

The Archival Turn: Rereading the Guy Butler Collection in the
National English Literary Museum

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Abstract

This thesis takes as its theoretical springboard the ‘archival turn’ in South African historical studies, a moment that arguably reached its culmination in 2002 with the publication of *Refiguring the Archive*. The archival turn posits that, rather than using it as an unproblematic source of original material, scholars might begin to investigate the archive itself, including its processes of construction and organisation. This theoretical model also proposes that the archive might reflect the cultural beliefs and epistemologies common to the era in which it was set up. It seems that the time is ripe for a reconsideration of the insights gleaned from this academic moment in South Africa, given the recent contestation over the meanings of history and our cultural markers of heritage in the public domain, largely grouped under the term ‘Fallism.’

As such, a fresh look at South African museums, which in this country are often rooted in colonial practices of knowledge production, seems apt. This work uses the case of Guy Butler, founder of many South African English cultural institutes and arts bodies, as a conduit and lens for thinking through these problematics. One of Butler’s institutional ‘offspring,’ born from his overarching work on behalf of the English cultural and literary cause in South Africa in the twentieth century, is the National English Literary Museum (NELM). Investigating the founding context and practices of NELM is a useful way of exploring the impact of Butler’s life’s work on literary heritage in South Africa. Issues such as the way in which NELM and Grahamstown continue to signify as loci of thought and practice in the contemporary South African literary landscape will be addressed.

The study draws extensively on the Butler collection at NELM, and spends much time investigating Butler’s positioning in a South African literary historical context in the twentieth century, to better understand the forces at work during the time of NELM’s coming-into-being. Derrida’s seminal work on the function of archives, in *Archive Fever*, is mined for a theoretical basis for the study, as is Deleuze and Guattari’s thought on how bodies (taking the NELM institution here to represent a ‘body’) form, change, and interact, explicated in the work *A Thousand Plateaus*. The study offers some insights into how the NELM archive was formed, and which forces continue to shape its work in the South African spheres of English literature and heritage.

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1. A Beginning: Theoretical and Practical Approaches to the Butler Archive at NELM

A study in doubles

Guy Butler's influence on South African literary history has already been documented by South African academics. Five doctorates¹ exist on the subject, and most recently, Chris Thurman has published a volume reiterating Butler's substantial contribution to South African cultural, intellectual and literary spheres. His various "personae," as Thurman puts it in his 2010 publication, include poet, professor, playwright, activist and "cultural politician" (1).² He is largely responsible for the introduction of South African literature into secondary and tertiary syllabuses; he edited early South African poetry anthologies, produced his own poetry and plays, and took an active part in the establishment of a theatre at Rhodes University. Such a brief list of achievements cannot hope to cover all of his professional and personal exploits. The influence of his army career during World War II on his poetry and religious faith, his establishment of the Grahamstown 1820 Settlers Monument, and his part in generating an annual National Arts Festival in South Africa, for example, are each worthy subjects for research on their own.

Importantly for the focus of this thesis, he spearheaded the creation of a National English Literary Museum in Grahamstown, and so was actively involved in the process of archiving for posterity both his own work and the work of his contemporaries. While Butler's archived collection at NELM has been mined by academics for source material in generating a literary history of Butler's life, the collection has not been much studied as a subject in itself. This study will take as its focus the specific archival interactions that can be mapped between the Butler collection and NELM as a contemporary institution. It is hoped that Butler's own writings, both on the founding of NELM and in his personal capacity as an amateur archivist, will speak to the 'work' enacted by the Butler archive at NELM in the

¹ Anthony Akal, Jared Banks, Dawid Malan, Christopher Thurman, and Hennie van der Mescht have written doctorates focussing on Guy Butler, all of which are housed in NELM's thesis collection. Full references are reproduced in the bibliography.

² Note that all citations of Thurman's work throughout this study refer to his 2010 publication, rather than his unpublished doctoral thesis.

contemporary moment. This places the investigation within the broad context of archival studies in South Africa.

Butler's legacy is difficult to describe briefly because of his overlapping careers – he edited the poetry of others while simultaneously writing his own, and expanded on existing Shakespeare scholarship in literature departments at the same time as directing the plays in drama departments. He taught European philosophies, using European methods of pedagogy, while arguing vehemently for the inclusion of a literature specific to South Africa on South African syllabuses. The sheer scale and dynamism of Butler's varied careers – the very quality that makes his archive such a rich source of investigation – makes him a difficult man to circumscribe in the collected documents pertaining to his life. In the final book of his autobiographical trilogy, Butler acknowledges the difficulty, even for him, of grasping a unified sense of self while so variously employed: “One ceases to be oneself, becoming possessed by one's staff and students” (*Local Habitation* 166). The autobiographical project becomes complicated by such a life, and requires methodological intervention. Butler finds it necessary to brief his readers accordingly in the preface to *A Local Habitation* (1991): “I have tried to present my life by teasing it out into the main strands from which it seems to have been woven, so that the reader will not be confused by the complex entanglement of interests” (x).

The resultant impressions left by Butler on the South African literary canon are thus widely divergent, and frustratingly interwoven. His followers are nagged by knowledge of his neo-colonial sensibilities, while his critics must acknowledge his tangible literary and cultural achievements. Even Mike Kirkwood, one of Butler's most outspoken detractors, who goes on to take issue with Butler's approach to South African literature in his watershed paper delivered at the Poetry '74 conference, recognises that “in Professor Butler, South African English poetry found its editor” (102). The blurb on the back cover of Chris Thurman's comprehensive 2010 publication summarises neatly the tensions inherent in a reappraisal of Butler as “a challenge: to acknowledge frankly those elements in his work that distance him from us, without losing sight of the significance it holds.”

Why attempt a reappraisal? Recent developments in South African archival studies, which now show the archive to be as much a subject worthy of study as a primary source to be drawn upon, mean that Butler's papers, the collection that lies at the chronological and ideological core of NELM, can now be viewed as enacting ‘work’ in relation to South

African literary historiography. A study that takes into account the conflicts both in the life of Butler and in the contemporary notion of archive itself might bring to light new ways of reading the Butler archive, and new ways of calibrating the relationship between this archive and South African literary historiography. If the archive can no longer be taken as the unproblematic ‘source’ upon which historical enquiry rests, then the relationship between historian and archivist³ becomes mutually affective rather than unidirectional. Simultaneously, *because* the content of the Butler archive is so complex and can be read and used in multiple ways, it proves particularly useful in developing the concept of archive in contemporary South Africa. Thus, Butler provides both content (in his personal literary works) and structure (in his institutional roles) for the archive of South African literature as it exists today, and this self-reflexive ‘doubleness’ – meaning Butler’s simultaneous roles as archived subject and archivist – is a particularly apt way of approaching the shifting nature of the archive more generally. This particular choice of subject will therefore help both to rearticulate the relationship between the author and his legacy and to highlight the centrality of the archive to South African literary and cultural studies.

The politics of South African archives

The methodologies of South African literary historiography (a scholarship largely initiated by Butler) are rapidly shifting in the contemporary moment. In a review article on two recent additions to the literary historical project – *The Columbia Guide to South African Literature* (2011) and *The Cambridge History of South African Literature* (2012) – Louise Bethlehem notes that, in fact, the project has been bedevilled by “persistent anxiety” since the 1970s, because “South African literary history is often described as absent or deficient, while the critical apparatus defensively locates plenitude elsewhere: in the realm of the *political*” (156). Such an anxiety was sparked, Bethlehem argues, in the mid-1970s by critics such as Kirkwood, who attacked what they perceived as a comfortable neo-colonialist bent in

³ The term “registrar” is used at NELM, and in the museums industry more broadly, over “archivist,” since it refers to the duties of a museum or library professional more specifically – dealing not just with the ordering and preservation of a collection of institutional papers, but also working in tandem with policy creators, curators, and collections managers, and balancing the requirements of public access against preservation considerations. It is a more industry-specific descriptor. In this study, however, I shall be using the term “archivist” as I mean the application in a broader, more philosophical sense of a person who orders and dictates access to a collection, and because the term is more often used in academic criticism relating to theories of archive.

Butler's editorial practices, which were at odds with the materialist politics dominating the academic scene at the time. According to David Attwell, the *Cambridge History* speaks to this epistemological tension, as it was born out of the interregnum years in South Africa, when "South African literary criticism began to offer responses that were shaped by taut negotiation with the historical materialist revisionism of radical South African historiography more generally" (qtd. in Bethlehem 157). This study situates itself within the context of current South African literary historiography. How does one read Butler's critical legacy in an academic climate that has shifted so significantly from the conditions which informed the production of Butler's papers?

One pervasive reading of the Butler legacy is shaped by Kirkwood's critique of Butler's literary-philosophical methodology, first levelled at Butler in the waning years of his literary career. Kirkwood posits that Butler adheres to Western philosophical paradigms even while taking South African literature for his content. Such an approach does not allow, he says, for the specificity of a South African (specifically political) context. Kirkwood's radical materialist politics dictated the meanings that he drew from Butler's poetry, in line with the South African literary scene of the 1970s that was prioritising a politics of apartheid resistance over stylistic concerns. Such an observation bears equal significance for approaches to the archive: the reader's historical location has ramifications for the meanings drawn from these historical remnants for the present. Kirkwood called for an end to the practice of 'Butlerism' within Butler's lifetime. However, even beyond resisting 'Butlerism,' settling on a methodology for uncovering and assembling Butler's literary legacy from a contemporary position is a vexed endeavour. At the end of her article, "Achieved Professionalism," Bethlehem draws on Adam Sitze to articulate the problems with the methodologies employed by contemporary South African literary historians:

Even though many South African scholars would seem to have successfully posed the question of what it means to create discontinuities with apartheid within the domain of politics (with the introduction of 'one person, one vote') and law (with the innovations of the 1996 Constitution), few have asked what it would mean to create similar discontinuities in the domain of historiography. (Sitze qtd. in Bethlehem 169)

In other words, while the ramifications of our legal and political transformations have been examined, our historiographical epistemologies have not received the same level of critical

attention (Bethlehem 169). This is a contentious opinion; whether or not South African historiography may be considered ‘transformed’ deserves its own critical enquiry, and is not within the scope of this study. However, the fact remains that Kirkwood’s critique of Butler’s editorial practices, and Bethlehem’s insistence that the ‘transformative rupture’ in South African historiography be given attention, bear this in common: both work to destabilise the discursive structures that regulate our terms of access to the past.

Premesh Lalu and the limits of the post-apartheid archive

Premesh Lalu points out that the transformation of a colonial and apartheid historiography must take place at the interface of archive and historian, since what we can know and say of South Africa’s colonial and apartheid history is regulated by our access to the archives. At stake are the epistemological concerns that underpin a researcher’s experience of archival source material. Lalu works not to conflate the historiographical practices of colonial and apartheid South Africa, but to ““explore their shared expressions in determining the conditions of production of subalterneity”” (qtd. in Bethlehem 169).

The historical and historiographical practices of coloniality might be traced back to the Enlightenment, with Carl Linnaeus’ system of taxonomy in the field of natural history becoming hugely influential as an organising system of thought. This epistemological development could be considered as having reached its apex in the nineteenth century, which was also the century that saw the heyday of colonial regimes globally. Mary Louise Pratt makes the point that Linnaeus’ system of approaching natural history came to be coded into other realms of life: “[n]atural history asserted an urban, lettered, male authority over the whole of the planet; it elaborated a rationalizing, extractive, dissociative understanding which overlaid functional, experiential relations among people, plants and animals” (37). Out of this perspective on the natural world grew a historical practice to match, which could similarly classify dates, events, causes, effects, and civilisations into a taxonomy of thought. The historical production of the colonial era is characterised by a discursive practice that purports to expose absolute scientific truths about the nature of the world. Historical writing practices of the period are dominated by linear narratives, chronological timelines, and teleological development.

If colonial knowledge production relied on a genealogy of Enlightenment thought that preceded it, apartheid thinking similarly relied on the colonial thought systems that were under threat in the twentieth century. It is a colonial epistemology that allows for the discursive subjugation of South Africa's indigenous populations using a language of neutrality and benevolence. Specific to South Africa's apartheid historical production, perhaps, is a kind of reactive mania catalysed by the threat to the nation state model that characterised the twentieth century, sparked in part by the crumbling of global colonial systems. Thus, Verne Harris specifies apartheid memory institutions as being dominated by "obsessive guarding, patrolling and manipulating" (67) of the subaltern historical narratives.

As Lalu uses the term, 'subalterneity' refers to the condition of being outside of hegemonic power structures, and in postcolonial theory, the term has come to stand for the marginalised or oppressed. Interestingly, in its original conception, the 'subaltern' is a military term referring to an officer below the rank of Captain, from the Latin "below" (sub-) and "every other" (alternus). This is worth pointing out only to show that the term is originally distinctly governmental, explaining its usefulness as a rallying concept for those outside of the governing power structures they seek to resist. It refers both to being outside (other) and disenfranchised (below). In archival terms, Lalu's comment about subalterneity shows the possibility of generating a South African historiography for the contemporary moment. Such a historiography needs to be cognisant of the structures that dictated which stories were worthy of preservation and which disposable in the past, and "is dependent on [its] ability to step out of the shadows of preceding conceptions of the archive and the governmentality forms [they] upheld" ("The Virtual Stampede" 29).

Local historiography *has* begun to recognise the problems inherent in using a colonially generated archive as source for contemporary, politically altered, histories. Common in more recent historiographical practice is a measure of self-reflexivity that renders historians visible and exposes the limited documentary sources from which they infer the meanings of past events. Lalu shows that this self-reflexivity is often expressed in terms of uncertainty. He draws on the many narrations of amaXhosa King Hintsa kaKhawuta's death in 1835 to make the point that in "alternative accounts of the South African past, [the narrative] is frequently, and perhaps strategically, deferred to a third-person narrator or represented in the idiom of doubt" ("The Grammar of Domination" 45–6). One historian "deflects all responsibility for the story by introducing the sequence of events with the phrase:

‘it is said’” (46). Lalu takes issue with such an approach, arguing that simply admitting the epistemological bias of the sources upon which historiography rests does not go far enough:

Evidence, whether in the form of the colonial archive or archive of opposition, does not necessarily provide a window to some prior reality nor should it only be evaluated in terms of the categories of ‘objectivity’ and ‘bias.’ Rather, I suggest that by apprehending the procedures through which evidence is produced and the rules that inaugurate particular ways of knowing we may encounter an altogether different perspective on domination. (47–8)

Lalu infers that the digitisation process being tackled by most international and local archival bodies (including NELM) might form the site at which a more profound historiographical transformation could take place. Instead of viewing the digitisation of the archive as solving existing storage problems, Lalu expresses the need for “a different intellectual input that may offer the potential to extend the ongoing debate about the archive and its place in society” (“The Virtual Stampede” 30). One such adjustment, given a digital platform, might include a recalibration of collection policies, away from narratives detailing the liberation struggle and towards more personal and private records of not only how the struggle was won, but the continuing effects thereof on the lives of those living in marginalised spaces in South Africa. A digital platform might offer a democratising move away from the institutional and textual-documentary bias of existing archives. Such a move was initiated as early as the 1980s by the History Workshop, a body which, according to Carolyn Hamilton, worked at

founding a new historiography (note the singular form of the word there) and was noted for its highly active, or let us say the activist quality of the associated popularization and outreach effort. History Workshop focused on the histories and experiences of marginalised communities, inaugurated the field of oral history, and sought to reach marginalised communities through audio-visual products, popular texts, educational materials and so on.

(“Workshop in Review” 25)

Clearly, however, the transformation has been staggered. NELM is debating, at present, how best to store and determine access to what is known as its ‘born-digital’ archive – meaning documents that are donated to the Museum in a digital format. It is understood that significant grappling with museum policy is required in order to keep up with such developments, which would offer space to take on lessons from bodies such as the History Workshop, but material

pressures such as lack of staff and funds mean that energies are directed first and foremost to the preservation and accession of existing hard-copy artefacts more in danger of deteriorating without immediate attention.

Lalu laments that policy overhauls are not the focus of the development of contemporary archival bodies, where digitisation processes are conceived at an institutional level rather than as part of academic debate, with academics enlisted at a secondary stage of planning to do the “spade-work” on an already conceptually prescribed project (“The Virtual Stampede” 35). Using an archival project initiated by Digital Imaging South Africa as a case study, Lalu claims that “in all the deliberations, legal and otherwise, the question of the relation of the proposed digital archive to the demand for expanding what can be said about the history of liberation struggles has been completely ignored” (30).⁴

Another limitation that Lalu believes the South African archive to be battling is that the language with which we talk about archives originates with the end of the Cold War. Explaining that the discursive formation of archives is moulded by a global, late-capitalist political economy, he says,

it is interesting that the matter of digitization should be undertaken without considering how the end of the Cold War entrenched views about capitalism that, in its more recent manifestations, signalled an idea of *exchange* as a universal language. Alongside this, a normative discourse has emerged that is premised on a hegemonic world order constructed on the basis of consumption (in archival terms, access), not production. (34)

In addition to this late-capitalist discursive frame, we must take into account the archive’s history in the service of colonial epistemologies of positivism and hierarchy, with archives conceived in terms of addition, subtraction and teleological development. In a fast digitising world, however, the “conceptualisation of the archive is now increasingly up for grabs, and digitising initiatives are seemingly intensifying the contests over the redefinition of the

⁴ It must be noted that, in some spheres at least, new archival initiatives are being born by the day, delinked from both heritage institutions and academia in its traditionalist sense. An example is the “Word N Sound” initiative – an online platform collecting together user-generated videos of spoken-word poetry recitals – which is fundamentally changing the face of performance poetry, not only in how it is stored (or the very fact of its storage, which is in itself a new development for the genre), but in how new forms of the genre are created and disseminated. It is working to democratise poetry, short-circuiting the usually lengthy feedback loop between archive and art.

archive” (37).⁵ In light of both NELM’s current digitisation initiative and Lalu’s call for the transformation of South African historiography to be located at the site of the digitisation process, the project of rethinking the role of and meanings to be inferred from a literary archive in South Africa in this moment seems apt.

