of gearing his archive towards the masculine, one of Charl's most cherished images (and the first one that he selected to disclose to an audience) is Figure 3, which shows him as a pre-transition

ABOVE: Figure 3. Charl, undated | Analogue photograph | 13.5 x 9.5 cm | Courtesy the author

subject. This photograph is arguably one of the images that fits most 'comfortably' into Charl's archive insofar as he sees it as an image that captures him at a contented stage of his life and that he chooses to share with an audience for this very reason. It is, in fact, one of the only images that Charl (2011) describes as "precious" and one that he deliberately safeguards. When asked what this image communicates to him, Charl (2011) explains: "I think of all the images that were taken of me, I am at my happiest in this particular photograph, and I think it shows. I suppose for myself, I don't think that there has been another period like that, ever". In addition, its power as a visual archive of identity rests on its ability to capture him in a way that he describes as masculine – for Charl (2011), this is a "fairly butch photograph" that supplements his current status as male. As Charl admits, if this photograph presented him in a way that could be read as feminine, it would become a problematic image – one that would probably not be included in his archive.

When presenting this image as part of his personal archive, the intimacy that it evokes (and demands) is crucial for understanding this image – it is a photograph that Charl (2011) often carries around with him; it is "never far away". Similarly, Robert's (2011) treatment of his selected photograph suggests a record and repository that is dear and close – it speaks of keeping an image at hand that frames a moment and a life "correctly". Meanwhile, Munir's selected image speaks of a wilful construction of archival intimacy by imagining an audience that wishes to invest in him, so to speak, by treating him as worthy of being recollected. The hands that hold his photographs in the created image points towards a desire for being remembered by an other – of someone deeming a life significant enough for it to be recorded, represented and recollected; *to be archived*.

Conclusion

A common thread underpinning Robert's, Munir's and Charl's narratives is the need for a space of visual reflection where one can be recognised – be it in the act of recognising oneself, or of directing the gaze of an other. Such an act of turning towards oneself bears strongly on the lives of these trans men, as it facilitates a space where they can meet an other (an outsider) and share their life stories in such a way that the act of recollection is conducive towards the gendered lives that they wish to lead. In short, the memories that they share in image and text speak of their desire, and ultimately their ability, to be men. In their personal archives, image and text form a complex relationship, as words become the means for imbuing photographs with particular meanings. In this manner, photography is underscored simultaneously as a referential and conjuring medium, as something that can direct the viewer's gaze to that which exists, or that which the subject wishes to propose, accentuate or invoke when talking about a particular image. Be it as a tool for recollection or recreation, the translation of photographs into words and the associated instilling of narrative meaning within the photographic image provides a space where the trans subject can potentially negotiate the role of archivist and author.

This act of sharing is situated at the crossroads of the private and the public, and it points towards the transformation of knowledge from the one domain to the other. The very idea of archive stands at the centre of this transformative act, insofar as it facilitates a creative position from which a subject can authorise and remember a given account of self by selecting material strategically from the past. Being in service of a particular vision of the future, this act of selection is as much about remembering the past as it is about allowing the

subjects to emerge as they wish to – to narrate and visualise a particular version of self into being. Robert, Munir and Charl chose to disclose themselves in such a way that their recollection of themselves privileges a certain account of their gendered lives – they remember themselves *as men* and, while the anticipated audience and readership is granted knowledge of their trans status (insofar as they present themselves as trans in the words that they use to describe themselves), the images do not disclose this. The act of archiving one's own life is thus interpreted in this context as a place where information can be shared in different ways and on different levels, with knowledge of a particular issue (such as transness) emphasised or erased, depending on the desires of the human subject. As such, sharing an archive, allowing a viewer *to see*, *to read* and *to know*, is never a gesture of complete admission or comprehension. This act of sharing is an intimate attempt at trying to find a common language to become social, to connect with an other, and to remember together.

Endnotes

1 This research project took the form of a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Visual Arts at Stellenbosch University in 2013.

2 During the interviews, Robert shared more than 100 images, which reflected his particular relationship to the photographic medium. As an artist, he specifically highlighted the power of photography to (re)produce an image of self that he finds conducive towards exploring his masculinity. In contrast, Charl only had five images available, which he attributed to his general distrust of the photographic medium.

3 The representational value of photography is a much debated subject, especially as it intersects with the domain of archival sciences. See, for example, Sekula (1993); Enwezor (2008); Tagg (1988); Schwartz (2000); and Green & Lowry (2003) on general critiques of the idea of photographic referentiality as it has traditionally been endorsed in archival practices.

4 See, for example, the Gay and Lesbian Archives, which is concerned with the heritage and neglected past of South African homosexuals as it strives to be "a permanent institutional home for the wide range of historical and archival material relating to gay and lesbian experience in South Africa" (Gay and Lesbian Archives of South Africa [sa]), while it also houses a range of material on trans identities. Other examples of the establishment and/or renegotiation of archival structures include Jean Brundrit's (2008) *Lesbian Story* project, as well as the artwork of Zanele Muholi, which is often read as a visual archive of lesbian experience (Thomas 2010:423). Such responses activate a visual history that simultaneously runs parallel with (as it supplements) and counter to (as it critically addresses the lack within) South African archival structures.

5 See also Koriat & Goldsmith (1996) for a critical discussion of what they call the "storehouse metaphor" of memory.

6 Robert (2011) strongly accentuates photography's value as a framing device as he regards the self-reflexive/self-reflective nature of the medium as essential for orientating his own sense of self – as he contends, "I have used photography to find myself". As a professional photographer and artist, photography is crucial to Robert's process of creating and archiving a specific version of self.

7 Being directed towards the "future anterior", Jacques Derrida (1998:46) sees the archive as a space that is open to reinterpretation, and can never be closed or finalised. The archive is dependent on and always awaiting the future – the "what is coming" and the "what will have come" (Derrida 1998:46) – an idea that is reflected in the research participants' interpretation of their own archives.

8 When Munir first showed the image to me, I was not aware that it was created from a digital template. It was only when I asked him about the identity of the person whose hands are depicted that my attention was drawn to the way in which this image was produced.

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Photographies, complicities and possibilities

Unseaming images

THE LIMITS AND POSSIBILITIES FOR RECONFIGURING ALBUMS OF COMPLICITY

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Abstract

In this chapter, I inquire whether counter-archival strategies used in the documentary film entitled *The Village Under the Forest* (Grunebaum & Kaplan 2013) might risk failure as a condition of their deployment. My discussion tracks the question of complicity and counter-archival strategy through consideration of the repurposing of personal photos of travel to Israel in the film.

During the states of emergency in 1980s South Africa, my travel photos represented my desire to affiliate to Israel and its promise to the Jewish diaspora to belong to its polity. In the film's visual matrix, these political claims are reconfigured. They are also 'cut into' and over, footage and voice-overs of interviews with Palestinians. Whilst these editing choices enable the photos' earlier meanings to be 'unseamed', they firstly raise the question: what limitations were encountered in the repurposing of my photographs towards offering an account of complicity? While the repurposed images interrupt the apparent 'seamlessness' of my earlier ideological affiliations to Israel, use of the travel photos in the film may also contribute towards creating a narrative in which Palestinians are (re)displaced; instrumentalised within an interpretative framework that explores complicity with their displacement, yet places complicity as the central narrative.

Secondly, I ask what is displaced of South Africa in the film, given that the photos were taken during the 1980s? Here the possibilities for my repurposed travel album photos to open different ethical relations and political vision than those asserted prior to their insertion in the film are countered by another limitation: if a counter-archive of complicity is to be assembled as a simultaneous account of the conditions of possibility for its becoming, then the risk of failure may constitute a necessary outcome in accounting for complicity.

In response to the question of what it could mean to be morally complicit with apartheid in South Africa, the documentary film entitled *The Village Under the Forest* (Kaplan & Grunebaum 2013) (hereafter *The Village*) turns towards Palestine/Israel in order to excavate the cultivated South Africa Forest established over the ruins of the destroyed Palestinian village, Lubya, in the Galilee, following the 1948 War for Palestine. Lubya was forcibly depopulated in 1948 by the Zionist militia later to form part of Israel's army, the *Haganah*. As was the case with some 500 other Palestinian localities that were depopulated during this war, displaced Palestinians from Lubya were not permitted to return to their homes or lands. This experience of explusion and dispossession is known in Arabic as the *Nakba* (catastrophe), for it marks the founding – and ongoing – displacement of Palestinians by the Israeli state and their exclusion from the narratives of the formation of the Israeli state in currently dominant historical narratives.

Among its many activities to extend and consolidate the Zionist enterprise in historic Palestine, the Jewish National Fund (JNF), established in 1901, was concerned with land acquisition, settlement, infrastructural development and large-scale forestation projects. According to Noga Kadman (2008), 86 JNF forests were planted on the ruins of destroyed Palestinian villages. The JNF planted the forest known as 'South Africa Forest' in the 1960s with contributions by South African Jews. Many of 'us' who had planted trees in South Africa Forest were not aware that 'our' trees concealed the ruins of the demolished village; that the JNF played a significant role in 'Judaising' historic Palestine; or that the trees in the forest and leisure park hid the existence of Lubya. I visited South Africa Forest for a second time in 2009 after becoming aware of Lubya's existence. My visit to this vast, haunting, almost pastoral pine forest and extensive scattering of ruins became an encounter with its topography of concealment and disavowed memories, as well as with the extent of my implication in JNF tree-planting, or 'greening the land', as an act of effacement.

Mark J Kaplan and I worked on researching, scripting, production and post-production of the film from 2009 to 2013. Concerned with the effects and entanglements of being implicated, we conceive of the film as an unfolding moral awareness of complicity that encounters the processes of erasure of Palestinian *Nakba*. *The Village*'s visual matrix includes interviews and footage filmed by the Palestinian, Israeli, South African and Syrian cinematographers with whom we worked on the production between November 2011 and May 2012 in Palestine/Israel, Britain, Denmark and Syria. It incorporates archival footage and stills from a range of film archives; archival photographs; as well as photographs from private and personal albums, sourced from South Africa, Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, Ramallah, Arhus (Denmark), Yarmouk (Syria) and Moscow. The following discussion focuses on photos from personal travel albums of trips I made to Israel during the 1980s at the height of the states of emergency in South Africa. Kaplan and I repurposed these to mark the ways that the travel snapshots performed my desire for affliation with Israel and its transnational promise to non-Israeli Jewish people to belong to its ethnic polity. In repurposing the photos, it became clear to us that they constitute an album of complicity – they could be named as such once they were repurposed as a counter-archival strategy to critically engage the narratives of Israel's founding that have been taught in the Jewish diaspora.

Whilst Kaplan and I redirected the vectors of the earlier meanings of my travel photos reconfiguring their prior political claims, in the visual matrix of *The Village*, my snapshots are also 'cut into' and layered over footage of interviews with Palestinians from Lubya. Despite its presence as a catalytic question to explore complicity, South Africa does not figure in the film as a direct referent or analogy.[2] What limits then may our

repurposing of photographs in the film encounter towards offering an account of complicity? In the following discussion, Ariella Azoulay's (2012a:18) proposition that the "event of photography" is made through an "ontology of the many, of the human being with others in which camera and photo are implicated", prompts a thought path in which I explore the possibilities and limitations for photographs to be reconfigured so as to open a different ethical relation between subjects than that constituted by erasure, transnational entitlement and historical denial. The work of re-constellation activated by deploying an album of complicity simultaneously encounters a limitation that may mark the failure of such efforts. For whilst the distinction Azoulay (2012a:18) makes between the photographed event and the event of photography is important in discerning and setting to work new fields of meaning, ethical relations and political claims, the "citizenry of photography" to which the distinction gives rise is shaped in differentiated ways by the forms, proximities and afterlives of violence that are its condition of possibility. While this may inhibit rather than expand thinking about complicit subjects and archives of complicity, it has productively prompted my thinking about the possibilities and limitations of, and failures in, excavating complicity through my discussion of the photographic archives Kaplan and I use in our film.

Albums of complicity

In grappling with the afterlives of mass violence and the unfurling of state and structural violence with their seepages into everyday life and the life-worlds of people who, in different ways, live in the shadows of historical catastrophes, the question of complicity – being implicated – often takes two modes of discursive and moral response. Both modes rely on conceptions of the subject of human agency in rather narrow, individualised and often identitarian or essentialist terms. The first mode, the confessional or autobiographical, tends to map narrative structures of address onto moral discourses of guilt, admission, acknowledgement and the search for redemption or closure. The second mode, also drawing on autobiographical discourse, favours edification of a kind of historical denialism in which rather than admitting, acknowledging and seeking redemption, the narrative deploys more empirical claims to distance and therefore to deny implicated-ness: 'I was not there; I did not know; I was too young; I did not pull the trigger; I was a product of indoctrination of a totalitarian system'. In this movement of distantiation, the complex, uneven, discomfiting and non-linear task of working through, and with, what complicity may mean is disavowed. A different mode, however, is suggested by Michael Rothberg (2014) who names complicity via the category of "implicated subjects". These, he suggests are the

> large and heterogenous collections of subjects who enable and benefit from traumatic violence without taking part in it directly. The category of implicated subjects emerges in relation to both historical and contemporary scenarios of violence [describing] the indirect responsibility of subjects situated at temporal or geographic distance from the production of social suffering. … *implication* draws attention to how we are *entwined with* and *folded into* ('im-pli-cated in') histories and situations that surpass our agency as individual subjects (Rothberg 2014).

Rothberg's formulation opens and productively reorients Mark Sanders's (2002) argument for the need to rethink epistemological complicity – enfoldedness – philosophically as well as through the work and at the limits of oppositional critique. Rothberg (2014) suggests that in thinking about "'implicatedness'" attention [may be directed] to the conditions of possibility of violence as well as its lingering impact, suggest[ing] new routes of opposition". To think about complicity in this way is not to minimise individual agency nor to exonerate individual collusion but rather to expand the analytical horizon. This would enable thinking about and accounting for structural, systemic and indirect forms of complicity that may conscript individual subjects yet exceed individual agency. Not only does Rothberg's formulation enable a necessary rethinking of complicity beyond the binary and individualised relations inherent in the terms 'victims' and 'perpetrators'; it also contributes to elaborating a critique of violence conceived as event whose temporal boundedness and causal relations are clearly discernable.

The question of Jewish diaspora implicatedness in the ongoing *Nakba*, as Kaplan and I excavate it in *The Village*, asks that the faultlines that characterise Israeli and Jewish diaspora nationalist claims to place and history be treated with care and attention. For along these faultlines the effects of a long and complex pedagogical co-option – a process by which being implicated has been difficult to escape – have become tethered to the psychic energies of fear which linger in the transgenerational afterlives of persecution and genocide, the *Shoah*. Aided by the political instrumentalisation of the *Shoah*, techniques of indoctrination by the Zionist movement and Israeli state across the Jewish diaspora have reproduced a constant mirroring, as well as an insistent and, until recently, hegemonic way of looking at Israel's partitioned land, history, and depopulation of Palestinians by ongoing "regime-made disaster[s]" (Azoulay 2012b:29). In the film the personal narrative voice and narrative viewpoint are visually indicated through the presence of a narrative guide (which I assume). The personal voice of the narration expands and shrinks from the first person singular, 'I', to the first person plural, 'we' and back again, suggesting that complicity emerges from and is located within "a matrix of multiple affinities, psychic landscapes, collective identities and political subjectivities" (Grunebaum 2014). Our reconfiguration of my travel photos re-assembled in *The Village* as an 'album of complicity' is an attempt to grapple with, and critically rehearse, the pedagogical process that is also implicated in such a systemic matrix of affinities, identities, meanings and subjectivities.

I visited South Africa Forest in 1983 as a participant in an orthodox Zionist youth programme called *Tochniet Akiva* (Akiva's Programme). The programme, comprising a highly ritualised pilgrimage to Israel, echoed Zionist youth programmes replicated throughout the Jewish diaspora, such as the American Birthright-*Taglit* programme. In those pedagogical itineraries, the spatial, topographic and affective narratives one encounters in Israel bring alive a landscape of "biblical patriarchs, modern Zionist prophets and global Jewish pilgrims"(Grunebaum 2012:277). The travel photos from my 1983 album therefore narrate a familiar framing of ethno-nationalist beholding: snapshots of landscapes at the Lake of Tiberias in the Galilee; Timna in the Negev/Naqab desert; Jerusalem's city skyline with the view of *Al Aqsa*'s golden dome from the Mount of Olives. Photos of tired teenagers in the tour bus, posing in groups at sites of battles, perched atop ageing carcasses of military hardware across a vast, visually selective warscape (Fig. 1).

There are 'nature' shots that I had taken during *tiyyulim* (tours) and hikes in the *wadis* (ravines) of the Galilee. Snaps at ancient biblical sites and modern battle fields where the disjunctive temporal arcs of

archaeology and military history coalesce into contemporary stories of territory and might, spanning thousands of years and compressed into the photographed moment's here-and-now. In addition to these photos, there are those from a later visit in 1987, which I took during a year-long stay based at a Kibbutz near Tel Aviv when immigration to Israel became a more serious option for me as a moral exit from the complicities of South African 'whiteness' with apartheid. The later photos expand on and deepen the affiliations to the ideological and nationalist community depicted in the earlier album.

Previously, I raised the question of 'pedagogical co-option'. What does this mean and from what pedagogical loam do the photos emerge? I attended Yeshiva College high school, a private Orthodox Jewish day school in Johannesburg. In the pedagogical milieu of Yeshiva College, collective Jewish identity was

ABOVE: Figure 1. Photographer unknown, Author and friend on the remains of an Israeli tank, Israel, 1983 | Courtesy the author

shaped through students' immersion in daily engagement with Torah learning, with the intellectual traditions and methods of Talmudic exegesis, and with what was for me, an exhilarating immersion in the importance of disagreement and dispute for the exploration of ideas. Collective Jewish identity was forged through the braiding of these traditions with a modern religious and political Zionist sensibility. The *Bnei Akiva* (Children of Akiva) youth movement, which was affiliated to Yeshiva College, was established in the 1920s in Israel as a religious Zionist organisation. Ideologically tied to the state of Israel through *Bnei Akiva's* founding mission, historico-theological narratives, and the geographical territory onto which these are mapped, the *Tochniet Akiva* programme tightened these bonds pedagogically.

Marianne Hirsch and Leo Spitzer (2014) address the institutional matrix of schooling in which the genre of school photography is embedded.[3] As a visual repertoire in the making of national citizens or as visual ciphers of settler colonial trusteeship in producing obeisant subjects, Hirsch and Spitzer position school photography as a technology arising at the same time as ideologies of social assimilation. They argue that assimilation is a fluid, multi-layered concept that points to messy, uneven and fractious social processes which they suggest are discernable in school photographs. These may offer "snapshots of a moment in this process, revealing its pushes and pulls, the assent and dissent, the gains and the losses, and the multiple erasures, that characterize this fraught recursive trajectory" (Hirsch & Spitzer 2014).

My travel photos, particularly those taken during the *Tochniet Akiva* programme introduce another plain of unsettlement. This intersects the fluid lines of assimilation, of assimilable subjects that Hirsch and Spitzer argue are suggested by school photographs in which difference and particularity are flattened as young people are inducted into the visual grammars of national citizenship. My albums could be understood as visually performative metonyms for a transnational claim signalled by Israel's Law of Return (1950) that characterises the state as ethnocratic and grants the automatic political right to diaspora Jews to take up citizenship in Israel by virtue of their Jewishness. However, the albums could also be understood as having been conditioned by, and implicated in, a regime of visuality in which Palestinians are continually made to disappear in order for the political right of Jewish citizenship for diaspora Jews to be given effect. As albums of complicity, they can also be thought of in relation to the impetus of early Zionist intellectuals to return Jews to a modern concept of History. That is, to create a 'national' basis for Jewish particularity, partly in response to the political crisis wrought by Jewish difference for European political modernity and for its project of the nation-state. As visual ciphers of the induction of high school students into another configuration of Jewish diaspora nationalist belonging, the photos in my travel album contrast with the assimilationist vector of the school photographs Hirsch and Spitzer explicate.

Removed from the albums and audiences of family and friends who constitute its primary addressees, my travel photos are placed into a different configuration of relations between subjects in the film and between the film and its viewing publics. In the travel albums the photos erase the erasure of Palestinians' presence from Israel's visual landscape. In the film, Kaplan and I un-seam this process of erasing erasure by making this process visible. In order for the photos to be named as complicit in the visual and discursive technologies of erasure of the *Nakba*, they first had to participate in making the *Nakba* invisible, unsee-able. In the process of 'unseaming' how the photographs could not but erase the *Nakba* as a condition for expressing my yearning for *Eretz Israel* (the Land of Israel), the photos also become 'unseeming' (morally improper). There is a

belatedness to naming the photos an album of complicity. The temporal unfolding inherent to the incremental, uneven process of becoming morally aware is attendant upon my being implicated in a matrix of violence prior to the moral and cognitive shift that enables perceiving, seeing and understanding anew. The belatedness of naming the photos an album of complicity intersects with the shifting and conjunctural politics of meaning that flow from the circuits and circulations of repurposed archival and personal photographs. In our re-assembling of those photographs in sequences of the film together with archival footage of the 1948 war for Palestine; filmed interviews with expelled Palestinians from Lubya; Jewish people who participated, and with others who insist on a dissenting and demilitarised vision of memory work and political futures, we point to another relationship of historical interconnection and ethical obligation. This obligation addresses the *Nakba* as a question of the future, enabling a critical unseaming of ethno-nationalist pedagogies that produce visceral, psychic and transnational Jewish attachments to the Land of Israel, the militarisation of its narratives and the ideological repertoires en-framed in my photo albums. In this belated naming of an album of complicity through movement of the album from the personal domain to the more public scenarios of address staged by the film, the photos become connected to the *Nakba* and its continued duration, not as an idea, but through material and historical links between human subjects.

In repurposing photos that attest to, and condition, normative ways of seeing that nurture and sustain complicity with ongoing forms of Israeli state violence, we attempt to re-distribute "the sensible" by de-partitioning narratives of history that maintain and naturalise separation (Rancière 2004).[4] This speaks to our efforts to remap points of connection and fracture, of ruin and erasure, of complicity and the work of imagining and inhabiting dissenting political perspectives. Here it is worth considering the insertion of still images into the linear movement of the film in relation to the mode of complicity or implicated-ness that Rothberg discusses. This gestures towards an understanding of violence that is more durational, ongoing and unfolding rather than a discrete or spectacular 'event'. I wonder if the photographs' stillness may also insert a temporal suspension into the continuity of the moving image, a barely registered yet momentary pause that may counter the speed of eventfulness which is increasingly the speed of digital editing in contemporary cinema. Opening a transient space to dwell in the belatedness of the form of the photograph may introduce a pace and a rhythm slightly at odds with the time-speed of war. The placement of the photographs into a reconfigured, intertwined visual archive also suggests that a sustained engagement with complicity requires a temporal slowing down. Such deceleration may be necessary in order for the viewer to apprehend catastrophe as systemic and durational, structural and enfolding, rather than as event.

Counter archives: still(s) dispersed

The dispersed sources of many photographs in the film stand also for the indeterminacies and heterogeneous meanings of still images and their range of archival provenance. Indeed, the provenance of each image has its own story, mediated by the synchronicities, coincidences, blockages and cul-de-sacs of my re-search for the film. Each photo, still or clip of archive has its own provisional biography, its circuits of meaning and politics of repurposed display, its fields of address and political claim. In *The Village's* visual matrix, the photographs

appear within a wider set of relationships with other visual, textual and audio sources that restore, complicate, and re-position points of connection implicated in the *Nakba*.

Consider the hand drawn map and aerial photograph of Lubya, which can be seen in a number of sequences in *The Village*. The map was created to scale, from memory, by Haj Mohammed Kharzoun who appears in the film. Until recently Kharzoun stayed in Yarmouk refugee camp, in Damascus, Syria. Since fleeing the civil war in Syria and finding refuge in eastern Lebanon, Kharzoun is a refugee twice over. In a sequence that deals with the centrality and persistence of memory for Palestinians from Lubya, Na'if Hujjo, a community leader born in Lubya, unfurls Kharzoun's hand-drawn map and sets it on a flat-topped rock in South Africa Forest, amidst the ruins of Lubya. Na'if Hujjo lays the memory map beside an aerial photographic map of Lubya taken during the British mandate period. Haj Kharzoun's hand-drawn aerial view map includes names of family homes and significant sites in the village. There were some 2700 people in Lubya until 1948 (Issa 2005). A visual mnemonic signalling each home, parcel of land, roads, wells, shops and other places, Haj Kharzoun's memory map was drawn *before* he received a copy of the aerial photograph. Three times in the film, the camera pans slowly in close-up across the aerial photo. As Patricia Hayes (2001) reminds, aerial photography as a technology is connected to, and productive of, new forms of cadastral mapping, military survey, and modern techniques of colonial and military cartography. The aerial photograph of Lubya also brings to mind Palestine's significance after 1917 when, as a region under British Mandate rule, it was a laboratory space for new technologies in which the British Empire advanced military photographic techniques via its experiments with aerial photography (Salmond, Hedley, Winterbotham, Hinks & Jack 1920).

Beyond the broad functions and purchase suggested by these observations that the aerial shot of Lubya would have had, the photograph has been reconfigured in a range of ways that attest to the indeterminate and heterogeneous valence of images. Acquired by a scholar of Palestine in the course of his archival research in the British archives, the aerial photo of Lubya now appears in the personal collections and framed on walls in the homes of Lubyans across a vast, dispersed diaspora of some 27 countries (Issa 2005). A visual memorial of the village's intactness, of its sheer existence, the photograph also foreshadows its future and future anterior, its physical obliteration. It is a memorial to Lubya as it was and that no longer exists in that way. Out of the British Archives, the archives of an imperial regime, the photograph now circulates in poster form, in worlds shaped both by the conditions that produced that archive as well as those beyond its reach. This is a persuasive instance of the multi-sited, multi-vectored and heterogeneous possibilities of "photography's citizenry" (Azoulay 2008). The aerial image, along with its visual iterations in the film, does more than subvert the claim, made in the *South African Jewish Report* (2013), that there had not been a village there before 1948. It rehabilitates the photographed moment of the intact village to the afterlives of the catastrophe. Together with Kharzoun's memory map, the aerial photograph upholds and extends contemporary claims of Lubyans to return to their lands and to reclaim their rights to citizenship.

