



uncertain

curature
in and out of the archive



edited by Carolyn Hamilton and Pippa Skotnes

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A class of girls gazes intently at a slide on a screen. It is the image of Bernadette Soubirous of Lourdes, lying in physical perfection in her coffin in the chapel at Nevers, France. Her head is angled slightly to the side, her face is lovely, framed by her white wimple and black veil. It is as if she is asleep, the eyes that gazed upon the Virgin Mary closed forever, yet her full lips slightly parted as if whispering a prayer. Her pale hands are clasped together on her chest and bear the only trace of death – faintly discoloured nails. Sister Peter dwells lovingly on the details of the corpse, uncorrupted, at peace, powerful evidence of the sanctity bestowed upon her by the mother of God. It is not the first time that the girls have heard the story of Bernadette, a simple shepherd girl whose visions of the Virgin in the 1850s gave credence to a papal declaration that Mary, like her son, was also immaculately conceived. It is, however, the first time they have seen the image of the body, and are filled with the wonder of it. Sister Peter has other photographs to show: the baths and the sleeping quarters at Lourdes and, most magnificently, the grotto where the Virgin appeared and which was crowded with crutches and callipers and the relinquished prosthetics that those blessed with a miracle would no longer need. Sister Peter, frequently seen ascending the stairs to the convent hall on her knees, had gone to Lourdes in search of a cure for a troublesome leg, but had come home disappointed. Yet this did not diminish the awe with which she spoke of her favourite saint. That the face was largely constructed of wax, and that the corpse of Bernadette had been exhumed several times from previous resting places, that pieces of rib and tissue had been removed as relics and that it was not quite as undecayed as Sister Peter understood, was an insight that would only come later. In that classroom, the body signalled a miracle: a moment of wonder curated with perfection by a Church that understood most powerfully the evocation through objects, notably relics, of the eternal.



UNCERTAIN CURATURE: IN AND OUT OF THE ARCHIVE

Carolyn Hamilton and Pippa Skotnes

We deploy the abstract noun of action ‘curature’ in our title to enable consideration of a wide set of activities beyond those typically undertaken by museum curators and as a way of positioning the volume adjacent to the practices of and literatures on two specialist, though intersecting, domains, those of curation and curatorship. If curation can be understood as concerned with the organisation and preservation of collected items in a wide range of museums, curatorship is the term increasingly used in the disciplinary practice of curation in the fine arts.

Like both curatorship and curation, ‘curature’ invokes notions of care (*curare*: to care) in ordering, managing or mobilising items within forms of custody. This is an idea of care rooted in the concepts of a Christian church that defined its remit as the care of souls for eternal salvation, which termed its courts the ‘curia’ and which was forceful in asserting the authority entailed in salvation. Seemingly a tender and nurturing notion, ‘care’ in custodial settings requires constant critical attention, its antonymical relation to neglect being an inadequate guarantee of its virtue.¹ The instances of care that the volume deals with are challenging because of the forms of authority involved. Indeed, it is the central paradox of both curation and curatorship that they always entail appropriation of one kind or another, often with authoritative fiat, along with care. We use ‘curature’ as a rhetorical device to keep this paradox firmly in view, to direct attention to the changes involved in forms of archival preservation and presentation, and to invite active and critical reflection about the practices which they entail.

David Cohen’s essay in this volume situates curation as a third thing, beyond and different from the production and consumption of a thing. As he encourages us to recognise, when our fingers

1. It is perhaps salutary that the other meaning of ‘curare’, from an entirely different root, is the term for a poison extracted from *Strychnos toxifera*, which affects the motor functions of the nervous system.

as, through curatorship, objects are seen as archival and texts as images and things. Such practices place long-established ideas of the archive as the place of texts, manuscripts and old volumes and of the curatorial world as a place of images and things, under erasure: recognising them, worrying at them and exceeding them.

The papers in the volume engage critically with various aspects of the deeming process, by looking beyond the institutions to processes in public life and by considering the role of archive in a visual and material economy as much as a textual one. A number of the papers engage with the concept of archive through investigation of spaces adjacent to, clustered around, askance from, and on the borders of that which is privileged as being 'archive' (see especially Buthelezi, Herwitz, Dodd, Modisane and Zaayman). Examining assemblages that are not quite 'archive', they unsettle established certitudes about archive and about the very activity of deeming itself. In all of this, archiving, whether indicted as an iniquitous colonial project or advocated as a strategy for the refiguring of material denied the status of archive, is the subject of critical inquiry.

The accidental photos that 'loitered' without purpose on Buthelezi's computer for some three years after they were first taken came to function as crucial mnemonics for the researcher. They assisted him in his quest to understand how recall of the past before the rise of the Zulu kingdom in the 1820s constitutes and keeps alive a pre-Zulu Ndwandwe identity that, as he puts it, supersedes and subverts Zuluness. Buthelezi's paper is rooted in an inquiry into the role in this process of particular oral forms (notably *izibongo*, *izithakazelo* and *amahubo*) that invoke Ndwandwe ancestors. The photographs unexpectedly turned into working notes in a different, non-verbal medium, which alerted him to the elaborate protocols at work, in a ritualised and ceremonial moment, in ensuring that these invocations are correctly and appropriately done, even in the face of concerted, now centuries-long, attempts by Zulu rulers to ensure the obliteration of memory of the Ndwandwe past. The preservatory imperative impelled by the demands of ancestors in the present proves resilient, well beyond the issues of 'memory'

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A ZULU BRAVE
In full dancing dress

that are typically invoked when the reliability of so-called oral traditions is questioned.