The performative archive

Lalu’s insistence that the archive no longer be considered in terms of addition, subtraction and development, but that it open itself to a fundamental conceptual recalibration, intersects well with Yvette Hutchison’s theorisation of the archive as essentially performative and dynamic. That Hutchison uses South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) as a case study is significant, since the TRC is one of the most widely critiqued public enactments of archiving that South Africa has experienced in recent history. The TRC as a subject demonstrates beautifully the process of transforming living memory into documentary record, in turn exposing the gaps, violences, and epistemological shifts that accompany any such endeavour. Hutchison argues that while the TRC was billed as a “fact finding” exercise, in reality “the TRC was actively shaping the material at every stage” (26). She outlines very clearly how the Commission is comparable to the workings of a play, showing evidence of “scripting” (26), various “backstage” (27) preparatory aspects, and the “[o]n-stage” (28) relationships that developed between “performers and the audience” (29). In this analogy, the commissioners are also, of course, archivists, whose own epistemological standpoints affect their shaping and interpretation of the material.

Hutchison concludes the analogy with the observation that, “although translation was key to the hearings, and the transcriptions of them formed the basis for the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa Report* (1998), these factors were not acknowledged in the process. Yet each of these individuals and their own memories of life during the apartheid years shaped these narratives for South Africa and the world” (31). Herein lies the importance of this work: Hutchison demonstrates that the archive is not only performative but *transformative*, seen palpably in the transcriptions and translations that make up the TRC final *Report*. Further, a large body of scholarship has pointed out the numerous

⁵ Word N Sound, for example, encourages production as much as access. The hub is intended not only to preserve spoken-word poetry, but as a crucible, or catalyst, for the production of new work.

errors, omissions, and misrepresentations that crept in during this transformation of living memory into archive.

This description of the South African archive's dynamism is central to understanding the ways in which Butler's archive continues to work, both in the context of NELM and in the South African literary canon. We need to recalibrate not just what is considered worthy of archiving, but what we mean by the term 'archive,' and how we go about engaging in the archival project in a transforming South Africa. In other words, the transformative effect is two-pronged: Hutchison delineates how the archive performs and transforms its content, while Bethlehem calls for an epistemological transformation in terms of the way we think about, and use, archives in contemporary South African historiography.

Hutchison also writes usefully of the continuing performativity of South African historical institutions, in that they act as archivers and enforcers of their connected ideologies. She takes the Voortrekker Monument as her example. The instantiation of Afrikaner nationalism became fully realised in the archival nature of the new Voortrekker Monument in 1948, writes Hutchison, so that "the symbolic historic narrative of the nation is literally concretised in granite" (114). Interestingly, Hutchison makes the point that the celebrations that used to be held annually on what was then known as the Day of the Vow are mirrored in some ways by the historic narrative presented by the transitional and post-transitional ANC.⁶ In particular, the cultural performances leading up to the inauguration of the monument highlighted key moments in Afrikaner history. Each day of the festival leading up to the inauguration celebrated pivotal moments in the Afrikaner nation's development through historical presentations, beginning with "Retief's journey to Dingaan," and moving through "The 1880's," "The rough period 1901," "Union, 1910," and "The heroes, 1949" (Hutchison 113). The performances "presented a clear linear narrative of what was to become the official version of South African history in a way not dissimilar to the way that the key historic moments were identified by the TRC posters, which also identified key moments in South Africa's post-apartheid history" (114). Thus, as pointed out by Bethlehem in her review

⁶ The phrase 'transitional' refers to the period in South African history immediately following the unbanning of the ANC (1990) and the signing of the National Peace Accord (1991), which enabled negotiations towards a democratic South Africa to begin. 'Post-transitional' refers to the contemporary period, beginning around 2000, when the euphoria of the 'rainbow nation' period, experienced in the early years of democratic ANC governance, began to ebb.

article, while the content of our archived and celebrated national history has broadened and changed focus, the historiographical methodologies remain similar.

The point might be made that, although Butler would be concerned by such a notion, he was instantiating a liberal brand of South African culture in his public, institutional roles, using the same methods as the National Party. If the National Party homeland was Pretoria, encapsulated in their Voortrekker Monument, Butler was arguably attempting to establish a rival liberal homeland in the artistic centre of Grahamstown, similarly encapsulated in the Grahamstown 1820 Settlers Monument, home to the National Arts Festival.

Concrete monuments, however, are not immune to shifts in their discursive signifying parameters; Hutchison demonstrates as much by unpacking the coverage of Tokyo Sexwale's visit to the Voortrekker Monument in 1996. She quotes a Coombes article written for the *Sunday Times* in which it is suggested that Sexwale reads the Voortrekker histories presented by the monument "“against the grain”" (Coombes qtd. in Hutchison 121).⁷ Sexwale's public and considered reinterpretation of the monument, for the purposes of propagating a new national narrative of unity, is worth quoting at length:

[Coombes'] article opens with Sexwale commenting on the laager of 64 wagons on the wall surrounding by saying: 'Now I understand the laager mentality, but I am glad there is a gateway, or the whole Afrikaner nation would be trapped inside'. Later, when the assegais on the gate are pointed out to him and are described as symbolising 'the power of Dingane who sought to block the path of civilization', Sexwale again retranslates the image and denies this interpretation, saying 'It was precisely the assegai at its height that turned the tide, Umkonto weSizwe, the Spear of the Nation, opened up the gates of civilization', and he insisted that he be photographed opening these gates. (121)

Later in Coombes' article, Sexwale acknowledges the "resilience of the Afrikaners, and then highlight[s] that their mistake was 'trekking off alone . . . They should have taken all the oppressed with them, then our history would have been different'" (Hutchison 122). Three important points must be acknowledged here: first, the crucial role played by institutions in archiving the cultural narrative of nationhood; second, the malleability of such narratives

⁷ Coombes is likely referencing Ann Stoler's work on colonial historiography, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (2010), in which Stoler unpacks the ways in which postcolonial scholars might read colonial archives both against and along the 'grain' of the collection. This chapter invokes Stoler in the section that follows, "A Return to the Surface."

through the course of history; and third, that the ANC draws on the same technologies of archive and nation-building as did the National Party. Hutchison concludes this section of her argument by drawing attention to “the powerful combination of narrative, visual image and symbolic performance [that are] used to communicate the important ANC narrative of reconciliation, while re-reading the past in terms of current cultural and political hegemonies” (122).

A final observation by Hutchison is of use here. She shows that the narratives engendered by institutions of memory such as the Voortrekker Monument are not limited to politics. In 2005, when coloured *Egoli* actress Michelle Pienaar was photographed for ATKV magazine *Taalgenoot* lying on the monument’s cenotaph, outrage was expressed by some conservative Afrikaner quarters. What is interesting is that ATKV’s managing director apologised, stating that the young team had “used the cenotaph as a background for the photograph ‘without being aware of the symbolic values that some people attach to it’ [. . .]; which suggests that while the Monument remains ideologically significant, for many its meaning is unclear, or has changed” (Hutchison 124). Such a comment might be fruitfully applied to both Butler’s literary legacy (evidenced in Thurman’s concerns, which open his text), and also to the changing function and perception of the institutions to which Butler is linked, primarily the Standard Bank National Arts Festival, the Grahamstown 1820 Settlers Monument, and significantly, NELM.

A return to the surface

Sarah Nuttall’s article “Wound, Surface, Skin” intersects with these thoughts about the ongoing cultural meanings of ideologically significant institutions such as the Voortrekker Monument. In the article, she thinks not only about buried or suppressed South African social and personal memories, but also about what is signified by the contemporary ‘surface’ of the country, which she explains in relation to historical traumas (‘wounds’) as “a skin surface which artists are exploring in the multiple senses of a cover, a form of cladding, and as a membrane of feeling” (418). Nuttall unpacks the impact of a painting by Yuill Damaso, a take on Rembrandt’s *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr Tulp* that presents Mandela’s body as undergoing an autopsy at the hands of Nkosi Johnson, while Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu, FW de Klerk, Jacob Zuma, Cyril Ramaphosa, Trevor Manuel, Thabo Mbeki, and Helen Zille watch

(419). The painting, which depicts the act of autopsy, of cutting open, can be seen to represent a desire to diagnose the ‘cause of death’ of the particular brand of politics that Mandela espoused. The painting speaks of a form of politics that “may live on only in part, and of a version of a nation which many, although by no means all, would want to hold on to” (423).

Such an analysis might be applied verbatim to the controversy over Michelle Pienaar being photographed on the cenotaph of the Voortrekker Monument. In Nuttall’s instance, the body of Mandela is recognised as the ‘archive’ of resistance politics. In Hutchison’s example, such an institution is represented by the architecture of the Voortrekker Monument. In both examples, some viewers register shock and offence; for others, the connected memory (of the ANC struggle and Afrikaner nationalism respectively) no longer registers quite so emotionally. It is the iconography that is important here: the surface image is the point at which meaning is recalled, but also mutated and remade. The analogy might be extended to NELM, and the politics of how Butler’s cultural work continues to signify in Grahamstown today. This thesis mines the contents of Butler’s papers at NELM for diagnostic historical clues on the route travelled to the institution’s present incarnation, and in this way delves beneath the ‘surface’ of NELM’s received public image. However, equally important is how the institution signifies now. That present-moment signification, the work enacted by the NELM “image” in the public mind, acts as the skin surface, or cladding, to which Nuttall is drawing attention. Nuttall applies this concept to literary criticism in a chapter for Andrew van der Vlies’ collection entitled *Print, Text and Book Cultures in South Africa* (2012). She asserts that

there now appears a need to think about the surface as a place from which to read – power, personhood and contemporary culture – actively. The surface, here, becomes less a discrete object that is secondary or derivative of some originary matrix or historical process against which it should be defined than a fundamentally *generative force* capable of producing effects of its own.

(“Rise of the Surface” 409–10)

She invokes Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari’s notion of the rhizome to explain such a phenomenon, stressing that literary meaning need not be conceived along a vertical axis where, if you delve beneath the surface of a text, you will find its meaning ‘beneath’ the rhetorical and metaphoric formulations (the hierarchical ‘tap-root’ of Deleuze and Guattari’s

writings), but rather “through a capillary, rhizomatic logic punctured by ‘lines of flight’” (410).

The ‘surfaced’ methodology is evident in Nuttall’s iconographical interests in “Wound, Surface Skin,” where she reads Damaso’s painting of Mandela’s political autopsy as representative of “an emergent form of image-capitalism” (410). Such a painting deals, shockingly, with the cutting of exposed skin that ought to remain intact and covered. Placed in the context of other such paintings, which draw attention not only to covered historical wounds but with the play of the present in their surface cladding, it becomes clear that these depictions reference “the unfixing potential of the surface effects of a commodity culture, one that has intensified in a city [Johannesburg] studded with texts and images of one kind or another, in the last decade” (427–8). Such a reading might also be applied to Hutchison’s consideration of the iconography of the Voortrekker Monument, particularly given that the public furore over the reimagining of such a space occurred through the vehicle of a photograph of a soap star in a magazine – the interplay of profound historical significance and wounding with ‘surfaced’ popular image commodities proved offensive. Rather more challenging is developing a theoretical reading practice that might be applicable to the archives at NELM, which *does* function as an authoritative institution, like Hutchison’s monument, but *does not* particularly feature as an iconographic image in the national consciousness.

Nuttall also invokes Anne Cheng on the subject of a ‘surfaced’ reading methodology. She quotes Cheng as asserting that “[s]ometimes it is not a question of what the visible hides but how it is that we have failed to see certain things on its surface,” and comments that “Cheng aims to read not so much in terms of a notion of excavation, but of attention” (“Wound, Surface, Skin” 411). In terms of postcolonial studies, this means, says Cheng, “concentrating less on colonial ideology’s repressed content and more on its ‘expressiveness’” (qtd. in Nuttall 411). For the NELM archive, it would suggest focussing equally on the visible but often overlooked elements of documentary arrangement, presentation and categorisation, as much as on ‘excavating’ the historical meanings of the archived documents.

Ann Stoler describes this methodology as a shift from “archive-as-source to archive-as-subject” (“Colonial Archives” 87). Her work, *Along the Archival Grain* (2010), presents a useful approach to postcolonial archival research. It has been popular in recent historiographical studies to take a pluralistic approach, examining the archives for traces of

the voices that have been excluded, and in this way subverting colonial archival violences by reading the sources “from the bottom up” (“Colonial Archives” 91). However, Stoler points out that reading archival sources in terms of their received meanings as much as in terms of subversive ones is also fruitful:

If a notion of colonial ethnography starts from the premises that archival production is itself both a process and a powerful technology of rule, then we need not only to brush against the archive’s received categories. We need to read it for its regularities, for its logic of recall, for its densities and distributions, for its consistencies of misinformation, omission and mistake, along the archival grain. (92)

By following Stoler’s advice that we read the collection “for its regularities” (92), and Nuttall’s that we read “both down and across, underneath and surface” (“Rise of the Surface” 410), we can consider the ways in which the Butler archive has been collected according to NELM’s methods of indexing, or assess the level of detail and conceptualisation of the subject terms according to which the collection can be accessed, for example. Engaging with representative ‘scope notes’ as descriptors of sub-collections would point to the narratives in place surrounding the Butler archive, as these indicate the generic and chronological factors influencing the processes of structuring and filing the material. Similarly, the accession numbers for each item generate a different chronology – not of Butler’s life and work, but rather of NELM’s acquisition of its historical remnants. Such a lens allows us to understand the play of past and present forces at the ‘surface’ of the collection that dictate the terms of access for the common reader.

Finding an appropriate epistemology

Deleuze and Guattari’s ‘nomad thought’

Given South Africa’s evidently contested relationship with its historical archive, as unpacked in the preceding section, an alternative paradigm might be proposed for both the reading and use of Butler’s literary and critical archive. In the preface to Deleuze and Guattari’s *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1987), translator Brian Massumi sums up the problem with the history of Western philosophy as follows:

The annals of official philosophy are populated by “bureaucrats of pure reason” who speak in “the shadow of the despot” and are in historical complicity with the State. They invent “a properly spiritual . . . absolute State that . . . effectively functions in the mind.” Theirs is the discourse of sovereign judgement, of stable subjectivity legislated by “good” sense, of rocklike identity, “universal” truth, and (white male) justice.

(Deleuze & Guattari qtd. in Massumi ix)

It is useful to begin an analysis of Deleuze and Guattari with Massumi’s preface, as he provides an accessible entry point to the complex volume. Massumi describes the alignment between traditionalist nineteenth-century philosophy and the state as laid out by Wilhelm von Humboldt, who saw the goal of philosophical study as the “‘spiritual and moral training of the nation,’ to be achieved by ‘deriving everything from an original principle’ (truth), by ‘relating everything to an ideal’ (justice), and by ‘unifying this principle and this ideal in a single Idea’ (the State)” (Von Humboldt qtd. in Massumi xii). This kind of epistemology is not only state-centric, it is also governed by a logic of analogy, since everything in existence can be derived “from an original principle” – in other words, the positivist principle of absolute truth (xii).

This traditional Western representational methodology is potentially problematic, however, because everything is abstracted, says Massumi, to a state of “sameness and constancy” (xi). Such a model does not allow for alterity or singularity, and as philosophers such as Jacques Derrida demonstrate, to represent ‘the other’⁸ according to the example of the self is to commit a kind of ideological violence. Derrida says that this “question of exemplarity [. . .] situates here the place of all the violences” (Derrida and Prenowitz 50). Speaking on the subject of how to excavate history and memory as an act of justice for the people of Israel, Derrida warns against the use of totalising narratives, or what he calls “the One in the figure of totalizing assemblage (‘to an entire people’)” (50). As such, “[t]he gathering into itself of the One is never without violence” (50). Massumi demonstrates how

⁸ To engage with the ‘other’ represents a vacillation between an extension of hospitality, accomplished by inviting the unknown into one’s personal field of identification, and, given that the ultimate act of hospitality would imply a complete surrender of personal identity in order to break down the linguistic barriers of intersubjectivity, a retraction back into the self. This has implications for the writing of history, wherein the ‘other’ is represented by those stories that history fails to accommodate. Accordingly, Mike Marais, a comprehensive theorist of ‘otherness’ in South African literary academia, shows that the writer of fiction is ethically bound by a “sense of responsibility for what is not yet present in history,” and yet, must remain trapped in the knowledge that “s/he can only [follow the invisible] by writing from his or her position within history and in the terms of history” (xv–xiii).

this persistent abstraction is named the “arborescent model” (xii) by Deleuze and Guattari, as it likens differing sensibilities to branches on a tree, all connected by a unifying root. At the risk of labouring the point, the preceding warning demonstrates how important it is to think about received theoretical logics, such as totalising positivist ideas of absolute truth, when investigating a historical archive such as Butler’s, which touches so palpably on South Africa’s relatively recent, troubling histories; histories which are characterised by violent omissions.

Notably, the arborescent model, which proceeds by a logic of analogy, is *as* problematic as representing oneself as fundamentally different, unique, and thus disconnected, and it is important to point out (as stressed by Massumi) that Deleuze and Guattari’s model does not advocate an isolated singularity, but rather a reconfiguration of the movement between points of difference. In a similar vein, Derrida notes the violence inherent in “the very constitution of the *One* and the *Unique*” (Derrida and Prenowitz 50). Thus while Deleuze and Guattari advocate for the apprehension of singularity rather than an arborescent mode of perception, they warn against disconnected singularity. If an arborescent model commits violence by disregarding the singularity of ‘otherness,’ we must remember that Derrida also warns against the “self-affirmation of the unique” (Derrida and Prenowitz 50), which commits the violence of closing out ‘otherness’ entirely.