As Hayes (2015) notes, it is crucial to address the structural and constitutive asymmetries that characterise photography's 'uneven' citizenry. These, together with different and differentiated agencies demand attention because the practical constraints for Palestinians on constituting and maintaining public archives and documentation centres requires consideration, and in these contexts, implicated subjectivities may also slip from view. The challenges for gathering, instituting and collecting in the shadow of enforced and ongoing

statelessness and occupation since 1948, are considerable. Existing archives and repositories, established under demanding conditions, have been faced with raids, removals, looting, pillage and even bombing of physical buildings after collections have been removed (see for example, Masalha 2012).

In the scene in the film on the battle for, and conquest of, Lubya, there is a photograph of Palestinian fighters from Lubya in 1948 from the personal archives of Amina Zu'aitier, a Palestinian woman from Lubya and a refugee from 1948, now living in Denmark. She tells of the three battles for Lubya before she was evacuated along with other women fighters who had been part of the armed resistance fighting to prevent the fall of Lubya at the frontline of the village in July 1948. In searching for archival photographs of Arab Liberation Army (ALA) soldiers stationed at Lubya – featured in on- and off-camera discussions as figures who impeded the villagers' armed resistance efforts – I enquired as to the possible location of such images with archivists at a range of institutions. In my correspondence with Israeli author, Tomer Gardi (2012), he suggested that I think in the non-categories of historical erasure, that is, within the organising logics of Zionist archives when trying to find photographs of ALA fighters at Lubya:

> You cannot look for Palestinian history in the organising categories of a Zionist archive. The archiving societies would not be interested in Palestinian history but in erasing it. … One has to enter the categorising mind of a Zionist archiving society and search for such images in such a way.

To think in non-categories is to encounter the very logic of 'politicide' and 'memoricide' (Kimmerling 1983; Pappe 2006) – a logic that characterises the processes enacted by the Israeli state's drive to 'Judaise' Israel's land and history. So whilst the repurposing of personal images may interrupt the apparent seamlessness of their earlier ideological performance, the insertion of my travel photos in the film as representing 'albums of complicity' also gestures towards a redemptive narrative of the figure who comes to be associated with complicity (myself); as if naming complicity may undo or mitigate its effects or exonerate the person who names it from an ongoing working on/through the conditions in which complicity was produced. In addition, there is a risk that if the complicit subject and the subject of complicity are placed at the centre of the narrative, Palestinians may once again be displaced; instrumentalised within an interpretative framework that explores and privileges complicities with their displacement.

And what is displaced of South Africa, given the period between 1983 and 1989 during which I took the travel photos? The school photograph taken in 1976, appears when the voice over in the audio says, 'Growing up in apartheid South Africa …'. Yet there is silence on the significance of 1976 for schooling given that the student uprising began earlier that year in Soweto and placed the question of education, and particularly schooling, at the heart of radical politics. The photo in the film of myself as a toddler with my carer, Adelaide Mkhumbuzi, indexes the deep entwinements of anti-black and -women violence in the institution of domestic work in South Africa under apartheid. Given "the long persisting indignities and exploitative effects of this racialized, gendered institution of domestic work", the photo neither "raises nor interrupts the social invisibility of women raced Black who labour as domestic cleaners, carers and nannies" (Grunebaum 2015). The archival clips of anti-apartheid protest, the legal defeat of apartheid and the promise of political justice suggested by scenes in *The Village* of old-regime portraits at parliament coming down and those of Human Rights Violations

hearings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC 1996) may all edify rather than trouble a postapartheid discourse of reconciliation that has contributed to white South Africans evading a moral, relational and restitutive grappling with complicity. Visual and narratorial references to the TRC in and of themselves open important questions about exclusionary narratives, both with regard to a more future-oriented and ethically radical and relational notion of memory in South Africa and to the TRC's silence on complicity in its discursive fields and categories of moral and legal subjects.

There is one particularly arresting image in which my complicity with structural violence at a distance, and with violence perpetrated in my name blur with the proximate violence of militarism. It is the snapshot of my best friend and I taking aim with rifles during a *Gadna*[5] exercise (Fig. 2). We both kneel on one knee with the other leg propped in front at a right angle to our bodies. One elbow steady to secure the rifles, the other arm extended, mimicking the line of the rifles. Immured in the perpetual act of taking aim, frozen in the continual imagining of an enemy, a perpetually produced Other, we ready ourselves to shoot in the present continuous

ABOVE: Figure 2. Photographer unknown, Author and friend at *Gadna* youth military training camp, Israel, 1983 | Courtesy the author

tense, aiming at 'targets' outside and beyond the edge of the photograph.

Taken during our 1983 visit, at the height of apartheid South Africa and Israel's arms, military and training co-operation, I wonder if these could be old R4 rifles provided by Israel's trade relationship with the apartheid regime (Polakow-Suransky 2010) that we are holding?[6] It also recalls the archival images excluded from the film, such as footage I found in the JNF archives of the last apartheid president, FW de Klerk's official state visit to Israel in 1991 to 'resume business'. In that visit De Klerk unveiled a plaque at a JNF forest. In Figure 2 however, the lines between implicated subjects and regime-made violence converge in other ways. The implicated subject here is not the subject position of the distanced, indirect yet enfolded one. The image suggests that the militarisation of everyday life, of civil and civic identities, requires a more careful engagement with the entanglements of implicated subjects in the militarisation of ontology and of fear beyond a critique of how militarised identities are produced and reproduced to nurture a mode of being and perceiving aligned to a state.

All these, along with the narrator's voice-over stage the question of complicity with apartheid in order to excavate it in relation to Israel and its narratives of history to which the narrator has historically affiliated. Complicity with apartheid in South Africa in the film is a point of departure and not a site of abiding or thought. Whilst it is difficult for me to judge the failures and merits of our film in relation to the questions I raise here, I am inclined to think that perhaps the silences, displacements, and discursive blind spots of the film are necessary, productive inadequacies. For the interpretative frame and its visual form have been shaped by the complicit subject, not the subjects of elision, of negated historical catastrophe. I should mention that since the completion of *The Village*, I have not (re)placed the various personal photographs that I removed from their 'albums of complicity' in order to be named as such. The albums have open spaces that bear the faint trace of the outlines of photographs placed elsewhere. The photos have been (re)placed in my archive box of film research; another taxonomic configuration. In aesthetic works such as *The Village* to undertake counter-archival strategies in order to offer an account of complicity carries the risk of failure. And perhaps, if such risk also constitutes thinking complicity, then failure may be a productive space to think from if archives of complicity are constituted as accounts of the very conditions of possibility for their becoming.

Endnotes

1 Grunebaum, H. 2015. Unseaming images: the limits and possibilities for reconfiguring albums of complicity. Special edition, Archival addresses: photographies, practices, positionalities. *Critical Arts* 29(S1):28–42. Critical Arts Projects and Unisa Press, reprinted with permission of Taylor & Francis Ltd, www.tandonline.com on behalf of Critical Arts Project and Unisa Press.

2 For an explication of how apartheid South Africa as an indirect and oblique reference is explored in the film, see Grunebaum 2014.

3 I am deeply grateful to Marianne Hirsch and Leo Spitzer for sharing the text of their lecture with me.

4 Jacques Rancière (2004) argues that the conventions, rules, disciplines and institutions that structure and social order and produce exclusion, invisibility and inaudibility are first and foremost aesthetic since they are founded on the production of perceptual, cognitive and sensorially structured forms of division which constitute a distribution of the sensible.

5 '*Gadna*' is an acronym in transliterated form that stands for *Gedudei Noar* (Zionist military youth brigades) established in 1947.

6 I am grateful to Allan Munro for helping me to establish that the rifles are *not* R4s and are, in fact, much older.

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Confounded subjectivities and 'fundamental ambiguities'

AYANA V JACKSON'S PERFORMANCE OF COLONIAL-ERA PHOTOGRAPHIC SUBJECTS IN THE *ARCHIVAL IMPULSE* EXHIBITION

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Abstract

The title of African-American artist Ayana V Jackson's exhibition *Archival Impulse* (2013, Gallery MOMO, Johannesburg) references Hal Foster's (2004) essay 'An archival impulse', in which he advocates the artistic use of archives as sites of construction rather than excavation. In *Archival Impulse,* Jackson (2013a) constructs an archive based on archival images sourced from the internet. Jackson photographs her own body using a high-resolution digital camera, repetitively casting herself in poses and tableaux that she identifies as being commonly used to represent black subjects in colonial-era photographic archives from Africa, India and the United States of America. Owing to the colonial context of the subjects whose poses Jackson performs, more than half of the images in *Archival Impulse* feature her naked or partially clothed. Jackson's intention in *Archival Impulse* seems to be to engage with early photography to explore the history and origin of photographic stereotypes of blackness. In this chapter, I discuss two artworks from the *Archival Impulse* series: *Case # 33: III* (2013) and *Diorama I* (2012). I argue that, depending on the viewer and the context of display, the ways in which Jackson images herself in *Archival Impulse* could either mitigate or exacerbate the lack of subjectivity that is historically associated with representations of the naked black female body. I consider the historical associations of the archival source material in relation to Jackson's aesthetic realisation of the series, looking specifically at the potential for the artist's/subject's gaze to disrupt the viewer's objectification of her body.

ABOVE: Figure 1. Ayana V Jackson, *Case # 33: III*, 2013 | Archival pigment print | Edition of 6 + 3 AP | 89.5 x 68 cm
Courtesy Gallery MOMO

Beautiful breasts

One August evening in 2013 I found myself standing in front of Ayana V Jackson's photographic self-portraits at Gallery MOMO in Parktown North, Johannesburg. It was the opening night of Jackson's exhibition entitled *Archival Impulse & Poverty Pornography.* I was looking at the work particularly intently, and mulling over the semiotics and politics of the images, when I overheard someone exclaim, "Wow, beautiful breasts man! Beautiful breasts!" I looked around and saw a young man, perhaps in his late 20s, standing behind me appraising the digital print entitled *Case # 33: III* (2013) (Fig. 1). His response seemed ingenuous and totally unselfconscious as though, to him, the primary purpose of Jackson's artworks was to present the artist's mammaries in a sophisticated and novel form.

I looked again at the work. Of course I had noticed the artist's breasts, but surely that was not the point? Yet the more I looked, the more I saw Jackson's nude form – pointedly juxtaposed with her clothed body – and the more unsettled I became. The man's comment made me realise that I had guiltily tried to censor my scrutiny of Jackson's naked body and sublimate its seductive qualities. As I grappled with my ambivalent responses to this work, I realised how effectively it had confounded me. My positionality as a white, female, middle-class, cisgender academic, schooled in 'art history and visual culture' in postapartheid South Africa, also played a role in my confounded responses to Jackson's self-portraits. As a viewer, I looked at Jackson's work but felt indicted in the act of looking; as a consumer of visual media, I was seduced and manipulated by the sensuous beauty of the images; as an art historian, I was troubled by the elision of the original sources of the work and their lack of historical specificity; and as a theorist, I was intrigued by the synaptic trap in which these conflicting associations ensnared me.

As Achille Mbembe (2013:20) writes in his catalogue essay for *Archival Impulse* & *Poverty Pornography,* the "logjam of feelings" elicited by the "glistening, black skin" of Jackson's "libidinous body" leaves viewers of her images "seduced while faced with fundamental ambiguity". While this ambiguity is compelling, the challenging visual politics of Jackson's representations are exacerbated by their sensuous tone, and viewers could therefore be more seduced by beauty and nudity in Jackson's photographs than by her critical intentions. The implications of the aesthetic attractions of Jackson's photographs confused and worried me, especially in the colonial context of the *Archival Impulse* (2012–2013) series. In these images, Jackson photographs and collages herself repetitively in poses, costumes and tableaux quoted from colonial-era photographs, creating a constructed archive. As Stephanie Jason (2013) describes it,

> Jackson's exhibition willingly invites the viewer's gaze as if two centuries of it had not been enough for non-Europeans. From every hand gesture and placement of limbs to the lifeless expressions on some of the subjects' faces, Jackson restages archival images to awaken the colonial ghost some choose to forget.

However, despite my concerns around the reawakening of these 'ghosts', I was intrigued by Jackson's potent gaze in her images and how effectively it stymied me between desire and shame. I could not look comfortably at the artist's images while she stared back at me.

In this chapter, I critique the conceptual and aesthetic register of two works from *Archival Impulse,* namely the *Case # 33: I-VI* series (2013) (Fig. 1) and *Diorama I* (2012) (Fig. 3). Drawing on contrasting critical perspectives of the trope of the naked black female body, I show how Jackson's realisation of her constructed archive is arguably problematic in the context of this exhibition because her work potentially "furthers the objectification of the black female body" (Jackson cited in Jason 2013). However, I contend that the troublesome beauty and nostalgic quality of these works is offset by the interesting and affective tension in the relationship between the artist's body and the gaze. I relate this to examples of 'defiant nudes' whose potent subjective gazes have been argued to disrupt the objectification of their bodies. I suggest that through the lens of Jackson's agency in her assumption of the role of the objectified colonial 'other', her interventions in the archives have the potential to shift perceptions of archival subjects from lifeless 'objects' or 'beleaguered ghosts' to figures with perspectives, individualities and subjectivities.

Archival Impulse

Although the *Archival Impulse* (2012–2013) and *Poverty Pornography* (2011–2013) series were exhibited together when I initially viewed them at Gallery MOMO in 2013, I focus solely in this chapter on the images from *Archival Impulse*. This is firstly because the differing use of nudity in these two series requires a discussion of different conceptual frameworks, and secondly, because my primary interest is in Jackson's representation of her body in the context of colonial photographic history. The conceptual basis of these two series is similar as they respond to archival photographs by presenting the artist as the primary photographic subject of the work; however, the reasons for Jackson's nudity differ in each series.

In *Archival Impulse,* Jackson borrows the postures and conventions of certain nineteenth-century photographs taken in Africa, India and the United States of America (USA), closely mimicking the appearance of the subjects in original archival sources. The artist appears naked or partially clothed in more than half of these images because that is how the subjects in the original images were documented. By contrast, in *Poverty Pornography* – which restages iconic twentieth-century photographs of warfare and strife (Jackson 2013a, 2014) – Jackson's nudity is more contrived because the original subjects in the twentieth-century images were mostly clothed. Although *Archival Impulse* and *Poverty Pornography* were made during an overlapping period between 2011 and 2013, Jackson describes these two series separately in the catalogue (Jackson 2013a) and on her website (Jackson 2014), and I have taken this to indicate that they can be interpreted separately.

Jackson (cited in Jason 2013) describes herself as a "black American artist". She is predominantly based in New York, Paris and Johannesburg, and the images in the *Archival Impulse* series draw on historical representations of black people from areas in the USA, Europe, Africa and India (Jackson 2014). Jackson (2013a, 2014) states that her intention in making the *Archival Impulse* series was to "confront" the "fictitious", propagandistic tendency of photographic archives and the "late 19th and early 20th century imagery of non-European bodies" in order to "transform this theatre into a space where new narratives might emerge". Her use of artificial backgrounds and theatrical costumes emphasises the constructed nature of her digital collages, which are noticeably different to their archival sources.

The title of the series references Hal Foster's (2004) article 'An archival impulse' in which he advocates the artistic use of archives as sites of construction rather than excavation. While I use terminology linked to Foster's essay, such as the word 'construction', Jackson's engagement with the archives seems to be less focused on the archives themselves than on the role of early photography in perpetuating the stereotyping and objectification of black people – which is one of the predominant themes of her work (Jackson 2013b). Foster (2004:22) claims that artistic interventions in the archives tend to suggest "a shift away from a melancholic culture that views the historical as little more than the traumatic", and this appears to have been a key inspiration for Jackson. However, from a postcolonial perspective, colonial photographic history wove perceptions of beauty, race, desire, abjection and trauma together in disturbing ways. Jackson baring her body in *Archival Impulse* to "confront" colonial-era photography (Jackson 2014) is therefore conceptually precarious – as she is well aware (Jackson 2013b). In the South African context in which Jackson frequently works and exhibits, this is particularly treacherous semiotic terrain because of the country's history of colonialism and apartheid.

Subjectivity deferred: Sarah Baartman and the trope of the naked black female body

Case # 33: III (Fig. 1) is the third image from Jackson's *Case # 33: I-VI* series (2013) in which she adopts poses and clothing from specific colonial-era portraits. This series registers ambiguously between commemorative portraits and scientific 'mug shots' recording phenotypic attributes. The anonymity and inhumanity suggested by the title infers that photographs like these were taken in the context of empirical scrutiny. Indeed, Case #33 is the display case in which Sarah Baartman's remains were stored in the Museum of Man in Paris (Jackson 2013b).

In the postapartheid South African context, the story of Sarah Baartman's difficult life, ignominious death, and the posthumous exhibition of her dissected body, is almost indivisible from academic discourses around the representation of black female bodies. Baartman was a young Khoisan woman who was taken to Europe to be exhibited to the public. In Sander Gilman's (1985:213) influential words, "the figure of Sarah Baartman was reduced to her sexual parts". Owing to the historical objectification of black people such as Baartman in western visual culture, images of naked black bodies in this culture are almost metonymic of sexual and racial objectification and exploitation (Gilman 1985:212, 213). This seems to factor automatically into all critical considerations of artistic images of the naked black female body.

To write academically, or respond artistically, to the trope of the colonised naked black female body is to run the risk of scrutinising and exposing bodies that have already been overwhelmingly exposed and scrutinised (Abrahams 2007:425). My postapartheid academic training (which relied on texts such as Gilman's) has ensured that artistic depictions of naked black bodies produce warning flares in my psyche, which are accompanied by blaring sirens when the body in question also happens to be female. Photographs of naked black bodies are sites of contestation in western academic discourse because of the ethnographic, pseudo-scientific manner in which colonised people were documented during the nineteenth century. Myriad images were produced that aimed to reinforce and justify white, western racial and cultural superiority. Power relations between photographer and subject are particularly problematic in nineteenth-century colonial photography because this

genre epitomises the operation of the objectifying colonial gaze. In *Archival Impulse*, Jackson's use of clothing and nakedness foregrounds the way nineteenth-century images contrasted the perceived virtues of 'white civilisation' with the perceived barbarism of 'black primitivism'. In this dichotomy, western clothing is coded as a signifier of modernity and culture, while nakedness is coded as a signifier of barbarism and nature.

In Baartman's case, and in others, the attribution of agency to black colonial subjects is often endlessly deferred as the images are haunted by the possibility that they were taken in the interests of scientific racism or pornography – which, according to Janie Cohen (2015:64), were often conflated. Paradoxically, even though academic discourses about scientific racism may call for recognition of the subjectivity of those depicted, Baartman is known and discussed principally because she was an objectified 'victim' of western visual history. However, Yvette Abrahams (2007:425) is heavily critical of Gilman's clinical discussion of Baartman's body and of the way that other western academics evince less concern for Baartman's "history and selfhood" than for the exposure of her living and dead body, and her status as a "sexual icon".

In view of this, Jackson's reference to Baartman in *Case # 33: I–VI* may seem problematic in relation to what she seeks to accomplish in *Archival Impulse*, since it could be seen as another text that is "*never* about Sarah Baartman. It is always about something else in which she is being used as an example, or as evidence" (Abrahams 2007:425). In *Case # 33: I–VI*, Baartman's presence is implied by words rather than by images of her body, but these words reference her catalogued remains, and are therefore more evocative of her objectification than her subjectivity. Jason (2013) also draws attention to the differing contexts in which images of Baartman and Jackson are interpreted: "Whereas Baartman was the victim of snide remarks and bewildered stares, Jackson's exhibition willingly invites the viewer's gaze". The tension between the potential for the re-objectification of colonised bodies is thus stretched particularly taut in *Archival Impulse*.

However, in this series Jackson frequently represents binaries such as whiteness and blackness, goodness and sin, and clothing and nudity in obvious and clearly ironic ways. In this light, the display of her body could also be seen as an attempt to challenge the existing western perceptions of the lack of 'decorum' displayed by the 'naked natives' that colonisers encountered in the colonies. This could potentially present an alternative way of reading the trope of the black naked female body. As Abrahams (2007) argues, "[T]here is not, in the Sarah Baartman historiography which has been written by white males, any symbolic role model where Black = good, woman = righteousness, or Brown = beauty". She also notes that it seems that the body is "what matters about [brown women]. This is our point of entry into academic discourses". It is interesting that Jackson has chosen to enter the discourse using her body, as many feminist artists have done, to "aggressively claim agency and control over the female body in an oppositional act of self-representation" (Murray 2014:11). In the reshuffling of the binaries that Jackson plays with so seriously in *Archival Impulse*, blackness is often re-paired with goodness, righteousness or beauty.

Diorama I (2012): luscious simulacrum

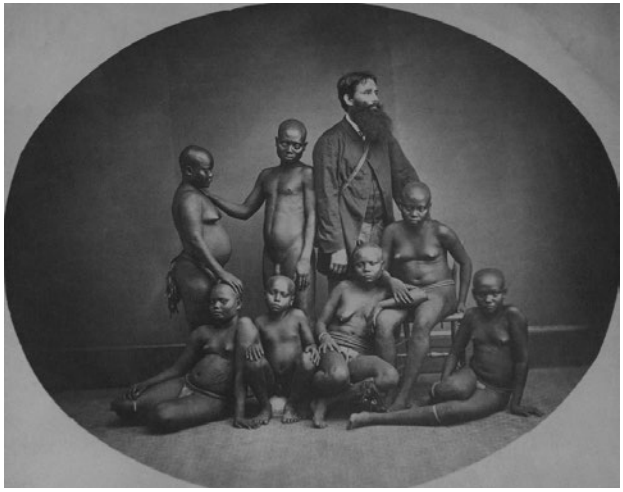
Three artworks from *Archival Impulse* were included in the *Past Imperfect // Future Present* exhibition (2015, FADA Gallery, Johannesburg). They are *Diorama I* (2012) (Fig. 3), *Does the Brown Paper Bag Test Really Exist?*

/ Will My Father Be Proud? (2013) and *Case # 33: VI. Diorama I* is the first work Jackson made for *Archival Impulse* and it exemplifies the 'fundamental ambiguity' of the series. Earlier on in my discussion, I acknowledged that Jackson's body and her work can be seen as problematic because it is 'beautiful' in terms of the ubiquitous popular use of the term to describe that which inspires aesthetic pleasure. This beauty is twofold as it arises from Jackson's socially acceptable appearance and from the seductive richness of her photographic compositions. In the remainder of this chapter, I demonstrate how Jackson's interventions in *Diorama I* mediate between a seductive and arguably problematic beauty, and an affective representation of subjectivity.

The archival reference for *Diorama I* (2012) is a photograph taken between 1865 and 1869 by JE Saché and WF Westfield entitled *Andamanese group with Mr. Homfray, their keeper, photographed at Calcutta* (Fig. 2).[1] According to the Peabody Essex Museum's archival records, the photograph is of a group of Andamanese orphans with a white man, Dr Homfray, who is dressed in western clothing (PEM collection checklist 2016). This source photograph exhibits the anthropometric composition typically adopted by colonial-era photographers. Cohen (2015:62, 63) describes the common compositional elements of anthropometric group photographs as an "idiosyncratic juxtaposition of poses – frontal, profile, three-quarter" with subjects "seated or squatting in the foreground", stylised arm gestures and a "highly compressed spatial relationship among the figures". Cohen (2015:62, 64, 71) argues that the subjects' gazes were usually "both lateral and outward" and that "the primacy of an outward focus at the expense of any connection" among the participants was essential for the images to register to western viewers as legitimate 'ethnographic science' rather than pornography. These anthropometric compositional dynamics are clearly visible in *Andamanese group with Mr. Homfray*, and therefore reappear in Jackson's *Diorama I*.

The collaged repetition of Jackson's body in the image emphasises the contrived caresses of the Andamanese, which were directed by the original photographer (PEM collection checklist 2016). The white man or 'keeper' in the original photograph, whose oblique gaze disassociates him from his 'wards', is represented in *Diorama I* by Jackson, wearing female Victorian clothing and with eyes downcast. The predominantly outward gazes of the Andamanese are replaced by Jackson's direct look into her own lens. Her expression, like those of the orphans, seems deadpan and inscrutable in most of the images, and perhaps somewhat resentful or sardonic in others. Despite the moral and physical vulnerability that is often perceived to accompany nakedness, Jackson's confrontational gaze seems to convey a sense of her self-control in the role of artist, subject and photographer.

However, Jackson's glowing body, as it appears in *Archival Impulse,* contrasts uncomfortably with the marked, faded, scarred bodies in the archival photograph. The ages and genders of the Andamanese subjects are somewhat ambiguous whereas, by contemporary western standards, Jackson's body is attractive: she has smooth skin, a slim, toned physique, full breasts and lips, well-defined cheekbones and striking eyes. Jackson (2013a) is aware that her body may be read as desirable, but maintains that the viewer's ensnarement between desire and self-critique is part of the modus operandi of her work. Thus, Jackson exhibits her own 'beautiful' naked black female body in the position of the colonised other in full knowledge of the complex visual politics with which she engages.



As I mentioned previously, this strategy worked in my case. However, the efficacy of Jackson's critique of the colonial gaze is arguably dependent on the subjectivity of the viewer looking at the work and the context of its display. Jackson's imaginative reconstructions effectively disrupt the objectification of the naked black female colonised body for me, a heterosexual white woman, but may not have done so for the man who so appreciated her breasts. One's positionality undoubtedly affects one's reading of the work, and the concept of a gendered viewer is important to consider, especially in the case of work like Jackson's that involves representations of the female body.

Jackson's aesthetic realisation of *Diorama I* may therefore register somewhat ambiguously as a critique of the photographic objectification of the black body because her self-portraits may reprise this objectification and the links between the female body and pornography in western photographic history. The potential remains for the perpetuation of the viewer's complicity – and Jackson's as the photographer – in the consumption of images of these bodies, especially because her images are often displayed within the context of a commercial gallery where there is as much concern about the saleability of the work as with the critiques she levels.