The acts of recognising a covert custodial impulse, as Buthelezi does, or deeming archive in museums (see Hamilton and Leibhammer), as much as the operations of institutions formally recognised as archives, are part of the volume's wider critical concerns about categories of knowledge, taxonomies and disciplines, and how they regulate ways of knowing, creating divisions and hierarchies (see especially Langerman, Herwitz, Shepherd and Haber, Buthelezi). At their core, these concerns centre on the relationship between the disciplinary rules of practice that give rise to archives, set their limits, enable them to undergo modification and, in Michel Foucault's formulation, define their mode of occurrence (Foucault 1972).

Fritha Langerman draws our attention to the role played by text, and by the form of the book, in presenting a linear model of knowing the world. She goes on to argue that museums were responsive to the pre-existing linear directives of books and their forms of sequential and hierarchical ordering of knowledge. These directives, she suggests, create passive readers and viewers. The essay, and indeed Langerman's exhibition *Subtle Thresholds* (2009–10), from which a number of the images alongside her essay are drawn, interrogate the taxonomies of knowledge entrenched in book form, in museum collections, and at work elsewhere in the ordering of inherited materials. Her essay invites consideration of the kinds of readers and viewers, receptive but inactive, that the linear book and sequential museum call into being. Her essay prompts a consciousness in the volume's contributors, and in the book's readers, of what it is to enter a book, to accept its temporality, to think about how its linearity directs engagement through the way that information and ideas are sequenced, and the way that the layout of the page guides apprehension of the content. In placing this essay first, we are inviting the reader to think critically about all of the ordering devices that operate in and on the archive, outside the archive, and in the place of archive, including books of the archive.



Langerman's contribution brings into view the relationship between book and archives, highlighting the synecdochal role of books, 'paper cabinets', in standing for the material archive; and in making certain archival objects, or whole collections, iconic or definitive (cf. Hamilton 2011a). Breaching the taken-for-granted boundary between primary and secondary sources, the attention given to the materiality of books enables us to appreciate them as archival objects themselves. We further see throughout the present volume the role played by books as bearers of the archive in public life. Books are revealed to be a form of curation that facilitates the constitution of the publicness of archive.

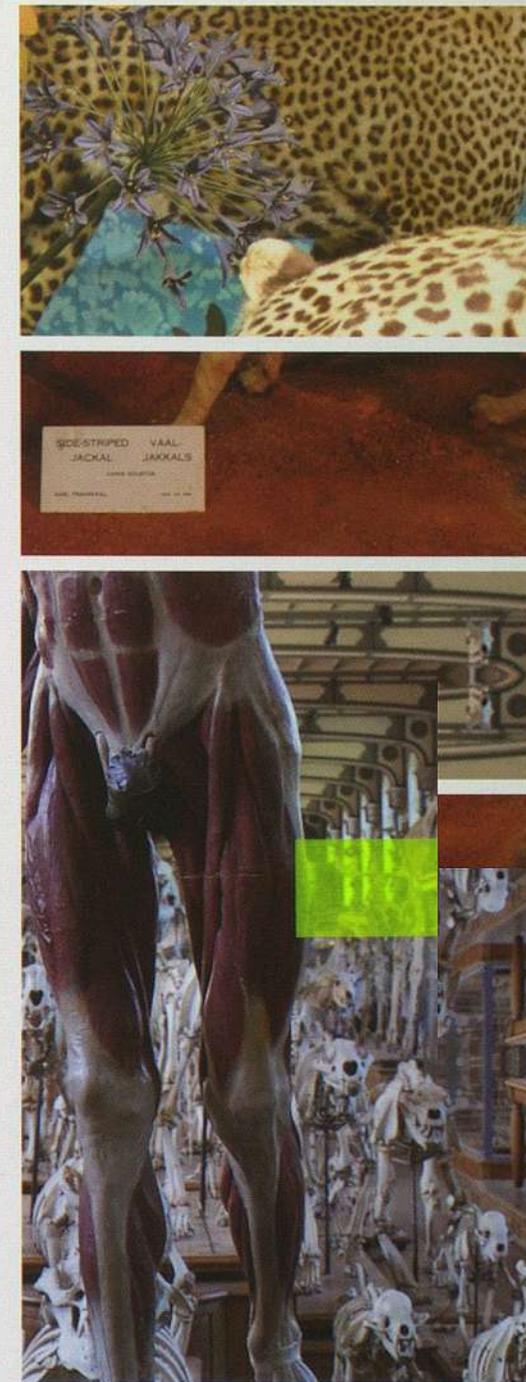
Co-editor Pippa Skotnes's layout of this volume is an attempt to connect a consciousness of the book, and of the history of reading, to discussions of curatorship and curation and archive, and to draw attention to the entanglement of images, objects and texts, both in the archive and in contemporary practices involving archive. By materialising text as nature, Skotnes's body of work entitled *Real Presence and the Book of Iterations* (first exhibited in 2004 and reiterated in 2009), discussed in her essay contribution, reverses the processes of naturalisation which are identified by Langerman, and which are manifest in the Iziko South African Museum's much-debated Bushman diorama with which Skotnes begins her discussion. Skotnes goes on to introduce the reader to her three bone books, skeletons of horses comprising gold-leafed bone pages, every inch hand-inscribed with texts taken from books that are themselves archives, in English, |xam and Latin. From the Bleek and Lloyd archive of |xam texts alone, several thousand pages were inscribed on bone by Skotnes. A work of intense labour, exquisite care and extreme valorisation, the bone books posit the entanglement of the source texts with each other and perform their commensurability.