In response to this violent binarism of closed-off uniqueness and derivative sameness, Massumi offers Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of “nomad thought” (xii), a model that I would posit might be fruitfully applied to archival research. The sense of the model is in the name, because the concept stresses movement. Nomad thought does not allow its constituting elements to be derived back to a unifying root. The model exists exterior to the thinking subject: it does not rely on the self-representational sameness of identity, but rather “rides difference” (xii). This sensibility also exposes the limits of categorical rationalism, because it “replaces the closed equation of representation, $x = x = \text{not } y$ ($I = I = \text{not } \text{you}$) with an open equation: $\dots + y + z + a + \dots$ ” (xiii). This means that “[r]ather than analysing the world into discreet components [. . .] it sums up a set of disparate circumstances in a shattering blow. It synthesizes a multiplicity of elements without effacing their heterogeneity or hindering their potential for future rearranging (to the contrary)” (xiii). Thus nomad thought is dynamic rather than static, existing on a “smooth” (xiv) plane. According to Massumi, “[o]ne can rise up at any point and move to any other” (xiii) plateau of meanings and ideas. This works in

contrast to State space, which is “‘striated’ or gridded [. . .] and limited by the order of that plane [rationalism] to present paths between fixed and identifiable points” (xiii).

Such a ‘smoothness’ might fruitfully be applied to the Butler archive, since, as Hutchison tells us, the archive is similarly dynamic. The archive’s collected components gesture always to those that remain uncollected, to the conscious and unconscious organising logics of archivists themselves, and even to the institutional practices dictating its boundaries. Massumi ends his preface by recalibrating our thinking on the structure of philosophical enquiry: “The question is not: is it true? But: does it work?” (xv). This notion of the ‘work’ of the archive is particularly useful, because it connects with Hutchison’s theorisation of the archive as dynamic, and conceives of the archive as a conceptual body with agency, rather than an inanimate collection of documents. Historians can no longer draw on the primordial ‘truth’ of the archive as a source, but must instead be receptive to the ways in which the archive articulates its systems of production by a colonial epistemology. In the same way, post-structuralist theory identifies the affective quality of linguistic structures, rather than perceiving language to be a passive vehicle of communication, and psychoanalytic theory engages with the ways in which the unconscious orders and influences waking thought. In all three instances (in the archive, language, and the unconscious), a medium that was once considered inactive – a body to be acted upon – is now recognised as having agency of its own. These are the self-reflexive shifts that inform what has come to be known as the ‘archival turn.’ Within this context, this study will aim to unpack the kind of ‘work’ the Butler archive enacts within contemporary South African literary historiography.

The ghosts of the Fathers: Freud, Yerushalmi, Derrida

The link Massumi indicates between Deleuze and Guattari, and a thinker such as Derrida, is not coincidental. The post-structural perspective aligns well with this ‘nomadic’ model. Massumi points out that what Deleuze and Guattari call the ‘arborescent model’ is similarly criticised under a different name by psychoanalysts. They call such thinking ‘phallogocentrism,’ a term referring to the fact that, in a patriarchal world, thought derives from a primarily male logic (Massumi xii). Thus, the philosophy of nomadic thought might be fruitfully linked to psychoanalytic perspectives on the archive. If an archive can be described in terms of the ‘work’ it performs, both imaginatively, as Hutchison shows, and materially, as

can be seen through the lens of Deleuze and Guattari, it might also be described in terms of desire. Derrida identifies the primordial desire that informs the archival impulse as the search for irrecoverable origins. He spends much time in “Archive Fever” (1995) unpacking his critical debt to Yosef Yerushalmi, whose book *Freud’s Moses: Judaism Terminable and Interminable* (1991) records Yerushalmi’s critical debt to Freud, the influence of Freud’s father on Freud, and backwards in a succession of historical spectres to Moses and the Bible.

Derrida explicates the range of impressions that make up an identity to show that archival influence works both retrospectively and prospectively. Thus, Derrida’s view of personal ‘impressions’ signify “the impression *left* by Sigmund Freud, beginning with the impression *left* in him, from his birth and covenant, from his circumcision, through all the manifest or secret history of psychoanalysis, of the institution and of the works, by way of the public and private correspondence” (Derrida and Prenowitz 24). Derrida’s personal markings are imbricated in “the history of this institutional and scientific project called psychoanalysis. Not to mention the history of history, the history of historiography. [. . .] [T]hus one no longer has the right or the means to claim to speak of this without having been marked in advance, in one way or another, by this Freudian impression” (Derrida and Prenowitz 24–5). The referent of ‘this’ is deliberately vague, showing that readers of Derrida’s work, and by inference readers of this thesis, are now ‘marked’ by the Freudian archive – the markings expanding outwards in an ever growing body of influence.

Derrida is most fascinated by the concluding chapter of Yerushalmi’s text, which forms a curious fictional segment in a primarily non-fiction work. The last chapter is ostensibly a ‘monologue with Freud,’ and Yerushalmi poses a series of personal and critical questions to the deceased psychoanalyst that, of course, remains unanswered. The answer to the crucial question of whether, in Freud’s estimation, “psychoanalysis is really a Jewish science” (Yerushalmi qtd. in Derrida and Prenowitz 28) must remain textually unanswered, even though the answer, for Freud and for Yerushalmi, is implied as yes. Derrida cites material from Freud’s letters, which Yerushalmi surely has read, as proof. What is important is not the solidifying of meaning, but rather the rhetorical gesture that keeps open the potential applications of Freud’s legacy. The irony of a chapter that claims to be a monologue *with* Freud indicates as much. An engagement with history, with a spectre, is neither monologue nor dialogue, but an acceptance of historical influence combined with an openness to the potentially different meanings drawn from such pressures in the future. The oscillating

backward/forward, or past/future movement of this idea is neatly summed up by Derrida's use of the 'pluperfect' verb formation in the phrase "having been marked in advance" (Derrida and Prenowitz 24–5). Here, the sense of the utterance travels grammatically backward in the perfect past tense (the action of 'being marked' having taken place further in the past than the 'speaking about' the Freudian archive), but also connotatively forward in the choice of diction, "advance." Such rhetorical movement echoes the nomadic movement described by Deleuze and Guattari.

This epistemological flux exists in tension with the very human desire for closure, or stability – what Freud calls the 'death drive.' It is this epistemological certainty that Yerushalmi works hard to establish as a desire, whilst simultaneously making sure he denies such closure. Derrida explains:

what is important is not so much the content of what Freud would say, Freud, moreover, who has acknowledged it in a way, as the fact that he should say it to *him* ('you'), with his mouth, and henceforth sign it with his name [. . .]. This last engagement ought to be irreversible, by definition. Engaging a dead person, it would no longer be subject to the strategic calculations, to the denials of the living Freud [. . .]. (Derrida and Prenowitz 36)

This desire for finite closure informs the impulse to archive; it is a desire to collect, in documentary form, the 'final word' on a life. Yerushalmi's linguistic gesture (his logically impossible 'monologue *with*') speaks to archival research fundamentally. The desire to contain the meaning of the archived subject exists in permanent tension with the impossibility of such an outcome. What remains unsaid, or else unarchived, permanently threatens to disturb the perceived meanings of those narratives that are collected and accessible.

Stasis, flux, and rock lobsters

The drive to render static that which resists closure – or the *mal d'archive* ("archive fever") described by Derrida – is also considered by Deleuze and Guattari, not from a psychoanalytic perspective of desire, but in terms of the concept's interactive qualities, or how it performs work on, and is worked upon by, adjacent bodies or "assemblage[s]" (40). For clarity, it will be necessary to consider Deleuze and Guattari's definition of an assemblage before exploring how such bodies might interact with and transform one another. Deleuze and Guattari unpack

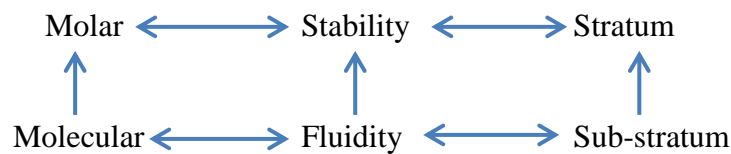
what might be called an ‘order of being’ (or perhaps disorder) in their chapter in *A Thousand Plateaus* titled “A Geology of Morals.” Certainly, the religious and metaphysical resonances of the notion of an ‘order of being’ (although they never describe it as such) are recognised in their assertion that “God is a lobster” (40) – the image of the lobster’s two jointed pincers standing in for a process they call “double articulation” (40). In order to understand such a process, it is necessary to choose a point of departure (*a* beginning, although there is no definitive beginning and end of processes on a nomadic plane of thought). It is thus necessary, before unpacking the process of double articulation, to understand the constitutive elements of bodies, while at the same time exploring some of Deleuze and Guattari’s commonly used terminology.

We shall begin with the infinite, the disordered, the unidentified – what Deleuze and Guattari call the ‘body-without-organs.’ The body-without-organs is not *non-existent* – this is important – rather, it is existent but unordered, unapprehendable, unarticulated. The matter comprising the body-without-organs becomes, by a process partly dominated by chance, partly by statistical selection, what is referred to as molecular and molar matter. While it is tempting to consider the difference between the molar and the molecular to be dictated by the size of the matter – in the sense that, once enough similar molecular matter gathers together it becomes a molar body – in fact what determines the difference is the stability of the resulting form. Molecular matter tends toward flux, in comparison to the relatively more stable molar body. These definitions are also, importantly, always relational, which means that molar bodies are not inherently stable once defined as such, and can be prone to molecular activity in the right circumstances.

Deleuze and Guattari use a geological example to explain the process of molecular and molar assimilation: sandstone is made up, at a basic level, of particles of sediment that have accumulated by chance, but not, as they say, ‘brute’ chance, because certain laws of size and weight dictate their coming to rest in particular positions on a riverbed. In this state, the sandstone-to-be is ‘molecular,’ but over time, as sedimentation occurs and layers form, the particles of riverbed are expressed as sandstone – a more fixed, ‘molar’ body. The significant point here is not the definitional difference between the terms, but their relation. Even the most inflexible, calcified bodies are expressions of a fluid, chance encounter, formed under pressure as a result of containment by certain natural laws. Thus in any expressed body, elements of both fluid movement and rigid fixity are at work. Massumi puts it thus:

the resulting muck is an ‘individual.’ An individual is singular – the element of chance assures that no two mucks are exactly alike – but nonetheless multiple: a muck deposit envelops a multiplicity of grains composed of a multiplicity of atoms, all of which follow multiple paths to their common agglomeration. [. . .] Over time, under pressure, sediment folds and hardens into sedimentary rock. The originally supple individual has been transformed, without ceasing to be itself. The fluctuating muck has rigidified into a stable formation. (48)

The process whereby molar bodies begin to associate according to similarities, and differentiate according to variances, is what Deleuze and Guattari call stratification, and the process by which matter changes its behaviour from molecular to molar is characterised by a move from one stratum to another – a reforming of substance is always informed by the substratum which supports it. Therefore, a binaric ordering of the terms we are using at present might be expressed as follows:



It is important to remember, however, that what is conceived of as molar/stable/stratified in one instance might form the molecular/fluid/sub-stratified conditions of being for a different body. The process whereby the contents of a collective matter form into substance (are “expressed” in their terms) is referred to by Deleuze and Guattari as deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation. This is a useful descriptor, as it refers to the physical application of their theory, which is so easy to think of as metaphysical and abstract. By way of multiple, often chemical and mathematical examples, they show instances of the processes of which they speak in one of their myriad possible physical permutations.

What is hopefully by now evident is that in any body, these de- and reterritorialisations between molecular and molar, stable and fluid, and differently stratified

states are ongoing – they are informed by certain conditions of possibility,⁹ and are themselves the conditions of possibility for new bodies, organisations, beings. This tension, whereby a body is both produced out of certain conditions and produces the conditions of its surroundings, whereby collected matter is both acted upon and active, is what Deleuze and Guattari call a “double articulation” – hence, “God is a lobster – or a double pincer, a double bind. Not only do strata come at least in pairs, but in a different way each stratum is double (it itself has several layers). Each stratum exhibits phenomena constitutive of *double articulation*. Articulate twice, B-A, BA” (40). This shall be the central philosophical exploration of this study – to describe the double articulations of the NELM archive.¹⁰

The notion of double articulation is useful in the sense that all archives are both produced out of material documentary conditions and simultaneously, in a secondary articulation, exert influence back upon the discipline to which they belong (be it fine art, literature, or anthropology). However, the double articulation notion is also useful for the very specific context of NELM. Examples of double articulation abound in the exploration of NELM’s specific origins and context already mentioned in this study: Butler’s ‘doubled’ legacy, as both self-archivist and founding personality of a literary archive into which he was collected, producing the contents and expression for the early conception of NELM; Thurman’s project of finding a new way to read Butler in an academic climate that has shifted so considerably from the context that informed Butler’s writings; Hutchison’s notion that South African archives such as the TRC final *Report* are influenced by their political context, but are also performative and transformative, enacting work both outwardly, on the public, and inwardly, transforming itself and the meaning of its own contents in the process;

⁹ Deleuze’s use of the phrase “conditions of possibility” may be traced back to his engagements with Foucault. While the phrase is also associated with Kant’s theory of a priori knowledge, Deleuze’s use of the idea is more in line with Foucault’s historical and contextual application of “conditions of possibility.” Kant’s theory of a priori knowledge posits that the subject enjoys a pre-existing mode of apprehension of certain, for example geometric, truths. For Kant, such knowledge exists in the realm of the transcendent. One of Deleuze’s primary critiques of Kant is that his philosophy tends to remain transcendental rather than immanent. Thus, for Deleuze, “the aim of philosophy is not to rediscover the eternal or the universal but to find the singular conditions under which something new is produced. In other words, [. . .] philosophy aims not at stating the conditions of knowledge qua representation, but at finding and fostering the conditions of creative production” (Smith and Protevi). Deleuze’s wielding of the idea thus falls more in line with Foucault, who uses it more loosely to signify the historic contextual drivers active in the episteme. Deleuze and Foucault both use the term when referring to the conditions or generative grounds for realities and experiences, rather than apprehension of transcendent truth. I use the term in this sense, but endeavour to remain specific about what these conditions constitute in each instance in which the phrase is invoked.

¹⁰ As such, this thesis will refer to the NELM organisation as a ‘body’ sometimes; the term is intended to be read in light of Deleuze and Guattari’s theorisation of bodies.

Sarah Nuttall's call for a focus on the "expressiveness" of a text's surface rhetoric – in other words, how the superficial apprehension of a text works jointly with the more traditionally sought-after 'hidden' meanings revealed through 'suspicious' reading; and finally, Massumi's closing remark in his introduction to *A Thousand Plateaus*, "[t]he question is not: is it true? But: does it work?" (xv). All these examples can be effectively viewed according to the logic of the double articulation.

It is fair to say that the bulk of Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus* is concerned with illustrating the inherent fluidity and potential for change in even the most rigid seeming bodies, but in the section "A Geology of Morals," they lay out the conflicting tendency towards stability experienced by all bodies of matter, not least by their use of geologic analogy to describe the process of stratification. This is particularly useful in the context of an institutional body like an archive, which always strives for stratified and discernible organisation, and is persistently threatened by the intrusion of the molecular and fluid, or even the unknown of history-to-come (one possible imagining of the body-without-organs).

We have finally arrived at the definition of Deleuze and Guattari's 'assemblage' – to be used in this study as signifying the persistent possibility for transformative change experienced by any given body. Deleuze and Guattari explain that the assemblage faces, on one side, the join between strata, and on the other, the body-without-organs. This means that the assemblage encompasses both the transitional state between the stratified molar expressions of a body (actual change), and the possibility of incursion from the unknown (potential change). In this way, the threats facing the contemporary South African archive as it stands are twofold: both physical and appreciable changes (such as those presented by the move towards a digitised archive, or the trend for museum displays to become more interactive and self-reflexive, less authoritative and didactic), represented as movements between strata; *and* the more philosophical incursions that threaten an archive's stability, encompassed in the unknown future-to-come, represented as the body-without-organs.

White Writing and the geologic perspective

If one were to apply the notion of strata to the material conditions of possibility for an institution such as NELM, it might be useful to bear in mind that the Museum, and the man

behind its instantiation, are both products of a twentieth-century South African literary heritage, and are both seen to inhabit an outdated position of ideological power, which translates as a kind of inflexibility, exclusivity, or calcification (or put another way, to inhabit stratified, striated space). It is possible to make a connection, going forward, between molar bodies tending towards stasis (a traditionalist historiography born of the nineteenth century, and inherited in the twentieth), and a positivist epistemology more generally, that would assert that absolute truth is both desirable and attainable. The geological metaphor forms a useful way of relating Deleuze and Guattari to Guy Butler and NELM, as it is possible to see in twentieth-century literary sensibilities in South Africa the existence of an explicit geologic perspective.