The aesthetic decisions Jackson makes in creating *Archival Impulse* contribute to the possibility that her critical message may be lost on some viewers. The consummate clarity and sumptuous tones and textures of Jackson's constructed archive imbue her artwork with sensuousness. This, in addition to the artist's physical attractiveness, adds to the impression of the overall 'beauty' of her images. Although they are meant to be imaginative constructions of historical visual artefacts, Jackson's use of Photoshop to cut-and-paste her image

ABOVE: Figure 2. JE Saché and WF Westfield, *Andamanese group with Mr. Homfray, their keeper, photographed at Calcutta*, 1865–1869 | Albumen print | 18.28 x 22.86 cm | Gift of Mr. Brown E Shaw, 1869 | Courtesy the Peabody Essex Museum

is patently more current than her nineteenth-century archival source material. This makes her work quite distinct from her archival references, and gives her photographs a contemporary, seductive 'look and feel'. The surface imperfections in the archival photographs are absent in Jackson's photographs, and her use of a high-resolution digital camera instils a crisp perfection in her images that is alien to nineteenth-century photographs. In other words, today's viewers are accustomed to seeing beauty in a high-resolution, photo-edited format and therefore probably consume Jackson's images in a similar way.

The images in *Archival Impulse* are mainly monochromatic. Some of the self-portraits are saturated or tinted with subtle filters that accentuate the tones of the clothing, ornaments, make-up and skin. This simultaneously connotes both the hand-colouration of mid- to late-nineteenth-century photographs and the effects that can be achieved using the photo-editing application Instagram.[2] The overall effect of this simulacral[3] blend of 'past' and 'present' is that Jackson's quotation of historical images cites, and may even induce, nostalgia for the past. This is both problematic and interesting, since vintage photographs are often romanticised in popular culture but, from a postcolonial perspective, this is ethically dubious when colonised people are the subject of such photographs. At the same time, Jackson's obsessive representation of herself also seems to echo the simulacral self-authorship – the 'selfie' – that is so prevalent in contemporary social media. Thus, for example, the rich, chocolaty-sepia tones of *Diorama I* reiterate the nostalgia sparked by historical images, while at the same time exemplifying the millennials' hunger for multiple, self-aggrandising, 'filtered' portraits.

The staged self-portraits in *Archival Impulse* are collaged onto monochrome backgrounds that were photographed at various locations. These are often obviously edited or inverted, and are deliberately 'inauthentic' in relation to the archival photographs Jackson uses (Jackson 2013b). Instead of the stark interior background in Saché and Westfield's photograph, the lush background in *Diorama I* alludes to a westerner's stereotypical expectation of the jungle setting of the 'native'. The use of this background shifts Jackson's intervention from a literal quotation of the original photograph to an imaginative construction of it. This, combined with Jackson's sinuous body and the sumptuous filter, makes *Diorama I* a pointedly more seductive and visually pleasing image than the one it references. Jackson's images and her original archival references could both be described subjectively as 'beautiful', but because of the crisp, 'fashion magazine photo-shoot' aesthetic of Jackson's images, there may be a more dissonant, disruptive 'beauty' in the original archival images than there is in Jackson's restaging of them. Jackson's interventions possibly push her images so far into the realm of uncomplicated beauty that their subversive quality is lost on some viewers – such as the male viewer on opening night.

The gaze of the defiant nude: a brown woman observing

In *Archival Impulse*, Jackson therefore represents the kind of aestheticised body that is often called 'nude', rather than 'naked' (Berger 1990:53). The art historical conception of 'the nude' is a body transformed into art – a body without need of clothes – while a 'naked' body is one "without clothes" and has been associated

RIGHT: Figure 3. Ayana V Jackson, *Diorama I*, 2012 | Archival pigment print | Edition of 6 + 3 AP | 137 x 108.5 cm
Courtesy Gallery MOMO

with shame and lack of propriety in western history (Clark cited in Berger 1990:53). Berger (1990:53) argues that a nude, whether a painting or a 'pin-up', is always conventionalised. Western popular culture promotes the desire for a conventionalised nude body, whereas naked (unshapely, emaciated or maimed) bodies are often viewed with a more craven curiosity.

It is difficult to argue that colonised peoples were consistently seen in anthropometric photographs as 'naked' rather than 'nude' because their poses often borrowed from the postures and gestures of the conventional nude in classical art. However, it is likely that colonial societies perceived colonised people as 'naked' scientific specimens rather than artistic 'nudes'. Colonial photographers often insisted that their photographic subjects wore no western clothing, reinforcing a visual contrast between clothed European 'civilisation' and the sometimes-revealing attire of indigenous peoples.[4] Indeed, according to the Peabody Essex Museum's archival records, eyewitnesses present at the studio when Figure 2 was staged "encountered positive difficulty, in inducing [the Andamanese] to group themselves, stripped of their European clothes" (PEM collection checklist 2016). Despite Jackson's (2013b) awareness of the potential problematics associated with the photographic representation of the black body, she states that her choice to use nudity was in part to claim the right to 'bare breasts'. This can be seen as an attempt to valorise the shamelessness of nakedness in many precolonial indigenous cultures rather than perpetuating the western view of an unclothed body as coerced, sexualised or degraded.

During the colonial era, the Modern nude shifted from being a relatively asexual figure connoting virtue and harmonious beauty to something more sexualised (Berger 1990:63). Sexualised nudes such as Manet's *Olympia* (1863) and Picasso's *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* (1907) greatly affronted Modern societies. Berger (1990:63) cites *Olympia* as the first example of "a woman, cast in a traditional role, beginning to question that role, somewhat defiantly". After Manet, Modern artists' fascination with Primitivism became inextricably linked with much early twentieth-century art, and non-European bodies became synonymous with unrestrained sexuality (Gilman 1985).

Picasso's *Demoiselles* is probably the most famous example of this. It depicts a group of female nudes, three of whom have faces that are stylistically reminiscent of Iberian, African and Oceanic masks (Cohen 2015:60). The harsh lines and marks in this painting have been seen as connoting a threatening, even savage, femaleness (Cohen 2015:72). Cohen (2015) argues that the composition of the image was heavily influenced by the profusion of anthropometric photos available in Paris during the early 1900s. It is therefore not surprising that the squatting figure on the left in Jackson's *Diorama I* mimics a pose in *Andamanese group with Mr. Homfray* (1869), and also bears a remarkable similarity to the squatting figure in *Demoiselles*. Jackson (2013a) explains that this similarity to Picasso's work was unintentional, which seems to confirm how deeply ingrained these images of the female 'other' are in western visual history.

The representation of the defiant female gaze links the nudes created by Jackson, Manet and Picasso. It is a self-possessed stare that confronts and implicates the viewer's gaze rather than inviting it with the coy or "calculated charm" of earlier nudes (Berger 1990:55). Cohen (2015:72) acknowledges Picasso's infamous misogyny and refusal to credit many of his African influences, but argues that his painting unintentionally 'troubles the archive' because the "forced nudity and prescribed poses of subjects in colonial photographs, particularly women, strips them of their agency", whereas "Picasso's demoiselles are of a different world;

their agency is palpable." Cohen (2015:68) notes how the crouching figure in Picasso's *Demoiselles* locks "her gaze on the viewer" and how three of the figures "look directly and intensely out of the painting," arguing that this "confrontational gaze and the aggressive breaking of Diderot's 'fourth wall'" is "one of the most radical aspects of Demoiselles".[5] There is a similar, albeit quieter, confrontational gaze at work in Jackson's images. As the photographer, she directs and acknowledges the viewer's gaze in a way that encourages the audience's awareness of the constructedness of the medium. As Abrahams (2007:426) argues, western art discourses are not terribly familiar with women of colour being observers: "To be a Brown woman observing is, in the white male narratives surrounding Sarah Baartman, a contradiction in terms". Jackson's level gaze may prompt viewers to look at her work more self-critically and with greater awareness of their gaze, and of how they are deliberately placed in a position where history has determined that they see her body as object.

I certainly respond differently to the archival sources for *Diorama I* and *Case # 33: I–VI* than I do to Jackson's construction of them. For instance, when I look at the 1869 archival image of the Andamanese it prompts questions about the people in the photographs: how old were they? When did they die? What were they thinking as the photograph was taken? How did they get their scars? I am moved by the contingent subjectivity of those represented and allowed a frustratingly mute and one-sided insight into their lives. In contrast, when I look at Jackson's performance of archival subjects in *Archival Impulse*, my narcissistic reflections are thrown back at me. The artist's repeated reconfiguration of herself and her gaze bars my contemplation of the faces of the original sitters and blocks my immersive pleasure in the archival image. Instead, I have to contend repeatedly with Jackson's multiplied, challenging stare and am continually forced back to the present. Jackson's images allow my scrutiny of her body but her gaze indicts it; I feel enjoined to be wary of photographs and of my own desiring, possessive, invasive looking, and my solipsistic reflections. My subjectivity is confounded by this awareness and I become more attuned to the other confounded subjectivities that Jackson explores: her subjectivity, the subjectivities of the people in archival photographs, the subjectivities of her viewers, and the subjectivities of those photographers whose compositional decisions mediate records of people and history.

Jackson's most obvious rejection of the objectifying gaze is in *Case # 33: VI*, in which she turns her back on her lens. This photograph is the last one Jackson completed in the *Archival Impulse* series, and it has no archival referent. Jackson wears a dress made from wax-print fabric – a popular fabric with those wanting to represent an affinity with, or appreciation of, 'Africanness' or African diasporic identity. It is a quiet, self-composed refusal of the gaze, and perhaps best represents Jackson's attempts to combat the invasive lens of the camera; however, it would be fairly meaningless were it not juxtaposed with the rest of the *Case # 33* images. The work suggests that, during her conceptual progression from *Diorama I* to *Case # 33: I–VI,* Jackson's critical engagement with her 'archival impulses' deepened as she worked through the various representational issues that her own practice presented to her.

In conclusion, Jackson's decision to use aesthetically seductive and nostalgic images that speak to the sinister operations of colonial photography is both disquieting and compelling. Since 2010, Jackson has represented stereotypes using her own body in various guises and settings, but *Archival Impulse* leads her into somewhat tricky conceptual terrain because of its colonial context. The pristine images in this series, in conjunction with the artist's striking looks, may send contradictory messages – ones that potentially invite or

allow the objectification and consumption of the female body that much of contemporary western popular culture trades on. If Jackson intends to critique the historical correlation between blackness, objectification and sexuality, the 'desirable' aesthetic of her images can be argued to counteract this aim. The potential therefore remains for the perpetuation of the viewer's complicity – and Jackson's as the photographer – in the "voracious market demand for the black body" (Murray 2014:10).

However, despite my ambivalence about the sumptuous beauty of Jackson's images, I believe this conflicts in an interesting way with Jackson's disruptive gaze, in the face of which "the edifice of colonial confidence seems to falter" (Garb 2013:26). The artist performs the role of 'the other' with a powerful sense of agency that is curious and affective. Perhaps what Jackson's work represents to me is the creation of a small space to imagine an individual, conscious colonised subject, rather than a passive colonised object. I see the original subjects and photographers differently through her intervention. Jason (2013) suggests that "it's hard to imagine and compare the lives of the unknown people in the archive photographs Jackson sourced with the real life of Jackson, born into a line of respected and educated pan-Africanists in New Jersey in 1977", but I contend that it is not impossible.

While many of the original archival subjects may be 'nameless' faces or presences, it is bold to suppose that the impassivity of those fixed in nineteenth-century photographs translates into their living impassive lives. PEM's archival records show that the original Andamanese subjects were aware of the construction of their identity, and attempted to resist it (PEM collection checklist 2016). Archival subjects had subjectivities and lived experiences during which they made choices as to how to represent themselves to others, however, part of the violence of colonial photographic history was its refusal to represent black agencies. Jackson's embodiment shows how archival subjects might have appeared had history been more just: as vital, conscious and unashamed as she appears in her images. The role of photographer in Jackson's work is not of a directorial autocrat; nor is the role of the subject a powerless one; instead, Jackson's intervention in these roles suggests that they may have been inhabited by individuals subject to the conflicts, dialogues and pressures of their time – like Jackson, and me, and men who like breasts.

Endnotes

1 Abrahams (2007) cites seven texts published between 1978 and 1996, including Bal (1991) and the Comaroffs (1991), as examples of academic texts that show little interest in Baartman's subjectivity.

2 This photograph is printed in the *Archival Impulse & Poverty Pornography* exhibition catalogue (Jackson 2013). The Andaman Islands are an archipelago between India and Myanmar.

3 Instagram allows one to crop a digital photograph into a square 'polaroid' format and choose a filter that imbues it with a faded, dated or over-saturated quality. These filters evoke certain eras of analogue film and paper quality and thus suggests a nostalgia for old photographs.

4 According to Jean Baudrillard (1994:6), a simulacrum is an image, or a system of representation, that is no longer real; it is a reproduction of something that is lost or may never have existed. Its authenticity is in doubt because of its distance from its referent. A simulacrum is therefore not 'authentic' to anything except itself.

5 For example, the colonial photographer Alfred Duggan-Cronin did this regularly (Godby 2010:60–63, 77–78), and Cohen (2015:71) claims that anthropometric photography "involved routine forced nudity".

6 The 'fourth wall' is the imaginary 'wall' between actors and their audience. The 'wall' is penetrated or broken down when actors acknowledge the presence of the audience.

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Colonial specimen/ neocolonial chic

COMMODIFICATION OF ARCHIVAL PORTRAITS IN SOUTH AFRICAN TEXTILE DESIGN

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Abstract

The greater accessibility of colonial archives in recent decades has not only given easier access to descendants, scholars and arts practitioners, but also to entrepreneurs who repurpose colonial photographs with the explicit aim of producing commodities for mass consumption.

The *Cameo* range of fabrics by South African company Design Team is one such example. The range features portraits of indigenous Southern African women photographed at the turn of the nineteenth century. These photographic portraits reach a wider audience through the publication, *Surviving the lens, photographic studies of South and East African people*, 1870–1920 (Stevenson & Graham-Stewart 2001) and the exhibition of the same title (Stevenson & Graham-Stewart 2001/2002).

In this chapter, I investigate the ways in which the appropriation and commodification of colonial photographic portraits conceal and mythologise history, in the process re-activating older signifiers of racial Otherness. Aimé Césaire's (2000 [1955]) equation "colonisation = thingification" is deployed in examining the commodification of indexical signifiers of racial blackness within a so-called 'colonial style' of interior design.

ABOVE: Figure 1. Photographer unkown, Deco Now, featuring *Natural Terrain* swatches, 2007. | Courtesy *Elle Decoration*

I first encountered the *Cameo* collection of fabrics while flipping through a copy of the South African interior design magazine, *Elle Decoration* (2007). My attention was arrested by the face of a woman, her eyes gazing quietly but intently from amidst a selection of upholstery fabric samples featured in an article entitled 'Natural terrain' (2007:[15]) (Fig. 1). I recognised her face from the cover of *Surviving the lens: photographic studies of South and East African people, 1870–1920* (Stevenson & Graham-Stewart 2001).[1] The photographer, Alfred Duggan-Cronin, who had documented what he assumed to be soon-extinct indigenous lifeways and peoples, called her 'Korana Girl' and scribbled on the back of the photograph, "She is the daughter of the woman (no 53) and a very good specimen of the people" (Stevenson & Graham-Stewart 2001:96).[2]

My knowledge of the image's origins troubled the harmonious composition of colour and texture artfully arranged for the magazine feature. The racism and cold instrumentalism of Duggan-Cronin's descriptions seemed worlds away from the beautiful commodity presented in the magazine, and indeed, this information and history are absent from the glossy page. This absence begs the question: what processes of erasure and discursive re-inscription occur when such colonial representations are reproduced on decorative furnishing and fabrics, and consumed within a context of domestic display?

Part of Design Team's[3] 'Novelty' collection, *Cameo* features a repeated motif of photographic portraits of four indigenous Southern African women taken between the late nineteenth and mid-twentieth centuries. Each historic portrait has been cropped and set in a decorative, oval frame by the designers. The black, brown and sepia motifs are offset against a predominantly light, natural-coloured background (Fig. 3). The ornate frames, references to older technologies of engraving, black and white photography or photogravure, and the women's poses combine to convey an air of romantic old-worldliness. During the first decade of the twenty-first century, this visually seductive collection was featured regularly in South African interior design magazines such as *Elle Decoration*, *House & Leisure*, *Ideas* (Fig. 2), and *Garden and Home*; at South African design fairs such as *Design Indaba;* and on local and international design websites and blogs. Within these contexts, the

ABOVE: Figure 2. Design Team (designers), Christo Lötter (photographer), Handwerk & Dekor, featuring *Cameo*, 2009 | Courtesy *Ideas* magazine and Media24

fabric is shown in the guises of upholstered furniture, wall decorations, home and fashion accessories such as scatter pillows, handbags and even a wedding gown (Photo gallery 2011).[4]

In this chapter, which forms part of an ongoing study, I investigate the ways in which the appropriation and commodification of colonial photographic portraits mythologise and conceal history. In so doing, I track and foreground the shifts in meanings and values that ensue as historical photographic portraits of black women are moved from the semantic space of scholarly publication and art galleries into the spaces of interior design stores, magazines and middle-class homes.

To contextualise my examination of Design Team's *Cameo* range (hereafter *Cameo*), I position it at the intersection of three, late twentieth-century trends: i) the archival turn in visual arts and curating; ii) retro; and iii) the 'colonial style' in interior design. Using Aimé Césaire's (2000 [1955]:44) equation "colonialism = thingification",[5] and unpicking the indexical signifier or racial blackness, I examine ways in which colonial photographic portraits and racial difference are commodified and gentrified for nostalgic, vicarious consumption. It becomes clear that, in their postcolonial afterlives, the portraits of the black women become productive as signifiers of the historical, while at the same time they are emptied of historical specificity; the resultant patina of historicity functions as an apt vehicle for varied, shifting, and even contradictory, readings.

Archival turns

In recent decades, through scholarship, artistic projects and curatorial interventions, colonial archives have been opened to new and diverse viewerships and readings. Galleries, museums, public interventions and information technologies facilitate access to documents and images. The unprecedented ease of access has facilitated and enriched the work and understandings of artists, curators, scholars, members of the public and descendants, and has enabled them to consume and reproduce elements of archives more easily.

As a project of archival retrieval, research and dissemination of historic photographs, the publication *Surviving the lens*, in which all four portraits depicted in *Cameo* are reproduced, can be said to exemplify the 'archival turn' – a term that, according to Cheryl Simon (2002:101), refers to the increase of historical and archival photographs and artefacts, and the approximation of archival forms, in art and photographic practices since the 1990s. Whether the *Cameo* photographic portraits were commissioned by the sitters, taken for artistic or social scientific purposes, or reproduced as postcards or *cartés-des-visité* and bought by tourists and collectors, these portraits originated as commodities. They spoke to owners and viewers of loved ones, exotic Others and racial types, or served as evidence of disappearing lifeways (Godby 2010).

Two of the portraits, 'Korana Girl' and 'Bakgatla' (both first half of the twentieth century) are by Alfred Duggin-Cronin;[6] the third, entitled *Woman with beaded hair* (late nineteenth century), which has the words 'A Zulu Girl, Hair strung with beads' written on the reverse, was taken by JE Middlebrook,[7] and the fourth, *Portrait of a woman* (late twentieth century) that has the words 'Kaffir woman' on the reverse, is by John Gribble[8] (Stevenson & Graham-Stewart 2001:62, 96, 122, 124). Although initially produced within a documentary and scientific paradigm that valued photography for its 'realist mode'[9] (Tagg 1988:99), these images were, from the start, unstable racial signifiers and thus facilitated diverse objectives and readings. The soft lighting, classicising and sentimental poses and atmospheric qualities of the portraits attest to the artistic aspirations of the photographers

(Godby 2010:63), while the captions and notes are evidence of racial classification and ethnographic didacticism.

Critical scholarship of colonial anthropological photography has uncovered and scrutinised photographers' intervention and invention in the documentation of their subjects (see Edwards 1992; Godby 2010; Pinney 2011). In order to record unspoilt and 'authentic' indigenous culture for posterity, photographers such as Duggan-Cronin constructed their idea of purity actively by careful selection of models and sites; removal of signifiers of western modernity (such as enamel basins, coats and watches); and the addition of props that denote tribalism and tradition (such as animal skins, blankets and items of material culture) (see Godby 2010:59–63). These kinds of images presented Africans as belonging to pure ethnic monads, each with discernible material and ceremonial culture, undisturbed by the forces of colonialism. Considerable intervention was required to produce such visions at a time when the Southern African landscape and the lives of indigenous people were transformed radically by industrialisation and legislation that dispossessed Africans of their land. Focusing on Duggan-Cronin's *The Bavenda* of 1928, Michael Godby (2010:76–78) argues that the sheer beauty of the photographs endorses a myth of tribal Africa as harmonious and autonomous, which presented exploitable visual proof to proponents of racial segregation. Blurring the boundaries of art and science, anthropological photographs further granted an air of veracity to century-old tropes of Africa: the noble savage, nubile maiden, stately chief, fierce warrior and sinister witchdoctor.

In *Surviving the lens*, Michael Stevenson and Michael Graham-Stewart (2001:21) situate the photographs within the contexts of the colonial economies of commodity and knowledge production, noting that they reflect the influence of early anthropology and ethnography regarding the representation of black Africans. Stevenson and Graham-Stewart (2001:21, 24) discuss the asymmetrical relationships of power that underscored the production of these images, and explore recent critiques of the idea of the photographic image as record, evidence or truth, positioning them rather as "rhetorical constructs and symbols of white imagination". However, the authors also emphasise the possibility of a multiplicity of contemporary readings, noting that, as works of art with conflicted legacies, the portraits may become, for descendants, evidence of beauty, pride, resistance, dignity, and of lives lived (Stevenson & Graham-Stewart 2001:31, 33).

Stevenson and Graham-Stewart (2001:13) further position the photographs as works of art, and urge public art galleries to reconsider them as more than social and ethnographic records. Through scholarly and curatorial projects such as *Surviving the lens*, colonial photographs-as-objects are made to traverse new epistemic and commercial terrains of academe and art galleries, acquiring new layers of meanings and sets of values. When exhibited in major art galleries, the photographs are invested with a form of scholarship and connoisseurship usually reserved for works of fine or decorative art. Endowed with the status of artworks, they acquire pedigrees as 'authentic', singularised objects of artistic and historical value; desirable commodities whose exchange value is boosted through the semantic spaces of art galleries and exhibition catalogues.

The new sites where archival material are showcased and publicised, in turn, provide rich visual sources for entrepreneurs. Previously the reserve of administrators and scholars, archives are now accessible from smartphones and, with the internet functioning as a "mega-archive" (Foster 2004:4), historical images are only a quick 'click and drag' away from the surfaces of new products. Adorning scatter cushions and handbags, lifted from the interpretative contexts of anthropology, critical scholarship and connoisseurship, the repurposed portraits assume additional layers of meaning and value, some of which I explore in the next section.

'Colonial style' and retro

Cheryl Simon (2002:101) regards the archival turn as a late-stage manifestation of postmodernist appropriation. It coincides with 'retro', defined by Elizabeth Guffey (2006:10–11) as the "half-ironic, half-longing" stylistic evoking of the recent past in visual and popular culture. Retro is not concerned with historical accuracy, and although it may insinuate subversion through its ironic and parodic citations, is not politically motivated (Guffey 2006:11, 14). *Cameo*'s detached and nostalgic evocation of an alluring and romantic past through appropriated and decontextualised imagery can therefore be described as retro.

Connecting retro to nostalgia and examining its deployment in consumer culture, Stephen Brown, Robert Kozinets and John Sherry (2003:19) characterise the late twentieth century by "an astonishing 'nostalgia boom' marked by classic brands or rejuvenation of brands through recourse to nostalgia". The term 'nostalgia', originally referring to a longing to return home, can be seen as "an incurable condition of modernity" (Dlamini 2009:16). Nostalgia plays a significant part in the marketing and consumption of 'colonial style' and, if understood as an outflow of modernity, is akin to primitivism – itself an ambiguous longing for a romanticised preindustrial past. In my discussion to follow, I explore the way in which the colonial is mythologised through commodification with reference to the ideas of Césaire (2000) and bell hooks (1992).

In its appropriation of photographic portraits of black women from colonial archives and adaptation thereof through collage, *Cameo* also conforms to the tenets of the 'colonial style'. The 'colonial style', as it is called in design features, is rooted in the mythologised images of adventurers, explorers and settlers in popular media. Two significant influences on the trend of (re-)creating the look of glamorous settler colonial homes or safari camps are the film *Out of Africa* (Pollack 1985) and Ralph Lauren's *Safari Home* collections of the late twentieth century. Both present opulent, visually seductive visions of upper-class European domestic interiors in imagined colonial settings using design, accessories and props, and have had a lasting effect on interior design enthusiasts who continue to cite these in magazines and blogs. Brown, Kozinets and Sherry (2003:19) argue that retro brands "hark back to a time when the world seemed safer, more comprehensible". For Daniel J Huppatz (2009:24–25), Ralph Lauren's "nostalgic styles [reflect] a yearning for tradition, stability, and history in a rapidly changing society". Entrepreneurs and marketers thus capitalise on the sense of stability offered by signifiers of the past in the face of the ephemeral and uncertain present (see also Lowenthal 2015:41). The discursive construction of the colonial as a simpler, more comfortable era is evident in articles on the colonial style where adjectives such as 'innocent' and 'calm' are used (Sargent 2013:64).

In order to tease apart the ideological underpinnings of myths presented by the visually seductive 'colonial style', I pose the question: *whose* colonial is evoked? Judging from media features, it is the (imagined) luxury of the colonial master's house that is emulated. On glossy pages such as this, the very word 'colonial' and its stylistic props have become designer shorthand for privilege, comfort and luxury. Despite the stylistic foregrounding of the historical, this trend obscures history, rendering signs (especially tropes and stereotypes) natural and neutral as décor elements, thus obfuscating their ideological functioning (Pickering 2001:48). hooks's (1992:25) engagement with "imperialist nostalgia" is instructive here. For her, the term denotes the celebration of "a continuum of 'primitivism'", taking the form, in mass culture, of "re-enacting and re-ritualising in different ways the imperialist, colonising journey as narrative fantasy of power and desire, of seduction by

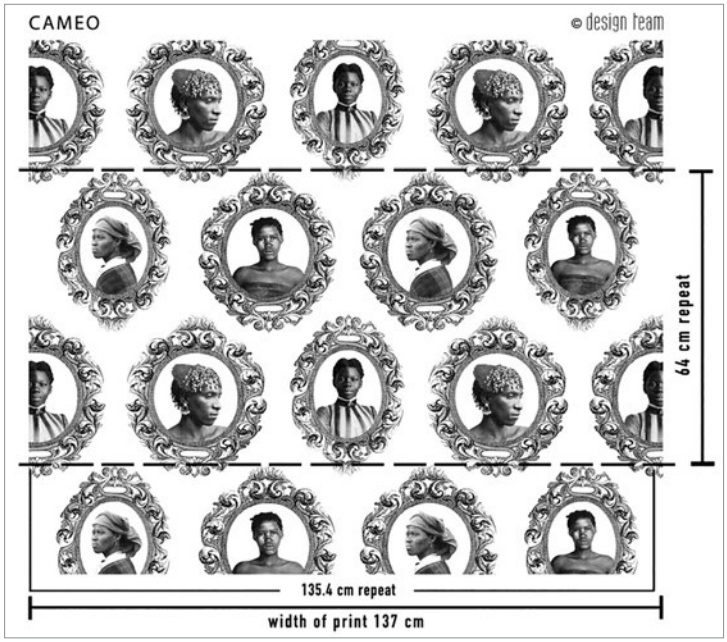
the Other" (hooks 1992:25). One can argue that the 'colonial' of the design world presents 're-enactments and re-ritualisings' of imagined colonial experience and its settings – not that of the colonised, but of the coloniser. The fantasy enacted is that of the master's house, and hidden from view, or silent in white gloves and aprons, are the disenfranchised indigenous populations, the "instruments of production" (Césaire 2000:42) harnessed to create and sustain the luxury and comfort of the ersatz aristocracy.