In a variety of ways, Skotnes's interventions further disrupt the discrete categories of book, archive and curated objects. Her essay foregrounds the processes of focusing attention on archival objects, and of thinking, that are achieved through 'making', as opposed to writing. In so doing, Skotnes considers the question

of what strategies of representation, which visual and material interventions, and which sensorial effects might contribute to a remaking of the colonial archive and the knowledge system it underpins. The device of curation helps us to keep these kinds of sensorial effects in mind, at the same time as it draws attention to processes of the constant remaking of archives.

The focus of this volume is on things: bones inscribed and bones prepared by archaeologists, objects with visual powers, art installations, items of expressive culture and everyday use, photos taken or 'made', books, films, plays, drawings and texts produced, circulated and preserved under particular circumstances. Like the 1551 text *Historiae animalium*, discussed by Langerman, and displayed today on perspex supports in the J.S. Gericke Library at Stellenbosch University, archival documents appear in this volume as 'things', rather than historians' footnoted references to text in folders lodged in distant repositories. They are joined by other textual 'things' such as labels, lists and catalogues. Emphasis on their status as things breaks the mode of their habitual perception, drawing attention to the webs of signification and ideation in which they are buried. It calls into question the subject-object relations that they entail and highlights the work that things do (see, inter alia, Brown 2001; Appadurai 1988; Latour 1993).

Objects are clearly active in social life and their vitality there is much tracked and studied, notably in terms of the role they play in shaping senses of self. Such activity is less obvious when things enter the archive, seemingly there being rendered inert. However, as we see in the course of the volume, much happens to them once in a repository. Objects previously celebrated become neglected, others forgotten later become iconic. Certain items are relabelled and reclassified, in the process becoming different things from what they once were. The papers in the volume are not confined in their scope to what happens to materials in repositories. They examine also their role in public life. What happens to archival materials in the repositories and in public life is seldom a matter of accident. A number of the papers follow the trajectories of archival objects, looking at how, in Hamilton's terms, archival



materials shape and are shaped by, reshape and are reshaped over time by, changing public, political and academic discourses and practices (2012). The notion of curation foregrounds the forms of publicness involved, well beyond what is entailed in custody or in arrangement. The archive is understood then to be a process of production and reproduction over time, subject to multiple, changing forms of curation. As many of the essays in this collection show, inherited collected materials carry the histories of their collection and past custody into the present in ways that influence both the materials and contemporary encounters with them. The need for due care in the engagement of these materials is, further, a demand for attention to be paid to histories of the archives and their public lives as much as to the ethics of their past and contemporary mobilisations. While the matter of 'due care' is itself an open question, the papers in this volume respond to this historicising call in various ways. The particular challenges they each pick up on, the methods that they employ, and the positions that they take, vary substantially.

A range of strategies centred on the visual or material nature of the items concerned is used in methodologically and theoretically innovative ways designed to put pressure on the inherited relationship between archives and knowledge. Michael Nixon deploys the off-centre tactic of using the visual (i.e. the photographic and sketch) components of the archive of the South African ethnomusicologist Percival Kirby to unsettle Kirby's core sonic project. Because of the way that Kirby has been celebrated for his founding role in the discipline of ethnomusicology, public and academic attention has been focused on his collections of musical instruments. Even the now unusable wax cylinder recordings that he produced remain a treasured component of the Kirby collection at the University of Cape Town. Nixon's tactic is to work outside the discipline's prescribed archive of instruments and recordings. In a move distinctive in its own right, but informed by the ways in which photographs can interrupt dominant narratives (Hartman et al. 1998) or critique spaces like museums (Edwards 2001), Nixon locates the photographs dispersed across the country

that were originally part of the Kirby collection. The researcher's engagement with the *images* from a *sound* archive makes them a visible element of this archive, with interesting effects in getting past the collector's sound-focused intentions.

Similarly attending to the production and curation over time of materials, Hamilton and Nessa Leibhammer employ yet another strategy, that of actively subverting the inherited institutional segregation of collected material culture, images and texts, and in so doing enhance our understanding of each of the items concerned. Reconstructing the webs of association across collecting silos that led to the preservation – often in isolation from one another – of certain items, rather than the many others of their time, the researchers recoup the archival potential of collected objects and images of material culture, redeeming them from conservation as forms of traditional culture attesting to tribal or ethnic identities. In their inquiry they further explore the archival potential of the material culture of museum practice – labels, catalogues and so on – that attached itself over time to these items, a tactic also effectively utilised by Nixon. Mustering all of this, along with, and so as in some cases to unsettle, more familiar written sources, they throw light on both the ways in which the pre-industrial history of the region that became colonial Natal was translated into timeless Zulu culture and how this might be probed for archival traces of historicity as well as multiple and changing identities and subjectivities.