Coetzee outlines the geologic perspective in *White Writing* (1988), positing that “the true South African landscape is of rock, not foliage, and therefore the South African artist must employ a geological, not a botanical, gaze” (167). Coetzee suggests that in South Africa, landscape is artistically apprehended according to the unyielding, alien, eternal properties of geologic rock formation, and that this mode of apprehension is traceable through a genealogy of South African writers as far back as Olive Schreiner. However, Coetzee locates this specific brand of landscape appreciation in the twentieth century. He illustrates how

the project of landscape-writing in English comes to be dominated by a concern to make the landscape speak, to give a voice to the landscape, to interpret it. This is not the ambition with which the landscape of Southern Africa was initially approached: writing in the twilight of neoclassicism, Pringle still regarded it as an appropriate field of aesthetic contemplation. But toward the middle decades of the twentieth century the confrontation between poet and landscape becomes more and more antagonistic, the poet wrestling with the silence of a landscape that “absorbs imagination / reflecting nothing” (Wright) or struggling to interpret its cryptic signs. (176–7)

Jennifer Beningfield, author of *The Frightened Land: Land, Landscape and Politics in South Africa in the 20th Century*, makes a similar point. She writes that “[t]he desert of the Karoo functions not as a tabula rasa but as a place of continuous erasure, where only the fossils and rocks withstand time” (20). This enduring silence and continual erasure of human life and activity in the face of the infinite geology of the Karoo exerts a powerful force in the imaginary of South Africa’s twentieth century poets. One might draw a connection between

this “geologic” literary perspective and the language of geology used by Deleuze and Guattari to indicate a body’s tendency towards stasis and fixity. In *Karoo Morning*, the first of Butler’s autobiographical texts, the author grapples with his decision to dedicate his life to poetry:

The river was down, and I leant over the parapet of the bridge. Watching its familiar display of elemental power might relieve my mind. How many million times had it been in flood? Enough to carve out the entire valley from sandstone measures formed from the silt deposited by other streams four or five hundred million years ago. [. . .] Where did my troubles belong in that vast geological calendar? What did it matter what happened to me? I would soon be dust, a few bones, less interesting than the fossils in the rocks of the Beaufort series. (266)

Interestingly, Butler flags in this image what is being termed ‘double articulation’ in this study. Central here is the relativity of size and age – the geologic processes that have informed the shape of the landscape are so slow that the landscape appears stable and unchanging, and by comparison the size of Butler’s existential question is rendered insignificant. However, the landscape – presented here as a molar backdrop to the molecular nature of Butler’s young, unformed self – has itself undergone and continues to experience molecular shift.

There is an inherited positivist outlook implied by this fascination with the power of permanence and age, or Butler’s appreciation of the relative stability of the landscape in comparison to his undesired psychic instability; it expresses a desire for finite and rational truth – truth in a striated, arborescent, essentialist sense. Butler comes to a crucial existential decision at this moment in *Karoo Morning*, implying that the geology of the Karoo landscape offers some kind of graspable metaphysical truth. Dirk Kloppe, author of the entry on Butler in the *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, suggests that it is precisely the African landscape’s rejection of European norms of apprehension and perception that makes its agedness (which comes to be read as a kind of primitiveness) so evocative. He argues that the project of inscribing the European self in the African landscape, as Butler attempts to do here, “is threatened [. . .] by a contradiction. The otherness of the African Landscape, its refusal to yield to the analytical European consciousness or to soften to European sentiment, imbues it with an archaic awesomeness,” in the face of which, “the poet is driven back to ‘primitive’ forms of understanding” (“Guy Butler” 91). The moment in *Karoo Morning*

implies that, more than simply inspiring visual delight, the landscape offers an essential meaning, if only the writer works hard enough to discern it.

The desire to make the landscape ‘speak’ means that the writer must apprehend a humanly communicable ‘truth’ or meaning from it. The positivist notion of being able to identify stable and finite meaning might thus be linked to the writer’s desire to make human metaphysical meaning out of the physical landscape – both schemas render the non-human (the archaic, primitive landscape) in human terms, and exemplify it according to human truths, denying its singularity. While what Butler appreciates in the landscape is its resistance to easy signification, there is a desire to make the landscape *signify* (through the linguistic process of poetic production) something eternal, beyond semantics.

Coetzee unpacks this complex desire in *White Writing*: “This geological turn to South African landscape poetry is particularly intriguing because of its claim that vegetation *disguises* landscape, that traditional landscape art, the art of the prospect, is superficial by nature, cannot tell the true story of the land, the story that lies buried, or half buried, beneath the surface” (168). The idea that “the true story of the land” is discernible implies a unidirectional flow of meaning – the poet must delve beneath the surface of the land to discover the essence of its meaning. Elsewhere in *Karoo Morning*, after a hunting trip, Butler again engages in the stripping away of layers, his process of meaning-making travelling in a straight line down to the earth’s core, and then then back up again to him. It is worth quoting at length because he starts by describing the geology of the Karoo, but by the end of the section, geology comes to stand in for human experience:

How different the rock on which I was sitting: not the product of wind and water but of violence and fire; volcanic; igneous; not built up granule by granule but ejected as smoking liquid from the hot heart of the earth, vertical through the buckling sandstone towards the sun.

[. . .] This was pure, unspoilt, primitive, original. It has never compromised. The soils and the sandstones are second- and third-hand, resting on top of older rocks; but an ironstone koppie is a nail driven up from the centre of things, piercing layer upon layer of laminated stones.

Hunting to kill: that is letting the dolerite thrust through the crust of custom and sentiments and morals, through layer upon layer.

And to make love must be the same: a shedding of disguises, of custom, of caution, letting the stifled instinct sing.

That was it, or something like that. (217–8)

One of Butler's central poetic anxieties is that the English language of the settlers may be unequal to the task of understanding or uncovering the truth of an African land, necessitating the doubting clause "or something like that." However, this maintains the supposition that there is an essence of stable truth to be uncovered. This characterises the tension at the heart of Butler's legacy that Thurman works so hard to identify – that while Butler may espouse a *desire* for positivist approaches to his pedagogy and editing practices, he is persistently plagued by the intrusion of destabilising, molecular forces. Klopper elaborates on the concept of authenticity in South African English poetic register:

[W]hen South African settler-poets claim that they wish to speak with the authentic voice of the land and that they aspire toward the creation of a distinctive African idiom, inflection, rhythm, a complex problematic is exposed. Wherein lies this authenticity and distinctiveness? How can these discursive qualities be isolated and defined without the whole exercise becoming a blatant imposition of one or another hegemony?

(“Guy Butler” 91)

When a local poetic register is judged by Butler to be either successful or inauthentic, such a distinction masks the discursive process at work, and the set of inherited markers that form Butler's naturalised and, in Klopper's words, hegemonic perspective on cultural production.

Part of the problem with the polarised contemporary perspectives on Butler is that much of the nuance of his critical thinking is lost. Poems such as “Cape-Coloured Batman” are straightforwardly patronising, the poetic voice not much troubled by self-reflection; but in “Cradock Mountains,” for example, Coetzee characterises the central poetic question as “in what ways have I been moulded by the landscape in which I have lived?” (*White Writing* 171) – a question that points to an awareness of precisely this process of double articulation, even if Butler would not have named it as such. Similarly, much contemporary criticism does not allow for the scale of philosophical exploration in the poet's own life. Thus an ageing Butler displays a “‘deep-seated dread of certainty’–‘I am put off by, and sometimes fly from, people who are too sure’ he once observed” (MacKenzie par. 4).

South Africa refigures its archive

The preceding meditation on Butler's and Coetzee's approaches to South African landscapes has operated on the assumption that connections might be drawn between the post-structuralist context of the global 'archival turn,' and a specifically South African philosophical context. The watershed study of *White Writing* might be considered a theoretical condition of possibility for the renewed interest in archival study in this country. Just as *White Writing* reconfigures South African literary historiography in the wake of the 'linguistic turn,' so the archive might similarly be reconfigured in a South African setting. What follows is an attempt to unpack the link between global post-structuralist theory and the specificities of a South African critical context.

Derrida's conception of the role of psychoanalysis in the archive has particular significance for post-apartheid South Africa, since attempts to archive the recent traumas of the past (or to 'close the file' on apartheid) inevitably invite responses that may be described in psychoanalytic terms – the traumas of apartheid memories 'resurface' in the 'return of the repressed.' The natural confluence of South Africa's transitional academia and Derrida's theories of archive reached its apex in a series of seminars run by the University of Witwatersrand in 1998, the collective contributions to which were turned into a seminal text, *Refiguring the Archive* (2002). This moment in the South African archival consciousness was underscored by a psychoanalytic understanding of the archive as more than physical documentary evidence, with essays exploring its agency in a diverse range of academic and popular spheres. As such, *Refiguring the Archive* will prove indispensable to this study, forming a context within which the thesis might operate and a condition of possibility for its production.

Contributor Susan van Zyl, writing on Derrida's *Archive Fever* (1995), notes that, much like the unconscious, the archive itself exists in an "ambiguous and symptomatic relation to time" (51) because of the tension it experiences between being both a material location in which to store actual documents, and a more conceptually open site, which gestures toward the future of documentary additions. Van Zyl further notes that both the archive *and* the archivist are "subject to unexpected unconscious forces and desires" (53). In this way, she demonstrates the applicability of psychoanalysis to the archive, and lifts the

archive out of the realm of positivism by showing it to be as much a dynamic concept as a passive collection of memories that can be mined at will.

In the work of Verne Harris, another contributor to both the seminar series and the published text, descriptions of Derrida's thought model with regard to the archive begin to bear resemblance to Deleuze and Guattari's descriptions of nomadism. Harris identifies four central assertions in *Archive Fever*, all of which signal the archive's fundamental fluidity or, to put it another way, its 'nomadism.'

First, the original event in the wake of which documents are archived is irrecoverable. All that we have access to are the traces, and these traces multiply, rather than narrow down, the meaning of the origin. Derrida notes the same of Freud's archive:

[A]ll the Freudian theses are cleft, divided, contradictory, as are the concepts, beginning with that of the archive. Thus it is for every concept: always dislocating itself because it is never one with itself. It is the same with the thesis which posits and arranges the concepts, their formation as much as their archivization. (Derrida and Prenowitz 53)

These multiple traces are spectral, as they exist in the absence of their sometimes literal, often figurative, flesh and blood origins. They haunt the archive and remind the reader constantly of the unreachable historical moment, remembered in an inherited impression. The diction used here – “traces,” “spectral,” “haunting,” “phantom” (Derrida and Prenowitz 54) – speaks to a movement away from rigid scientific positivism, a movement endorsed by Deleuze and Guattari, who embrace a more holistic vision that interconnects multiple epistemologies, where positivism might prove one of many active sensibilities. Additionally, the language of doubleness, where the archive is “cleft, divided, contradictory, [. . .] always dislocating itself because it is never one with itself,” speaks to the movement of a double articulation, so that Freud's archive multiplies itself rather than narrowing down its meaning because of this movement.

Second, Harris asserts that the archiving trace, mentioned above, “is not simply a recording, a reflection, an image of an event. It shapes the event” (65). In fact, Derrida also uses a verb to describe the process. He is interested in the “acts” (Derrida and Prenowitz 17) of the archive, or the way in which the archival traces work as much on the archivist as the archivist works on them. Archivists are influenced by material production, by the economic, political, social and psychological dimensions that Deleuze and Guattari include in their field

of vision. This inherited lens always shapes the way archival evidence is organised, sorted, and associated – or “consign[ed],” to use Derrida’s term (Derrida and Prenowitz 10). On the other hand, the material selected and stored in the archive works on the archivist in return. This historical trace (found in the content of the archive) cannot be apprehended in any form of singularity or uniqueness – it is symptomatically connected to other images, events or perceptions in the unconscious of the archivist, and contributes to the “pre-impression[s]” (Harris 65) that archivists bring to bear on any external reality in a double articulation.

It is clear that such a conception of the archiving process will be useful in a project that seeks to understand the ‘work’ done not only by Butler’s signature on the institution of NELM, but also by the common impressions that impinge on contemporary readings of Butler’s archive. Derrida calls this ‘bringing to bear,’ this ‘impinging’ of impressions, the “signature of the archivists” (“Archive Fever” seminar 64), and shows how this signature is inherited, with the archivist standing not just for the “person in charge” but for “the signature of the apparatus, the people, and the institution, which produces the archive” (“Archive Fever” seminar 64), recalling Deleuze and Guattari’s logic of the ‘molar’ and ‘molecular.’ These two – the archive and the archivist – are mutually effective, and so (and note the echoes of ‘nomadism’ here) meaning cannot be produced or inferred unidirectionally. Each works to generate meaning from the other, in the same way that Butler’s archive is in multiple ways effective in, and affected by, contemporary organisations.

Third, Harris avers, “[t]he object does not speak for itself. In interrogating and interpreting the object, or the archive, scholars inscribe their own interpretation into it. The interpretation has no meta-textual authority. There is no meta-archive. There is no closing of the archive” (65). This is connected, by Derrida, to the notion that the archive is perpetually open to “the future-to-come” (Derrida and Prenowitz 24). A meta-archive would be able to draw limits around the material, suggesting a finitude that Derrida says is impossible. The infinite possibilities for conceptual travel that the archive gives rise to means that the archive must always orient itself towards the future of its reading, its interpretation, as well as to the past of its spectral origins. As previously mentioned, Derrida considers one of his own ‘spectral origins’ to be the work of Freud, which influences Derrida in multiple ways, psychologically and textually. Derrida goes so far as to insist that because of this conceptual richness and indeterminacy that gives rise to multiple possible interpretations and influence,

Freud's work "never managed to form anything that deserves to be called a concept" (Derrida and Prenowitz 24). This, however, is not to be perceived negatively:

We only have an impression, an insistent impression through the unstable feeling of a shifting figure, of a schema, or of an in-finite or indefinite process. Unlike what a classical philosopher would be tempted to do, I do not consider this impression, or the notion of this impression, to be a subconcept, the feebleness of a blurred and subjective preknowledge, destined for I know not what sin of nominalism, but to the contrary, [. . .] I consider it to be the possibility and the very future of the concept, to be the very concept of the future, if there is such a thing and if, as I believe, the idea of the archive depends on it. (Derrida and Prenowitz 24)

This seems to repeat Deleuze and Guattari's resistance to an arborescent model of thought that could derive its constituents back to a governing scheme, or meta-text. In fact, the permanent epistemological movement that makes *A Thousand Plateaus* resist easy apprehension is precisely what Derrida is celebrating in Freud – his work dwells in the realm of possible or potential meaning, and cannot be fixed upon. It is an assemblage. What is useful about Derrida's description of this lack of fixity is that it links conceptual instability to temporal instability, meaning that (as van Zyl says of the unconscious) the archive need not operate chronologically or in a linear fashion. This is not to say that the archive is never *organised* chronologically, but to perceive archival categorisations of all kinds as the result of a pre-impressed desire on the part of the archivist, rather than as inherent to the material. Central to an investigation of the Butler archive, then, will be an approach that engages with the 'pre-impressions' regulating the production of the body of work, or, to use Deleuze and Guattari's parlance, the 'molecular' conditions for its possible expressions of 'molarity.'

Finally, Harris states that "[s]cholars are not, can never be, exterior to their objects. They are marked before they interrogate the markings, and this pre-impression shapes their interrogation" (65). The notion of impressions has already been discussed, but central to this final point is the assertion that archivists cannot stand outside of the archive. Derrida points out that, in conducting archival research, the scholar automatically adds to the corpus of information available within the archive. This supports the archive's resistance to closure, since the archivist is always already implicated in the archive, not simply in the manner of the addition of content, but in the use of methodology. It is for this reason that Lalu points to the blurring of lines between historian and archivist, because, in the act of collection, the archivist

is involved in the creation of a historical narrative, and in the act of research, the historian is adding conceptual layers to the body of archived materials (“The Virtual Stampede” 28).

Derrida asks, “has one [. . .] the right to treat the said psychoanalytico-Freudian archive according to a logic or a method, a historiography or a hermeneutic which are independent from Freudian psychoanalysis, indeed anterior even to the very name of Freud, while presupposing in another manner the closure and the identity of this corpus?” (Derrida and Prenowitz 27). Derrida seems to suggest that if the work of Freud is to be used in ways unimagined by Freud during his lifetime, then the closure of the “corpus” can never be presupposed. This repeats Derrida’s and Harris’ core arguments, that the limits of the archive are fundamentally unstable. We might add that movement through the morass of archival information must, of necessity, thus take place across a ‘smooth plateau’ rather than a ‘girded plane,’ according to the thinking of Deleuze and Guattari.

Given these thinkers’ sophisticated demonstration of the infinite nature of the archive, analogous to the unconstrained unconscious, it comes as a surprise that Derrida does draw one limit on archival boundary. Derrida insists that the archive *must* be exterior to the conscious subject, or externally located, since the desire to archive stems from the need to remove information from living memory, and to place it “in a safe, so to speak” (“Archive Fever” seminar 42). This does not even have to mean exterior to the psyche itself – repressed information can, for example, be exterior to living, conscious memory, but the archive *must* be located and *must* be accessible via a trace. This locatedness gives rise to Derrida’s second immovable dictate: because it is exterior to conscious memory, the archive runs the risk of erasure. This means that remembering along the lines of the archival trace is also, automatically, allowing oneself the luxury of forgetting, since the information has been stored in an accessible location, in safe-keeping. This locatedness means that the material is in danger of permanent loss, permanent forgetting. The desire to preserve, which is held in tension with the possibility of destruction and erasure, informs the title of Derrida’s essay: this permanent oscillation is the ‘fever’ of which he speaks.

The discourse of archival theory and psychoanalysis, together with the methodological tensions they throw into relief, is dense, apparently contradictory. Certainly, Derrida’s notion that forgetfulness is contained within the desire to remember is perceivably paradoxical.

The desire to destroy is implicit in the desire to remember. This aporia, what Jonathan Culler terms an “irresolvable alternation” (96), is what prompts Derrida to call his work a ‘fever,’ in

French a kind of sickness or evil: *mal d'archive* (other translations of the word include 'trouble' and 'difficulty'). The two constituting sides of this irreducible binary may be seen to enact work when perceived together, so that the instances of memory and forgetfulness traceable in the Butler archive must be seen (to labour the point) as a double articulation comprising a material political sense (as pointed out by Hutchison and Nuttall) and a psychoanalytic, theoretical sense.

Locating NELM in a post-transitional moment

Mongane Wally Serote, speaking in 2015 on the foundation of Freedom Park in Pretoria, remarked that in collecting the stories of apartheid pasts, researchers were made to face the realities of past and present simultaneously. As such, even in the democratic contemporary moment, twenty years removed from the atrocities memorialised, Serote continues to stress that "the soil of this country is soaked in blood," and that in this country, people must live out their lives with "unhealing wounds" ("Protest Poetry and Love"). In this way, the trauma of an apartheid past is rendered viscerally present. Such a statement speaks to the traumatic and politicised landscape in which South African historians and archivists must engage with the past. NELM, as one of South Africa's memory institutions, is bound to bear in mind that the material it collects (including, incidentally, a collection on Serote himself) is fundamentally connected to the historical conditions that impress upon the politics of the now.