The 'colonial' is thus conceived as a vague historical period or style, and presents a mythologising abstraction of colonialism, colonial subjects and their lived realities under colonial subjugation. According to Roland Barthes (1991:117), myth is defined by constant games of hide-and-seek between meaning and form, and when dominated by form, the contingency of meaning is left behind: "it empties itself, it becomes impoverished, history evaporates, only the letter remains". Meaning offers form "an instantaneous reserve of history", which can be called upon and dismissed (Barthes 1991:116). In this manner the indisputable image of the subject of an historic image is tamed, "put at a distance, made almost transparent; it recedes a little, it becomes the accomplice of a concept which comes to it fully armed" (Barthes 1991:117).

It is my contention that, to facilitate consumption, the sentimentalising commodities created for this contemporary, neo-colonial style require amnesia and the emptying of history of all but its surfaces. This process facilitates vicarious nostalgia, as utilised by marketers. Unlike 'personal nostalgia', that is, a consumer's longing for the lived past, vicarious nostalgia describes nostalgic feelings "for a period outside of the individual's living memory", thus never directly experienced by the consumer (Merchant & Rose 2013:2619, 2621). The term denotes emotional connection to, and fantasising about, experiences and associations from past eras of which the consumer has no first-hand experience. By consuming goods and brands that evoke vicarious nostalgia, individuals can indulge in an idealised past. Arjun Appadurai (1996:77–78) calls this "armchair nostalgia" or nostalgia without "lived experience or collective historical memory", where merchandisers' images supply the "memory of a loss […] never suffered", for him exemplified par excellence by "catalogues that exploit the colonial experience for merchandising purposes".

The absence of substance, and consumers revelling in the surface value of simulacra, as theorised by Fredric Jameson (1991) and Ted Polhemus (1996), is constructive for thinking about the appropriation and commodification of colonial images. Jameson (1991:5, 16–18) argues that, through acts of "cannibalisation", producers of culture only have the past to turn to. The present world is mediated by representations and imitations of dead styles of the past from an "imaginary museum of now global culture", dominated by a culture of the image or simulacra. (Jameson 1991:5, 16–17). According to Polhemus (1996:[sp]), contemporary postsubcultural consumers irreverently plunder a global "supermarket of style, where every world and every era you dreamed of … is on offer like tins of soup on a supermarket shelf".

Have archival representations of colonial subjects, as empty signifiers and photographic chemical traces divorced from the original person and body, become 'tins on a supermarket shelf'? While this question cannot be considered in depth here, I explore the idea that the specific selection of photographic portraits for *Cameo* suggests that a particular 'trace' was desired for this design: the images were chosen because they are historic photographs of black women; they are read according to well-established codes of race and gender, and consequently can be encoded as signifiers of scenic and historical black femininity.



Thingification and the commodification of difference

The above characterisations of postmodern commodification and appropriation as 'cannibalism' and 'plunder' may be linked to Césaire's (2000:32–33) definition of colonialism in terms of globalising capitalism and the consequent 'thingification' or dehumanising of colonised peoples. With regard to his question, "[w]hat, fundamentally, is colonisation?", Césaire (2000:32–33) urges that, "the decisive actors here are the adventurer and the pirate, the wholesale grocer and the ship owner, the gold digger and the merchant, appetite and force".

Césaire's identification of the pirate and adventurer as being among the chief colonial actors resonates with authors Deborah Root (1996) and hooks (1992), who describe the processes of assimilation and consumption of the material culture, intellectual property, and representations and bodies of formerly colonised peoples, as cannibalistic. According to Marcia Crosby (cited in Root 1996:70), appropriation is prompted by presumed differences and inherent cultural authenticities of the Other, and that "difference ... has itself become a saleable commodity". For hooks (1992:21), "ethnicity becomes spice, seasoning that can liven up the dull dish that is mainstream white culture".

ABOVE: Figure 3. Lise Butler and Amanda Haupt (designers), *Cameo* pattern repeat sheet, 2014 | Courtesy Design Team

Writing in the context of late twentieth-century America, hooks (1997:21) argues that blackness is consumed as a sign of transgression, as a domesticated product offering consumers self-transformation through safe and comfortable encounters with other cultures. Such 'touring through consumption' is possible without relinquishing mainstream positionality or class privilege, or engaging with the people, lives and histories that constitute the resources of those commodities (hooks 1997:21, 23). Within contemporary homes, images of historic black bodies and faces – like 'tribal' sculptures, hand-woven textiles and hunting trophies – may thus serve to spice up an otherwise classic palette with frissons of worldliness and Otherness. Adorned with simulacra of historic black femininity, *Cameo* may present a versatile, yet safe, commodity fetish that promotes whichever noble or romantic version of colonial Africa entrepreneurs and consumers desire.

Yet what about consumers who do have "lived experience or collective historical memory", in the words of Appadurai (1996:78), or those unaffiliated to hooks's (1992:21) 'mainstream white culture'? The deployment of signifiers of blackness, as simulacra and traces, within both colonial discourse and contemporary design, is premised on the need for a multiplicity of sign functions allowing for both comfortable stability and suggestions of the illicit and dangerous. Stuart Hall (1996:6) explains race as one type of floating signifier, subject to constant processes of redefinition and appropriation. The stereotypes created by dynamic and ambivalent colonial discourse, whereby subjects are constructed through the articulation of difference, are, according to Homi Bhabha (1994:94–96), inherently ambiguous, paradoxical modes of representation and application. Owing to the fixity and volatility of the racial signifiers selected for *Cameo*, the fabric can lend both charm and spice to domestic contexts. By the same token, the images can also serve as affirmations of the consumer/owner's political ideals or ancestral relations. The flexibility of the racial signifier and the diverse contexts and modes of domestic consumption may, as anticipated by Stevenson and Graham-Stewart, therefore contribute to its re-inscription as records of resistance, celebration and remembrance.

In locating the fashioned role of black femininity in *Cameo*, it is helpful to consider the semiotic and economic functions, as well as the value of the indexical sign denoting racial blackness through an unpicking of the signifier from its referent. For Alessandro Raengo (2013:13), the "image of blackness" functions as "perfect sign"; an intelligible, trustworthy and transparent visual sign where "the surface bears the self-evident trace of what supposedly lies beneath it". She explains this in terms of the visual ontology of "face value", formulated as the possibility, desire and belief that one may read value (also understood as reference, truth and meaning) on an image's face and its surface. This approach traps the body within the visual field where it becomes both "proof and product of the visuality of race" (Raengo 2013:13). I believe that the fashioning of the four photographic portraits in *Cameo* was informed by, and functions within, the 'face value' entrapment of perceived relationships between signifier and signified, the black body and racial blackness, and archives of accumulated associations of the black body. The re-inscription of meaning by entrepreneurs and consumers is thus facilitated by a decontextualised racial signifier, which although a potential "accomplice" (Barthes 1991:117) to a myriad of even contradictory concepts, remains a palimpsest of prior meanings.

This codified and recontextualised palimpsest assumes exchange value(s) as it can be affixed to commodities that compete within global image economies where Otherness is marketed as commodity. Having accrued currency as being metonymic of Africa in the popular imagination, the image of the black body becomes a lucrative readymade commodity that functions to set apart both entrepreneur and consumer. Signifiers of racial

and ethnic difference enable entrepreneurs – who can copy and paste these onto products from the 'mega-archive' of the internet – to differentiate their products from "culturally 'othered' artefacts and goods" (Huggan 2001:28). For consumers, possession thereof signifies a cultural capital that not only speaks of the owner's style, awareness of current fashions and ability to afford these, but also of an appreciation of the African cultural and historical context, however sincere or superficial. Transformed into decorative motifs adorning costly soft furnishings, the black bodies and faces indicate recognition of (colonial) history, yet both history and difference are carefully contained and gentrified within the antique frame and the parameters of the commodity covered in the fabric.

Conclusion

I acknowledge that my reading of *Cameo* – a critique of the postcolonial marketplace's fixing of racial signifier to referent – might curtail other interpretative possibilities. It is indeed imperative to decolonial projects of emancipation to recognise that colonial photographic portraits produced with the explicit aims of racial categorisation can and should be read for interpretations that differ from the purposes and ideologies of their creation. This is the wish expressed by the editors of *Surviving the lens*, which urges revisiting the photographs as evidence of individuality, resistance, pride and dignity (Stevenson & Graham-Stewart 2001:24). In contemplating the potential repetition of trauma in contemporary artists' appropriation and use of colonial images of African bodies, Colin Richards (1999:185) argues that it is untenable to assume "that the figurative repetition (reproduction) of violence is always and everywhere a structurally entailed ossification of existing power relations".

In their appraisal of nineteenth-century anthropologist Gustav Fritsch's photographic portraits of Southern Africans, taken with the explicit aim of indexing racial types, Andrew Bank (2008) and Lize van Robbroeck (2008) emphasise the excess of signification in Fritsch's portraits. Despite his painstaking, instrumentalist efforts to control, quantify and generalise, his portraits in fact testify to the human individuality and hybridity he encountered in the colony. The same can be said of the photographic portraits selected for *Cameo*: the dignity, self-respect and fortitude expressed in upright postures; the individuality and style communicated in fashionable arrangements of hair or headscarf; a gaze that interrogates and holds the eye of the lens and the viewer. Furthermore, like colonial photographers and sitters, contemporary consumers are aware of the camera's ability to thwart the efforts of the photographer or to serve as an instrument for invention and affectation. In the form of homeware, and therefore more readily available to the middle-class than the original photographs, these images may provide consumers with important reminders of 'lives lived'.

It is, however, important to keep in mind that such alternative readings and potential recognition happen through the consumption of radically decontextualised images of blackness, racial signifiers (whether decoded as Otherness or affirmative expressions) codified and domesticated through and for fashionable commodification. Laying bare the erasure that occurs in the commodification of difference, hooks (1992:31) highlights that this process denies the significance of the Other's history. Furthermore, the transformation of signifiers of black colonial experience into nostalgic, 'colonial style' products produces "experiences of duration, passage, and

loss that rewrite the lived histories of individuals, families, ethnic groups, and classes" (Appadurai 1996:78). It is this obscuring of both history and of the processes of production – demanded by the mythologising of neo-colonial style – that facilitates the elegant subsuming of critical, democratic and counter-hegemonic aims of historians, artists and curators by contemporary hegemonies of a global cannibalistic capitalism.

Clues as to whether the women's faces on the fabric are little more than tins on a supermarket shelf – their value subject to the longevity of a trend – or whether their reproduction and consumption have the potential to unsettle racial stereotypes and historically exploitative relations of production, will most likely be found in individual consumers' relationships with the commodity. Extensive fieldwork may provide rich, undoubtedly multifarious, data about owner-commodity relationships that are, like the meaning and value of the image, characterised by flux and intertwined with socio-economic contexts.

Endnotes

1 The exhibition *Surviving the lens: photographic studies of South and East African people, 1870–1920* showed at the Iziko South African National Gallery in Cape Town (2001) and at the Johannesburg Art Gallery, Johannesburg (2002).

2 In 1925, the photograph was reproduced in SS Dorman's *Pygmies and bushmen of the Kalahari* (Dorman 1925; Stevenson & Graham-Stewart 2001:96).

3 Design Team is a Pretoria-based company established in 2002 by Amanda Haupt and Lise Butler. According to its website, the company is "a textile design business focusing on the design, print and conversion of South African inspired textiles" (About us 2011).

4 The production and marketing of the collection was recently halted and *Cameo* is currently only printed to client order (Strey 2016). Exploring the reasons for the halting of *Cameo*'s production – the eventual dwindling of sales, according to Wilna Strey (2016) of Design Team – necessitates a reception study amongst consumers and does not lie within the scope of this chapter or current research project.

5 I would like to thank Anthony Bogues (2014) for suggesting the relevance of Césaire's formulation to this study.

6 Duggan-Cronin immigrated to South Africa from Ireland in 1897. He started working at De Beers Consolidated Mines in Kimberley where he began photographing migrant workers in about 1904. His photographic work focused increasingly on indigenous cultures, dress and customs, and after the First World War, he started travelling to document groups of black people in Southern Africa. Between 1919 and 1939 he travelled some 128 000 kilometres, taking approximately 6 000 photographs. His photographs and collection of indigenous art and objects of material culture are housed in the Duggan-Cronin Gallery, part of the McGregor Museum, in Kimberley, South Africa. He published selections of his work in the eleven-volume *The Bantu tribes of South Africa* (1929–1954).

7 A commercial photographer, Middlebrook had studios in Kimberley from 1888 to 1894, and in Durban from 1898 until approximately 1902 (Stevenson & Graham-Stewart 2001:124).

8 Four generations of the Gribble family worked as commercial photographers in the Western Cape since 1860, with studios in Cape Town and Paarl (Stevenson & Graham-Stewart 2001:62, 92).

9 Photography, for John Tagg (1988:99), operates in the "realist mode", offering a fixity in which the signifier is treated as if identical to a pre-existent signified. Furthermore, Tagg (1988:99) argues, in a manner analogous to commodity production under capitalism, processes of production are obscured, and "the complex codes or use of language by which realism is constituted is not accounted for".

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Derrière les panneaux publicitaires/ *Behind the billboards*

DECONSTRUCTING PHOTOGRAPHY'S INSTRUMENTALISATION AND POTENTIAL FOR UN(BUILDING) ABIDJAN

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Abstract

In 2014, I presented a workshop in Côte d'Ivoire on informal settlement upgrading. This opportunity came in the wake of state-sanctioned eradication of informal settlements in the country's economic capital, Abidjan. I found photography to be an effective way to archive the process of eradication as it enabled me to capture the violence, damage and loss which go hand-in-hand with forced removals. Analysing these images retrospectively, I realised that they embody what I consider to be a hard-to-grasp *counter*-archive of what could be referred to as situated absence.

Using my photographic documents of the forced removals witnessed in Abidjan as an analytical starting point allows me to shed new light on photography's concurrent roles: I argue that it is *instrumentalised* – via its use on billboards – in the framing of the official archive of city-making, supported by big business and the state; simultaneously, I believe, it offers radical *potential* for the emergence of an archive which *counters* convenient official narratives. In my analysis of the situation, there exists a tension between photography's complicity and its potential. The medium of photography is made *complicit* in the form of the programmed manipulation of the billboard archetype, and what its repetitive iconic imagery signifies, as part of a broader neoliberal agenda of erasure through state-sanctioned forced removals. At the same time, I maintain, it has the *potential* to generate a counter-archive – using indexical images of destroyed human settlements – to oppose the powerful top-down and highly selective archive of bureaucrats, city planners, policy makers and mainstream commercial interests.

Referencing the marginalisation of large parts of Abidjan's citizenry – through state-sanctioned clearances of informally settled areas – I use this paper and my artwork entitled Derrière les panneaux publicitaires*/Behind the billboards* to highlight and interrogate the tensions residing within the photographic medium and its dichotomous operations. Paper and artwork become productively entangled vehicles to think through photography's multifaceted roles; in other words, its instrumentalisation in the service of constructing comfortable archives of power, and its potential usefulness as a medium through which such archives may be countered.

Introduction

In September 2014, in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire,[1] I presented a workshop centred on methodologies for the upgrading of informal settlements. The workshop's content was informed by my direct and ongoing experience – since 2011 – of various community-driven collaborative engagements[2] (Opper 2012) aimed at upgrading so-called informal settlements in Johannesburg and surrounds. This chapter stems from my interpretation of a series of snapshots I took in and around Abidjan during my stay. The photos document the state-sanctioned eradication of numerous informal settlements, taking place before and during my visit. As an artist interested in practice-led research, and working with the specifics of given sites, I used the photos to animate a new artwork. For the work, Derrière les panneaux publicitaires*/Behind the billboards* (2015) (Fig. 1), I chose the form of a custom-made billboard-like object.[3] The intention of the *Behind the billboards* artwork was to make tangible the argument I put forward in this chapter. The looped images of the destruction (of informal settlements and their commensurate social networks) projected onto the artwork are used to put the elusive potential of *counter*-archives and *counter*-narratives – of forced absence – within reach of the viewer. I argue that such latent archives embody photography's *potential* to 'speak out' against the current marginalisation of the so-called informal dwellers of Abidjan by the heavy-handedness of neo-liberal[4] models supporting one-sided state- and market-driven ambitions. Obversely, I reason that the billboards adjacent to Abidjan's informal settlements, via the glossy aspirational desires they unashamedly display, constitute photography's support of ready-made instrumental slogans; lazy mottos employing the blanket advertising rhetoric of a 'better life' to gloss over the larger structural challenges of accommodating the urban poor of Abidjan equitably.

ABOVE: Figure 1. Alexander Opper, Derrière les panneaux publicitaires*/Behind the billboards*, 2015 | Installation view, *Past Imperfect // Future Present* exhibition, FADA Gallery, 2015 | Single channel video projection onto billboard-like object (wood and paint) | 2100 x 200 x 210cm | Photograph by the author

In terms of the multifaceted roles of photography, I argue for its substantial potential to 'speak' and to mobilise agency. At the same time, I highlight its complicity as a pivotal feature of billboard advertising, in the way it is used as a carrier for the unabashed marketing of largely unattainable aspirations. Photographic representations are used to sell opulent lifestyles that are generally inaccessible for marginalised citizens of Abidjan (Fig. 2). There exists a stark disconnect between the material ambitions of top-down policy-making structures and their attendant capital-biased logic and economically defined yardsticks, and the grassroots realities of Abidjan's informal settlers. This schism can be discerned in the images included in this chapter and those additional photographs used to animate the above-mentioned artwork: they represent a small collection of photographic documents that illustrate the crass juxtaposition of promotional billboards flying in the face of physical landscapes of newly demolished informal settlements (Figs. 2 & 3).

In this chapter, I show how the unapologetic complicity of photographic constructions that push a neoliberal agenda – in support of the comfortable yet exclusive marriage of bottom-line-driven logic and the state's desire for sophistication and speed – may be challenged using the social currency of the medium's ability to challenge apparatuses of power. Photography harbours the latently potent ability to operate in the service of resistance. The medium's capacity to spontaneously capture the destruction of informal settlements begins to demonstrate its relevance in 'archiving' what was, most likely, never destined to be archived (at least not from the perspective of an official archival narrative). The artwork – which can be read as the artistic manifestation of this chapter – consists of a custom-made billboard-like object onto which the snapshots I captured are projected in a repetitive loop. These images show two phenomena: sites of demolished

ABOVE: Figure 2. Alexander Opper, Image of billboard situated along the road from Abidjan to Grand-Bassam and adjacent to a newly eradicated informal settlement, 2014 | Photograph by the author

settlements; and the advertising billboards adjacent to these (in some instances the razed settlements and intact billboards overlap in the same frame). Using the disjunction between absence (of settlements) and presence (of billboards), I demonstrate the importance of a *counter*-archival 'voice' of urban inclusion, *aided* by photography, as a counter-position to the one-sided, top-down justification of forced removals.

In the context of my argument for photography's role in the production of a counter-archive, I ask what the *counter*-archival approach is able to offer in terms of a new contribution to existing research on, in and through 'the archive'. To contextualise this proposition for the counter-archive, I draw on Okwui Enwezor (2008:16) who, following Michel Foucault (2002 [1989]:146), notes that no archive is ever exhaustive. Bearing this in mind, a new and searching *counter*-archival tendency offers a timely and relevant mode, not towards exhaustiveness, but towards a critique of certain archival tendencies that suppress or drown out others.

A brief background of the relative value ascribed to informal settlements in different parts of Africa

The intention behind the workshop in Abidjan was to catalyse broader and more productive professional and public discourse around the maltreatment of the urban poor. An important aspect of the emergent discussions during the week-long workshop was the interrogation of stereotypically dismissive connotations[5] attached to informal settlement contexts by a more privileged Abidjanese public (and, by extension, by privileged sectors of society at large).

The invitation came in the wake of substantial clearances of informal settlements by the state in Abidjan. Witnessing the seemingly absent civic rights and lack of any real agency of thousands of informal settlement

ABOVE: Figure 3. Alexander Opper, Image of billboard situated along the road from Abidjan to Grand-Bassam and adjacent to a newly eradicated informal settlement, 2014 | Photograph by the author

dwellers systematically uprooted from their fragile addresses drove home, for me, certain urgencies. Despite being a relative outsider in Abidjan, I recognised the potential value of sharing my direct experiences and involvement – as practitioner, facilitator and teacher – in developing and implementing positive and collaborative "co-productive" (Mitlin 2008) informal settlement upgrading methodologies and strategies in a range of Johannesburg settlements. These extensive involvements in multiple-stakeholder community-driven upgrading exercises have included witnessing *illegal*[6] forced removals of settlements. An example of this took place through a violent disruption – by the Johannesburg Metropolitan Police Department (JMPD) – of a collaborative settlement upgrading engagement in Marlboro South, in 2012. The above experience made clear to me the precarious nature and status of life in informal settlements: for one, the vulnerability of no security of tenure is compounded by the constant possibility of being forcibly removed, and by additional life-threatening disasters such as fire and flooding.

The privilege, as I see it, of being able to engage in the collective community-driven pursuit of upgrading informal settlements in and around Johannesburg – with the teams of the architectural students in my trust, as well as other key partners, collaborators and stakeholders[7] – has allowed me to become sensitised to the value of *upgrading* (as opposed to eradication). In the South African context, upgrading has only recently replaced an earlier official attitude of eradication. This positive shift is exemplified by the 2009/2010 renaming of the National Department of Housing to the Department of Human Settlements. The progressive approach of upgrading represents an admission from the South African state that participative processes, and the acknowledgement of what people on the ground have done for themselves, are crucial factors towards achieving greater safety, accessibility to municipal services, mobility, and equity for the urban poor.[8] Prior to 2010, informal settlements in South Africa were perceived by the state as an uncomfortably unavoidable aspect of the contemporary city. Government's policy shift, slowly but surely, begins to reframe marginalised informal populations as valuable and valued contributors to the inclusive economic and social growth of South African cities. It is in this supportive context that a growing awareness can emerge, interrogating polarities such as informal/formal, in favour of the opportunities offered by *less* formal (and *more* flexible) urban and peri-urban settlement forms, thereby demonstrating their value for rapidly urbanising cities worldwide.[9] The significance of the South African government's shift in attitude – namely the embracing of contextually relevant forms of informal settlement upgrading – will hopefully stimulate other governments on the continent, such as that of Côte d'Ivoire, to follow suit by adopting more humane modes of engaging the needs and desires of urban informal dwellers.

Photography's potential to generate counter-archives to resist archives of power

Moving across the urban surfaces of Abidjan by car, I was unable, owing to the recent stripping away of vast tracts of informally settled land, to read the now-absent version of the less formal city in the original, so to speak. The erasure of much of its earlier bustling informal texture made it impossible to access that part of Abidjan's 'aura'[10] in the sense that Walter Benjamin (2008) uses this term. In other words, the value Benjamin ascribes to the necessity of an *original* presence of something, in this case an informal settlement – as a guarantee of its unmistakeable aura – is inaccessible owing to the obliteration of such an original. A violent palimpsestual reversal meant I was looking at an *absence*, evidenced by rubble, raw earth, beach sand, or a

combination of these. Only days before many had called these now-naked patches – with their inscribed narratives and histories – 'home'.

Abidjan's version of a 'clean-sweep'[11] had replaced organically formed human settlements with rationalised absence: a classic top-down tactic, namely the application of narrow bureaucratic definitions of 'legal/formal' versus 'illegal/informal' settlements as the justification for the widespread removal of the latter. In Abidjan, a crucial layer of dialogue between the more and the less formal – not to mention collaboration and co-production – is markedly absent: no real possibilities exist for the grassroots needs and desires of informal settlement occupants to be heard seriously by the powerful formal arm of the city. The scenes of erasure I saw jolted me into personal mental reconstructions of the racially motivated and engineered tactics of violence attached to the notorious forced removals that had epitomised the everyday realities of the marginalised during the apartheid period in South Africa. One such example was Sophiatown – famous far beyond its Johannesburg borders as a vibrant, artistic and inclusive, multi-cultural hub – the site of a calculated and indifferently executed series of forced removals and mass demolitions from the mid-1950s to early 1960s. The celebrated *Drum* magazine photographers Bob Gosani's and Jürgen Schadeberg's (1994) depictions of the life of this famous settlement, before and after its demise, offer deep insights into the cultural void resulting from the apartheid regime's decision to raze Sophiatown. A syntactically violent attempt at reinforcing the physical flattening of Sophiatown's architectural fabric took the form of its over-writing, with the establishment of a white middle-class suburb on its ruins, called Triomf (meaning 'triumph' in Afrikaans). In this challenging context, *Drum* magazine's approach was subversively cunning: "The strategy it developed … was to expose the evils of the racist system without actually condemning official policy" (Schadeberg 1994:6). The immersive photographic work of the above protagonists and their contemporaries at the *Drum* offices embodies a crucial counter-archive to the reductive narratives and ambitions (all archived fastidiously by the state) of perversely defined 'separate development' – one of the countless drivers of apartheid's machinery of Othering.