Uniting 'information across the silos of race, class, culture politics and taxonomy', Hamilton and Leibhammer reconstruct the curatorial activities in one area at one time by multiple actors, including local chiefs, custodians of local history, colonial officials, visiting European academics and curators, and missionaries. The concentrated hotspot that they identify is confirmed in the essay by Nixon, in which many of the same figures and places recur. Close examination of the detailed references in the papers reveals a striking set of links, as common persons, things and ideas crop up repeatedly across the two essays, attesting to tight networks involved in the production of seemingly disparate archives. The

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1.
W. HERMANN
2.
CAPE TOWN

Pitt Rivers Museum curator Henry Balfour's fingers are everywhere. So too are those of a small group of Natal chiefs. Back to back, the essays by Hamilton and Leibhammer and Nixon give us insight into how the combination of phylogenetic and tribal classification was responsible for the denudation of vast collections of objects of archival possibility.

Close examination of the circumstances of the production and ongoing curation of archives reveals manipulations and faithfulness, negligence and care, pernicious forms of damage as well as breathtaking recognitions. Nowhere is this more evident than in Marlene Winberg's essay 'Loss and Abundance'. Winberg focuses on the trauma and violence that underpinned the making of the !kun part of the iconic archive assembled by Lucy Lloyd after the death of her collaborator and brother-in-law, the philologist Wilhelm Bleek. Examining the collection of children's drawings in the archive, she tracks the abduction of the children from colonial Namibia and the events that brought them into the Bleek and Lloyd household in Cape Town. She probes Lucy Lloyd's own troubled childhood of humiliation and abuse to account for her 'ability to be a sensitive listener' to the stories of death and estrangement described by the children. The result of this historical reading saturated with loss is a simultaneous recognition of the abundance of material in the archive attesting to its painful origins.

In an off-centre move similar to that of Nixon, Winberg focuses on a medium – drawings – that is marginal to the primary language collection. In this way she explores the information preserved in the archive in excess of the intention to record a language. Hers is a reading of the archive that distinguishes Lloyd's contribution from Bleek's and that is not governed by his focus on words and its register as a linguistic collection.

The pursuit of these kinds of issues flows from, and contributes to, by now well-developed debates and discussions in the academy and public life concerning the imperial and colonial construction of knowledge about colonised subjects, operations of power involved in the collection and display of objects, the identification of subjects of research, their investigation and their representation,

and the way in which these practices give shape to what comes to us as inherited knowledge. The contributors are alert to the way in which points of entry into recognised archives require conformity to the particular knowledge conventions, themselves tied to the operations of power, that undergird the concept of archive itself. They share a critical concern with the way in which, as a result of these and other processes, a certain body of materials, and not other materials, has come to constitute the archives that are available to us to think about the past. They focus on objects and images and, in many instances, on aspects of creative practice as research methods, in order to unsettle ongoing logocentricity in the politics of archive.

The volume thus explores what happens in relation to archive when its visual and material aspects are foregrounded: what conceptual work might be enabled that lies outside language; what might be made visible that otherwise might be only vaguely seen or occluded; and how alternative political readings are enabled through a range of lateral approaches. Each of these moves is a response to deepening recognition of the ways in which archives are constituted under particular circumstances, operate according to particular, albeit changing, logics, and continue through time in ways responsive to the changing contexts in which they exist. The volume engages both the form along with the content of archives, and their poetics alongside their politics, in ways that appreciate that the possibilities of archives are far greater than the search for evidence or the writing of history. Archives are, after all, also drawn on in the course of emotional and subjective explorations, affective experiences, multiple forms of intellectual inquiry, and are sites of nostalgia, revulsion, delight and horror.

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In its insistent coupling of care with authority and power, curation creates a demand for active consideration of the ethical challenges involved in inheriting collected materials, in exerting custody over them, and in deploying such materials in the world.

Where research and data protocols in relation to living human subjects are today everywhere carefully elaborated and subjected to rigorous ethical scrutiny, the traces of *past* human lives and collected materials fall outside the remit of formal ethics reviews. Some discussion of the ethical challenges involved takes place in academic forums and occasionally in public life. Colonial-era, and more particularly ethnographic photographic collections as well as physical anthropology collections have been well served in this regard, with considerable attention being given both to the unequal circumstances involved in, and the racial and ethnocentric ideas underlying, the collection processes, and the subsequent management and mobilisation of the collected materials. In South Africa much of the ethical attention is tied to situations involving repatriation or restitution, leaving uncontested materials out of the light of ethical scrutiny. Ethical issues about the use of collected documents and books, animal specimens and stuffed trophies, or the remains of rulers, elites, conquerors and colonisers, are seldom explored.

While much of the critical discussion around inherited collections, and colonial collections in particular, deals with the abuses involved, attention is less often paid to the particular regimes of care to which the materials have been and are subjected. These regimes of care, often simultaneously the sites of epistemic violence – nowhere more evident than in the stripping of hallowed gravesites in the pursuit of science – encompass fieldwork methods, processes of assembling collections, preservatory and security apparatuses, cataloguing, labelling, boxing, consignment, transcription, digitisation, publication, exhibition and so on. One of the tactics of the volume is to subject these measures to multiple forms of scrutiny.