Reviewing a workshop run at the South African History Archive's conference of 2006, Carolyn Hamilton said the following of the politicised nature of memory in the archive:

In the 1980s the recovery of memory was a key act of resistance. In the 1990s memory was formally recognized as part of the archive through policy and legislation in the area of heritage. In the now, we may wish to reconsider what "memory" might mean, and what its powers might be in a context where so much that was once consigned out of the archive as "mere memory" is now entrenched and secure, in the archive. Which memories are still excluded and why? Might the term "memory" now come to refer to a past that eludes archival fixing but that requires narration? [. . .]

Another point of difference that marks the now, is the central position in all of this of archive, not as inert repository but as a site of power.

(“Workshop in Review” 26)

Harris, too, reminds us that the archive as an institution is fundamentally connected to power structures, and cites the Greek root of the word (*archon*, meaning ‘rule’) as proof. Thus, in South Africa, the ideologies that historical institutions can be seen to espouse gain a particular potency. In fact,

it only takes a slight jiggling of memory to recall the obsessive guarding, patrolling and manipulating of consignment by apartheid’s *archons*. Apartheid’s memory institutions, for instance, legitimised apartheid rule by their silences and their narratives of power; the media were controlled by an oppressive censorship regime; official secrets were protected by the Protection of Information Act and numerous other pieces of interlinking legislation.

(Harris 67)

If apartheid’s ‘memory institutions’ were governed by silence, then it falls to contemporary archives to attempt to redress these historical censorships. The Black Bibliography project at NELM is one such attempt, with Andrew Martin heading up an initiative to collect publications pertaining to those authors who remained uncollected, and so largely unrecognised, under the apartheid state. Looking at the methodologies and policies in practice for this effort will be a useful way of exploring how Bethlehem’s call for a ‘transformative rupture’ is being applied in real terms at NELM.

The current study orients itself around five main focal points in order to detail the ways in which NELM positions itself as a ‘memory institution’ in post-transitional South Africa:

1. NELM’s foundation will be researched with the help of material artefacts such as Butler’s letters and his retrospective documentation of the process in *A Local Habitation*. This ‘founding moment’ will be conceptually unpacked by looking at any of Butler’s correspondence during the period of its founding where mention is made of NELM, the 1820 Settlers Monument, or the Institute for the Study of English in Africa (the ISEA). That these institutions are often referred to as a group, or interchangeably, shows that Butler conceived of the work of NELM as part of a broader cultural project in which he

sought to expand the role of the English language in South Africa. The notion of ‘founding’ in relation to Butler’s concept of the Frontier will also be unpacked. Butler’s discussion of South African literature in letters to and from the authors he was memorialising will provide context for thinking about the ‘work’ enacted by NELM in the present day.

2. The material permutations of Butler’s conceptual work in setting up NELM will be explored by looking at the early collections policies of the Museum, and considering the contents of some of the early ‘focus’ authors, such as Thomas Pringle. The correspondence of the first director of NELM, André de Villiers, will be instructive in this regard. Early letters soliciting donations for NELM were sent largely by Butler, and are informative on how Butler conceived of the purpose of NELM, and the ways in which this purpose interacted with administrative and organisational considerations ‘on the ground.’ Official forms, such as those requesting donations, point to how NELM saw itself at this time, and in which directions it was actively seeking to expand.
3. Given Butler’s role as archivist in NELM’s early years, when he acquired key collections for the Museum, his complementary role as anthologiser of South African poetry will be considered. Butler’s take on metaphorical and ideological archives, or on how one draws a boundary around a body of writing and thinking, will be inferred by looking at the anthologies themselves – most importantly, *A Book of South African Verse* (1959) and *A New Book of South African Verse* (1979) – as well as related conference papers and critical articles by and about Butler. The largest body of collected material in Butler’s donated material to NELM refers to this work, and while the current study is not specifically about Butler’s editorial practices, the conceptual overlap between editorial and archival work will be explored.
4. A conceptual critique of Butler’s position as a ‘cultural politician’ is mounted by the challenge to ‘Butlerism,’ spearheaded by Kirkwood but echoed in the materialist political and ideological approaches to literature that gained currency in the 1970s. This was during the early days of NELM’s existence, and it will be interesting to compare the conclusions reached in the chapter discussing NELM’s founding, where Butler’s role as a ‘cultural politician’ is considered, to the growing resistance to such a project. Butler’s reaction and, accordingly, NELM’s response (or lack thereof) to such a climate will be considered. Did NELM always subscribe wholeheartedly to the vision laid out by Butler

in its founding? If, as this author suspects, this was for a long time true, what conditions about the English literary project, specifically in Grahamstown, led to this long period of ideological stasis? It will be interesting to explore Butler's limited reference to the challenge in his correspondence, and NELM's institutional calcification, through the lens of Deleuze and Guattari's concepts of molar and molecular organisation. The Black Bibliography project will be considered in the context of such conceptual developments. If NELM did have an answer to the accusations levelled at its founder during these years, surely it was the active work it was undertaking in the Black Bibliography project to address the voices silenced by the cultural projects criticised by Kirkwood et al. Andrew Martin, a key collector of black resistance poetry for NELM's collections, will be interviewed, and the conceptual implications of how the material was both solicited and archived (specifically the logic of its ordering within the collection) will be explored.

5. Finally, the study will consider how this historical narrative is distilled into the contemporary moment at NELM, the aim being that in thinking through this material context, one might arrive at a notion of the pre-impressions impinging on the present-day archivists. NELM's contemporary move to new premises, under the leadership of a new director, might be considered, in Deleuzian terms, as a 'deterritorialisation'. Which old archival and conceptual boundaries are being dissolved, and which defended? Might the new initiatives allowed by the physical relocation of the archive offer what Deleuze and Guattari call a 'line-of-flight' for NELM in the present day, and more broadly, for the project of English Literature in South Africa?

The conceptual approach to the project will be rhizomatic, surfaced, and conditional, as is appropriate to the shifting and unlimited state of the archive itself, with all its attendant historical and ideological forces. Such an approach can only gain cogency as NELM moves forward into its 'future-to-come,' particularly when it comes to NELM's proposed transition from research centre to display-museum (in a more traditional sense), and its new mandate to begin collections on literatures in other indigenous South African languages.

The extensive collection of Butler's papers will be mined for source material in order to conduct this proposed work. Butler donated his papers in stages, but ensured that most of his papers were deposited before the time of his death, so that he had a measure of control

over how they were divided up between Cory Library and NELM. Jeremy Fogg, originally an archivist and later deputy director of NELM, recalls long days spent with Butler going through papers and discussing their significance and history, which presented an unusual level of involvement from a donor. Nevertheless, due to Butler's long involvement with NELM and his piecemeal donation of items, the collection is sprawling and its organising logic is governed by the order in which papers were deposited at the Museum. The papers are comprised primarily of correspondence, manuscripts and typescripts for Butler's plays, television and radio-play scripts, short stories, the autobiographies, and poetry, as well as research notes and correspondence pertaining to a range of professional activities including anthology work, critical writings, non-fiction writings, involvement in journal activities, settler history research and publications, and Shakespeare research. The collection also contains Butler's diaries, an assortment of family photographs, press clippings collected by Butler, and some of his artwork. For the full list of scope numbers sorted by these categories, see "Appendix B: Finding Aid for the Butler Collection."¹¹

A brief return to the question of methodology: it seems evident that the act of writing works against the kind of nomadic movement this study wishes to explore, since, for the purposes of explanation, much of this thesis uses a logic of metaphor to pick out the consistencies between apparently divergent strands of argument. For example, drawing out analogous links between the works of Derrida, and Deleuze and Guattari, is to derive the two models back to a common root – exactly the kind of exercise against which nomadic thought struggles. To apply Derrida self-reflexively, the act of writing is to render thought externalised and thus archived. The attempt to record the dynamics of archival engagement (the 'fever' of which Derrida speaks) in a structured thesis format means the inevitable loss of just that dynamism or, put another way, the nomadism of which Deleuze and Guattari write. Viewed this way, thesis writing indicates stasis rather than movement, because at the very moment at which the observation is written, it becomes outdated. This is a point to which Deleuze and Guattari return frequently, and which they in turn target by rethinking *their*

¹¹ 'Scope notes,' or 'scopes,' refers to entries on the NELM database that summarise the records to follow. Scopes do not represent physical items; rather, they are a sorting aid. For each scope number contained in the finding aid, a number of items may be represented. There are 4568 records in the Butler collection, sorted under 277 scope notes (at the time of writing). My attempt to apply a further sort to the collection in the finding aid is not exhaustive, and as always, archival choices and selections have been made. Many of my chosen categories overlap, and scopes might have been categorised differently by a different writer or archivist.

writing and structuring methodologies in *A Thousand Plateaus*. Similarly, this thesis shall have to keep such a methodological awareness in varying states of submersion and exposure.

Such a bind – between the conceptual freedom of the archive and the limiting nature of the project of articulation – is what defines archival research. Derrida explains this when unpacking the name of his monograph: *Mal d'Archive*. Harris interprets the fever positively, however, by identifying three “pleasures” (69) inherent in archival study. First, there is the undeniable fact that “we are in need of archives” (69) in order to access what we can of history. Second, rather than letting the ‘archive fever’ leave us cynical at the impossibility of closure, we can instead view it as an invitation “to enchantment, to the play of ecstasy and pain, as we exercise that immemorial passion for the impossible” (69). Finally, “there is the devastating rebuttal of the notion long cherished by archivists that in contextualising text they are revealing meaning, resolving mystery and closing the archive” (71). This means that, “at best, archival contextualisation reveals the multiple layers of construction in text, and in doing so adds yet another layer. Properly conceived, archival contextualisation, indeed archival endeavour as a whole, should be about the releasing of meanings, the tending of mystery and the disclosing of the archive’s openness” (71). As such, this thesis seeks to investigate the work performed by NELM as an institution in post-transitional South Africa. It hopes to do so by ‘adding another layer’ of meaning to the Butler archive, while ‘releasing [the] meanings’ of previous readings. All the while, it must bear in mind the impossible paradox of articulating the archive’s limitlessness.

2. A Cultural Politician: Butler's English Project

To appreciate NELM's position as a participant in the contemporary South African English literary project, it is necessary to understand the context in which Butler conceived of its necessity. The contemporary NELM is at pains to distinguish itself as a specifically literary centre rather than a linguistic one, but given that NELM was founded along with a plethora of Butler's other institutional projects, it is easy to see where the confusion arises. For example, NELM was originally closely aligned with the work of the Institute for the Study of English in Africa (the ISEA), whose early focus was on the creation of a dictionary unit for the delineation of a specifically South African brand of the English language. It is clear that Butler's project, while springing from an artistic, creative personality, went beyond the literary and creative possibilities engendered by the promotion of the South African English culture and language. Butler's vision for English in South Africa encompassed a social and at times political project, which was as concerned with the English language and its speakers as a cultural subset as it was with specifically literary and creative output, and, as will become clear, he perceived language, literature, and culture to be inter-dependant.

This chapter will consider the various ways in which Butler conceived of the English language project in South Africa at the time of NELM's instantiation. He argued for English as a creative force for good, bringing to South Africa the best of Europe's artistic traditions, while simultaneously arguing, more and more strongly throughout his life, that South African English speakers ought to consider themselves locally rooted. At the same time, he perceived English to be a useful political tool in South Africa's ongoing segregation through the 1960s and 1970s – he considered English to be ideally placed to serve as a *lingua franca* between the competing Black and Afrikaner nationalist forces. To this end, he devoted much time to researching and creatively representing the 1820 settlers, as he saw in the settler stories a founding myth for English speakers to challenge the pervasive Afrikaner nationalist Voortrekker narrative. It will be useful to consider the ways in which founding myths were co-opted in Butler's institutional projects, including NELM. Additionally, at the same time as Butler was generating what Elaine Williams considers “an encompassing conception of a collective identity” (20), he was also deeply concerned with the individual, the local, and the

specific. To this end, it will be productive to consider some of Butler's writings on history, which will enable an exploration of how these tensions play out in NELM's archives.

Butler was attempting to generate an English-speaking and -writing community of South Africans, and so it is necessary to explore the ways in which Butler's concept of community was both open and closed. In his time, and in terms of his literary legacy, there is space to recognise both his inclusivity and the ways in which his liberalism¹ fed into problematic neo-colonial tropes, and it might be useful to bring Deleuze and Guattari's concept of double articulation and Butler's own ethics of uncertainty to bear on this tension. This will prove a useful context for delineating the ways in which archives are both open and closed – they function to establish community by fixing into permanence a shared history, thereby opening up a historical narrative for engagement, but they also serve to limit the members of those communities, since the archive can never be exhaustive. Only some shared histories are actively archived, and so there are always those whose historical narrative will not have been selected for preservation, and who are closed out from the archive's bid to preserve a shared historical consciousness. Finally, it will be useful to consider Butler's founding activities in all of his inter-related Grahamstown projects in light of Derrida's notion that the archive is fundamentally patriarchal, and wields a kind of conceptual tyranny. The innate patriarchy of the archive, and by extension of much of Butler's institutional work, is most visible and interesting when explored alongside the very subversive and creative ways in which these institutions are being used. A further layer of complexity becomes apparent when we consider, for example, that the Arts Festival and the Settlers Monument were *intended* for this kind of use by Butler. These artistic engagements with community and culture, enacted within the walls of those institutions, might be fruitfully studied as what Deleuze and Guattari call a 'line of flight.'

¹ Criticism of Butler's political liberalism has become caught up with a broader critique of the liberal-humanist literary position, perhaps most prominently by Michael Chapman and Mike Kirkwood, who were themselves members of a generation of critics who sought to recalibrate the South African literary critical scene according to an emergent Marxist or materialist critical philosophy in the 1970s. Chapman accuses Butler's work of being "somewhat detached from the political actualities of the times" and reiterates that "Butler's work is fairly typical of a strand of 'educated' liberal writing that has never been sure where it belongs" (*Southern African Literatures* 225). The point is that Butler's received liberal-humanist positioning is a product of the cultural and historical leanings of his subsequent critics, and cannot be easily defined. The intricacies of the liberal-humanist position in a South African context, the nuances of Butler's own literary critical leanings, and his variously received critical legacies, will be investigated with more specificity in the fourth chapter, "A Book of South African Verse."

English Language, English Culture, and English Literature

In a letter to the editor of *Grocott's Mail* in 2016, Fred Hendricks takes issue with national budgetary expenditure on the English language, encompassed, as he sees it, in the erection of the new NELM building. He explains that

English is my mother tongue and I love the language, but it strikes me as singularly inappropriate for a poor country such as ours to invest such huge sums of money in a language of such global power and dominance. Of course, the literary resources of English far surpass those of all the other official languages, but is this not an even greater reason to invest more in those languages? Or are we simply entrenching the already privileged position of English, a language spoken as home language by not even 10% of our population? (8)

In this critique, Hendricks outlines one of the primary contemporary responses to Butler's historical project, which specifically aimed to promote the symbolic and cultural power of the English language in South Africa. Elaine Williams takes a similar approach in her 1989 MA thesis, "Guy Butler and South African Culture." She argues that the promotion of the English language project by Butler amounts to neo-colonialism as it does not take into account South African English speakers' role in the historical violence enacted on South Africa's indigenous inhabitants. The argument, like Hendricks', is materialist in nature, questioning the promotion of a language belonging to an economically powerful sector of South African society at the expense of the majority of its inhabitants. She writes that "[d]ominating much of Butler's critical writings is [. . .] an ethical rationalisation of colonialism which at times leads to the denial of any role at all to the historical and economic in the genesis and shape of conflict" (5). These comparatively more recent perspectives, from 2016 and 1989 respectively, outline the hegemonic power of the English language in South Africa and show the contextual difference between Butler's time of writing and ours.

Butler perceived the English language in South Africa to be under real threat at the time that he was actively working to entrench its cultural symbolism, and his work was conducted largely in response to a growing Afrikaner nationalism. In 1955, he was so concerned about the future of the English language in South Africa that he was able to contemplate the "'horrible uneasy question' – has English a future in this country; has the English-speaking section a future in this country?" (qtd. in Thurman 297). Thurman reiterates

that “[i]t was only after the ‘crisis year’ of 1959 that (having decided against emigration) he could answer this question in the affirmative, publicly, consistently, and unequivocally” (297).

Interestingly, Thurman shows that this promotion of English based on its perceived fragility as a South African language came under review by Butler within his own lifetime. His “opinions on English in South Africa were largely a response to the specific conditions of education and literary creation prior to and during apartheid, and he anticipated that they would need to be revised” (296). In his 1960s essay “The Future of English-speaking South Africa,” Butler promotes a specifically local English, and, in contrast to the neo-colonial attitudes critiqued by Williams, shows disdain for those South Africans clinging to English literature as a means of attaining a Western “cultural correspondence course” (118). Thurman notes that it is not coincidental that much of Butler’s work in generating various institutions for the promotion of the English language in South Africa occurred after South Africa withdrew from the Commonwealth. This shows that Butler was using English as a specifically political tool in resistance to the segregational policies of Verwoerd. However, Thurman makes the point that Butler was “vehemently anti-Verwoerd, but he was not anti-Republic per se; he was by no means as desperate as many others in the literary-intellectual establishment to ensure that ties with Britain were maintained” (299). Indeed, Butler later says in “‘The Language of the Conqueror on the Lips of the Conquered is the Language of Slaves’,” a lecture delivered at the University of Natal in Pietermaritzburg in 1975, that, “[o]nce our society achieves a greater measure of justice and sanity, will not the literary pressure be taken off English? Will not a future Mtshali want to write poetry in Zulu?” (154).