In Abidjan, which obviously has its own socio-political history, the most effective way for attempting to archive what I was seeing or, perhaps more accurately, the settlements and dwellings I was *not* seeing, was through photography. As discreetly as possible, I snapped images with my mobile phone. With hindsight, I have rationalised these images as a collection of 'information' or raw material in the service of processing and understanding what I was witnessing. What this collection of snapshots amounts to is the capturing of violence, loss and destruction: a hard-to-grasp *counter*-archive of absence. Preparing my presentation for the first day of the workshop in Abidjan, I began using my snapshots of its removed settlements in visual dialogue with my similar older images of forced removals in Johannesburg, as scenes of comparative reflection and provocation. The use of these counter-archival images, documenting loss, draws attention to photography's inherent political currency. Such images have the potential to catalyse action via the emergence of more empathetic attitudes – from the side of the state and more privileged classes – towards marginalised citizens of, in this case, Abidjan.

Only a small selection of the photographic 'information' assembled during my trip is included in this chapter. The images (Figs. 2 & 3) show examples of representations of mainstream billboard devices and the selling tactics these employ set against images of the recent eradication of informal habitats. Via the retrospective visual and textual analysis of site-specific photographic material, I attempt, on the one hand, to negotiate the blurry line between the dangers of the apathetic consumption of these images and, on the other

hand, to tease out the 'vocally' productive prompts towards the potential agency they harbour.

I maintain that the collection of images embodies the necessary evidence to constitute the beginnings of an idea around the employment of photography in the service of the construction of a *counter*-archive. The photos depict forced removals of communities and have the potential, I believe, to mobilise public awareness, empathy and, ideally, the political will to provide support and security for Abidjan's marginalised *less* formal dwellers. The emergence of a counter-archive is further supported by the relational disjunction and uncanny visual tension that may be read in some of my photographs (Figs. 2 & 3). This tension manifests between the sudden lack of everyday *life* (the absence of human activity epitomised by the recently demolished settlements), and the vacuous promise of life-*style* flaunted via the repetitive billboard motifs, now even more visible than prior to the widespread demolitions.

Photography's complicity in this context becomes clear when one begins to study the carefully capital-engineered language and visual tactics of the billboards and banners adjacent to the sites of informal settlement removals. In unambiguous contrast to the anxiety of dislocated people attempting to gather up and reconfigure their lives and homes in the wake of forced removals and demolitions, the billboards stand disembodied and distanced (Fig. 3). Such billboards, like advertising panels anywhere, cunningly employ the duplicitous nature of photographic reproduction and large-scale printing technology, using public space to achieve their consumptive ends. Benjamin's (2008) ideas on the aura of the original, and in this case the missing aura of the now absent settlements, are again important here. The billboards, photographed in Abidjan and on its outskirts, deceive would-be consumers with an aura of 'authenticity' achieved via careful codification. Layers of visual prompts are reductively employed to appeal to potential consumers' aspirant desires for individuality, material wealth and capital-dependent mainstream societal status. Promises of social mobility embedded in the visual languages of the billboards are disqualified almost immediately, however, audiences soon encounter the same images on multiple generic billboards recurring across the city's asphalt horizon in a duplicitous chain of enticement. The billboards stand as tenacious pieces of commercial infrastructure, their consumer-driven imagery in blatant support of the slick and sellable 'World-class' register. They float untouched above recently demolished terrains, their backs turned to the fabric of the absent informal settlements.

A larger selection of my photographs than can be shown here is used to animate the *Behind the billboards* artwork (Fig. 1). I expand here on the subversive translational possibilities the appropriation of a billboard register offers me in terms of the artwork and its role in testing my stated position on photography's respective complicity and its constructive potential. As an artist with architectural training, the approach I used to make the work is what I refer to as 'Undoing Architecture' (Opper 2010).[12] This practice, which is usually site specific, seeks to agitate, subvert, and even consciously derail what is often expected from distanced, neat, linear and conventional framings of the architectural discipline, and the corpus of inherited, accepted knowledge (still largely influenced by western-centric paradigms) attached to it. In the sense that my artwork emerged in response to the crass marginalisation of the urban poor in Abidjan, it could be compared to a performance project – also related, at least for its inaugural staging, to an informal settlement context – by South African artist, Steven Cohen. Cohen, as do I, often works with the theme of marginalisation, highlighting a number of stark social, economic and political contradictions that pervade the post-1994 South African landscape. In his first performance of *Chandelier* (2001), the artist dons a colonial remnant – a chandelier reinterpreted and reconfigured as a tutu skirt – and walks through an informal settlement in Newtown, Johannesburg. What the

artist did not know at the time was that his performance would be synchronous with the forced removal of the occupants of the settlement and the flattening of their dwellings (Blignaut 2003:42). According to Belinda Blignaut (2003:42), Cohen is aware of the difficulties attached to presence of his uninvited and exuberantly adorned white body in the chosen context. Yet, he is also convinced of the value of those aspects of his practice he uses to show up glaring flaws inherent in the structural and systemic limitations that have emerged since 1994's politically well-intentioned envisioning of a 'new' South Africa. I propose that Cohen's *Chandelier* – as the embodiment of literally illuminating bling – could be termed a 'counter-archival performance'. Stemming from this position, I suggest that – at least conceptually – this counter-archival mode is comparable with the way I have photographically framed and condensed two different photographic registers in this chapter and used these as the basis for the artwork linked to it. Namely, the register of manipulated and manipulative images of postcolonial, neoliberal, iconic bling (exhibited by the *disembodied* billboards of Abidjan), set against the indexical images of forced removals adjacent to these billboards.

In making the artwork[13] Derrière les panneaux publicitaires,[14] I mined the visual clues offered by my snapshots as 'information' for processing. I developed and translated this visual 'data' into a complex relationship with itself. This was achieved through a productively disjunctive and relational collapsing-onto-each-other of iconic fabricated billboard images and indexical images documenting the forced removals. Using the billboard archetype in shrunken form, as both support and critique of the scenarios represented in the images projected onto its surface, allows for the congestion, collision and ultimately uncomfortable conflation of these disparate sets of photographic images of consumption and erasure.[15] In many of the images projected onto the billboard-like object, the destroyed settlements and billboards (taunting marginalised citizens with images of luxury) occupy the same frame. This colliding adjacency suggests the necessity for a more equitable and inclusive playing field of collaboration and co-production between policymakers and a complex field of diverse and diversely resourced urban stakeholders. In the artwork, the collapsing of images onto the flatness of the billboard-like surface denies the viewer the luxury of a simple categorical signifier-signified unpacking of the work. Importantly, the reduced scale of the billboard-like object brings its typically lofty state down to the eye-level of one's gaze. Confronting the viewer directly, it makes its content of looped superimposition accessible, not in the service of selling, but for provocative reconsideration.

My position, articulated through the making of the artwork, is to challenge the city's one-sided bureaucratic apparatus, currently driven by, and striving towards, a patriarchal and reductive notion of urban sophistication, beauty and modernity, at the cost of broad-based inclusivity. The snapshots captured in Abidjan embody the inclusive possibility for the emergence of counter-archives. However, they simultaneously demonstrate the suppression of *lived* counter-*narratives*: the result of a bureaucratic approach, encapsulated by a reductive strategy driven by the relative flatness of the consumptive tourists' and developers' gazes and desires. This narrow strategy is built on oversimplified notions of the 'beautiful' or the 'clean' city. It represents a one-tracked generic mode resulting in the systematic sanitising of the urban image, setting it at a remove from the richly layered and lived narratives referred to above.

In the artwork, the physical undoing of the 'informal' layers of Abidjan is conveyed via the projection of images of literal destruction interspersed with images of billboards flanking demolished settlements. This alternating conflation of absence (flattened settlement) and false presence (superficial billboard) sets up a complex tension within the artwork. It demonstrates that Architecture, as a 'thing' and discipline – in this case

in the form of modest makeshift dwellings – is defenceless to stand up to the unpredictable speed and (il)logic of the bureaucratic city's strategies and desires. These aspirations often hinge on branding. An example is the universal mayoral aspiration, of late, to prefix the names of cities with the adjectival thread 'World-class …'. On the one hand, such hankerings to stand out are valid: they help attract investment, young professionals, tourism and so on. On the other hand, as can be observed in contemporary Abidjan, these moves often exacerbate and endanger the already precariously shaky standards of living for informal settlement dwellers.

There currently seems to be no 'Plan B' in place for re-housing dislocated residents in Abidjan. Invariably the displaced are edged further away from the urban centre. This dislocation forces people to give up proximity not only to work possibilities and basic resources necessary for survival, but also access to civic amenities linked to the city's more formal makeup, such as schooling and healthcare. This mode of displacement is, in some cases, justified and made easier by the state's use of the construct of safety as one of its primary rationales for forcibly removing masses of people.[16]

In this one-sided battle between the formal and the less formal, the emergence of the beginnings of a counter-archive – via the medium of photography – as a potential tool of negotiation seems, to me, to be a worthwhile endeavour. It could be argued that my status – as a relative stranger to the histories and complexities of the city in question – is debatable in terms of engaging in, and making a case for, such a pursuit. At the same time though, I recognise (as objectively as possible) the validity and necessity – in the service of possible positive change – of attempting to interrogate and reformulate, through new readings, the extent to which photography may be utilised as an enabling and socially responsive tool within the precarious contexts of informal settlements on the continent.

Conclusion

In the context of the act of witnessing and photographically recording the given case of forced absence in Abidjan, I use this chapter and artwork as productively entangled vehicles. I frame the condensing strategy – of the photographed conspicuous absence of people with the photographed generic codes of advertising billboards and banners – as a written *and* artistic provocation. In the face of city-wide forced removals, text and artwork interrogate the paper-thin significance of Abidjan's actual *panneaux publicitaires* (advertising panels) and banners, promising its citizens a better and inclusive future, using the one-liner rhetoric and cut-and-paste visual language of the advertising world. Together paper and artwork highlight photography's complicity in the way its subliminally manipulative graphic code (epitomised by the billboards) is directed at the proverbial '*target* audience'. At the same time, they draw attention to the 'vocal' possibilities of photography. In other words, its capacity to establish a counter-archive and counter-narrative for a population *targeted* by forced removal to 'speak' back, from a grassroots perspective, to the city's power structures, stubbornly out of touch with its citizens. Using the 'voice' of photography, the provocation to Abidjan's power structures, and to cities elsewhere, is to recognise the margins – and the marginalised citizens inhabiting such liminal spaces – as intrinsic to the centre and rightfully worthy of the opportunities attached to being close to that centre.[17]

Endnotes

1 In 2014, I had the privilege of being invited to Abidjan by the then-director of the local Goethe-Institut, Henrike Grohs, to present a week-long workshop on informal settlement upgrading. The workshop was funded by the Goethe-Institut and hosted in partnership with, and at, the offices of the *Ordre des architectes de Côte d'Ivoire* (Côte d'Ivoire's Institute of Architects). Workshop participants consisted of professional architects, architecture students, urban designers, planners, policy makers and city officials. In the wake of city-wide forced removals, my mandate was to catalyse broader and more productive professional and public discourse around the maltreatment of the urban poor. The workshop was guided by inclusive notions such as the "right to the city" – originated by Henri Lefebvre (1968) – and the importance of this right for spatial justice. This week-long forum resulted in the emergence of encouraging dialogue and debate regarding site-specific possibilities for positive change and the urban inclusion of Abidjan's currently highly marginalised informal settlement residents.

I dedicate this paper to the memory of Henrike Grohs. On Sunday, 13 March 2016, she was tragically killed during the attack by al Qaeda gunmen on the Ivorian beach resort town of Grand-Bassam.

2 The following informal settlement upgrading engagements have taken place since 2011, involving the University of Johannesburg's (UJ) Department of Architecture and multiple partners, stakeholders and participants. These engagements include *Informal Studio: Ruimsig* (2011); *Informal Studio: Marlboro South* (2012); and *Studio Aformal Terrain: Denver* (annually, since 2014). For a reflection on the lessons learned from my collaborative involvement in such projects, see Opper 2012.

3 This work, referencing the site-specific forced removals I witnessed in Abidjan, was included in the 2015 group exhibition entitled *Past Imperfect // Future Present*, held at the University of Johannesburg's FADA Gallery, 24 March to 15 May. The exhibition showcased "the work of visual practitioners engaging with complexities of, and rethinking new possibilities for, contemporary archival practices using lens-based and new media technologies" (*Past Imperfect II Future Present* 2015).

4 Ivorian architect Issa Diabate (2015) confirms that in terms of its aspirant image, Abidjan is following an economically driven hard line, and that appropriate rehousing of the urban poor is not one of the city's priorities.

5 No satisfactory term exists for describing what is referred to, throughout this chapter, as 'informal' settlement(s). The term is generally understood as a descriptor for settlements that are *less* formal than what one might perceive to be the so-called 'formal' status quo of cities, particularly those in the Global South. Other negatively connoted names are often defined by culturally specific settings, such as *Villas Miseria* (Argentina) and *Invasiones* (Ecuador). My above suggestion of using the qualification *less* formal, confronts the widespread misunderstanding and labelling of such settlements as 'bad'.

6 It is common that the state will refer to some informal settlements as 'illegal', but the public tend to be largely ignorant of the fact that the JMPD have also been guilty, on occasion, of evicting informal settlers without the correct permission. During the University of Johannesburg's community upgrading project in the settlement of Marlboro South in 2012, such an illegal forced removal, conducted without the necessary court order, took place. This forced removal – reported on in a number of local newspapers – seriously interrupted the flow of our engagement with the informal settlers of Marlboro South. For an example of one such report, see Roane (2012). The relative definitions of 'legality' and 'illegality' are recorded and reflected on in a number of articles contained in the project newspaper, *Informal Studio: Marlboro South – between and within processes of engagement* (published in early 2013, as a component of the exhibition carrying the same name). The exhibition at the Goethe-Institut, Johannesburg ran from 1 February to 9 May 2013.

7 The main funding partner of the *Informal Studio: Marlboro South* project was the Goethe-Institut, Johannesburg (the University of Johannesburg contributed additional funding, at the end of the process, towards the printing costs of the exhibition newspaper). Collaborating with the cohort of 51 University of Johannesburg architecture students (third year and master's level) – under the guidance of a large contingent

of UJ's teaching staff – the main professional partners were 26'10 south Architects. Additional contributions came from BOOM Architects. The most important partner was the large community of Marlboro South itself (represented by the Marlboro Warehouse Crisis Committee). Additional support came from a non-governmental organisation called Community Organisation Resource Centre (CORC) and a number of CBOs (community based organisations), namely: South African Shack Dwellers international Alliance (SDI); Federation of the Urban and Rural Poor (FEDUP); Informal Settlement Network (ISN); and iKhayalami.

8 The importance of upgrading informal settlements is acknowledged in a 2009 publication by the South African government's Department of Human Settlements (as a part of its National Housing Code). This publicly available document (PART 3: Upgrading Informal Settlement (2009)) outlines how South Africa's policies are in line with the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals (2009).

9 Cities, research institutes and researchers in the Global North have, in the last few years, developed an interest in 'exchanges' with cities in the Global South (particularly around aspects of informality). From 2013 to 2014, I was part of the organisation and running of a student and young-professional exchange project. *The (in)formal city* project was based on the principle of a productive exchange, examining the differences and similarities of cases of 'informality', in Berlin (Germany) and Johannesburg (South Africa) respectively. For more information, see *The (in)formal city (2013–2014).*

10 Although I am aware that Benjamin valued photography as a form with strong potential to act in the service of socialism, my reference to his understanding of 'aura' is not designed to assign to this paper a Marxist slant. My specific interest is in the auric erasure, which occurs because of the demolition of settlements and the site-specific life and narratives they contain, and how this subtractive logic blatantly, unreflexively and irreversibly reinforces the top-down subjugation of these already marginalised informal settlement inhabitants of Abidjan. Photography is an opportune medium to document this doubling of absence (absence through marginalisation exacerbated by absence via forced removal).

11 In 2013, this sanitising-speak, widely publicised in the South African press, was employed in Johannesburg (Operation Clean Sweep) as a mechanism with which to remove not dwellers, but thousands of 'illegal' traders from inner-city Johannesburg.

12 For a comprehensive self-reflexive mining of this practice of 'Undoing Architecture', see Opper (2010).

13 I use the term 'artwork' advisedly. This is because I did not initially intend a translation of my experience and interpretation of the forced removals in Abidjan – and the various roles I ascribe to photography in this chapter – into an artwork to be shown in a gallery context. That said, the inherent logic of the artwork is in line with my long-term practice of methodically 'Undoing Architecture' (2010) as a vehicle for the uncovering and interrogation of power imbalances across a range of spaces.

14 The choice of a French title references the history and lingering presence of the French colonial project in West Africa. It simultaneously alludes to the way such advertising boards 'colonise' and compromise citizens' experience of public space. Part of the built-in provocation attached to the French title comes through via a direct translation into English: the *arse* of the advertising board.

15 To see the full video of all the looped images projected onto the surface of the artwork (as it appeared in the *Past Imperfect // Future Present* exhibition, see: https://vimeo.com/178830608).

16 From discussions with my hosts, I gathered that a number of lives have been lost in incidents of rain and flooding in the city's informally settled areas. However, it is highly questionable whether such numbers warrant the scale of informal settlement eradication taking place.

17 What many governments on the African continent do not acknowledge is that what they – from a top-down position of privilege – define as the social margins (in the form of informal settlements) actually represent the norm in most rapidly urbanising African cities. The sooner governments accept the challenge to work proactively *with* the residents of informal settlements, towards upgrading such communities as inclusive parts of and contributors to cities at large, the better for the sustainable futures of these cities.

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Affective encounters

Ephemeral and site-specific encounters with the Freud Museum (London)

PENNY SIOPIS'S *THREE ESSAYS ON SHAME* (2005)

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Abstract

Using Penny Siopis's site-specific and ephemeral encounter with the Freud Museum in Hampstead, London as a lens, I reflect on the ethics of my own subjective and situated relationship to historical knowledge and how I mobilise archival spaces, historical sources and sites of inquiry. Curated by Jennifer Law in 2005, Siopis's exhibition, entitled *Three Essays on Shame*, situated objects, found materials, sound and moving image in dialogue with three rooms in the Freud Museum and the furnishings and objects within them. I engage Mark Godfrey's (2007) essay 'Artist as historian' to think about Siopis's formation of an artist's archive. The encounters Siopis stages between art and historical and archival sites are never absolutely determinable. These encounters, and their ethical-political significance, may remain opaque, unsignifiable and open to imaginary, affective, performative and poetic processes.

In this chapter, I stage a deliberately subjective encounter with the site of the Freud Museum and Siopis's intervention there in 2005, considering my own proximity to histories of apartheid as a subject classified white, and the ethical questions and feelings this produces. This ethical positioning foregrounds the methodological question of how it is the scholar is constituted as a historical subject in relation to histories of apartheid and its violence (which encompasses questions related to the politics of representation itself). I draw out particular thematic and historical threads from a site that I experience through affect, sensation and emotion, which I argue is also a significant aspect of Siopis's practice as an artist. I put forward the idea that it is through a simultaneously imaginative and critical engagement with this sphere of human experience that normative thinking and canonical knowledge formations might be disrupted and placed under scrutiny. I consider how particular historical-geographical conditions of violence related to anti-Semitism, the Holocaust and apartheid brush up against each other through Siopis's intervention within the particular space of the Freud Museum, which in itself is weighted with particular significations, memories and affects. I argue that the relational aspect of shame suggested by the curation of Siopis's work at the Freud Museum, and the capacity for an empathetic encounter with another, which it suggests, is where its political-ethical significance rests. I mobilise the ethics

of Dominick LaCapra's (2001) concept of "empathic unsettlement" as I foreground histories of racial violence that are historically and geographically specific, and inflected by intimate and personal experiences made public.

Introduction

Penny Siopis's exhibition *Three Essays on Shame*, was staged at the Freud Museum, 20 Maresfield Gardens, Hampstead, London, from 3 June to 3 July 2005. Curated by Jennifer Law, the show encompassed installations of painting, found materials and objects, moving image and sound. Its timing coincided with the centenary of Freud's publications from 1905: *Three essays on the theory of sexuality* and *Jokes and their relation to the unconscious*. The exhibition still exists in the form of ephemera kept in the exhibition archive at the Freud Museum and is recalled in the scholarly publications that document it photographically and reflect on its significance (Law 2005; Pollock 2013; Morra 2016). Law's (2005) curatorial text is an account contemporaneous with the exhibition. The artist, who was present at the Freud Museum (hereafter 'the Museum') in 2005, reflects on the exhibition retrospectively (Siopis 2008, 2010). In her writing, Siopis (2008, 2010) brings the reader into close proximity with her creative process and the memories she chooses to share, whilst also articulating the political and theoretical registers that relate to her practice as an artist.

I write this chapter in 2016 about an exhibition that forms the site of an ephemeral and site-specific encounter that I reflect upon retrospectively. In 2005, at the time of Siopis's exhibition at the Museum, I was living in Johannesburg and did not travel to see the show. Now, writing as an art historian based in London, the Museum is a site that I visit repeatedly. It is a space weighted with histories that are both private and public and the visual and sonic remains of a family's exile from Vienna to London. In engaging the 2005 exhibition, I explore the archival materials housed at the Museum, as well as the artworks and archival materials kept in Siopis's own archive. Through archival materials and fragments and secondary texts, I re-imagine the significance of this exhibition and its afterlife. In my discussion to follow, I (re)enter Siopis's *Three Essays on Shame* in 2016 as an interlocutor who participates in a conscious act of retrospective memory. I navigate archival materials, published texts, the site of the Museum itself, and my own temporal displacements. These displacements register as affects during the process of re-visiting this exhibition from my position in the present. This is an exploration that works *with* rather than against the feelings that are present as I engage the past through the conduit of an ephemeral and site-specific exhibition from which I am temporally distanced.

In this essay, a retrospective and deliberately subjective and performative encounter with the archival materials and traces of a temporary exhibition, I weave multiple historical, archival and theoretical strands in order to think about: i) conceptual and writing strategies for the art historian's retrospective encounter with ephemeral exhibitions through different kinds of archives and secondary materials; ii) the artist's encounter with history and archival materials, objects and spaces that have significance across geographical-temporal spaces; iii) ways in which differently constituted histories of violence are brought into a relation through the proximities staged by the artist; iv) the historical, political, social and ethical capacities of forms of experience that exist in relation to affect, emotion and sensation; v) the ethics of acknowledging how the artist and the art historian are situated, historically, politically and socially, in relation to subjects, histories and experiences

embedded in prolonged historical conditions of racial violence taken to absolute extremes in all aspects of life; and vi) the potentially transformative capacities of working with rather than resisting the discomforting feelings and sensations that relate to shame as it is theorised in psychoanalytic and historical senses.

Encounters with the Freud Museum

The Freud Museum – which is also an archive – was once a family home. Siopis installed works in Freud's study, the dining room and his bedroom (now called the 'exhibition room'). Each room, the works situated there, and their relationship to the space, its affects, furnishings and objects was conceived through three concepts: 'Voice' (Essay 1, Freud's study); 'Gesture' (Essay 2, the dining room) and 'Memory' (Essay 3, Freud's bedroom).

In 'Voice', Freud's study is the site of a sound installation made up of seven voices, audible through earphones placed on plinths. In making this work, Siopis was informed by her experience of oral testimony presented at the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC 1996) (Siopis 2008:148).[1] Each person "had publicly voiced views and feelings on or about shame" and Siopis (2008:148) "asked all to consider if and how shame connected with sexuality in their speaking". Siopis (2008:148) writes of the opening night of the exhibition where "the voices played out as ambient sound – loud, public and intense". Each of the voices bring subjective inflections to the concepts and experiences of shame, situating private experiences (intimate

ABOVE: Penny Siopis, *Three Essays on Shame*, 2005 | Sound and site-specific installation in Freud's study, Freud Museum, London
Sound and mixed media | Dimensions variable | Courtesy the artist

narratives related to gender, sexuality, HIV/AIDS, racism, violence, political complicity, aging and vulnerability) in relation to the wider historical and political context of South Africa and the official transition from apartheid.

In 'Gesture', Siopis transplanted what is thought to be an ancient Baubo terracotta figurine from Freud's study. Siopis (2008:144) recalls how she "searched for a sign that would trigger my imaginative energies and also connect with one or both of the centenary publications". The Baubo figure "captivated [her] imagination" and Siopis (2010:240, 242) notes that "Baubo's presence in Freud's collection is a puzzle, with no sign of her in his inventory of purchases". Siopis (2008:144, 242) narrates that the object "emerged" for her "from the shadowy recesses of Freud's study" appearing as "the perfect embodiment of a joking sexuality", and imagines the figure in dialogue with texts, images and events that constitute historical, political and imaginative resistances to patriarchal power.

Siopis constructed installations of objects and film, which she placed in the hand-painted cupboards normally found in the space. She lists the objects, which she describes as "transcultural", as: "newspaper cuttings, film, documents, photographs, other people's artworks, *objets trouvés* and my own crafted and found things" (Siopis 2008:144). A number of the materials presented refer to narratives of historical and contemporary significance to South Africa, for example, press clippings related to the repatriation of Sarah Baartman's remains and the seven-minute documentary film 'Uku Hamba 'Ze*/To Walk Naked*' (Meintjies, Maingard & Thompson 1995), screened from a monitor placed in one of the cupboards (Pajaczkowska & Ward 2008:154). The film documents how a group of women mobilised their bodies in an act of political agency in

ABOVE: Penny Siopis, *Three Essays on Shame*, 2005 | Site-specific installation in Freud's dining room, Freud Museum, London
Mixed media | Dimensions variable | Courtesy the artist

Dobsonville, Soweto in 1990. As state authorities order them to evacuate their homes in an informal settlement, they remove their clothes (see Coombes 2004; Morra 2016). Siopis (2010:242) places the Baubo figure in relation to this political action – and in so doing, foregrounds connections between times and places that are not connected to each other in any empirical-historical sense. What is at play in connecting the Baubo figure to the women who mobilise their bodies in a historical and political context of extreme racialised violence? These connections pose questions about the ethics of the artist's relationship to histories embedded in the violence of representation and related ethical and philosophical questions such as: who has the right to speak for whom? Who has the right or ability to speak legitimately for or of another? Who is being spoken for, and who is being addressed? In this sense, how does Siopis, classified as white in apartheid South Africa, confront the unavoidable sensations of shame and complicity? What is at stake in the encounters between women differently classified and thus differently constituted in South Africa (historically, socially, politically and economically)? How does one engage in historical work without re-inscribing the psychic conditioning of generations of racism in all aspects of life? I return to these questions of violence and shame in closing. In foregrounding my relationship to apartheid systems of classification and the multiple power relations and existential and psychic conditions this produced, I am stating my ethical position on the practice of writing about histories that relate to apartheid. I resist colour-blindness in my work and universal notions of the human. I take this position as a subject constituted as white through extended historical and ideological processes that have brought white and black subjects into being.