Many of the contributors who take up the ethical challenges involved find they need to take risks to meet them. As Nick Shepherd and Alejandro Haber note, the resurfacing of the photographs of the then just-exhumed dead from Oakhurst Cave allows us to grasp something of the 'sanctity and intimacy of the grave site' and the violence of the act of its exposure, in a way that the archaeologist's

'bare description' forecloses on. To make these points palpable, the essayists must take the risk of publishing the photographs (see also the essays by Buthelezi and Thomas).

Shepherd and Haber are alert to the violations involved in the sequestration of items in the archive and to the way in which archive, when understood as a place of repose (cf. Derrida on consignment), places the past in the past, 'safely ruptured from the present, imagined in the logic of modernity as a free space for self-invention'. Hamilton and Leibhammer, on the other hand, are concerned about the denial of archive to collections of material culture, a move that contributes to the rendering of those affected historyless and or timelessly traditional. The compilation thus holds in tension ideas of archive as prison and as place of possibility.

The museum curator Patricia Davison and photographer George Mahashe and, in a separate essay, the artist Andrew Putter revisit the ethnographic photographic archive. Davison and Mahashe look closely at the circumstances of the production of the J.D. and E. Krige archive of photographs of Lobedu, taken by the anthropologists in the 1930s, carefully situating them within the two anthropologists' own particular practices and within the emerging field of anthropological photography. They go on to track the instances of the photographs' initial curation in albums as visual records, their subsequent publication, their appearance in homes in the Lobedu capital, later in a museum collection and in specific public interventions by Davison in 1996 and Mahashe in 2012. The Davison intervention was an elicitation exercise which took the photographs back to the community concerned, resulting in discussions about the time of the photographs, the Kriges' fieldwork and changes since that time. It constituted an occasion of subjective engagement in the present. As the authors note, 'In showing the images at gaModjadji, yet another process of making meaning took place, located in history, imagination and memory'.

The intervention by Mahashe focused on releasing the creative potential of the images. Defining his research site as the curatorial field, Mahashe, himself of Lobedu descent, inverted the terms of the anthropological encounter that generated the original

2. In their Introduction to a special edition of *Cultural Studies* focused on South Africa, Bystrom and Nuttall (2013) examine what is at stake in this kind of private exposure undertaken by contemporary artists. Like Putter, they understand it as a practice of working through, in the now, the dynamics of racialisation. The paragraph on Putter in the text draws from Hamilton's discussion of his work in an overview article for a special focus on Archive in the *South African Historical Journal* (2013).

photographs, inviting curatorial field professionals and practised consumers of curations in Cape Town and Johannesburg to develop, but not to fix, randomly selected negatives from the Krige collection. Harnessing Lobedu structures of thinking about pasts, Mahashe treated the ethnographic photographs as troubled, but valuable, inherited objects, and set out to appease the disturbed and disturbing ancestors to which they are connected.

Andrew Putter also tackles the vexed archive of ethnographic photos. His work references the photographic practice of A.M. Duggan-Cronin, arguably the most influential photographer of 'the Bantu tribes', who was renowned both for the extent of his corpus and for the costume boxes with which he reputedly travelled in order to achieve the effects he sought. Putter's work comprises two complementary series of photographs that cannot be viewed independently. The artist goes to enormous lengths to mimic Duggan-Cronin's photographic style, and in the first black-and-white series casts contemporary people in ethnographic roles from Duggan-Cronin's script. He dresses the models from a prop box of his own, mostly drawn from a private collection of so-called traditional material culture. The black-and-white images are offset by a second, colour series in which the models wear clothes of their own choice. By doing the intensive work necessary to achieve an echo-like effect of sensory vitality in his own latter-day photographic project, Putter foregrounds the beauty and affective dimensions of Duggan-Cronin's photographs, and draws our attention to the way in which they exceed their purpose as illustrations of 'tribal life'. Taking a calculated risk in rehearsing Duggan-Cronin's mode of work, he alerts us to the visual signals and affective signs of Duggan-Cronin's appreciation of, enchantment with and admiration for his subjects, what he terms 'an impulse of tenderness'.²

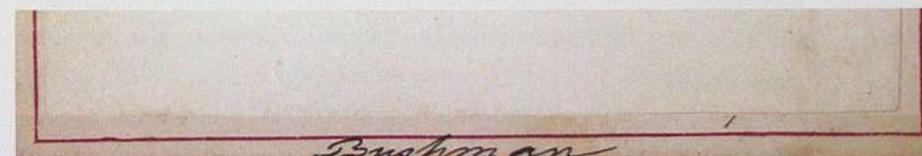
Indeed, the volume as a compilation is itself something of a risk. Much of it requires the contributors to reach out of areas in which they are schooled to try to grasp the significance of developments beyond their discipline, sometimes in other disciplines, sometimes in wider social and political life (cf.

Murphy et al. 2011). The researchers traverse fraught and complex terrain that would be easier to refuse or avoid altogether.