Thurman gives evidence here that Butler was using English as a tool of political resistance. However, in Williams’ eyes, Butler was promoting the language, literature, and culture of the English in a more patronising, colonial sense. Thurman’s defence of Butler’s motives does not excuse Butler from some of his more problematic statements on the place of the English language in South Africa. Butler’s famous Apollo/Dionysus formulation, for example, whereby Europe exemplifies rationality and civility, and Africa a romanticised barbarism, bears much criticism. Williams defines much of Butler’s writings in Apollonian/Dionysian terms, and shows him to be articulating race and class conflict along the binaric lines of the universal opposing the local, the dynamic opposing the static, and the

historical against the traditional. She refers to a damning section from his 1956 essay “Poetry, Drama and the Public Taste”:

I believe that this continent, which has produced nothing yet, will do so if we Western Europeans are really true to the West: by which I mean maintaining our curiosity about our world, a determination to bring what is dark into the light, a compassionate imagination. Our role, as I see it, is to play Apollo to Africa’s Dionysus. This is very different from another type of Loyalty to the West: a sort of Ancestor Worship, a terrified refusal to become aware of the magnificent, if barbaric, deity dancing and drumming all around us. (56)

Williams’ assumption that these views categorised Butler’s philosophical outlook for the rest of his life is not, perhaps, fair. In light of the contradictions outlined above, it seems that Butler cannot truthfully be lumped wholly into either camp; either as anti-apartheid resistance campaigner or neo-colonialist.

Thurman takes the same careful, nuanced line of thinking in *Guy Butler: Reassessing a South African Literary Life* (2010), and his suggestion, on the back cover of the work, that we “acknowledge frankly those elements in [Butler’s] work that distance him from us, without losing sight of the significance it holds” bears repeating. Thurman’s reappraisal of Butler is the most comprehensive of its kind, and this thesis (in particular the following chapter) relies heavily on Thurman’s positioning of Butler as a cultural actor. In fact, this work has taken Thurman’s text as a kind of archival source in itself (in the abstract sense of the term, where ‘archive’ might be considered a body of collected thought). This thesis routinely cites Thurman’s sources to bolster its argument, so that Thurman’s text is acting as a kind of directory through which I have accessed much of my primary material. It is appropriate to register the ambit and significance of Thurman’s work at this point. This thesis seeks to draw from Thurman’s rich basis, while moving in a different direction in the field of Butler studies, towards considering the nature of the archival source material upon which much of Thurman’s argument is based.

In the middle: Butler’s vision for English in South Africa

If Butler does not comfortably fit either of the characterisations into which he is routinely slotted, it is because he oscillates between the two poles (committed resistance writer and

liberal neo-colonialist) and finds himself, politically, neither so far left as the materialist politics of his detractors (Williams, Kirkwood and others), nor so far right as the apartheid language policy-makers he so abhorred. Responses to Butler's 'middle road' are similarly divergent – Williams is straightforwardly critical, and Anthony Akal, author of a 2003 thesis on Butler, is much more forgiving. It will be useful to overview both before continuing.

Williams takes Butler's work on the 1820 settler histories as the "core myth" informing his work, and uses the following statement from the introduction to *A Book of South African Verse* (1959) as evidence of this position: "[t]he Settlers of 1820 were placed on the frontier between the Dutch pastoralists and the African tribesmen, and, metaphorically speaking, that is where we still are: in the middle" (qtd. in Williams 3). She takes issue with the passive voice used here (the settlers "were placed"), arguing that it elides the role of the settlers as agents in the violence committed on South Africa's colonial frontiers. She further points out that Butler's literary and cultural projects ignore multiple settler narratives from other parts of South Africa in favour of generating a founding myth for English-speaking South Africans in the same way that the National Party had enlisted the Great Trek narrative for political purposes. She poses the question: "if, as many have argued, the British were not the bringers of peace and harmony, were not even the middlemen on the frontier, [how] has Butler managed to pass off the 1820 settler tradition as *the* significant past?" (33).

In Williams' estimation, Butler sets up the English South African as inhabiting a politically moderate position for very specific cultural purposes. Butler's less palatable Apollo/Dionysian writings make for an easy target, but even his more generally lauded attempts to localise South African literature, and instantiate such writings on university syllabi, comes under attack. She shows how Jack Cope likened the move to "the situation in the United States 'where locals have managed to throw off British colonialism and have a culture of their own'" (12). The result is that "[b]y a peculiar sleight of hand the colonialists become the colonised and black South Africans do not enter the picture anywhere" (13). In this way, Williams mounts the argument that Butler's various public personae feed into his culturally hegemonic role of promoter of a colonial language and value set.

Fourteen years later, and at a significant enough remove from the backlash against 'Butlerism,' Anthony Akal is able to write a much more sympathetic account. Akal begins the final chapter of his thesis by comparing George Orwell and Salman Rushdie's accounts of the

writer's position in relation to society. Orwell, comparing the writer's sometimes necessary state of passive detachment to being inside the belly of a whale, Jonah-like, claims that

[The writer] feels no impulse to alter or control the process that he is undergoing. He has performed the essential Jonah act of allowing himself to be swallowed, remaining passive, *accepting*.

[. . .] Give yourself over to the world-process, stop fighting against it or pretending that you control it; simply accept it, endure it, record it.

(qtd. in Akal 252)

Rushdie, responding in 1991, writes that “[o]utside the whale the writer is obliged to accept that he (or she) is part of the crowd, part of the ocean, part of the storm, so that objectivity becomes a great dream, like perfection, an unattainable goal for which one must struggle in spite of the impossibility of success” (qtd. in Akal 252). Thus, if Orwell's writer, “inside the whale,” must aim for occasional detachment from the world in order to record its events objectively, Rushdie's writer, “outside the whale,” must engage fully with her/his environment and accept the impossibility of objectivity.

Akal argues that Butler is always located both inside and outside the whale, recognising himself to be a product of his historical placement, and yet fully and consciously engaged with his local politics and culture. Akal explains that

Despite the fact that his drama, poetry and prose writings tend to display [. . .] that he himself was very conscious of his privileged position as a white South African placed inside the whale by the structures of colonialism and, later, apartheid, he could not be fairly categorized as one who willingly and consciously performed the “essential Jonah act” of allowing himself to be ingested by a system he deplored, “. . . remaining passive, *accepting*.” (254)

In the same way that Akal characterises Butler's socio-political engagement (both inside and outside the whale), Butler's take on the concept of linguistic purity also fluctuates between poles throughout his lifetime. Thurman points out that

Butler's sympathy with either side of this debate shifted back and forth over the years. Much of his time at Oxford after the war was devoted to ‘work on Old English and Middle English’ [. . .], which informed his understanding of English as an organic language, even ‘within borders’. Yet he was quoted just a few years later expressing concern about the potential degeneration of English into a ‘barbaric dialect’. (297)

Taken together, using a retrospective ‘long view’ of Butler’s life’s work, his politics and writings present, as many critics have pointed out, an attempt at synthesis between conflicting pressures or, perhaps, a meeting in the middle. Akal describes Butler’s varied social and political standpoints as “an intricate nexus of intersecting cultural strands requiring complex and contrapuntal solutions amongst which was his constant attempt to forge synthesis between Apollo and Dionysus, Europe and Africa, coloniser and colonised” (255). The concept of forging a middle way is echoed in his idea that one of the primary purposes of English in Africa was to serve as a *lingua franca* – a necessary linguistic middle road to be forged under adverse circumstances.

Butler was, if nothing else, a pragmatist, and following the implementation of Christian National Education policies after 1948 and, later, the much reviled Bantu Education Act (1953), he realised the significance of English as an educational, liberal rallying point. Thurman points out that in the context of CNE and the Bantu Education Act, which signified “the imposition of the language of the most immediate and obvious oppressor, the Afrikaner” (293), English became associated, by contrast, “with the forces of liberation” (293). The contemporary perspective on this may be that indigenous language speakers had one overt oppressor replaced by a more paternalistic one, but in his own time, for better or worse, Butler clearly viewed English as the most sensible and useful route forward for black resistance writers.

Certainly, Williams takes the less generous view. She argues that proposing English as a *lingua franca* for resistance politics was one way in which Butler was able to construct a “myth of consensus and a base from which to pursue the liberal programme of reform within an ethos of tradition, permanence and objectivity” (15). The narrative of inclusivity, she infers, forms part of the liberal programme “in which black South Africans are informed that they will be welcome if they are (a) ‘liberal’, (b) identify themselves with the cultural parameters set by the English Academy” (15).² Thurman, responding to Williams, posits that “the question is one of agency and autonomy,” because even within Williams’ charge of linguistic and cultural paternalism, “she quotes an interesting passage from Butler’s self-portrait in *Contemporary Poets of the English Language* (1970): ‘English, as the chosen

² This is a deliberate jibe, echoing Butler’s similarly worded explanation of the Afrikaner Nationalists’ claim that the English are welcome in South Africa: “[t]he Englishman,” Butler says, “will be welcome if he is (a) conservative; (b) identifies himself with the Afrikaner’s history, struggle and mission” (14–5).

language of literature of millions of Blacks, has a great and exciting future in Africa; and I've made it my life's business to encourage its creative use in this corner of the world" (Thurman 294). Thurman insists that Butler's claims here are localised, rather than sweeping, and he "depicts himself as having limited agency" (294). If Butler's localised rather than sweeping ambitions for the English language might save him from claims of linguistic paternalism, according to Thurman, then it is worth adding that in its present day incarnation, NELM is seeking a far broader national footprint for its literary project. NELM is now shaking off both the prioritization of English, as it begins collecting literatures written in other indigenous South African languages, as well as its parochial, localised image.

Divergent forces

If this argument seems to dither unnecessarily over divergent responses to Butler's English project in Grahamstown, it is because it forms a useful context for considering his cultural and institutional legacy in relation to Deleuze and Guattari. Butler's primary artistic struggle was located in his attempts at synthesis, at making sense out of the conflicting and disparate cultural pressures of his day. This grasping after singular meaning might be likened to Deleuze and Guattari's arborescent meaning-making system, the system of the tap root, where interpretation can be traced in a linear and logical trajectory back (or down) to a singular governing principle. By contrast, from a post-structural perspective, and bearing in mind the destabilisation of the sign, Deleuze theorises early in his career that "a thing has as many meanings as there are forces capable of seizing it" (*Nietzsche and Philosophy* 5). Such an assertion is, obviously, born out in the fluctuating historical significations of both Butler's work and NELM's positionality on the South African literary landscape.

Deleuze's comment is a useful springboard for Massumi, an eminent commentator on the work of Deleuze and Guattari, who explains their rhizomatic meaning-making system using the analogy of force. The 'force' analogy rings particularly true with Butler's location in a cultural and social nexus (the nexus is described by other critics, fittingly, as a web of conflicting *pressures* which Butler tries in his various roles to navigate). In Massumi's estimation,

[M]eaning is more a meeting between forces than simply the forces behind the signs. Force against force, action upon action, the development of an envelopment: meaning is the encounter of lines of force, each of which is actually a complex of other forces. The processes taking place actually or potentially on all sides could be analysed indefinitely in any direction. There is no end, no unity in the sense of a totality that would tie it all together in a logical knot. No unity, but a region of clarity [. . .]. (11)

Massumi considers meaning to be produced from an “encounter of lines of force,” meaning the point at which signs encounter one another, or the point of encounter between the sign and the interpreter, for example. The emphasis is on flexibility rather than stasis. Deleuze and Guattari explicate this process through their concept of ‘double articulation,’ whereby meaning-making is always developed out of a meeting of contexts – the context in which the sign appears, for example, and the context of the one perceiving and interpreting it. In addition, as Massumi points out, these contexts or forces have always been developed out of their own encounters, their own multiple developments, so that interpretation can travel in myriad directions and encounter myriad possibilities. For the purposes of the work of this thesis, tracing the disparate forces and interpretations of Butler’s work – inside and outside the whale; enabler versus paternalist for black writings in English – is crucial because it is at the meeting point of these forces that the meaning of my theoretical intervention is generated.

Massumi’s point about the generative possibilities of multivalent interpretive forces has resonance for the complex and conflicting conceptual pressures evident in Butler’s own work, too. These ‘pressures’ might be characterised as existing both on the side of a colonising voice and in the argument for a local specificity. If Butler is indeed, at various stages of his career, fluctuating between being “inside and outside the whale” (253) as Akal puts it, could it not also be suggested that he is always *simultaneously* inside and outside the whale, in what Deleuze and Guattari call a double articulation? If his position inside the whale is considered as the context out of which his consciousness is produced (Butler’s ‘molecular’ conditions of being, his birth and settler lineage, his childhood in the specific locale of Cradock among liberal English speakers), then his position outside the whale, or the ways in which he consciously tries to engage his surroundings, is the ‘molar’ expression of these conditions. Deleuze and Guattari theorise these two states as necessarily twinned because both states are capable of new expressions and new directions, and both are already expressions of prior meaning-making encounters. For example, one might cast Butler’s writings, and his

public role as founder of his Grahamstown-wide English project, as the ‘molar’ expressions of his lifetime – molar because their existence in the public realm lends them a kind of stability and fixity. These molar expressions would have been formed, in their turn, out of a double articulation of their own, an encounter of forces, produced out of their own set of conditions of possibility informing Butler’s lived experience. However, these ‘molar’ expressions of Butler’s become ‘molecular’ when understood as the conditions from which NELM’s contemporary work and ethos has sprung (in other words, one half of the double articulation informing NELM’s present day configuration).

What, then, is the “region of clarity” mentioned by Massumi? For the purposes of this study, NELM’s present expression in the contemporary moment might form one example. If, according to a rhizomatic logic, Butler could be both neo-colonialist *and* anti-apartheid liberal, and if his intention in his own lifetime is neither relevant nor knowable (as Derrida would attest),³ then one region of clarity might be found in the future-facing expressions of Butler’s cultural legacy, NELM’s present day workings.

English and the Frontier

Butler’s conscious positioning of himself ‘in the middle’ as an English-speaking South African gave rise to his lifelong conceptual interest in synthesis. In the opening lines of “Elegy II” the poet explains, “In all of us two continents contend, / two skies of stars confuse us” (1–2). This ongoing poetic concern, which leached into his public pronouncements on the South African cultural sector, may be said to have informed his research into settler histories in the Eastern Cape, what Thurman calls Butler’s “most contested role as an historian: ‘apologist’ for the 1820 British settlers” (262). Williams bases her critique of Butler on his abiding interest in the settlers in terms of what they represented for the South Africans of English descent, and in these sections, her argument is at its most persuasive. She credits

³ Derrida, speaking of Freud’s archive, establishes finite meaning as a desire. The desire for a ‘final word’ from the archive exists precisely because the archive cannot provide closure. Derrida, as quoted in the first chapter, clarifies: “what is important is not so much the content of what Freud would say, Freud, moreover, who has acknowledged it in a way, as the fact that he should say it to him (‘you’), with his mouth, and henceforth sign it with his name [. . .]. This last engagement ought to be irreversible, by definition. Engaging a dead person, it would no longer be subject to the strategic calculations, to the denials of the living Freud” (36). Thus, there can be no possible ‘final word’ on Butler’s life.

Butler with wanting to establish positive relations between the English and Afrikaner sectors, but adds that

If the belief in dialogue and the attempt at harmonising group relations through the individual sharing of experience was not to be swamped by the Afrikaner claim to a superior right to the land [. . .], a myth of consensus and a base from which to pursue the liberal programme of reform within an ethos of tradition, permanence and objectivity had urgently to be constructed. [. . .] It is here that Butler's writings, dedicated to the building of such a 'tradition', played a powerful and timeous role. His deep identification with the 1820 settlers and his theory built around this provided a much needed legitimisation of English economic and social power, and at the same time provided them with the sense of belonging that seemed to have proved so powerful for the Afrikaner Nationalists. (15–6)

Williams' concern is that, in placing the settler descendent 'in the middle' of South African politics, race, and class conflicts, Butler assumes a passive and benevolent role for the settler legacy in South Africa. In fact it must be acknowledged that Butler, himself a settler descendent acting out one strand of the settler legacy in South Africa, was instantiating English projects that were calculated to achieve certain goals. For Butler, being 'in the middle' also means being at the mercy of opposing political factions, a kind of victim complex with which Williams takes issue. She points out that "the institutions then launched must be seen as instruments in the hands of social actors with particular interests, interests that were not innocent of political or ideological motives" (17). This means that Butler's view of the English 1820 settler history in the Eastern Cape has come under some criticism, as the settlers are presented as mostly fighting for survival in inhospitable conditions, rather than enacting violence at the frontier.

Quite apart from the fact that settler history is fraught with violence, and therefore cannot support the assertion that the settlers were only passive spectators, Thurman quotes Yvonne Banning to show that consciously inhabiting a passive role is equally problematic. Banning accuses white English-speaking South Africans of being "ghosts with ears," guilty of "allowing the South African tragedy to play itself out on a national stage while they simply watched (or listened) like silent spectators, neither taking an active part in the struggle nor speaking out against the wrongs of apartheid" (qtd. in Thurman 264).

Thurman goes on to assert that Banning's criticism is too harsh, since the kind of engagement Banning is insisting upon from the settler descendants is precisely what Butler is

calling for in the 1950s, in his public address on “The Future of English-Speaking South Africa.” Butler warns against renouncing English heritage and instead “accepting the mystique of Afrikanerdom, its view of South African history, its cultural ambitions for the *volk*” (116), while at the same time cautioning against a retention of English values at the expense of local engagement, “to become even more a-political than at present, simply a commercial species (like the English in Argentina?), making money, and vainly washing our hands of political responsibility” (116). Instead, he urges English South Africans to “act in the belief that we have been cast for an important role, and to perform it with intelligence, energy, and without apology” (116).