ABOVE: Penny Siopis, *Three Essays on Shame*, 2005 | Site-specific installation in exhibition room (formerly Freud's bedroom) Freud Museum, London | *Shame* paintings mixed media on paper | 18.5 x 24.5 cm each | Courtesy the artist

For 'Memory', Freud's deathbed was moved from storage and placed at the centre of the exhibition room. Siopis (2008:155) hung some of the paintings from the *Shame* series "in a low, continuous frieze around the walls". She describes the works as "small and intimate, imaginings of childhood sexuality and dread" (Siopis 2008:155). Writing on the *Shame* paintings, Sarah Nuttall (2005:141) draws out their relationship to gendered violence in South Africa: "the threatened, sexed body of the girl child". These unexpected constellations of objects invite connections between Freudian psychoanalytic thought across temporal and geographical spaces, which are differently constituted.[2] The artist's disruption of linear trajectories invested in fixed geographical-temporal points poses questions about the particularity of experience, the tensions that might emerge in the circulation of ideas across hemispheres, and complex historical-political entanglements at play.

Siopis's installations are experienced in dialogue with the former family home they occupy, and the objects that the artist displaces and re-imagines in new visual, temporal and spatial arrangements of association and signification. South African narratives of historical, social and political vulnerability, and the affects, emotions and feelings these may produce, are explored in Siopis's work, thereby complicating the already unstable relationship between public and private realms. These narratives play out in the space of the Museum, which is weighted with the sensations of its own historical, political and social memories. Griselda Pollock (2014:172) comments on how Siopis "examined the house for its own traces, and caught up the voices, gestures and memories that inhabit the place and the legacy it archives". The Museum's relationship to memory, affect and the life of emotion and sensation is ever-present, and is often remarked upon in the literature that engages with the space.[3] Marina Warner (1998:ix) refers to the Museum as "a vibrantly living organism", noting that, "It is a fascinating cult site, a place of mythic memory, a shrine, a monument, a haunted house."

The Museum has its own relationship to historical and political events and their relation to private life. In June 1938, after fleeing Nazi Vienna, Freud arrived in England with his wife Martha Freud, sister-in-law Minna Bernays, and daughter Anna Freud. Paula Fichtl, the family housekeeper, who was not Jewish, "chose to accompany the Freuds to England" and "was interned as an enemy alien on the Isle of Man for nearly a year in 1940–41" (exhibition text, dining room in the Museum). Freud "arrived in England on a German Nazi passport because Austria, his homeland, had just disappeared as a nation after the German Anschluss on 11 March 1938" (Davies, Davies, Molnar, O'Cleary & Ward 1998:10). A family tree displayed on the landing of the house, gives a detailed account of the Freud family history, including the deaths of four of Freud's sisters in concentration camps: Adolfine Freud at Theresienstadt; Rosa Freud at Treblinka; and Pauline Freud and Marie Freud at Maly Trostenets. The family tree also documents countries to which individual members migrated: I learn that Max Halberstadt, Freud's widowed son-in-law moved to South Africa and died in Johannesburg in 1941.

Upon their arrival in England, the Freud family lived in a rented house at 39 Elsworthy Road, North London, before moving to Maresfield Gardens. The generously proportioned, red brick house is described as a "revivalist style looking back to the architecture of Queen Anne in the early eighteenth century" which was "highly fashionable in Hampstead during the 1920s and '30s" (Davies *et al.* 1998:7). In a letter to Jeanne Lampl-de Groot, dated 8 October 1938, Freud (cited in Davies *et al.* 1998:7), wrote of Maresfield Gardens: "Our own home. It is very beautiful … Light, comfortable spacious". Elsewhere, he complained of inadequate heating: "It is bitterly cold, the plumbing has frozen up and British deficiencies in overcoming the heating problem are clearly evident" (Freud cited in Davies *et al.* 1998:8). Documentary footage of the Freud family – titled 'Freud

family's *Home Movies'* – is screened on a continuous loop in the Video Room and its soundtrack is audible, at various registers, elsewhere in the house. I hear Anna Freud's voice as she identifies events, places, people and the beloved pet dogs. I also hear Freud's voice in a BBC recording made on 7 December 1938. Freud died on 23 September 1939 at the age of 83 at Maresfield Gardens, after battling mouth cancer for 16 years. Anna Freud lived at the house with her friend, companion and professional collaborator, the psychoanalyst Dorothy Burlingham. In 1982, Anna Freud – who died in 1984 – sold the property to a registered English charity and in 1986, the Freud Museum opened (Davies *et al.* 1998:3). In her will, she "bequeathed the contents of the house to the charity to become a museum dedicated to her father's life and work" (Davies *et al.* 1998:3). The room that was Freud's study is apparently as it was when he lived at the house: "time had been stilled by Anna Freud when she did not move any of her father's things, not even his spectacles on the desk" (Warner 1998:vii).

In the study, things are both visible and hidden, including Freud's wedding ring in a drawer of the desk (Davies *et al.* 1998:79). Oral prostheses, made for Freud after surgery that "left the nasal cavity open to the mouth", are in a stainless steel box in a desk drawer (Spankie 2015:158). Freud and Anna brought the furnishings, objects and books housed at the Museum to London from the family home at Berggasse 19, Vienna. The eighteenth- and nineteenth-century painted cupboards in the dining room, which Siopis activated for her installations, are from the country retreat Anna Freud shared with Dorothy Burlingham at Hochrotherd near Vienna. In a poignant act of memory, the photographer Edmund Engelman was appointed to document the Freud apartment in Vienna in May 1938 before its contents were packed up. He recalls this experience in his memoir and describes the atmosphere and density of the objects in Freud's study:

> Antiquities filled every available spot in the room. I was overwhelmed by the masses of figurines which overflowed every surface. To the left of the door was a large bookcase covered with tall ancient statuettes. In the corner, at the end of the wall facing these statuettes, was Freud's chair, almost hidden by the head of the couch. The couch itself was covered with an Oriental rug and pillows were piled high on it, so that it seemed a patient lying on it would almost have to sit up (Engelman 1998:92).

In her forthcoming exploration of art and the Freud Museum (including Siopis's *Three Essays on Shame*), Joanne Morra (2016) draws out the relationships between historical trauma and the private lives embedded within the Museum as a site of memory. In her account of the *Home Movies,* Morra (2016) notes the sonic presence of Anna Freud's "halting, raspy, accented" voice, guiding viewers through "experiences that occurred between 1930 and 1939". The Freud family's experiences of the historical violence of anti-Semitism, Nazi ideology and the occupation of Vienna are foregrounded. I am given glimpses into a family's exile to London and the life they lived before then, and learn of family members who, unable to escape, died in concentration camps. Freud died without knowing the full extent of what was to come: "In January or February 1946, the Red Cross informed Anna Freud by official letter that her aunts had been killed in Nazi camps" (Morra 2016).

The Museum is a space of historical and private memory, which has a temporal relationship to the homes of the Freud family in Vienna and then London. It is also a site of intellectual inquiry and its activities encompass art exhibitions, publishing, educational programmes, scholarly conferences and symposia. The Freud Archive, catalogued online, includes the Anna Freud Archive: "The core of the museum archive is the Freud family's correspondence, papers and photo albums" (Davies *et al.* 1998:103). Both personal archives are accessible to

researchers and "the London archive continues to grow, not only through donations of papers, photographs and other records relating to the Freuds and the history of psychoanalysis, but also electronically through databases of letters and works" (Davies *et al.* 1998:102).

Curating shame

Law (2005) states that in marking the publication of *Three essays on the theory of sexuality,* the exhibition would "visually explore Freud's theories on sexuality, as they relate to shame, in wide cultural terms". She notes that Freud did not write a sustained theory of shame and that "references to shame in his work are few and scattered" (Law 2005). Reflecting retrospectively on *Three essays on shame,* Siopis (2008:143) remarks on the particular challenge of "materialising shame" at the site of the Freud Museum, "not only because of the symbolic weight and myriad associations of Sigmund Freud's house, its contents and location, but because shame is relatively invisible in his writings". Pollock (2014:168) similarly notes how shame "haunts" Freud's *Three essays on the theory of sexuality* "without ever being specified", and conceives of shame as a "specifically *human* and *humanizing* generation", suggesting the capacity for empathy through shame. She reflects on shame as affect, something that is both visible and hidden, and the voice of conscience:

> Shameful. I am full of shame. This makes shame sound like a substance that can fill me. Shame floods, colouring the outer surface of the body with its visible sign: blushing. But it can also be the hidden shame that no one knows. It is other. The other that can heat and colour my body and silence my tongue. Often we cannot speak of what is shameful. Shame makes it dangerous to explore aspects of ourselves, our bodies, imaginations and desires. It is the mark of an inner conflict. But it is also the instrument of the cultural police, a voice of internalized conscience, a persecuting superego that seems to enter us from without (Pollock 2014:168).

Law touches on Freud's discussion of shame in relation to infantile sexuality in *Three essays on the theory of sexuality*. Freud (2001 [1953]:178) writes of "opposing mental forces" in infancy shaped by "sexual impulses" that "cannot be utilized" owing to the deferral of the "reproductive functions". This is a period of latency during which "unpleasurable feelings" elicit "opposing mental forces (reacting impulses)" that "in order to suppress this unpleasure effectively" proceed to "build up the mental dams" related to "disgust, shame and morality" (Freud 2001:178). In a discussion of Freud's *On narcissism* (1914), Law (2005) connects shame to "the development of narcissism, self-regard and the ego ideal". She relates this text to the idea of shame as an "emotional response to the realisation that the self is inadequate or deficient in itself; that it has failed to achieve or live up to an ideal state" (Law 2005). Law (2005) differentiates shame from guilt: shame "affects the individual's perception of the 'whole' self", while guilt is "remorse felt in relation to a specific action of the self". Shame, she writes, "is relational", and is "always felt – or inflicted – in relation to a community against which the self is both internally and externally measured in reference to an ideal" (Law 2005). This relational aspect of shame informs Law's conclusion to the curatorial essay, wherein the political and conceptual concerns of the show are located within the context of postapartheid South Africa and its "starkly oppressive past" (Law 2005). Pollock (2015:169) similarly locates

shame within the terrain of the historical and the political, arguing that it "is a feminist issue" related to "racism and homophobia." She engages the connections Martha Nussbaum (2006) makes between disgust and shame in relation to anti-Semitism and misogyny, noting that "disgust is a defence mechanism against internal shame, which is directed outwards to an other who inherits the shameful traits" (Pollock 2014:169).

Siopis (2014:144) reflects on the psychic and bodily manifestations of shame and its relation to that which cannot or may not be spoken: "It is unspeakable but we feel it, we all know it". This affective sense of that which is opaque and not fully articulated empirically, but which is unspoken and felt subjectively, psychically and bodily, extends to the artist's overall practice (Smith 2005; Olivier 2014; Greslé 2015). In writing about her work at the Museum, Siopis (2008:154) relates the "network of associations" produced by the installations of objects to the "psychosocial state of pain", and of the intensification of the "unstable process of 'free association' that lies at the heart of psychoanalysis". She continues: "These objects are neither labelled nor categorized, but 'float' symbolically, much like many of the more arcane objects in Freud's collection of artefacts; they are fundamentally open and eternally 'unfinished'" (Siopis 2008:154–155). Law (2005) foregrounds how the TRC, which facilitated a "public voice" for shame, encompassed the "burden of 'private' shame" and the memory of apartheid. In elaborating on the dynamics of private and public shame in South Africa, the more intimate expressions of shame are identified in "confessional modes of art and literature" following the official transition from apartheid in 1994 (Law 2005). In conclusion, Law (2005) places emphasis on the idea of a "shared humanity" in the recognition of shame even as it "negatively acts to expose a deficiency in the self", and elaborates by drawing on Siopis's (cited in Law 2005) words: "The things that shame us might vary across cultures but the self-exposure involved usually draws something out that encourages us to recognise the pain of shame in others and empathise with situations not immediately (culturally) our own".

This relational aspect of shame and the associated possibility it suggests – the capacity for empathy for an Other – is a significant aspect of *Three Essays on Shame*. Reflecting on the exhibition, Siopis (2010:239) foregrounds the relationship between theory and practice in her work and on the specificity of the Museum as a space that "made it possible to engage abstract theorisation and concrete situated experience in powerful relation".

I approach *Three Essays on Shame* as what Dominick LaCapra (2001:10) terms the "attentive secondary witness", arguing for the "role of empathy and empathic unsettlement" that "involves a kind of virtual experience through which one puts oneself in the other's position while recognizing the difference of that position and hence not taking the other's place". In my historical imagination, the "after-affects" (Pollock 2013) of apartheid and the Holocaust – two historical conditions of racial violence that impacted on the lives of individuals and families – are situated in relation to each other, and are affectively present and felt.

The artist as historian

Mark Godfrey's (2007) essay entitled 'The artist as historian' engages the research practices of artists, including archival research, which, for me, opens up a path of inquiry into Siopis's methods as an artist and her exploration of historical knowledge and archival materials. Godfrey (2007:142–143) states:

> There are an increasing number of artists whose practice starts with research in archives, and others who deploy what has been termed an archival form of research (with one object of inquiry leading to another) … These varied research processes lead to works that invite viewers to think about the past: to make connections between events, characters and objects; to join together in memory; and to reconsider the ways in which the past is represented in the wider culture.

I have previously explored Siopis's formation of an "artist's archive" which, in the making of videos utilising home movies and found film footage, enter into dialogues with historical events (Greslé 2015). This personal archive includes materials discovered both serendipitously and through official archives such as the newspaper archives of the Central Library in Cape Town (Greslé 2015). An analysis of Siopis's video *Obscure White Messenger* (2010) and its usage of found footage demonstrates the work's undoing of narrative logic. I argue that in the work, Siopis mobilises "potentially labyrinthine systems of signification, which function subjectively within the territories of affect and poetic modes of meaning" (Greslé 2015:144). Siopis's practice imbues the idea of the archive with affect, sensations, imagination, and processes of un-making and re-making. Archival processes of categorisation and labelling are subverted by the orchestration of highly subjective gestures, inserting randomness into classificatory procedures. The artist's personal archive of objects, documents, found footage and home movies are in a process of continuous expansion and reconfiguration. I suggest that the critical power of the work, and indeed the critical and conceptual strength of Siopis's overall practice, rests in not having to complete itself. The work is experienced through the subjectivity of affect, feeling and sensation. It is through a simultaneously imaginative and critical engagement with this sphere of human experience that normative thinking and canonical knowledge formations might be disrupted and placed under scrutiny.

Pollock (2013:27) makes the critical distinction between emotion and affect, articulating affect's intensity as well as its amorphous-ness: "Affect is as intense as it is without shape or focus … [It] is more like a colouring of our whole being; an opening towards something or a complete enclosure in its grip such as depression". She articulates the "'after-affects' of 'post-traumatic art'", which work "towards a phrasing – not merely linguistic, but gestural, sonic or graphic". This produces encounters "capable of shifting us both subjectively and collectively" (Pollock 2013:27). Pollock (2013:27) conceptualises the encounter with the artwork as an "*aesthetic wit(h)nessing* of traces or residues of what could not be immediately represented: hence they bear *after-affects*." As I encounter each work in the Museum, I *feel* particular sensations and affects, and it is this intangible space, which Pollock theorises, that is my point of departure for retrospective critical thought.

Standing in Freud's study, the site of 'Voice', I draw connections with Siopis's installations and her articulated relationship to objects and the temporalities, affects and memories they embody. I am aware of the density of things: furnishings, rugs, antiquities, books, pictures and photographs. The musty room feels weighted with history, atmosphere, memories, and the passing of time. Dimly glowing ceiling lights partially illuminate the contents of glass cabinets filled with antiquities, and Freud's desk is laden with objects: figurative expressions of human and non-human animals and mythical characters. They have travelled through geographical and temporal space, to Freud's personal collection and into his thinking and writing. Security cameras watch me; barriers prevent me from moving freely and taking photographs. The long room has windows on either side but the curtains are drawn. I cannot look through the windows into the garden or the street, as Freud would have done, for reasons of security and preservation. The room is an archival space that alludes to the official codes

and protocols of museums as institutional sites. But it is also a space constituted by a private life: "objects in the study are unlabelled to maintain the effect of visiting a private house. Information gives way to evocation, which is a different kind of knowledge" (Warner cited in Davies *et al.* 1998:50).

For me, the particular configuration of the analyst's chair and the analysand's couch, recalls Freud's emphasis on voice and the symbolic world of language. The absent-presences with which objects are imbued are pronounced in the emptiness of the chairs, including the curious sculptural desk chair designed by the architect Felix Augenfeld to accommodate Freud's reading posture (Davies *et al.* 1998:57). I register Anna Freud's voice, present in her absence, through the 'Home Movies' screened in the video room upstairs, and imagine the experience of the sound works within Freud's study registering the materiality of voice. Voice is ephemeral – it can be heard but cannot be seen or touched. As I listen to a voiced narrative, I am aware of the duration, tempo and passing of time. The voices invoke the figures of analysands on the couch, but emanate from unseen bodies. As I listen to Siopis's sound work on my laptop in 2016, and imagine it within the space of Freud's study, I hear voices that are gendered and accented, and register intakes of breath connecting the voices to the physicality of unseen bodies. The narratives are intensely private, relating personal experiences and memories to larger historical conditions, but also to the particular memories of individual subjects. In one of the narratives, Meer recalls a memory of prison – an incident of brutal and sadistic violence that is both racialised and gendered:

> In prison it's a brutal kind of shame. It is deliberate [pause] and it is [pause] planned [pause] to shame you [pause] to [pause] take your dignity away from you … I got to my section [pause] where my cell was [pause]. And there [pause] outside, cold winter August, I am asked [pause] by [pause] the warden to take off my clothes. You know, I am reluctant. I don't want to take off my clothes at all. So I do almost a striptease. I was wearing a sari at the time. So a sari hangs on a half petticoat [pause], which we call a *langa*. That covers your legs [pause]. Now I don't show my legs [pause]. I've always got the long skirts. In order to take off the sari I've got to take off the petticoat, which immediately means that I reveal my legs, which I don't usually expose. So I immediately feel the shame of this. There is the cold wind hitting my legs as well.

As I listen to Meer speak I *feel* the sensations of the shame produced by my historical and cross-generational relationship to whiteness and the privileges that were automatically conferred on me by virtue of my birth and the racial category that was attached to it. It is my own shame and the shame of another that I imagine, via the ethical situatedness of LaCapra's 'secondary witness'. I hear the intimate abuses of power generated by white supremacist violence. Antjie Krog (1999:328) writes of a personal memory, from the TRC, that is related to sound, violence and her own historical relationship to whiteness:

> The proceedings are concluded with the anthem. I stand, caught unawares by the Sesotho version and the knowledge that I am white, that I have to reacquaint myself with this land, that my language carries violence as a voice, that I can do nothing about it, that after so many years I still feel uneasy with what is mine, with what is me.

In dialogue with women of similar ethical-political sensibility, I acknowledge the particularities of my subjectivity as a woman and the nuances of my experience as a historical, social and political being. I am conscious that in

my encounter with Meer's voice, and the words that she speaks, is the unequivocal fact of my whiteness as it is figured through a cross-generational relationship to Afrikaans-speaking apartheid South Africa and the colonial legacies of the Indian Ocean islands of the Seychelles, where I was raised. The encounter with apartheid South Africa has particular inflections for me and I acknowledge that there are gradations and hierarchies of whiteness, although the prejudices I encountered when living there later in life, do not absolve me from the fact of what it means, socially, politically and economically, to have been constituted as a white subject. Vron Ware's work (2015:29) on white women, racism and history, although foregrounding the United Kingdom and North America, is of critical importance to the question of what it means to "think about the historical connections between white women and black people." Sara Ahmed (2007:150), writing on institutions, conceives of whiteness as a "phenomenological issue": "Whiteness could be described as an ongoing and un-finished history, which orientates bodies in specific directions, affecting how they 'take up' space." Ahmed's theoretical, political and ethical project provides me with a language through which to articulate my own weighted relationship to the past as an historian and from my positionality as a gendered and racialised subject. The past is unfinished and my body, constituted as white, is not an invisible, unseen presence in the historical and ethical project in which I choose to participate.

My personal history and familial emotions, which encompass love, and other kinds of affect, exists in immediate proximity to histories and legacies of white supremacy. The intimate and private life of the historian, and the acknowledgement of racial violence rendered natural, and ordinary, indeed, almost invisible (buried) depending on how one looks and when, folds into grand narratives of slavery, colonialism and apartheid. Christina Sharpe (2010:3) writes of racial violence across temporal-geographical-historical sites and "mundane horrors that aren't acknowledged to be horrors". There is no circumventing the many discomforting affects produced by the histories I encounter through the visual-sonic worlds of the artworks I choose to engage in my work. I cannot detach my historical and social presence from the historical figures to whom I speak, subjectively and imaginatively, across time and space. I must imagine my own situated relationship to histories of racial violence, which are figured in particular ways – historically, politically, socially and economically – and that are always present in the everyday life of subjects constituted as white, even though there may be nuances and inflections. How do I encounter the voices and bodies of women whose relationship to racism and its violence exists in ways that are different to my own without what Jill Bennett (2005:10) refers to as "crude empathy"? What is the political and ethical use of shame? There is no closure at this historical and political juncture, but perhaps there is transformative possibility, even if only on a personal scale, in the ephemeral encounter with the artwork, its sensations, affects, and capacities for unexpected juxtapositions and unorthodox approaches to history.

The violence that Meer experienced and recalls, connects to a constellation of images and objects that, mobilised by Siopis, suggest an ephemeral, affective and sensory archive, which is not subject to linear modes of thought and the empirical, hierarchical and authoritarian ordering of knowledge. I do not encounter Siopis's work claiming the authority of objectivity and detachment. I come to her work enmeshed in its histories and its affects. There are multiple routes through Siopis's *Three Essays on Shame* and I have reflected, in closing, on the gendered body, figured as both presence and absence; as physical, corporeal being and as ghostly trace. I imagine and sense presences that are unseen and hear the recordings of voices that remain in their

own distant temporality. The encounters Siopis stages between art and historical and archival sites are never determinable, and their significance may remain opaque, unsignifiable and open to imaginary, performative and poetic processes. These processes invite me to reflect on my own subjective and situated relationship to historical knowledge, and how I mobilise archival spaces and sites of inquiry. The presence of anti-Semitism and the Holocaust in European memory and in the minutiae of everyday life haunts the space of the Museum in particular ways. The narratives and affects in Siopis's work that relate to the particular geographical, historical, political, social and economic conditions of South Africa – and specifically to the experience of apartheid, its racial violence and its traumatic inscription in the present at the intersections of private and public life – brush against these histories caught up in the space of the Museum.

Endnotes

1 The South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC 1996) was chaired by Archbishop Desmond Tutu, and aimed to witness, investigate and document the testimonies of victims and perpetrators of crimes related to human rights violations committed between 1960 and 1993.

2 The possibilities of thinking about Siopis's visual constellations and Freud's writings and the tensions that may emerge for thinking about girls, women and violence is beyond the scope of this chapter. I signal it here to draw attention to the ways in which Siopis's work functions in relation to the life of ideas.

3 My thinking here is informed by Pollock's (2013) and Jill Bennett's (2005) exploration of the affective and sensate possibilities of art. Theoretically, Bennett's writing is framed by a Deleuzian perspective, while Pollock's is Freudian in emphasis, yet they share a concern with the idea of art objects as sites for the experience and articulation of affects, which prompt critical thought and historical inquiry.

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Archival aftershock

ON SPECTRAL JUSTICE, NON-CRIMINAL DEATH AND INFINITE RESPONSIBILITY

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Abstract

In the latter part of the 1990s, I undertook a research project that entailed going through the Death in Detention files in the Historical Papers Archive at the University of the Witwatersrand. I spent three days compiling names and documenting the details of the supposedly 'accidental' causes of death. While I compiled notes on the violence of the security forces, the untimely erasures of prisoners' lives and listed the official causes of their so-called accidental deaths, my abiding memory of this time is of the nauseated dread that took hold of my body and filled my chest as I turned the pages of these documents. In the intimate space of the archive, I was confronted by the bodily and psychic violence, indeed the casual distribution of death, that aimed to preserve my sovereignty while denying that of those deemed other. Looking back, this visceral response was one of the formative moments that came to fruition in my doctoral thesis on the contemporary art that answers back to the racist, sexist and speciesist tropes of sovereignty in postapartheid South Africa.

The Death in Detention files produced a kind of archival aftershock in me. I use this chapter to think through the ethical and necropolitical questions provoked by this aftershock. These questions confront the relation of sovereignty and alterity through the framing of the non-criminal death of the Other – in this case, an Other made animal inasmuch as their death is made non-criminal through the authority of the sovereign state. Drawing on Jacques Derrida's (1976, 1982a, 1982b, 1994, 1995, 1998 [1995], 2002, 2008a, 2008b, [2007]) work on violence, animality and spectres, as well as Achille Mbembe's (2003) concept of "necropolitics", I focus on questions of spectral justice and infinite responsibility, and reflect on the ghosts and the violence that the archive both lays bare and works to entomb. In doing so, the archive responds to, and takes issue with, recent remarks on the spectral in relation to the idea of a justice only for the living.

> No justice … seems possible or thinkable without the principle of some *responsibility*, beyond all living present, before the ghosts of those who are not yet born or who are already dead (Derrida 1994:xix).
>
> The archive has always been a *pledge* and like every pledge [*gage*], a token for the future (Derrida 1998 [1995]:18).