McGregor and Nuttall (2007) identify the uncertainty that we highlight in this volume as a characteristic of the current narrative age. In their analysis it emerges after a cultural moment of wonder at the miracle, bloodless South African political transition. The combination of the unanticipated challenges of the deepening post-transition period and the commitment of writers to the place where they live – South Africa in the case of their edited volume and, indeed, for many of the contributors to this volume – is an important driver of the taking of these kinds of risks. The acknowledgement of uncertainty and the risks involved flows also from post-colonial concerns with how facts are created, how knowledge is produced and suppressed, and the possibilities of ethically responsible knowledge. As Cohen and Odhiambo put it in their remarkable exploration of the 'tenacious interstices of the "risks of knowledge"' in contemporary Kenya, 'uncertainty is the fragile formative ground of debate and critique' (2004, 271).

The essays open themselves to correction, to the expression of unresolved concerns, endorsing the idea of knowledge making and archival engagement as continuously provisional, open and ongoing. From Skotnes's statement of her own preoccupations and of the changing nature of her thinking on key topics, to Kylie Thomas's iteration of the need for processes of 'constant reckoning', the papers offered here are occasions for critical thinking rather than finished works of presented facts. The volume's open-endedness is, further, an experiment in instantiating in the form of a visually advertent book something of the tacit, invitational commentary that is more typically achieved in forms of visual art practice.

The essays address the challenge of the vast set of inheritances from the past that require active negotiation in present post-colonial, post-apartheid South Africa. Peccant but rich colonial and apartheid collections and archives are part of this inheritance, as are the pervasive, often noxious, intellectual and



Zau-u
 (the name of
 the tree, the
 leaves & fruit
 of which are eaten)

*one part,
 body is place*

nanni

30 July/80.

binaries like traditional–modern, black–white, colonised–coloniser, indigenous–colonial, oral–written, documents–things, art–science, stored–displayed and so on. Another important line of inheritance comprises vernacular intellectual traditions conveyed in multiple genres often sequestered in the compromised notion of tradition. While the Enlightenment is a formative inheritance in the organisation of contemporary knowledge, a still deeper legacy lies in the Christian Church which gave early shape to the book, curation, archives and the museum.³ The essays in the book interrogate features of this diverse inheritance, revealing thoroughly entangled processes of curation and re-curation over time – what we term *curature* – that invite new perspectives.

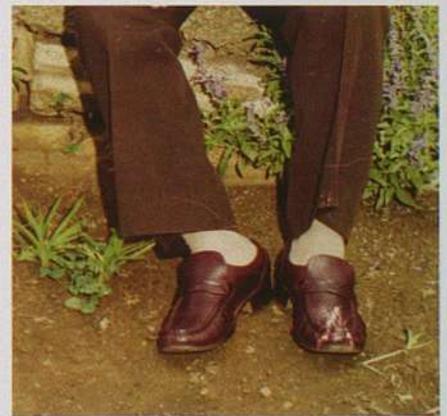
Danny Herwitz's contribution, 'The Creator's Hand and the Curator's Imprint', for example, positions Venda and Tsonga sculpture, with its deep traditional roots, as profoundly modern. Following Baudelaire, Herwitz argues that modern art is a response to modernity's conditions of contingency and transience, and shows how the sculpture variously parodies modern life, or feels its pressures and vibrates with its anxieties. Itself both art and not-art, the sculpture defies the easy opposition of traditional and modern, to do some of the work needed, in Herwitz's shockingly memorable phrase used in relation to Mexican modern art but immediately recognisable in a South African context, in 'a society carrying its past like the blade of a knife, and its future like a violently held dream'. In this formulation, Herwitz names the challenge of post-colonial curature that is threaded through the volume. Unlike the work of Diego Rivera, Venda and Tsonga

cultural values of the Victorian era and the legacy concepts of academic disciplines with roots in that period. These include, among other things, the concepts of tribe and tradition, typologies and taxonomies of various kinds, as well as sharply delineated

3. See for example F. Langerman, "The exploded book: a disarticulation of visual knowledge systems within sites of natural history display", Phd thesis, University of Cape Town, 2013.

sculpture does not involve absorption of source modernisms or enter the global circuitry of biennales and international auctions. Instead, Herwitz argues, it is readily appropriated as heritage in a country hungry for a proud past. Suggesting that the concepts of modern or traditional are inadequate alternatives in the face of what the sculpture is and does, Herwitz begins to build his case for a rejection of the Eurocentric story of the diffusion of modernism, and by implication modernity, in favour of a multiplicity of overlapping stories of art and modernism, with strands of similarity and difference, 'criss-crossing to form a web of rope'. The plural stories of modernity are marked by, among other things 'profound differences of history, tradition, culture, state politics and so on'. In this way, the expository offering from a philosopher, by way of Tsonga and Venda sculptural arts, sets out the terms for exploring South Africa's alternative modernity, its particular entanglements of multiple inheritances.