This may be true, but as Thurman concedes, Butler’s conception of the “important role” to be played by the English in South Africa is still coded in fairly colonial and patriarchal terms. His sense is that the English “are ipso facto inclined towards forms of dialogue that would, in time, lead to a resolution of racial conflict (we may recall his assertion that the British settlers brought with them a ‘democratic habit’). This is what Banning exposes as ‘the myth that English usage promotes democracy’” (265).

In line with the qualities of rationality and the capacity for reasoned argument that Butler sees as inherent to the English, he quite often expresses the need for artistic South Africans to detach themselves, socially and politically, in the pursuit of a more truthful art; to place themselves ‘inside the whale,’ according to Akal’s argument. Butler suggests, in an introduction to Alan Lennox-Short’s *English and South Africa* (1972), that the issue of detachment is why there is a lack of black-authored long-form fiction in his time, musing that “perhaps a people in so rapid a state of growth and transition cannot be expected to achieve the degree of detachment needed for extended fiction” (6). In “The Language of the Land,” he argues that the possession of a world language such as English should provide the speaker with “a degree of wisdom and necessary detachment, at times, from a too-local view of things” (85). Thurman raises the question, “why, if the aim was ‘a necessary detachment . . . from a too-local view of things’, did Butler devote so much attention precisely to the ‘local’ history of the English-speaking South African and to the pivotal arrival of the 1820 settlers?” (273). Thurman provides both a defence and a critique of Butler’s settler work, and it will be useful to detail both before outlining their relevance to the contemporary workings of Butler’s English project in Grahamstown.

History and history

Thurman's defence of Butler's ongoing critical and artistic interest in the settlers is rooted in Butler's (and others') belief that a knowledge of one's own cultural history enables one to better engage with those from different historical and cultural positions, or, as Thurman puts it, "[k]now then thyself, the voice intones, *that you may know the other*" (274). Thurman points out that this position is echoed in Czelaw Milosz's *The Native Realm* (1959), which posits that the value of familiarity with one's 'origin' "lies in the power it gives one to detach oneself from the present moment" (qtd. in Thurman 274), showing again Butler's attempt to synthesise disparate concepts – the long view and the close view of history are, for Butler, intertwined. In addition, the same idea is rehearsed in the contemporary moment by Eastern Cape MEC for Sports, Recreation, Arts and Culture, Xoliswa Tom, who in 2009 promoted the staging of traditional dance and music of the Eastern Cape at the National Arts Festival with the following words: "It is important to know about your own culture, to be comfortable with it, in order to understand and engage with people from other cultures" (qtd. in Thurman 274). Thus Thurman demonstrates the ongoing relevance of such an approach to history, implying that in this way, Butler's project translates through the ages, from his particular corner of the Eastern Cape through a universal attempt to engage the specificity of one's own history and the unassailable difference of those positioned differently by history.

In this, however, lies the key to what is truly important about Butler's interest in settler history: in writing about the settlers, Butler expounds on how we access history and goes some way towards delineating his own historical sensibility. Of primary significance is the difference Butler sees between 'history' and 'History.' In 'history,' Butler finds the stories of local individuals, subjective accounts of specific lived realities on the frontier in the nineteenth century that, as he saw it, were being subsumed by the materialist turn of literary criticism in the 1970s. Reflecting on his historical interests in *A Local Habitation*, he says:

I have never tried to duck my 'guilt' as an unfairly privileged white, but I knew myself to be a member of a small human sub-species called the English-speaking South African. I knew that one of my ancestors had come in 1829 as a settler, and others subsequently. I saw no reason to shed this history in the name of HISTORY. (249)

Such a perspective is quite contemporary and future-facing, in some ways, as historians have in more recent times begun to turn to the stories and voices of individuals, those excluded from the official record of History, in order to critique the overbearing narrative of nineteenth century-style history – the kind of history, as the expression goes, written by the victors. It seems that, at the time, Butler felt that between Afrikaner nationalism and the popular anti-colonial trends in academic criticism, his history was at risk of becoming one of the voices being excluded by history.

Linda Hutcheon, writing in the 1980s in *The Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* (a seminal post-structural work of historiography), suggests that sense can be made of history only from a discursive, subjective position. This is not to say that history is purely discursive, however. She clarifies that “[t]o elevate ‘private experience to public consciousness’ in postmodern historiographic metafiction is not really to expand the subjective; it is to render inextricable the public and historical and the private and biographical” (95). This means that “[t]o speak of discursive practices is not to reduce everything to a global essentialized textuality, but to reassert the specific and the plural, the particular and the dispersed. [. . .] The particular, the local, and the specific replace the general, the universal and the eternal” (98–9). From this perspective, Butler’s promotion of individual lived histories as a representation of Eastern Cape frontier history, as seen in works such as *Take Root or Die* (1970), *A Rackety Colt* (1989), and *Richard Gush of Salem* (1982), is quite postmodern and pluralistic, as much as Butler disapproved of the “pure waters of leftist theories emanating [. . .] mainly from Paris” (249).

On the other hand, from a contemporary perspective, the voices of the white settlers hardly read, to us, as constituting those voices silenced by official histories. Colonial rule ensured that the English experience in South Africa was in fact quite assiduously documented. An additional problem is that Butler often projects individual histories as standing in for a symbolic frontier history of the Eastern Cape, a tendency with which both Thurman and Williams take issue. Thurman explains that, in Butler’s reworkings (both in fiction and non-fiction),

The 1820 settlers became real people with quirks and foibles; their names become familiar [. . .]; they have particular trades and qualifications, aspirations and disappointments. ‘The generalities of history,’ Butler wrote of his project, ‘crumble into individuals, this man and that woman, going about

the business of living, loving and being.’ To idealise the motivations and actions of the settlers in the name of *history* is, however, to risk committing a great injustice to those who have felt the heavy weight of colonial and postcolonial *History* upon them. (276–7)

Butler was using settler diaries as source material, and is quoted by Thurman as positing that in diaries, a more essential truth of settler history is to be found, since the diary writer does not craft his account into a story, as does the autobiographer. Rather, the settler diarist finds himself writing “‘with private, not public motivations [. . .].’ In such cases, ‘writing is so subsidiary an activity to the writer’s life that he or she has not the professional’s concern for putting the cork back in the [ink] bottle’; this is ‘writing that is close to the soil, with grit in it – rough with the texture of hard, practical lives’” (279). Thurman points out, rightly, that “Butler does not sufficiently acknowledge that diaries, precisely because of their subjectivity, are faulty sources. He glosses over the great obstacle to which all historians must defer – the impossibility of establishing an authentic historical ‘truth’” (279).

Finding a fitting historiography

It is possible that Butler was glossing over this fact because he believed, in some ways, that a measure of objective historical truth *could* be found in his settler histories. Thurman notes that what attracts Butler to the diary source is not only “the ‘vividness and particularity’ of a first person account, but also the honesty of the author” (279). His approach to history is thus fraught with contradictions – he believes in individual voices, small, pluralistic histories, but also in objective and singular truths. He seems to find the materialist bent of postmodern criticism tiresome, and yet firmly believes in artistic fluidity and subscribes to an identity politics of a kind: “[c]ross-fertilization – biological and mental – is an ongoing fact; and artists have a particularly important role to play here – as ‘Bronze Heads’ tries to demonstrate. Works of art can provide exchanges at depths which the sociologists and literary theorists seldom reach” (Thurman 250).

Carolyn Hamilton, in an essay in *Refiguring the Archive* titled “‘Living by Fluidity’: Oral Histories, Material Custodies and the Politics of Archiving,” lays out the contemporary tension between post-structural approaches to historiography and a more traditionalist approach that seeks to maintain rigorous methodologies in seeking out reliable historical facts.

Underlying this is, perhaps, a fight between pluralist and singular conceptions of meaning, a divide that also seems to underpin Butler's approach to history. Speaking in the context of approaches to the preservation of oral histories, particularly, Hamilton says:

The emphasis in this essay on fluidity and processes does not constitute a rejection of the value of recording and of the preservation of such recordings for posterity. Nor is it meant to suggest that the academic work on the remote past is doomed to drown in perpetually swirling waters. It does constitute a claim that recording is insufficient on its own, and that the academic pursuit of knowledge of the remote past cannot proceed without due acknowledgement of the multiple fluidities involved in the production of historical knowledge. (226)

In Hamilton's essay, the process-driven emphasis on contemporary collecting of oral histories comes to stand in for the post-structural pluralist conception of meaning-making, wherein historical narrative production is context-dependant. The older methodology of simply recording an oral history for posterity stands here for traditionalist historical practice, namely, the preserving and consulting of primary sources – one thinks of Butler's insistence that diaries, by way of their closeness to the subject's day-to-day life, are more reliable sources of fact.

Interestingly, Hamilton brings the two approaches into conversation, insisting that rigorous historical practice is not “doomed to drown in the perpetually swirling waters” – and here, it is easy to recall Butler's snipe at the “pure waters of leftist theories” (*A Local Habitation* 249). Instead, she calls for a kind of synthesis (Butler's pragmatic middle road in new dress, perhaps), and highlights “the capacity for the material and the physical to invite multiple historical interpretations, while constraining the extent of historical ‘invention’” (225). This synthesised approach, she suggests, “when transported into the museums and monuments that house or preserve the material and the physical, questions the long-held authority of the heritage institutions without conceding a complete relativism” (225). Hamilton's suggested contemporary approach constitutes, in other words, a double articulation, whereby the artefacts themselves, as well as the context of their collection and preservation, form the conditions of expression that allow for multiple interpretations in the future-facing moment. It will be interesting and necessary to investigate the extent to which NELM has historically navigated this tension between *history* and *History* within the setting of Butler's grand vision for English in South Africa.

Open and closed communities

Butler's approach to the future and the uses of English in South Africa is premised on a certain conception of the English-speaking community in South Africa, and it is necessary to flesh out the differing ways in which Butler speaks about various communities of English speakers before continuing. Butler, at different times, makes pronouncements on 'the English' in South Africa (settler descendants, or presumably those with colonial and cultural roots in England, otherwise known as white English-speaking South Africans – WESSAs) and English-speaking South Africans (ESSAs, a group that includes black English speakers, using it as an additional language – the group for whom Butler feels that English can provide a *lingua franca* or 'world language' to their political advancement). It is clear, too, that in Butler's estimation, his linguistic and institutional goals are premised on an opening up of both communities. By contrast, much of the criticism of Butler's work in the public sphere delineates the ways that Butler's cultural pronouncements worked to close off the English community, demonstrating as they did colonial and patriarchal value sets. This section seeks to understand the ways in which these conflicting tendencies towards opening up and closing off communal boundaries might work in relation to the archival institution that Butler founded.

“There is much virtue in both/and”

Akal, in conscious defence of Butler against Williams and Kirkwood, writes that

Butler's cultural narrative [. . .] is not one of separation but of integration. For Butler South African identity was too varied to be a unitary and homogenous thing. Rather than seeing South African culture as a unitary identity, he tended to see the whole as a complex but not reductively unified one. Where critics such as Williams and Kirkwood chose to see South Africa in terms of a linear and subsuming history, Butler was seeing it as an intricate nexus of intersecting cultural strands [. . .]. (255)

Indeed, in Butler's own self-defence against Kirkwood's accusations, recorded in *A Local Habitation*, he says: “I do not accept the notion that the political triumph of an abstraction

called ‘the people’ will produce a society with a common culture worth a row of beans – or beads” (250). He expands:

I do not believe that Xhosas are Zulus, or that either will be converted into heroic brothers in the epic working class struggle by the waving of a Marxist wand; or that Afrikaners or ESSAs will cut their historical taproots no matter how ingeniously HISTORY is revised, deconstructed, reconstructed, etc. This is not to deny that they share in a complex economy, enjoy and suffer the same climate and landscape, aware of a process which embraces them all.
(250)

This kind of statement points, Akal suggests, to a conception of South African identity as “too varied to be a unitary and homogenous thing” (225). Butler goes on, in *A Local Habitation*, to explain that cross-fertilisation between cultural groups is best achieved through art, rather than critical theory. The fact remains, however, that while Butler *is* here showing evidence of the complexity of social thinking with which Akal credits him, this statement tends towards exclusionary rather than integrated thinking, since emphasis is placed on the differences that divide the South African cultural subsets. Where Kirkwood would unite the labouring classes of South Africa under a materialist politics of resistance, Butler sees such an aspiration as naïve, and insists upon the social and linguistic specificities of South African peoples that keep them divided.

The most persuasive arguments Akal sets forth in motivating for Butler’s role in opening up South African English-speaking communities are found when he describes Butler introducing South African literature into South African English literary syllabi. Despite fears that the introduction of South African English texts would inevitably mean less canonical classical texts would be taught, and despite his contemporaries’ claims that to include South African literature on teaching syllabi would constitute “a provincial and pointless pseudo-nationalism” (Segal qtd. in Akal 260), Butler succeeded, in 1972, in securing a South African literature paper in the Rhodes English III course, and also an African literature elective at Honours level in 1973. According to Akal, “[h]is philosophy was not exclusivity but inclusivity. The study of South African English literature should stand alongside works of the accepted metropolitan canon – not replace them” (260). Of his final success in securing the teaching of local literature, after encountering much opposition, Butler notes wryly, “[t]he sky did not fall” (*A Local Habitation* 236).

This certainly shows off Butler's more flexible sensibilities. He notes, when recording the opposition to the introduction of South African literature in *A Local Habitation*, that "[t]he greatest battles I had to fight in these departmental parliaments sprang from my belief that innovatory solutions could be found once we moved beyond thinking in either/or terms, and entertained the possibility of both/and. There is much virtue in both/and" (238). This suggests a more fluid epistemological outlook, one that certainly seeks to expand the boundaries of South African English literary pedagogy and, more broadly, the South African English-speaking community. Similarly, Butler put his institutional and administrative skills into action in support of his claim that the English community in South Africa ought to be expanded to include additional language speakers, so that English became a useable *lingua franca* capable of providing opportunities to those oppressed by apartheid educational legislation. His insistence, and the reasoning behind the formation of the ISEA, that English language research should be funded and aimed with the express concern of improving second-language teaching constitutes what Butler hoped would become a growing, open community of English speakers.

On the other hand, the language used to describe the institution of the ISEA, the English Academy, and NELM takes on a defensive tone. English is perceived to be under threat, and thus must be fixed into place both physically and psychologically – fixed physically in the form of the Settlers Monument, and conceptually in the institutes founded by Butler with the express purpose of guarding the sanctity of the English language. Paul Walters notes, in the recently published *ISEA 1964 – 2014: A South African Research Institute Serving People*, that "[t]he government of the day claimed to support equality of treatment for speakers of both Afrikaans and English: there was a very determined group of English-speakers in the Eastern Province who were going to see those claims were ratified by stone, bricks and mortar" (10). It is tempting to compare this to a laager mentality.

In Williams' view, this fixing in place of the symbolic importance of the English language was conscious, and sought to establish and maintain a colonial view of the ideological power of the English. For Williams, Butler's English project had much more to do with the interests of WESSAs (White English-speaking South Africans) than those of ESSAs (English-speaking South Africans). Certainly, it is easy to dismiss Butler's proclamations that the English, and the English language, are bearers of an entrenched democratic spirit. It is this kind of essentialising that we ought rightly to regard with suspicion, and Williams points out

the ways in which Butler's liberalism was constructed as much as innate. She shows how Butler's own identity, and the future he saw for the English cultural subset in South Africa, were mutually reinforcing, generating a closed circuit of meaning-making and communal identification. She says:

His self-identified role is related to an encompassing conception of a collective identity (English-speaking South Africans) which he feels is in need of clarification. It is further related to the historical role of the 1820 settlers on the Eastern Cape frontier which he feels is relevant to his own role activity of encouraging the creative use of English in contemporary South Africa. Thus his role-specific frame of reference is anchored in the legitimation of the social role itself. The concrete point at which the (constructed) collective history of English-speaking South Africans and Butler's personal identity meet is, then, in the projection of a social role which is fitted into a symbolic network of ideas. (20–1)

Essentially, Williams is arguing that his academic and creative interest in the settlers reinforces his authoritative role as white, male Professor ("role-specific frame of reference"), which in turn confers on him the institutional power to inscribe the role to be played by the English language and by English speakers in South Africa ("legitimation of the social role"). Williams' primary argument is that Butler projects his own identity on to the majority of English-speaking South Africans, thus making unfounded pronouncements on the group's political and cultural leanings. This much Thurman agrees with, noting that "Williams's critique of the ways in which Butler constructed an ESSA identity and history based on his own persona has some weight" (274). Additionally, he reinforces Williams' assertion that "there was a flawed 'narrative of origins' at the heart of Butler's tireless promotion of the 1820 settlers and their 'symbolic relation . . . to contemporary English South Africa'" (274).

Butler was publicly and consciously trying to open up conceptions of what it means to use English in Africa; in his institutionalising roles, he envisioned always active and engaged platforms and spaces for discussion, promoting the creation of a *living* monument for the settlers, for example. However, as has been ably pointed out by Williams and Kirkwood (to whom I shall return in subsequent chapters), his failure to adequately reflect on his own imbrication within South Africa's colonial history, and his tendency to project his own liberal, politically engaged identity on to the rest of the white, English-speaking South African community, amount to an exercise of ideological power that serves to close off rather than

openly engage the English-speaking community. This thesis does not seek to moralise on either position, but rather to explore the directions such divergent interpretations might take, when considered as the conceptual and material birthplace for the institutions as they are perceived in their present-day formations.