"Aftershock n. the effect, result, or repercussion of an event" (Dictionary.com unabridged 2016)

In this chapter, I write with the ghosts that haunt me, even as I conjure them, as Jacques Derrida (1994:139) testifies; writing with and alongside Derrida, I chase down the ghost that I am (following).[1] In the late 1990s, I undertook some archival research for an internationally based scholar working on deaths in detention during the apartheid era. My role entailed going through the files on death in detention held by the Historical Papers Archive in the William Cullen Library at the University of the Witwatersrand. I spent three days compiling names, gathering and collating information on the so-called 'causes' of death that the files contained, as was my brief. My abiding memory of this archive experience, of this archive's intimate address, is of the raw, nauseated dread that filled my chest. As I turned the pages of these documents, I was confronted by the bodily and psychic violence directed against those deemed other, indeed, so other that they were considered as non-human. Years later, I learnt that this was the kind of violence that fuels what Derrida (1995:277) calls "the worst", but at the time, I simply trembled before it, as if in vague recognition of its power to foreclose the future in the name of the Same.[2] Sitting on the steps outside the William Cullen Library, I remember thinking over the phrase 'crimes against humanity' and feeling undone: not quite lost, more like a shiver that would neither leave me nor yield to the winter sun; as if an excess, once unhomed from its sepulchred documents, overwrote my sense of self with an uncanny sense of strange familiarity, of coming face to face with a terrifying logic of animalising othering. Looking back, this was one of the formative moments that underwrites (and haunts) my doctoral thesis in which, through an analysis of selected examples of contemporary South African art, I rethink the speciesist, racist and sexist vectors that frame postapartheid subjectivity, and propose an ethico-politics rooted in an alterity that cannot be appropriated (Lipschitz 2014).

Growing up under apartheid, I witnessed the state's deployment of brutalising violence, albeit from a mediated distance. And indeed, as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC 1996) testimonies unfolded, so too did gruesome accounts of pain and broken bodies, torture, interrogation and targeted breaking of spirit. However, what produced the archival aftershock before which I trembled was the realisation that there, at once remaindered in the archive and spilling over its limits, was both the cruel logic of sovereign power and the blunt repetition of its force. There, in those files, a discourse on "making killable" (Haraway 2008:82) the other was made palpably visible, though it was one whose "necropolitical" distribution of death, to borrow Achille Mbembe's (2003:11) term, I did not yet know how to analyse.

Blunt repetition. I had stalled long enough. I had to go back inside, back to the Historical Papers Archive: I still had so many more files to go through – always already too many. Looking over my notes of the list of over

70 (110 at one count) names of anti-apartheid activists who died in police custody between 1963 and 1990, I was (and still am) struck by the so-called 'natural causes' of death listed in the 'official cause' column. The determination of 'natural' apparently included death by injuries sustained during torture.[3] I was (and still am) struck by the number of purported suicides by hanging[4] and the alleged fatal clumsiness of those prisoners who fell down stairwells, or 'jumped' out of John Vorster Square's infamous tenth floor windows, or hit their head against a chair, or slipped in the shower (all documented 'causes' of death). Infamous because the ninth and tenth floors of John Vorster Square (now Johannesburg Central Police Station) were occupied by the Security Police. Something stirred in me while sitting in front of those files, and I remember trying, although not altogether successfully, to recover the lines of Christopher van Wyk's (1979) poem, 'In detention', which I had studied at high school. Van Wyk's use of repetition had stayed with me like a counter memory and I recalled how its successive disordering of the language of accident gives lie to John Vorster Square's official line of accidental or suicidal death: "He fell from the 9th floor / He hanged himself / He washed from the ninth floor while slipping / He hung from a piece of soap while washing." The repetition of the phrases of the state-absolving 'causes' of death in both the files and the poem enact the apartheid state's death-filled compulsion to repeat its sovereign violence in the name of its racialised self-identity. But, just as Van Wyk's poem slips its register from the suicidal 'hanged' to the objectified 'hung', this self-same identity, as I argue in what follows, is intimately bound to the determination, as Derrida (1995:280) puts it, of the non-criminality of the death of the other. Here, writ large, is not only the work of what Derrida (1998:36) describes as the archive's death drive (its desire to remember by containment, and to contain through the force of erasure: that is, to "anarchive"), but also what Derrida (1995:281) calls the "sacrificial" logic of the subject. At stake in the archival address that I set out here, in what Derrida (1994:10) would call the "hauntological" excess that undoes 'me' (who?), is not simply the kind of displacement or traumatic rupture that Dominick LaCapra (1999:722) terms "empathic unsettlement". Rather, it is the ethico-political question of the other before whom I must answer. It is the question, as my first epigraph suggests, of infinite responsibility and of spectral justice – a question that *must* be undecidable if it is to initiate any decision worthy of the name, as Derrida is wont to say. It is a future-oriented question, a question without calculable end or answer, that must, in Derrida's deconstructive ethics, be ever negotiated anew. As Derrida (1994:24) phrases it, it is the learning-to-live-a-death-contaminated-life question that asks "[w]hen will you become responsible? How will you *answer* or finally *take responsibility* for your life and for your name?" It is a version of the question that is at issue in both *Specters of Marx* (Derrida 1994:24, 176) and *Archive fever* (1998: 84): how to talk *with* ghosts? Or, to borrow the terms of what Derrida (1995:282) calls a "metonymy of 'eating well'", it is a question that demands thinking about the "most generous, most giving, most hospitable" way to address ghosts and be addressed by them (Derrida 1994:176).[5]

I stay in the space of the aftershock and set out the terms of this Derridean question of spectral justice and responsibility without end. I explore what it means (to me) to answer before a violent economy of the subject that secures its authority through dividing criminal and noncriminal death, and the relation of this division to a singular human / animal binary that initiates the animalising logic of 'making killable'. This is not to say, however, that Derridean thinking on justice is not linked to violence. Rather, as I argue here, it locates the ethical within a violence that does not deny difference in order to immunise the self. Consequently, I draw on Martin Hägglund's

(2004:46) reading of Derrida's (1976:140) idea of a "non-ethical opening of ethics" to think through responsibility as, to use Derrida's (1994:10) neologism, a hauntological address to a radical – because undecidable – alterity. This, I propose, following my second epigraph, is the death in detention files' archival "pledge" (Derrida 1998:18): its "wager" (Derrida 1998:17) on an alterity that is not bound to a fixed and death-bearing calculation of what whiteness calls 'human' and what it calls 'animal', but remains, instead, open to a future that is constitutively spectral, or as Derrida (1994:9), by way of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, puts it, "out-of-joint".

Ghosts in the archive

"*Ghosts*", Derrida (1994:xx) writes, always "more than one/ no more one (*plus d'un*)". For Stefan Herbrechter (2004:[sp]), the paradoxical and ambiguous '*plus d'un'* can be more accurately translated as "most one / more than one/ other than one". *Plus d'un* stages, as Herbrechter (2004:[sp]) notes, the aporia of "the im/possible one … without which deconstruction cannot take place". *Plus d'un*, in other words, sets up a non-dialectical co-implication of the singular and plural that binds the spectral to the ethical in a relation that is based precisely on relation rather than ontology, and first of all, with self-relation, with the other in / as self. Or, as Derrida (1998:77) puts it, "the other others and the others in oneself".

I open the Derridean spectral with *plus d'un* in order to respond to Esther Peeren's (2014:11) argument that Derrida's framing of the spectral concentrates not on the spectre but on the one who is haunted. Her qualifier: unless the ghost in question is tied to authority and socio-political power, such as King Hamlet. Peeren (2014:11) begins her discussion of "hauntology" with the idea of *plus d'un* but soon leaves it to assert that not all ghosts are equal. For Peeren (2014:11), Derrida's analysis of ghosts excludes and disempowers the agency of those who live marginal lives, those she calls the "living ghosts". Despite her recognition that Derridean thinking desires not to appropriate the otherness of the other, Peeren (2014:24) argues that Derrida "refuses to look through the ghost's eyes". Taken up by Verne Harris (2015:17, 13–14), Peeren's ideas make space for, in Harris's words, "a critical reading of Derrida" that interrupts Harris's admitted seduction by the hauntological possibilities of *Specters of Marx*. Peeren's criticism enables Harris's (2015:10) notion of "archive banditry", a strategic intervention in the South African archive that seeks to restore a voice to the ghosts of those who are oppressed by social injustice. Peeren's and Harris's concern is how to square the Derridean injunction to talk to, and with, the ghost if the ghost has no voice, and thus, no agency? For Harris (2015:17), Derrida's reluctance to speak for the ghost "privileges the ghosts of those already dead and those not yet born at the expense of the ghosts of the living". Thus, argues Harris (2015:17), Derridean hauntology makes no space for "the living, ghosted by trauma and violation, waiting to be befriended by the selves who have survived" and implies in his conclusion that this 'failure' impacts on the idea of justice (for ghosts).

Peeren's and Harris's readings of 'hauntology' and infinite responsibility seem to be at cross-purposes to Derrida's (1994:179) argument in *Specters of Marx* of the spectral as a deontologised site of "promise". It is worth calling attention to this because the deconstructive co-implication of the ethical and spectral in *plus d'un* puts into question the very foundation that underwrites Peeren's and Harris's (mis)interpretation of spectral justice as a failed enterprise: namely, the possibility of an agential, auto-affective presence that anchors a firm

separation between the living and the dead – a separation Peeren (2014:48) seems to suggest that Derrida advocates. Yet, while hauntology takes aim at the ontological, it is itself not an ontological formation – Peeren (2014:11) acknowledges as much when she says that the ghost *is* not. The hauntological formation of a "time out of joint" (Derrida 1994:10) cannot, therefore, address the emotional content of trauma. Given that Derrida's formation of the spectre is not specific to humans (Royle 2003:245), it is precisely not geared to do hospitality's triage work in the sense that Harris envisions. Hauntology is not an empathetic structure any more than it is a politics of agency or identity. Moreover, to claim that it does not address the living or privileges those who are dead or yet to be born is to misrecognise the way alterity, justice and hence, the ethical, is inscribed in the hauntological.

Part of the issue in Harris's (2015:17) reading of the spectral as an analytical strategy that dis-ables rather than empowers those whose lives are without hope is Peeren's collapse of the multiple ghosts at work in *Specters of Marx* into a larger discourse on "spectral metaphor." As such, Peeren (2014:48) suggests that the idea of *plus d'un* functions merely as a kind of "spectral surplus". Yet the spectre in Derrida's argument is not a "surplus", nor is it divided firmly from the living. This is for two reasons: first, because Derridean metaphor supports neither the metaphysical opposition of being / nonbeing, nor the logocentric referential power of representation (Derrida 1982:207–272). Instead, metaphors and concepts, figurative and literal, co-implicate each other in multiple, shifting and ambiguous ways, which is why, contra Harris (2015:18), the specific instance of its deployment is important.

The second reason that the ghost cannot be an excess, nor divided from the living, is because of the 'out of joint' organisation of time and its impact on Derrida's notion of justice, ethics and alterity. 'Time is out of joint' is a recurring motif in *Specters of Marx*, and signals the work of what Derrida (2005:xiv) calls "spacing". As Hägglund (2004:43) explains, 'spacing' entails the working together of the "spatialisation of time" and the "temporalisation of space" in order to effect the relative stabilisation of identity. Relative, because of the impossibility of presence to be fully present *as such*: in Hägglund's (2004:42) words, "[t]the temporal can never be in itself, but is always disjoined between being no longer and not yet". In this trace-structure of 'nows' that erase as they appear, identity cannot be stable in itself. Identity can only occur as a relatively stabilised spatial succession of 'nows' in the absence of an indivisible 'origin'. There is no self that auto-affects and returns to itself in seamless continuity with itself. 'Now', in other words, is divided from the start so that, as Derrida (1982:56) observes, "the dyad is the minimum". This means that rather than there being a time 'in-joint' that has fallen out of sync and become corrupted, Derrida's argument holds that time is structurally out of joint, or as Hägglund (2004:42), after Derrida, writes, the hauntological 'disjointure' of time is the "condition for there to be any ethics or politics, as well as any society and life to begin with". In short, time, if it is to enable anything to happen at all, must be heterogeneous to itself; or phrased differently, the violence of a time that is 'out of joint' is not that of a single rupture, but rather of a foundational opening to difference, contamination and "corruption" (Hägglund 2004:63). Thus 'alterity' does not mean 'the other' *as such*, but instead, as Hägglund (2004:63) writes, signals the constitutive impossibility for anything to be *as such* in the first place. Hence Derrida's (1994:166) assertion that to say "I am" is, in fact, to say "I am haunted".

For Hägglund (2004:49), the "constitutive violence" of Derrida's thinking on a time that is 'out-of-joint'

reveals what Derrida (1976:140) calls "the non-ethical opening of ethics". Hägglund (2004:63) argues, in other words, that the ethical in Derrida does not share in the ideas of non-violence and a Good before Being (ethics before ontology), as does Emmanuel Lévinas (1998 [1974]). Nor is it overwritten by a Kantian categorical imperative or any prescribed structure of 'ought,' or 'should' that would provide a programme of thought and action that could be determined in advance as 'ethical'. Rather, and more radically, the ethical for Derrida (1995:281) is tied to the "ordeal of undecidability" and the search for a "lesser violence" (Lawlor 2007:23). Undecidable, however, does not mean without decision; it means, instead, that a decision must be made, only one without the prior knowledge or assurance that it will be a good decision or embrace the least possible violence. Before any howls of fence-sitting, relativisation or complaints of disempowerment and denial of agency, such a notion of the ethical demands an unflinching commitment to vigilance before the 'worst' violence that the term 'crime against humanity' proposes (Lawlor 2007:23). Even more rigorously, the work of the trace or the out-of-jointness of time that produces the "non-ethical opening to ethics" demands that one take responsibility for such a decision (Hägglund 2004:63). And moreover, given that the "constitutive violence" of difference is always at work, responsibility in Derrida's (1994:xix) thinking on the ethical is owed not merely to the human, nor to the living, but "beyond all living present". This does not suggest a denial of the living in favour of those who are dead, merely a structure of responsibility without end or preconception, unbound from divisions of being and nonbeing, the living and the dead, absence and presence, and indeed, human and animal. Because the "constitutive violence" of difference conditions all life; because the Derridean ethical demand is to answer before "the other others and the others in oneself"; and because a decision must be made, it is necessarily formed through exclusion (Hägglund 2004:56). Hence, with respect to the hauntological non-coincidence of time with itself, the concept of infinite responsibility means that non-violence is impossible. Hence too, Derrida's concepts of an ordeal of decision and of "lesser violence", even though what at once appear as the lesser violence, may also, as he shows, bring 'the worst' forms of calculated violence (Lawlor 2007:23).[6]

This tension between "lesser violence" and the violence named 'the worst' returns me to Derrida's framing of the ghost as *plus d'un* (more than one/ no more one). *Plus d'un* announces that the desire for the purity of the 'most one' in the sense of 'more [one] than one' – a self-identity that excludes difference and is in thrall to the unrelenting tyranny of the Same as a self-same presence – is, ultimately, a suicidal gesture. *Plus d'un* as 'no more one' thus enacts a refusal of absolute presence in favour of a relation in which one *is* only in the origin-heterogeneous opening to 'more than *one*'. *Plus d'un*'s ambiguous formulation is therefore the manifestation of a radical alterity that privileges not the living over the dead, but a structure of relationality and difference over sameness and its auto-immunising (self-annihilating) and future-foreclosing violence. The hauntological opening to "constitutive violence" (Hägglund 2004:40), that is, to the corruption of difference that is always already internal to any sense of identity, underscores what for Derrida is both the "chance and threat" (Derrida 2005:5) of the future, its risk, and its possibility, without which there could be no concept of justice (Hägglund 2004:63). As Elina Staikou (2008:279–280) writes: "the call to justice … [is] a call that is always wounded … and wounding."

Making 'killable'

For Derrida, the question of spectral justice is a question that always comes from the other as an incalculable demand that commands the (imperfect) calculation of law (Staikou 2008:280). As a matter of address, it describes the ethical necessity to think anew about an inherited politics of life, law and sovereignty. As Derrida (1994:160) writes and Peeren (2014:27) notes, the ghost is an incarnation, it has a body; but since it complicates divisions between life and death, presence and absence, the living and the non-living, as well as between human and nonhuman animal, it is also an appropriate figure to intervene in the logic of making bodies 'killable': a logic whose animalising consequences played out name after name after name in the death in detention files.

The question of killing is framed by clear ethico-juridical guidelines that are rooted in the biblical injunction "Thou shalt not kill" (Derrida 1995:279). Yet, as Derrida (1995:279) points out in his interview with Jean-Luc Nancy, "'Eating Well,' or the calculation of the subject," the Judeo-Christian prohibition on killing was never a proscription against killing in general: God's acceptance of Abel's animal sacrifice over Cain's grain offering testifies as much. Rather, the injunction against killing is only a command not to kill a fellow human being, which, in effect, opens a space for the non-criminal death of the other, and links the institution of the subject to what Derrida (1995:278) calls a "sacrificial structure". The existence of this structure or logic of sacrifice thus posits subjectivity as a condition of human life only. It also sets up a "schema" in which not all human life is equal: as Derrida writes (1995:279–280), the sacrificial logic of subjectivity aligns autonomy and authority with "homo" (as in 'same') and "vir" (as in 'virility') to install a masculinist, sacrifice-accepting "carnivorous virility" at the heart of the auto-affective subject (he who can say 'I'). In other words, Derrida (1995:279–280) asserts that the humanist structure of the subject is mired in a violence that first of all separates the 'who' – who is 'Human' – from the 'what' that is not human enough, or worse, that is 'Animal' and therefore killable with impunity. For Cary Wolfe (2003:6), this anthropocentric schema of the subject makes available an economy of violence in which the taken-for-granted death of the animal other can be transposed onto animalised others of whatever species.

Supported by the humanist fantasy of a singular defining limit between 'Human' and 'Animal', this transposition sets up, in Mbembe's (2003:11–12) terms, a deathly necropolitics of animalisation in which sovereign power is inextricable from the death-distributing administration of racism, itself, as Michel Foucault (2004:157) observes, a discourse of virility as war.[7] Mbembe (2003:11–12) argues that the sovereign ability to put to death – that is, to enforce a necropolitics – anchors sovereignty in the sacrificial model of Hegelian nonreciprocal recognition. Hegel's model takes its licence from the human / animal distinction in which to be human is to risk death; while to be animal is to cling to survival (Mbembe 2003:12). But while Hegel reinstalls a dialectic that alters the one-sidedness of this distinction through his model of Lordship and Bondsman, Mbembe's (2003:12) rereading of Hegel by way of a necropolitics of racialised and animalised difference establishes 'becoming sovereign' as a transcendent act of 'purely' human self-creation. Since 'the animal' favours survival over the risk of death, this ability to transcend becomes the limit that separates human existence from mere animal being (Mbembe 2003:12). As such, as Mbembe (2001:1) writes, the notion of animal being is formed under the sign of its own debasement: it is nullified before the law, without

transcendence, discardable and ungrievable. 'The animal' as that which is animalised is thus a political manifestation of bodies that are made killable, and put under non-criminal erasure in both real and symbolic terms. To kill within the operation of colonial and apartheid racism thus required not consensual politics, but the speciesist invention of 'the native' as simply 'animal', or as Mbembe (2001:187) puts it, as a "thing that is, but only in so far as it is nothing".

In this framework, no responsibility is owed to this 'nothing,' this 'animal' life that does not matter. This erasure is not the work of the necessary violence of difference (the 'more than one'), but of the absolute violence of the Self-Same, of the 'most' One: as Derrida (1998:78) asserts, "[a]s soon as there is the One, there is murder, wounding, traumatism". Since, for Derrida, any concept of 'self' is out-of-joint from the start, haunted by an originary and foundational opening to difference, to death and to contamination by an otherness it can neither master nor contain, the concept of the 'most One' stakes out an impossible purity that is not only undesirable but also utterly death-bearing. In the logic of apartheid's drive to sustain racial separation, the target of its murderous maintenance of the Same is the other whose animalised death signifies not as murder but as 'accidental' or 'natural': a product of the sacrificial law of the subject. However, in the self that recognises itself is always already haunted, there is no immunity from an alterity that exceeds any ontological determination, for the hauntological condition of a "time … out of joint" opens the self to impurity, corruption and difference (Derrida 1994:10). Despite any ideological and political drive for purity, the disjointure of the 'out of joint' is another name for the wound that calls for an im/possible justice: im/possible because it is a justice that is, in Derrida's (2002:254) words, "infinite … infinite because irreducible, irreducible because owed to the other … before any contract, because it has *come*, it is a *coming* … the coming of the other as always other singularity." As Elena Staikou (2008:280) notes, singularity for Derrida is always heterogeneous to itself, fractured by the hauntological and interrupted by the otherness that is lodged at the heart of the self. Always already inhabited by the ghosts of the self who is also other, the 'I' of the "I am haunted" is a structure of self that is not bound to ontological distinctions of human/animal/ghost, but instead, to a desire to witness, to remember "beyond all living presence", and to bear this responsibility infinitely, without end and without the absolution and assurance of what Derrida (cited in Lawlor 2007:28) calls "good conscience".

Like the archive itself, the hauntological structure of a 'time out of joint' proposes a spectral justice that is future-oriented, for ghosts arrive in order to come back (Derrida 1994:161). Living with ghosts, as a ghost, is thus, for Derrida, not synonymous with living in deprivation as it is in Peeren's (2014:14) idea of a "living ghost" – marginalised, dispossessed and without access to justice. Rather, for Derrida (1994:161), to live with ghosts, to talk with them, is to live in the very condition of possibility for the future to happen: to live in the opening to spectral corruption is to await what is to come, without closure and without knowing who or what will arrive. Since the spectre marks out a responsibility to whatever comes, it can neither know nor pronounce on the death of the other: it can only signal the non-ethical opening to an alterity that cannot be appropriated, not even as the sacrificial (and political) validation of a non-criminal killing. As that which *is* not, the spectre puts into questions any determination of human, nonhuman and animal, and hence, any political and juridical determination of self and other, non-killable and killable, that depends on, and is intrumentalised by, the speciesist and racist drive for ontological purity. It is this death-dispensing animalised politics of the other that the death in detention files bear witness to, but also disrupt. They trouble precisely because, unlike Peeren's (2014:48) assertion of a Derridean

separation between the spectral living and the dead, the spectres that haunt my thinking on alterity, justice and the question of responsibility in the aftershock of my archival research on the making killable of the other who is not human enough for their death to be criminal, will not, and cannot, stay dead. They cannot because it is not simply the 'I' who is haunted, but the archive itself. To return to the place I began, it is Derrida's (1998:18) sense of the "pledge" of the archive, its spectral opening to the future and thus to the wounding question of justice, and not simply the horrors it bears wit(h)ness to, before which I tremble.

Spectral justice and the archive: 'ghosts, more than one'

To posit a separation between 'living ghosts' and the dead, and to ask that voice be given to the spectres of the dispossessed and not simply to the experience of the haunted, as Peeren (2014) and Harris (2015) argue, is, in effect, to return the ghost to a structure of knowledge. Turning the spectre into a body of knowledge implies not only to know what 'death' is, even if it is a 'living death', but, as Derrida (1994:48) would assert, aims to ontologise its remains: it is to seek to put death in its place, outside of life, to name it and exorcise it. As Nicholas Royle's (2001:183; 2003) reading of the uncanny and the phantomatic suggests, however, there is little to be known about the place of death, which is why, for Derrida (1994:99) the repetition of the spectral, the arrival of the ghost who re-turns the present to an unknowable future, invokes not only the structure of promise or "pledge" but returns to the "question of mourning". This question of mourning is not of the kind in which one is caught in melancholic despair, in which the 'I' who is haunted is unable to see the structure of promise for the horrors of the past. Rather, as Royle (2003:288; 2001:187) notes, the uncanniness of the Derridean spectre links mourning to trembling: to a hesitation before which the archive is unassailably open to "the other and the other others" which it homes but cannot exorcise (Derrida 1998:77). For Derrida (2008b:93), trembling only comes from the outside: it is that involuntary response that is unassimilable to knowing – as if there is an excess that shivers "to the bone" (Derrida 2008b:55). To extrapolate from this shivering, the spectre troubles all received knowing, all assurances, all rote responses. The spectres of the deaths in detention files that I write with produce, through the constitutive violence of 'the more than one', an alterity in relation that, while ghostly, is nonetheless inscribed in the flesh, in the shudder of shared vulnerability and a mutuality whose wounding rips through the apartheid state's sovereign violence to call to the future. As if to testify to the archive's promise to remain open to the ghosts that come only to come back, the South Africa History Archive Trust (SAHA 2016) announced on 27 October 2016, 45 years after the fact, that the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) has agreed to relook at the 'accidental' death of Ahmed Timol on 27 October 1971, who died, according to the police report, by apparently rushing towards the open window of interrogation Room 1026 of John Vorster Square and "diving through it" (Anstey 2016). The first of those who sailed off what the security police began to refer to as "Timol Heights" (Anstey 2016), Timol's spectre returns to bear witness to the demand to bear responsibility to a spectral justice "beyond all living present" (Derrida 1994:xix); a demand to which "one must" answer, albeit belatedly and always provisionally, without end (Derrida 1995:282).

Endnotes

1 I reiterate here the echo that haunts the French title of Derrida's *The animal that therefore I am (more to follow)*: *L'animal que donc je suis* (à *suivre*), in which the French 'I am' (*je suis*) also resonates as 'I am following'. See Marie-Louise Mallet (2008:3).

2 For a sustained discussion of this concept in Derrida's work, see Leonard Lawlor (2007:23). 'The worst' describes an absolute, totalising violence that has both genocidal and suicidal dimensions: it is a violence that is without end. Examples of 'the worst' would include Nazism (and thus the *Shoah*) and the Islamist jihad of al-Qaeda and ISIS, as well as the west's 'war on terror'.

3 The death of Steve Bantu Biko, Mthayeni Cutshela, Imam Abdullah Haron, Nicodemus Kgoathe, Lucky Kutumela, Alfred Makaleng and others are consistent with injuries sustained during torture, though no report of anyone held to account can be said to exist. See George Bizos (1998).

4 For example, of the eight deaths at John Vorster Square, the majority were found hanged: Neil Aggett, Wellington Tshazibane, Ernest Moabi Dipale, Clayton Sizwe Sithole.

5 Derrida (1995:282) deconstructs an appropriative and wholly violent form of subjectivity that simply consumes its others to sustain a version of a heterosexual, virile and masculinised self. Derrida extends the literal eating of the animal other to the metaphorical eating of every other through psychoanalytic identifications. Since, as Derrida (1995:282) writes "one *must* (*il fait*) eat", both literally and metaphorically, the question is not who or what one 'eats', but rather how to 'eat well'. See also Lipschitz (2014).