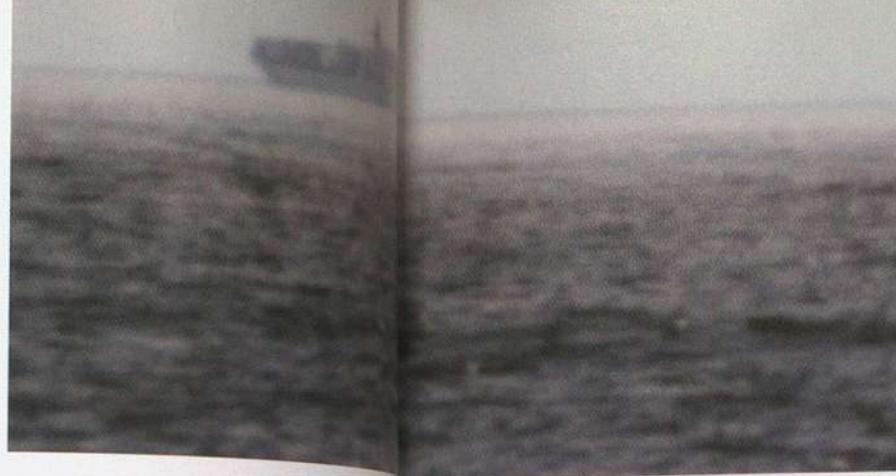
Some of the papers are interested in how materials enter the archive, others give attention to what has been excluded from the archive, and still others, like Herwitz's, deal with indeterminate cases, while Carine Zaayman's contribution is concerned with what is forever outside archive. Her essay explores the problem of the an-archive, the presence of absence in the archive, through reference to the historical figure of the Van Riebeeck-era Khoi woman Krotoa. Zaayman reprises the little that is known archivally about Krotoa and how that has been used and extrapolated in historiography, fiction-writing, art-making and so on, as the figure of Krotoa is made to be more than the archive alludes to, and to stand in for others who are not in the archive at all. The images that accompany this essay are Zaayman's own, presented less as the work of an artist-photographer, than as a documentary photographer committed to record what is not there. Photographed from the embodied position of where Krotoa might have stood, or informed by what Zaayman conceptualises as remnants – themselves not fragments of evidence of what was, but leftovers, which speak to what is lost – and then worked over, the images attempt to figure the absence in the archive. For Zaayman, the notion of archival fragments that



enable reconstruction of the past leads to a conception of the past that is somehow separate from the present. Following Giorgio Agamben, her proposal is that the remnant brings the past into the present in a way that allows us to conceive of the presentness of the past and alerts us to its loss. 'Efforts to find what is present do not inform us about what is absent, yet it is necessary to consider what is absent in order to place that which is present.' Zaayman's own photographs propose the existence of – and scope out something of the extent of – that which is archive's negative, an-archive, an area distinct from either that which is remembered or that which is forgotten (cf. Derrida 1995).

In a resonant manner, this volume's own visual dispensation, developed by the editors in response to the various concerns of the contributors, and fashioned by Skotnes, is an extended cogitation across the volume referencing not only what is not in the archive but also what is not normally imaged or visible: from the diorama casts under the sheets to the many labels that are typically treated not as archival material in their own right, but as neutral and timeless meta-data. The volume's visual strategy highlights the way in which not only the accidental photographs which Buthelezi comes to appreciate as mnemonics, but most archival items, are stand-ins of one sort or another for what is not in the archive, whether synecdochal, metonymic, defences against amnesia, memory compressions, cues or decoys. The form of the curation involved is critical in revealing, hiding or interpreting their mnemonic character, and drawing attention to some of the leftovers of the processes that bring archives into being in the first place.

Zaayman makes the point that the various works that have imagined Krotoa beyond the available archival material have become 'an extension of the archive' – archival paratexts perhaps – rendering a distinction between the actual archive and the fictions



that imagine her life impossible. 'It is my contention', she continues, 'that these subsequent interventions have become archival traces of the changing social, political, public, aesthetic and academic meanings and interpretations of Krotoa.' These, she notes, change

the archival material itself, her observations lending weight to Skotnes's argument, first developed in *Claim to the Country* (2007, 43), that work deriving from an archive becomes incorporated into what an archive is and reorders its boundaries.

Points about remembering loss, archival paratexts, extensions of the archive through latter-day engagements of its holdings, and extra-archival testation are pursued in various ways in the final three chapters of the volume.

In her essay on the artworks depicting the corpse of the slain anti-apartheid activist Steve Biko, Kylie Thomas also makes use of Agamben's concept of remnants. These artworks, she argues, keep the corpse unburied, exceeding both the narrative of the apartheid state and the post-apartheid reconciliation and healing narrative. The excess prevents them from being consigned to archive. These then are the remains that are the central concern of her paper – 'what remains after we imagine ourselves to have dealt with the trauma of the past in ways that enable us to move on'. The nub of her argument is that some elements of the past are always with us, refuse assimilation, and cannot be done with and relegated to the past. Thomas's contribution offers a reading of Derrida that treats archive as a site of repression, a place of consignment that enables forgetting, a point that chimes with Shepherd and Haber's concerns about the archive placing the past firmly in the past. The paper makes a strong argument about Biko's death refusing entombment, and about loss as demanding ongoing attention. The question persists, however, as to whether the contents of archive are indeed buried. When things enter the archive, do they depart public life, or do they enter a state of latent publicness,





their archival positioning signalling their availability for repeated consultation and mobilisation? This is the implication of the paper that follows.

