



ANARCHIVE (PICTURING ABSENCE)

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Within the arena of critical investigations of archive, much work has been done to address the fact that a multitude of omissions necessarily shadow any archive. Most of this work has, however, focused on what has been left out of the archive, lost in the course of time or ignored as an effect of extant power structures at the time in which an archive is established. In this chapter, I want to approach the notion of what is missing from the archive differently. I do not attempt a reconstruction, nor do I aim to present a fuller picture of history. Instead, I bring absence itself squarely into focus. I will be entering into a terrain that deals directly with that which is outside the archive, and suggest that this area might usefully be thought of as the 'anarchive'.¹

1. In his article 'An Archival Impulse' (2004), Hal Foster discusses the way in which artists have referenced the archive in their production and makes reference to the notion of an 'anarchival impulse' (Foster 2004, 5). My use of the term 'anarchive' had an independent genesis, as it emerged prior to my encounter with his text. Although this presents a striking example of coincidental nomenclature, I do not draw on Foster in my construction of the term. Foster does not expand further on the notion of anarchive, and does not offer a definition as such. Instead, he loosely connects the term to 'obscure origins', or the marginal archival material that seems to be favoured by artists when choosing source material. His notion is distinct from the one outlined and mobilised in my argument here, in that I employ the term to speak about not only that which has been left out or marginalised in the formation of an archive, but more specifically that which escapes archives as such. This includes the interior life of historical subjects and the desire to think about the 'presentness' of the past.

Krotoa

The problem of absence exists in a revealing way when one considers the archive of the Van Riebeeck-era Khoi woman named Krotoa. Though a marginal figure in the archives, Krotoa is nonetheless present, virtually anomalously, as a colonial subject – a Khoi woman – and is consequently regarded as possessing a voice of some kind. Due to her (albeit liminal) presence, she has come to signify the loss of others, women and Khoikhoi especially, who did not make it into the archives. Because of her presence, pressure is exerted on what little we know of Krotoa to signal the loss of history of these other unrepresented colonial subjects, to represent them.

'Eva' was the name that the first governor of the Cape, Jan van Riebeeck, gave Krotoa, and by which she was known to the Dutch community populating the VOC refreshment