6 For instance, as Lawlor (2007:23) observes, scapegoating a minority within a community might indicate a "lesser violence" for the larger community for whose purity that minority was sacrificed, yet at the same time, such a scapegoating also acts out the 'worst' kind of totalising violence.

7 On racism as a primary manifestation of the discourse of war, see Foucault (2004:257).

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Curating the archive

RHYTHMS OF MEMORY AND JUSTICE IN THE VIDEO WORK OF MICHELLE MONARENG

Same Mdluli, Independent researcher

Abstract

In this chapter, I explore the work of South African, Johannesburg-based artist Michelle Monareng and her use of the archive both as an artistic expression and a visual metaphor of, and for, restitution for loss of land. Firstly, I show how her use of the notion of the archive is a form of artistic expression that is *of* restitution (as it is articulated through the video medium), and therefore about a particular kind of remembering, excavating and recording. Secondly, I argue that Monareng extends the work further to become a visual metaphor *for* restitution, one that is narrated through her grandfather's archive, which is not necessarily a unique one but rather speaks about a significant overarching socio-political and highly contested issue in South Africa – that of the land.

While Monareng's video and installation work is based on a personal account of history, it also details the traumatic pilfering of an historical narrative that highlights the plight of land dispossession in South Africa and the urgent need for its repatriation through a mediation of archives dealing with this subject. I read Monareng's re-account of her memory of her grandfather's archive through her use of the video medium, not only as a personal and collective process of remembering, but also as an invocation of this act through a reconfiguration of different kinds of knowledge documented through the rubric of an archive. The visual narrative she draws from to present her grandfather's archive is thus as much about loss and erasure as it is about the ambiguities of space and time through an intriguing visual play between the past and present. I focus on a video work by Monareng entitled *Removal to Radium* (2013). Art historian Nomusa Makhubu (2013:14) notes that as a moving image, Monareng's work "is an experience of that process of deciphering the inequities of the present through the often obscured narratives of the past." *Removal to Radium* is therefore presented as an archive in and of itself; it is represented as a powerful appellation indicative of the temporalities underpinning a multi-layered narrative around the uneasy question of land retribution in South Africa. The fact that Monareng chooses to present her grandfather's archive is significant, in that she thereby poses difficult, yet urgent questions around justice and repatriation. I suggest that these are notions that can be viewed empirically

through Terry Cook's (2007) reading of Verne Harris's (2007:xi) articulation of the archive as a crack that allows in light rather than the controlled destruction of memory, history and present lived experiences. Harris's articulation is based on varied contextual frameworks; however, what distinguishes his observations from others is his argument that in South Africa the archive *is* the people – in the sense that it is the people who rework, reinterpret, reimagine the archive and enable this process – and so the archive fundamentally consists *of* people. Cook's reference to the poetics of the archive as being both lyrical and musical offers an appropriate entry point to an understanding of Monareng's work as "a personal engagement with the rhythms of memory and justice" (Cook 2007:x). These characteristics are not only apparent in the methodology, visualisation and narrative of the video piece itself, but are also metaphorically tied to the act of digging and its link to South Africa's history of black migrant labour, mining and the exploitation of black people through the land. As such, in her work, Monareng not only opens up a larger discussion around the systems of power shaping ways of recording but also, more importantly, the language used to allow those who are marginalised and denied access to "fountains of creativity: through the archive, an opening to justice" (Cook 2007:xii).

Introduction

In this chapter, I explore the work of young[1] South African, Johannesburg-based artist Michelle Monareng and her use of the archive both as an artistic expression and a visual metaphor of, and for, restitution for loss of land. I show how her use of the notion of the archive is a form of artistic expression that is *of* restitution (as it is articulated through the video medium) and therefore about a particular kind of remembering, excavating and recording. Furthermore, I argue that Monareng extends the work to become a visual metaphor *for* restitution, one that is narrated through her grandfather, Sonnyboy Abram Shikwane's archive, detailing the traumatic pilfering of an historical narrative that highlights the plight of the land question in South Africa and the urgent need for its mediation through the employment of archives as evidence[2] for the realisation of justice.

I trace Monareng's re-account of this memory of loss represented by her grandfather's archive through the use of the video medium, not only as a personal and collective process of remembering, but also one that presents reconfigurations of different kinds of knowledge documented within the rubric of the archive. The visual narrative Monareng draws from, I suggest, presents an account that is as much about dispossession and erasure as it is about the ambiguities of space, time and placement, all of which are intricately woven through a powerful visual play between the past and present.

I focus on the video work entitled *Removal to Radium* (2003), which Monareng produced as part of the practical component of her Master's degree in Visual Art at the Wits School of Arts, University of the Witwatersrand. At first the video appears to follow the formalist convention of narrative film where a story unfolds in a linear way; however, in this instance the imagery acts not only as a tool for telling the story, but is used in ways that reveal and conceal the notion of 'historical truth', pointing to the significance of archives in the realisation of justice. The video piece is rendered in grey scale – a visual effect accentuated by the mist in the air on the day of recording. In this chapter, I therefore suggest that the video medium and use of the

archive not only form a visual metaphor through which the artist interrogates what historian Annie Coombes (2004:7) calls "the nature and use of historical evidence in the public realm" but are also, in themselves, effective forms of representation through which loss and collective memory, history and silence are articulated.

In 1965, Monareng's grandfather, Sonnyboy Abram Shikwane and the community of Rietspruit Farm[3] were forcefully removed from their land to make space for white farmers and their families to occupy the land. Their case for the repatriation of the land was successfully lodged through evidence provided from Shikwane's archive to the South African Land Claims court in 1995. The archive of Monareng's grandfather comprises testimonies focusing on the forced removals at the farm. It consists not only of his story, but also those of other families who document their experiences of forced removal. In the video, what seems to be of interest to Monareng is not so much what is in the archive, but rather the way in which all traces of black people originally possessing the land were erased effectively through the careful notes and practices of Berlin missionaries who coveted the territory. Monareng achieves this through the medium of video and its ambivalent play between actual, lived experiences and representation thereof.

In *Removal to Radium,* the viewer is presented with an eerie scene; an obscure oscillation between an imaginary yet fully present figure moving between contemporary imagery and historical references of men mining or digging into the ground. The figure is Monareng's uncle, who lives on the family farm. Initially, his full body is shown, in the process of digging a hole in the ground. As the video unfolds, he gradually descends into the hole, with only his head and shoulders appearing in the frame, as a small pile of sand accumulates next to him. As the digging progresses, a herd of cows emerge from the misty background and the digging stops momentarily; it is in that moment of uncertainty that a silhouette of a bull appears. The bull[4] becomes an emphatic presence of philosophical and symbolic significance to African practices and the relationship to the land.[5] The visual signifiers used in the video thus require a deeper understanding on the part of viewers regarding collective traumas of extortion, dispossession and loss. Without the land, black people of South Africa were stripped of their means to plough, harvest and tend or raise livestock and therefore, to survive in a context of rapid industrialisation and urbanisation in the early 1960s.

In reflecting on loss and repatriation, I draw on the idea of the archives and justice presented by South African archivist Verne Harris (2007). For Harris, this idea of the archives and justice starts with the archivist. While he acknowledges the danger in arguing that "archivists are always already political players", he insists that "recognising this is critical to avoiding the greater danger of archivists, while wearing the mantles of custodian and broker, becoming pawns in bigger power-plays" (Harris 2007:248). These power plays, I suggest, raise questions around how ordinary South Africans were meant to access the means to justice following the dispensation of the new African National Congress government. In referencing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC 1996), I explore a combination of questions that both Annie Coombes and Harris raise about "the nature of personal or 'collective' memory as a tool for the production of historical narratives, particularly where traumatic abuses of human rights have been involved" (Coombes 2004:7). While Coombes (2004:8) draws attention to "the contexts of understanding memory from both an individual subjective experience and as shaped by collective consciousness and shared social processes", Harris (2007:245) alludes to a reading of the archive as a political act. Both approaches, however, allow for a means to look critically at how Monareng's work may be situated in the space of new national histories, centred on

the lived experiences of ordinary South Africans. New national histories in the South African public sphere are, according to Coombes (2004:10), well considered when they

> engage larger structural narratives and material conditions and individual lived experiences without reducing their public expression to either some monolithic representation of 'the struggle' or some unlocated and ahistorical notion of individualized experience and that might adequately signal (if not represent) the compromised, complicated texture of living under and fighting against apartheid.

In making this observation, Coombes is referring to the institutionalisation of memory, which in South Africa's public realms was marked in 1996 – the year in which the TRC began and 'concluded' its work. While the TRC process was welcomed for ushering in a sense of healing and reflection in the reconciliation process, it was also heavily criticised because of its compromise of upholding the ideals of national unity and reconciliation over a more cognitive reparation process of addressing the injustices of the past. Such a disjuncture is evident in how, during the process, the narratives of some of the victims were, as noted by Alejandro Castillejo-Cuellar (cited in Krog, Mpolweni & Ratele 2009:9), "plotted into the Commission's historical narrative as exiled from the findings or strategically used as a moral bedrock or emblem". In other words, the narratives of some of the victims were displaced from the findings predetermined by the Commission. Here the case of Notrose Nobomvu Konile,[6] one of the Gugulethu Seven's mothers comes to mind. Her testimony, which was one of the first TRC hearings held in Cape Town on 23 April 1996, is re-examined by authors Antjie Krog (transcriber and editor), Nosisi Mpolweni (transcriber and translator) and Kopano Ratele (interpreter) (2009). Given their meticulous re-assessment of the contents of Notrose Nobomvu Konile's testimony, the publication is an important archival document that accounts for and disrupts the conventional reading of an archive and testimonies about trauma, which is often assumed as impartial and honest, while also offering an insightful consideration of the multifaceted and complex process of interpretation. In this discussion of Monareng's work, I align the reading of the work through visual culture, which includes a wider examination of cultural tropes, and references that seek to interrogate its placement as a 'counter archive'.

During the TRC hearing, Notrose Nobomvu Konile's testimony represented a defiance of the prescribed testimony, as it was one that did not fit neatly with the general framework and therefore resisted the imposed outline of the hearings. The prescribed testimony was in many ways based on a simplistic banality between good and evil, black and white, poor and rich, in the accounts of how apartheid occurred in the daily lives of ordinary South Africans. Her narrative "defied all elements that render narratives 'audible' within what we considered to be the dominant discursive framework" (Krog *et al.* 2009:46). It sits in what Krog *et al.* (2009:46) refers to as the "slippages" in translation where cultural codes and references are often misinterpreted and misrepresented. The cultural readings of Mrs Konile's testimony are as intimate as her experience of losing her son, but they are also reflective of the lives of many African people whose testimonies at the TRC were lost in translation because they did not follow the master narratives of a dominant western-orientated or Eurocentric discourse. I suggest that although Monareng's grandfather's archive is presented through a visual

RIGHT: Figure 1. Michelle Monareng, *Removal to Radium*, 2013 | Installation view, *Past Imperfect // Future Present* exhibition, FADA Gallery, 2015 | Dual channel video installation with sound. Continuous cycle 1:15 mins | Photograph by Clive Hassall

account, it too operates in a complex intersection between the social and political, all of which are presented through a visual narrative that starts to interrogate history through the lens of the archive. My use of Mrs Konile's testimony in relation to Monareng's grandfather's archive aims to probe the nature of the archive through Harris's (2007:244) assertion that "'the archive' is political … that politics is archival and that the archive is the very possibility of politics".

The reference to Mrs Konile's testimony speaks directly to the idea of a narrative – a narrative around obtaining justice, and how some cases fall through the cracks because the mechanisms imposed for telling one's story are predetermined and distorted by a structural ideology that continues to dictate how black subjects are meant to remember trauma and experience.

Harris (2007:248) adopts a Derridean[7] deployment of 'the archive', which he considers as a "tool for determining meanings and significances underneath which instruments of power are forged". This, he notes, is underscored by the fact that "archivists are always already political players and therefore cannot be merely custodians and brokers" (Harris 2007:248). According to Harris (2007:241, 242), record makers are "active participants in the dynamics of power relations"; archivists are "whether they realize it or not … at once the objects and instruments of political pressure". There are two folds to Harris's view of the archivist as political and politics as archival that could offer a more nuanced exploration of Monareng's work. These, I argue, are presented through a set of overarching ideas that make her use of the video medium perspicacious, not only in the reference to the visual process of uncovering the archive, but also its metaphysical property as evidence submitted for acquiring justice.

On the one hand, Monareng draws attention to the subjectivity of archiving and the role of the archivist in what is both a personal and collective processing of memory and remembering. The video work becomes part of a larger interrogation of a body of visual signs, reconfigurations and reinterpretations of particular kinds of historical narratives and knowledge. On the other hand, Monareng's work operates within a visual language that, like the testimony of Mrs Konile, starts to interrupt (if not disrupt) the dominant systems of power that constitute what visual culture theorist Nicholas Mirzoeff (2011:2) refers to as the "visualization of history". The 'visualization of history' is, according to Mirzoeff (2011:2), "ways in which systems of power determine what becomes dominant history in terms of archives, events, and even subjects (as in people) and subject matter". The visualisation of history emerges from what Mirzoeff (2011:3) terms "visuality", wherein systems of authority operate by "naming, categorising, and defining". This process goes beyond the increase and consumption of certain imagery maintaining status quo, by lending itself towards a "complex of visuality": a sophisticated system of segregation seeking to prevent groups from "cohering as political subjects", whilst aestheticising processes of classification and segregation as acceptable (Mirzoeff 2011:3–4).

Collective memory and interpretations of the black experience

As the custodian for her grandfather's archive and an artist re-engaging with it, Monareng, in a sense, positions herself as a curator of a particular kind of historical narrative, one that starts to reconstruct a new system of knowledge articulated through the visual language of the video medium. In *Removal to Radium,* Monareng

invokes a multiplicity of visual references around (collective) memory and its relationship to loss and repatriation of land. In the work, this is unravelled through the use of a set of visual and archival material that alludes to land as a metaphor and site for looking simultaneously at both the past and present, albeit through a particular lens. This lens differs slightly from the historical one in that it takes an artistic practice as its method to examine the notion of the archive.

It is a similar lens through which South African photographer Santu Mofokeng enunciates his reading and reconstruction of the archival material he gathered for *The Black Photo Album / Look at me: 1890–1950* project. Presented as an ongoing research project (1997–), *The Black Photo Album / Look at me: 1890–1950* is about "a dynamic form of memory in which things are brought together and connections are made" (Obrist cited in Boutoux 2003:623). In the photographs collected, there is an underlying narrative of the black middle class that begins to challenge the accepted historical notion of blacks as poor and prone to poverty. During the research phase, Mofokeng gathered images from family homes in Soweto. These images, which depict black middle class subjects from the Victorian and Edwardian eras, present these subjects in a different light to colonial (and later, apartheid) conventions of representation. These tropes of representation entailed a tradition of photographing black subjects as inferior and different from their western counterparts; an ethnographic approach that disempowered the subject being photographed. Mofokeng's collection of images in many ways challenged this, in that the subjects themselves commissioned most of the photographs. In other words, his archive shows the notion of memory as something that is not static, but rather a process of documenting the political in the everyday.

While Monareng's and Mofokeng's archives are innovative insofar as the artistic and creative processes they employ, both belong and circulate in the domain of how visual methods can enable an excavation of the archive through particular kinds of historical narratives. Mofokeng's archive may be seen as a precursor to that of Monareng's grandfather's, in that both are representative of the kinds of narratives not usually found in museums and galleries. However, their differing lens-based approaches towards the archive differ slightly, in that the initial stages of Mofokeng's research dealt with amassing, whereas Monareng's excavation of the archive reveals the testimonies of her grandfather and those he represents in it, thus digging deeper into the personal. Both strategies of amassing and excavating fall within processes of what Mirzoeff calls "countervisuality", in which complexes of visuality are being constantly challenged and resisted by "different realism[s]" and histories, thereby allowing for ambiguities to arise in the spaces "between intention and accomplishment" (Mirzoeff 2011:5, 9). In this sense, both Mofokeng's and Monareng's archives can be viewed as "a response to the monopolization of public memory by the state and the political effects that flow from such mnemonic power" (Pad.ma 2015:352), although this may not be stated explicitly. In tracing both these archives, it becomes apparent that they present a different focus to the archive, one that cannot be categorised easily or defined, but is well articulated through Harris's (2004:41) reading of Derrida's assertion that "in the archive trace, the archive is not simply a recording, a reflection, an image of the event … it shapes the event". Furthermore, Harris (2004:42) notes that in "interrogating and interpreting the archive, scholars almost always inscribe their own interpretation into it thus creating a sense of openness out of the future".

There are two important aspects of Monareng's focus and exploration of the archive in the form of video, that as curator Gabi Ngcobo (2014) notes, make it stand as a "counter archival response to the collection of

documents, photographs and video testimonies that make up the archive". On the one hand, it points to a deeper inquiry around one's formulation of an identity and a sense of location in narratives of the past, and, on the other hand, places emphasis on the role of a collective voice in the act of remembering. To remember, as Jacob Dlamini (2009:111) notes, "is a political act … by no means is the act of remembering, the work of memory, itself an innocent act". Speaking on this act of remembering, Dlamini places memory in relation to the act of remembering the township as part of a political imagination based on the notion of nostalgia. While the views expressed in Dlamini's book *Native nostalgia* (2009) have been widely contested (see, for instance, McKaiser 2009; Steinberg 2010) on the grounds that he is romanticising apartheid, Dlamini presents a paradoxical condition of how memory operates in the constitution of the public sphere; the evolution of nationhood; and citizenship and identity in postapartheid South Africa, that is worth extending in the reading of Monareng's work.

Dlamini (2009:113) provides an account of the township as a space for "posing a challenge to the master narrative of black homogeneity". The difficulty with Dlamini's notion of black homogeneity however, is that it is presented as somewhat indistinct; an elusive description of the notion of the township anchored on a metaphorical interpretation that gives little insight as to whether or not it is assuming or implying that not all black people remember apartheid as a terrible time in their lives. The counter narrative Dlamini paints thus suggests that black homogeneity should be considered in a particular way – one that is perilously centred on a distorted notion of apartheid as something that can be recounted and remembered fondly. Whilst it locates itself within what Coombes (2004:10) poses as "the effectivity of different kinds of expression – both pedagogic and imaginative – in embodying the trauma of surviving apartheid", it also "complicates and compromises the larger homogenized political ideology", where the narrative of living and fighting apartheid is set against the backdrop of township as a visual metaphor for only trauma and pain. Monareng's grandfather's archive and her exploration of its content through the mode of video thus pose a different kind of remembering, particularly in how it operates in both the past and present. It forms part of a visual language that is well described through Coombes's (2004:10) notion of narratives as "representation and forms of representation in the present that act as an insurance against the amnesia of future generations but offer more than a palliative or reproduction of pain". Monareng's reactivation of her grandfather's archive is therefore not only significant for past generations to reclaim their narrative and address the injustices of the past, but more importantly, for also offering future generations an opportunity to engage with material that would otherwise not be available.

Archives and land

The metaphor of land comes across more explicitly in the toiling of the land depicted in the video. In the video, Monareng's uncle (whom I met when visiting her family farm) is captured digging repeatedly in a hole into which he appears to be sinking deeper and deeper. The action of repeatedly digging evokes the notion of 'rhythms' referred to in the title of this chapter. It is not only the action of digging that is rhythmic, but also the repeated sound, which features strongly in Monareng's work.

Not only does the action of digging serve as a visual metaphor for the archive, it also forms part of what

Derrida (cited in Harris 2007:45) demonstrates in his elaboration of "archival contextualization", where the multiple layers of constructing text are revealed and thereby augment yet another layer. The notion of the archive as denoted through a Derridean sense about remembering without forgetting is a view Harris (2007:47) contests since, for him, "forgetting is a way of remembering". This oscillation between remembering and forgetting, the past and present rests in Derrida's notion of how memory is traced; "each time the trace is revisited it is continuously busy with its work of shaping and reshaping" (Harris 2007:47). The process of undoing the archive Harris (2007:47) co-opts thus lies "in its dance of remembering, forgetting, and imagining"; a dance of imagination that, for me, is similarly embedded in Monareng's video work precisely because of the way it, to apply Harris's (2007:47) words, "moves effortlessly through both the conscious and unconscious shapes of what is remembered and what is forgotten, and how the trace is configured". The act of digging and the accumulation of the heap of soil next to the hole that the figure gradually sinks into, are all visual narratives of the archive's ability to unearth the darkness beneath, while at the same time exposing it for light to enter.

Monareng's video work allows one entry into her grandfather's archive and its visual narrative through the artist's unearthing of that which Nomusa Makhubu (2013:14) notes is revealed through "processes of interrogative seeing and the endless assemblage of visual narratives". It is a process similarly employed by Mofokeng in his attempt to give context to the photographs in his archive of *The Black Photo Album* research project – not only does he use the photographic process as a way of looking at the historical information the images provide, but he also "reinserts them within a bigger understanding" of its political significance (Mofokeng 2003:622). The culmination of the artwork into a book is, for Mofokeng (2003:624), not only an efficient "way of documenting meaning", but also a political statement constructed out of an archive that does not necessarily suggest a definitive view of what could be explored as 'a black experience', but rather provides a more nuanced contextual reading thereof. In *Removal to Radium,* Monareng's use of the video medium facilitates the process of reading the visual narrative of dispossession and the relationship between the land and the people to which it belongs. The people represented in the archive are, however, made invisible and instead symbolised through the sublime presence of the figure digging the hole in the land. The figure oscillates between what is rendered visible and invisible in questions around land where, as Makhubu (2013:16) notes, the land is marked as ancestral rather than a commodity derived through concepts of affluence, private property and ownership.

Conclusion

Allowing for light to enter, however, also implies that there are cracks and sometimes slippages in what have become traditional narratives of how archives ought to function. As Cook (2007) notes, it is with this urgency that Harris (2007:xi) calls for recognition that "there is crack, a crack in everything, that is how the light gets in". Cook (2007:xii) elaborates on Harris's refracting exploration of these cracks, which he construes as "inviting an archive opening to justice", and spreads broadly across three underlying concepts. The first, explains Cook (2007:xii), requires identifying what he terms as "monolithic professional mantras" wherein

there are often "systems of power shaping what becomes normalized in language, classification conventions, accepted traditions and record keeping models applied as professional mantras". The second encourages an approach that allows "light of difference in through these cracks" – a method, which, he notes also, allows for archives to "move from oppressive to the liberatory, from straightjackets of convention to fountains of creativity" (Cook 2007:xii). Lastly, for Cook (2007:xii), Harris's probe into the archive prompts an enlightened mind-set and practice in breaking down what he states are "those insularities that plague most professions and all ideologies … it invites an archive that is always opening to justice". The interrogative ways of seeing Monareng's video work creates – in both its visuality and narrative of dispossession and loss – is layered in this idea of opening. In creating an uncharted path, the narrative the work creates begins to debunk the national narrative around land and memory, where a more heterogeneous synergy of the past and present is combined to access the archive and its potential to reinstate justice.

Endnotes

1 In this instance the use of the word 'young' serves two purposes:
   i. It alludes to the supposed historical and generational gap between the young and the old; their relationship to the past through the land, the impact of this loss under the apartheid legacy and ways of re-claiming it in postapartheid narratives. Monareng is not only dealing with material that is conventionally not considered as 'art' or within the artistic realm - her grandfather's archive forms part of actual historical evidence detailing the dispossession of black people of their land.
   ii. Monareng's activation of the archive through the medium of video is not only indicative of mediums that, as a young person, are perhaps more familiar to her, but more importantly, articulated through the mediation of this intersection through the use of the medium between both the past and present.
2 The archive of Monareng's grandfather was part of evidence presented by her family to regain their land. Along with testimonies by other members of the community, this constituted an actual case in the court of law.
3 Rietspruit is located in Heidelberg – a small town south of Johannesburg, established during the apartheid era as a land fertile for farming.
4 In many African cultural practices, the bull represents wealth, ancestral links, and other symbolic meanings attached to the ecological and spiritual interpretation of the land.
5 The Land Act of 1913 not only dispossessed Native Africans from owning land, but also created a migration system that resulted in the deterioration of the fabric of black African lives, both socially and economically.
6 Notrose Nobomvu Konile was one of the four mothers of the Gugulethu Seven – a group of seven young men brutally killed by the security police of the apartheid regime on 3 March 1986.
7 Harris (2007:40) notes how in the archive, Derrida manages to generate 'new text' which is "… old in its newness". Harris (2007:40) adapts what he terms "a bifurcated shaft of darkness, where on the one hand the archive is considered as a concept of heeding closely the 'otherness outside and the otherness inside'" and on the other hand, "explicitly connected to ways of knowing, of being and of becoming".

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Front cover image: ©Michelle Monareng, *Removal to Radium*, 2013.
Dual channel video installation with sound. Continuous cycle 1:15 mins.
Video still courtesy the artist.

The volume *Critical Addresses. The Archive-in-Practice* brings together a collection of essays in which authors trace how visual artists and theorists critically reflect on institutional and personal archives by using their fragments in ways that potentially create new forms of engagement for the construction of identities, subjectivities and agencies. Authors in this volume consider the archive as a repository of traces, which have the potential to be destabilised, thus signalling the construction at work in any single account of a historical narrative and remembrance. Processes of 'making', 'unmaking' and 'referencing' are effected through multiple exchanges between the subjectivities of the writer, visual or archival practitioner and the spectres, ghosts and shadows of those subjectivities that haunt the archive itself.

Critical Addresses. The Archive-in-Practice adds to a vast context of scholarly work done on the archive as a key site of inquiry in fields, such as anthropology, critical theory, history and visual art, through its specific focus on visual archives, and primarily those archives in which lens-based technologies are deployed. Given the significance of political and personal forms of archiving practices in postapartheid South Africa, and the possibilities that re-examinations of these archives hold for social transformation and the realisation of justice, the volume is focused on South African and African archives and ways in which South African artists and authors are engaging with these.

The Visual Identities in Art and Design Research Centre (VIAD), based at the University of Johannesburg, explores the construction of multiple forms of politicised socio-economic-cultural individual and collective identities within visual practice and visual culture. Work done under VIAD's auspices explores ways in which identities are conceptualised, imagined, expressed, challenged, performed, marketed, disseminated, received and consumed in the visual domain, with a particular emphasis placed on research in postapartheid, postcolonial South African cultural identities in continual processes of emergence, development and flux.

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