The film scholar Litheko Modisane addresses directly the issues of the publicness of archive that are threaded throughout the volume. Elsewhere Hamilton (2011a) has written about the life of the archive and processes of publicity in which apparently cloistered archives are involved. Modisane, in turn, brings this to bear on his ideas about the public life of films – by which he means ‘the totality of the events and engagements in the circulation of films across time and space’, including all their many paratexts – to include their archival phases. The first phase in the public life of a film, he argues, is the time of its inception and its life on circuit, as well as its circulation in a variety of portable formats; it is a time when, as he puts it, a great deal of publicness unfolds around a film. The second phase is archival, when the films are shelved and conserved, seemingly out of public life.

Modisane argues that the archival phase of film lends it an extra-institutional public life with important cultural and political priorities. He shows, for example, how *Come Back, Africa* – originally made in 1956, banned in South Africa and then excavated out of the archive and shown in this country in 1988 – is an instance of archival material used to mount a challenge in the late-apartheid public sphere. This was achieved through the way in which the retrieved film, by bearing witness to the past, attested visually to ‘the historically outlawed public sphere of black urban modernity and intellectual life’ of the 1950s. It served as a catalyst for discussion of latter-day censorship and was deployed to constitute a worker public in the late 1980s, playing a useful role in figuring the possibility of a convergence of class consciousness with revolutionary cultural progressiveness, across racial lines. Modisane shows how the retrieved film challenged apartheid’s official archive, which excluded evidence of anti-apartheid public spheres, thereby acting as a resource for the imagination of a post-repressive national cinema. The essay invites recognition of the role of what we have termed ‘curature’ in the publicness of films,

embracing their launch, routes of circulation, modes of archiving and re-presentation in public as archival items in festivals, books and through scholarly canonisation.

In the final essay of the volume, Alexandra Dodd looks at how a play restaged almost fifty years after its original production exorcises ‘old damage inflicted in one moment in time and lodged in the collective psyche’. Dodd focuses on Mwenya Kabwe’s 2010 production in Cape Town of Adrienne Kennedy’s play *Funnyhouse of a Negro* (first produced in New York in 1964, resuscitated and relocated into post-apartheid South Africa). Reading it as an imaginative response to the ‘hovering imperial legacy of Queen Victoria in post-independence Africa’, she explores the opportunities that it offers for conceptual liberation. Dodd tackles head-on the multiple affective powers of the archive in tethering modern subjectivities to the past, as it is recorded and refracted through the aesthetic repetition of iconographic forms. Literature and art were central to the construction and reification of race theories during the nineteenth century, manufacturing imaginative associations that contributed to the racialisation of self-consciousness. Conversely, Dodd argues, it is through the radical provocations and dissociations of contemporary art practice in post-colonial contexts that reference archive, that the internalised imprint of this toxic legacy is being undone. Drawing on the embodied poetics of Frantz Fanon, Dodd’s analysis and, indeed, Kabwe’s 2010 production ponder multiple



forms of racial tethering and the paralysing psychic grip of 'the tortured European-African binary'.

Making the point that what we live with in the present is an entangled inheritance, the essay recognises that legacies do not divide in clean ways along racial lines. The spectre of Queen Victoria hovers not only in the psyche of the descendants of English settlers, while the legacies of apartheid burden not only the descendants of the victims of discrimination. Key to the production and reception of artworks that rethink and undo aesthetic codes of racial and gender binarism, which have been besieging the popular psyche since the not-so-long-gone days of Empire, are strategies of embodiment. In a manner that resonates with Zaayman's photographic practice, Dodd's approach situates the body as a site of cognition and the means through which not only do we apprehend the world in the present, but the past is objectively and subjectively enshrined: 'It is by means of the ossified archive of that same sensory body that the damage of the past can be released and knowledge/history re-imagined.' This is an opportunity, she concludes, 'for conceptual liberation, a chance to imagine ourselves as part of the more expansive flows and hybrid encounters of transnational history'.

In all these many ways the essays in the volume venture out beyond existing conversations about curation concerned with repatriation, rightful ownership and who represents whom, not by letting go of these questions but by seeking to extend and complicate them. The contributions invite us not simply to disavow troubled archival inheritances but to deepen the discussion about what they close off and what they offer, what is entailed in their complex legacy, and how that legacy is being, and might be, navigated. Trawling between things and curatorial activities in the past and things and curatorial activities in the present, the volume offers perspectives on the role of archive in emerging cultural practices, embedded in post-colonial, post-apartheid social and political processes. Sensitive to the role of curation in the remaking of archives, it explores the ethical challenges of archive, encouraging us to consider afresh not only its presences,

absences and exclusions, but also tenacious ideas about insiders and outsiders in relation to archives.

As mentioned elsewhere (Skotnes 2007, 41–2), the archive is often a chaotic place, provenance being a minimal ordering system. This chaos is reflected in the partial nature of archives, their fragmentation or dispersion; in unaccessioned documents or the traces and leftovers of organising systems; of torn and missing pages and fragile bindings. The impulse to curate the archive is not only to care for, reorganise or politicise, but to bring order to this chaos. The volume gives expression to the ataxy and draws attention to the order, organisation and structure we make outside the archive so that we might forget how compelling the uncontained and entropic space is within it. Curation highlights the artifice – and so potentially also the value – of that chaos, as well as the paradoxically tight limits and endless possibilities of archives.