A useful point of comparison for NELM's contemporary move to refigure its identity and purpose as a public South African service facility is the ISEA. In its fiftieth year of existence, the ISEA is, much like NELM, continuing to debate the ways that English exercises ideological power. The ISEA, too, is thinking through ways that the promotion of the English language might be transformed in the contemporary cultural landscape. In some ways, the problems facing these institutions are the same as they have always been. Monica Hendricks, current director of the ISEA, explains that

On the one hand, privileging an already dominant language such as English adds to its power and necessarily diminishes the potential for the formerly marginalised indigenous African languages to become powerful. On the other hand, without access to English, students run the risk of being marginalised in higher education, economic opportunities and wider communication nationally and internationally. (161)

This much, Butler would have agreed on, and in fact expresses similar sentiments in some of his essays and lectures. However, Hendricks continues by expressing her desire for the ISEA to “take a more nuanced approach to our linguistic sensibilities, to subject our course curricula and research in the creative and educational fields to critical self-scrutiny in order to embrace South African multilingualism” (171). She articulates this goal while remaining mindful of the “existing excellence in teaching, writing and researching English” (171) that the Institute presently boasts. In this, then, is evidenced the kind of flexibility and fluidity that might be presented as a future direction for such institutes. Both the ISEA and NELM are undergoing the symbolic process of a name change, and the practical process of updating the languages in which they do their work, constituting what Deleuze and Guattari would call a shift in strata, as they reconstitute the content (actual work of the institutes, the languages collected and researched) and form (the names, encompassing the institutes' public-facing identity projections) of their respective institutions.

Common identities or shared communities?

Debates over South Africa's shared identity and community are ongoing, showing that the ways in which Butler's commentary was received, both in his own time and now, are not unusual. In the preface to *Becoming Worthy Ancestors: Archive, Public Deliberation and Identity in South Africa* (2011), Xolela Mangcu asks "how could nations possibly speak about a shared sense of identity in pluralistic societies where individuals and groups also have multiple identities?" (vii), showing that perhaps it is unfair to charge Butler with speaking for the interests of all English-speaking South Africans from an epistemologically limited position, and failing to take into account the diverse plethora of English-speaking South Africans in his imagined community. It seems inevitable that we are all limited in our perspectives, capable only of seeing what the lens of our historical positioning allows.

Mangcu offers a pragmatic epistemological alternative to the idea of grasping after a common national identity (a dubious aspiration for a country like South Africa). In his introductory chapter, "Evidentiary Genocide: Intersections of Race, Power and the Archive," he outlines a distinction "between shared identity and common identity, for while we cannot speak of a common identity and experiences, even within a group of people, the concept of 'shared identity', by definition, suggests the existence of multiple individuals and groups who have a stake in the continued existence of the nation" (1). This gives rise to a much more pluralistic sense of both community and archive. Hamilton shows how the archive and understandings of community are linked, since in her estimation "archive" reinforces and authorises our sense of shared community as well as draws boundaries around its limits. If Mangcu's complication of the notion of community is added into this equation (for instance, communities are made up of those with 'shared' rather than 'common' identities), then the archive informing these communal formations must be similarly plural, containing scraps of commonly recognised historical narrative, as well as scraps that are alien to some citizens' personal historical memory and experience. Moreover, the archive may not contain materials that sufficiently support all citizens' experience of lived history, and may produce, in addition, mottled communities, who share in partial histories and identities.

A brief excursion into Butler's various engagements with the South African English-speaking community has been necessary, since Butler's historical context informed the founding of the NELM archive, and since those "materials," in the words of Deleuze and

Guattari, inform the institution's present configuration. It is tempting, when discussing the social and communal context out of which NELM emerged, to think of the institute in teleological, linear terms. According to this perspective, first there was Butler's social and political context, in reaction to which he saw the need to protect and preserve the English language and culture in South Africa, and then came the present, post-apartheid moment, which refutes such easy notions of authority and essentialised group identification.

It is easy to see chronological political and social development as progressive and evolutionary. However, Deleuze and Guattari refute this approach. If, as discussed in the introductory chapter, each given socio-political milieu and its attendant actions (the instantiating of laws, the founding of institutes, the social and political 'work' undertaken by a given community) is considered to be a stratum, using the parlance of *A Thousand Plateaus*, then differing strata must not be thought of in progressive or developmental terms:

To begin with, a stratum does indeed have a unity of composition, which is what allows it to be called *a* stratum: molecular materials, substantial elements, and formal relations or traits. Materials are not the same as the unformed matter of the plane of consistency; they are already stratified and come from "substrata." But of course substrata should not be thought of only as substrata: in particular, their organization is no less complex than, nor is it inferior to, that of the strata; we should be on our guard against any kind of ridiculous cosmic evolutionism. (49)

From this perspective, rather than debating whether Butler's vision and public work was either limited or progressive (or both, at various times), it may be useful to consider Butler's founding work as the substratum on which the present-day organisation is formed – the conditions of possibility informing its present day de- and reterritorialisations.

The founding impulse

Hamilton's closing chapter in Mangcu's *Becoming Worthy Ancestors*, titled "Why Archive Matters: Archive, Public Deliberation and Citizenship," presents a useful definition of the ways she wields the terms 'archive,' 'archives,' and 'the archive.' She explains: "the term 'archive' offers an epistemological and political frame that allows us to bring into view the circumscribed body of knowledge of the past that is historically determined as that which is available to us to draw on when thinking about the past" (120). 'Archive,' in this sense, is

informed by, and in turn informs, the production of ‘archives,’ so that “[h]istorically and currently, this body of knowledge has given, and gives, shape to ‘archives’. The term ‘archives’ refers to collections or storehouses of preserved historical resources which may be documentary, oral, visual, material, virtual or physical [. . .]. Both meanings are contained within the formulation ‘the archive’” (121). According to this definition, all of the institutions, departments, and monuments – in fact, all of Butler’s work in the public sphere – may be considered part of the ‘archive’ of South Africa’s becoming.

The language Hamilton uses to describe ‘archive’ illustrates Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of double articulation quite well. She implies a backward- and forward-facing gaze that should by now be familiar; we look back to the past to see what can be known of the present, with the present influencing how we access the past all the while. Hamilton herself recognises that

This is a demanding formulation. It recognises that there are complex historical processes (rather than mere accidents of preservation) that have established that some things are part of the archive while others are not. Some of these historical processes are rooted in the evidentiary paradigm that underpins Enlightenment thinking; others, as Achille Mbembe has noted, have taken a very particular form in relation to Africa, where the archive of academic and public discourse is especially fraught. (120–1)

Given this indication of the inherent ideological power of the archive, it is necessary to investigate critically the action of founding, adding to, or engaging with ‘archive’ in the way that Butler was consciously doing in the 1960s and 1970s.

If we consider ‘archive’ using Hamilton’s broad definition, then perhaps we can similarly categorise Butler as ‘archivist’ in a sense, since he was consciously inscribing and drawing the limits upon the ‘archive’ of English in South Africa in his time. It is useful to bear Butler in the role of archivist in mind when reading Susan van Zyl’s comment, in *Refiguring the Archive* (“Psychoanalysis and the Archive: Derrida’s *Archive Fever*”), that

If we are to understand the workings of the archive, and how and why archives might reconfigure themselves, we must turn not only to the inevitable surface vicissitudes of history, power and knowledge, but also to what as post-Freudians we know of the depths of its subject, the archivist. A science of the archive must concern itself not only with the way in which the archive becomes an institution and the laws that govern this institutionalisation, but also with those who authorise (in both sense) this process. (39)

Of course, integral to the question of authority and the archive, especially when drawing on Derrida's *Archive Fever* (the text to which van Zyl is responding in this piece), is the designation of the patriarch. Van Zyl reminds the reader that "a term that threads its way throughout Derrida's text is the word 'patriarch' (or 'archpatriarch'), a word that signals a concern with the often secret and mysterious power that those who appear to found the archive or, crucially, the family have over those that follow them" (41).

Derrida writes of the intersections between patriarchal authority and physical emplacement that occur in the archive, stressing that it is "in this domiciliation, in this house arrest, that archives can take place" (Derrida and Prenowitz 10). He adds that it is at the intersection of the topological and nomological, of place and law, that archives exist, and that archives must go hand-in-hand with "this *topo-nomology*, with this archontic dimension of domiciliation, with this archic, in truth patriarchic, function, without which no archive would ever come into play or appear as such" (Derrida and Prenowitz 10). If one were to take Hamilton's broad definition of the archive together with Derrida's insistence on the importance of the archive's physical, public dominion, Butler starts to strongly resemble Derrida's founding patriarch figure. This is particularly striking when one recalls the architectural nature of Butler's public aspirations – he was intensely interested in the restoration of historic buildings, and fought hard for the Settlers Monument to be a space *inside which* settler history could be housed (rather than a statue or some other kind of memorial).

An unsettled legacy

If Butler is to be considered a kind of patriarch, the authority behind the founding of a great many language and literature institutions nationwide, then his cultural, sociological, and historical sensibilities must be seen to inform the limits of archives such as NELM. Thus, this chapter's lack of closure on what, specifically, one must make of and take from Butler's cultural and artistic legacy is quite unsettling. If we cannot draw a 'limit' around the figure of Butler, how do we approach his archival 'offspring'?

A final word from Thurman is helpful in this regard:

[I]f we cringe while reading some of Butler's essays and lectures it is only partly because they are written in an idiom and describe a political context very different from our own. What keeps Butler's ideas topical may very well be their inconsistency. The call for justice, liberty, unity, and a recognition of shared humanity never wavers but, as we have seen, the 'hesitant mottled chameleon' in Butler's mind sought very different – almost contradictory – means towards achieving these goals. (268)

The idea that what keeps Butler's ideas topical is their inconsistency is, perhaps, the key to approaching Butler's contested philosophical logic. The unsettled nature of the legacy is valuable precisely because it opens up, rather than closes down, debate. The point is that the perspectival variance engendered by Butler's life work allows for varied 'lines of flight' for contemporary researchers and users of his institutions. Although Butler subscribed to the notion of singular, rather than fractured and postmodern, meaning-making, when viewed in this way, his legacy leaves space for the kind of rich debate that he was hoping for in his institutional work.

3. Early Days: NELM in its Infancy

It has been demonstrated that Butler was attempting to generate a community out of English-speaking and -writing South Africans, using a certain brand of liberal politics, the documentary traces of which remain in certain of the early collections held by NELM. The disparate and contradicting voices that comprise Butler scholarship show that the foundations of South African literary criticism are still deeply contested. On the one hand, contemporary scholars call for a more substantial recognition of Butler's tangible legacy, a legacy primarily still active through his public works. On the other hand, scholarship initiated by Mike Kirkwood and followed up by Elaine Williams takes issue with the neo-colonialist values implicated in his English project, for example the assertion by Butler that the English settlers brought with them a "democratic habit" (qtd. in Thurman 265). Butler's writings on settler history, education, the political aspirations of English-speaking South Africans, and South African arts and culture were all imbricated in this English project, which has meant that much of his archive is marked by an overarching framework that appeared to inform his public and artistic works. Thus, while his work throughout his lifetime was undoubtedly diverse, rich, and varied, it was also largely interconnected.

The usefulness of Deleuze and Guattari's conceptualisation of rhizomatic knowledge production, and the coming-into-being or 'becoming' of a body through a process of double articulation, has also been explicated. Deleuze and Guattari's system of reading and theorising such processes is inherently useful to archival work, since meaning is never imposed unidirectionally on a body of collected documentary remains, but is affected and effective in multiple ways. In addition, Butler's attempts to impose a much more authoritarian control over his English project in Grahamstown, and indeed in the English literary academy nationwide, brings to mind Derrida's theorisation of the arch-patriarch, and the spectral ways in which the archive is marked by its founder. All of these strands of thinking (both the contextual historical information pertaining to Butler's life work, and the suggested methods of approaching such work critically, through the limited glimpses afforded by the incomplete archive) can be brought to bear upon the documentary remains of Butler's public life.

This chapter seeks to use what has been unpacked thus far, both theoretically and contextually, to investigate Butler's aims for NELM in its early years, by looking at some

collected correspondence from key players in the Museum's instantiation. Although Butler was never a director of NELM, he sat on its board for the first decade of its existence and was involved in its shaping. Butler's correspondence with the Museum's first director, André de Villiers, and with the authors he personally approached to solicit donations, gives some insight into the role he saw NELM playing in the South African literary sphere. Similarly, NELM's early collecting policies might be guessed at by reading this early correspondence, including, crucially, the stock letters that were sent out to request material from authors. The early collecting policies will be of central importance when considering what kind of archive NELM was conceived as, including the breadth of its influence and the sweep of its future-facing goals in that moment.

Corroborating evidence will also be supplied by providing an overview of the authors collected before 1980. What does their demographic makeup tell us about NELM's perceived purpose in those days, and how does this intersect with the Museum's stated goals, as explicated in the correspondence soliciting donations? Finally, a look at the character placed at the centre of the early collection, Thomas Pringle, will prove instructive. It will be necessary to tease out the commonalities between Butler and Pringle as writers and cultural influencers in order to ascertain the ways in which the early collections espouse an element of nineteenth-century coloniality.

A theoretical segue

It is necessary at this stage to comment on the ways in which *A Thousand Plateaus* and *Archive Fever* might be used together, intertextually with this thesis. It has by now become clear that the subject of archive invites comparison to Deleuze and Guattari's notion of the rhizome, the process of becoming, and the concept of double articulation. Additionally, Derrida's work in *Archive Fever* on the ways collected texts might be worked upon by their authors, in a Freudian sense, has been of use in the preceding chapters. However, it is occasionally suggested in contemporary criticism that the two modes of reading a text cannot be used together, since they view the work of texts differently. This thesis hopes, at this point, to propose a way of using the two theories in tandem.

The argument for Deleuze¹ and Derrida's theoretical incompatibility rests mostly in their apprehension of language. While much of Derrida's philosophy is seen to centre on language's failure to provide fixed meaning, Deleuze's work suggests that a text's meaning (or lack thereof) is inconsequential, and that what is important is the kind of work that a text can do. Such a move (from suspicious reading techniques that focus on hermeneutics to a more instrumentalist approach) is, according to Jeffrey Nealon, presently popular in the North American critical humanities academy. He writes that "there seems to be a general sense that we've passed from the 'age of deconstruction' as the dominant 'theory' discourse in the humanities and social sciences, to a more slippery terrain that sometimes simply goes by the name 'cultural studies'" (159). Thus, "'theory' in North American humanities has passed from a phase where it was primarily a tool for producing 'new' readings of texts (remember 'reader-response'?), to a phase where theory takes itself to have a greater purchase on world-historical events" (160).

Such a move is perceptible in South African literary academia, certainly, and critics such as Sarah Nuttall (quoted in the introductory chapter of this thesis) explain the move away from a method of 'suspicious reading' to a more surfaced methodology: "there now appears a need to think about the surface as a place from which to read – power, personhood and contemporary culture – actively" ("The Rise of the Surface" 409). The South African academy is then perhaps echoing Nealon's view of the significant "cash value of Deleuze within recent theoretical discourse" which avoids "the 'despotic' legacy of any discourse whose primary pivot is the signifier" (160). For Deleuze and Guattari, "language no longer signifies something that must be believed; it signals what is going to be done" (qtd. in Nealon 160). Derrida's work, by contrast, is seen to pivot precisely on the destabilisation of the sign, and to focus exclusively on the meaning-making capacities of texts: "in the end, Derrida supposedly reduces everything to language, which is to say signification, 'meaning' and its absence" (Nealon 161). The purpose of this seeming digression is to indicate the possibility and indeed the necessity of using both lines of investigation – the material and the hermeneutic – when looking at archives such as Butler's.

¹ I use "Deleuze" rather than "Deleuze and Guattari" here because, although this thesis draws primarily on their co-authored work *A Thousand Plateaus*, it is Deleuze's work, rather than Guattari's, that is sometimes read as incompatible with a more deconstructivist reading methodology.

By Nealon's logic, critical humanities study has seen a shift from Derrida's interpretive framework to Deleuze's interest in the forces of social production, where he sees language as interesting in so far as it serves an illocutionary purpose. In the chapter titled "Postulates of Linguistics," Deleuze and Guattari devote much time to unpacking the social forces inherent in the 'order-word' – statements which generate action. Brent Adkins explains:

In order to understand this claim, let us recall from the previous plateau that the linguistic stratum functions by translation. That is, it overcodes other codes. Order-words are overcodings, ways of organizing the relation between speaking and acting. Of course, organizing the relation between speaking and acting does not require information or communication, nor does it require belief or the inculcation of belief. It only requires that certain actions follow from certain words. Order-words are not to be believed, only obeyed. (66)

Adkins' approach to Deleuze and Guattari is particularly helpful for the study of 'bodies' such as NELM, since he posits that the central concept of importance in *A Thousand Plateaus* is the assemblage. He tracks the different kinds of assemblages offered throughout the plateaus of Deleuze and Guattari's volume, paying attention to social, political, and – crucially – linguistic assemblages, and tracing their tendencies towards stasis and change. This is particularly important for a thesis that takes the linguistic formation of the book as its centre point.

Building on Adkins' point about linguistic coding, Nealon elaborates, claiming that, for Deleuze and Guattari, language "is better treated as a form of interpellation than it is as a form of mediation, communication, information, or signification. Language commands and configures [. . .] and hence it is never treated productively as the trace of an absent or future meaning" (160). Further, Deleuze is quoted at the 1972 Cerisy colloquium on Nietzsche as commenting: "[w]ith regard to the method of deconstruction of texts, I see well what it is, I admire it greatly, but I don't see it having anything to do with my own [method]" (qtd. in Nealon 161–62). Indeed, there is little to no mention of either Derrida in Deleuze's work, or vice versa. Thus far there is not much grounds for using the two theorists together, bringing both to bear on the Butler archive. It seems curious, then, that Derrida says of Deleuze, in a eulogy for the latter titled "I'm Going to Have to Wander All Alone," that he perceives in their works "a closeness or a nearly total affinity concerning the 'theses'" (3).

Nealon posits that “if Derrida and Deleuze agree on anything, it’s the irreducible role of illocutionary *force* in culture and language – oddly enough, the very thing that supposedly separates them within their current reception and deployment in America” (163). Further, Nealon believes that Derrida need not be read as concerned only with interpretation of the sign. He explains,

Despite the flood of readings that argue the contrary, Derrida’s work is quite simply *not territorialized on the signifier or on interpretation*. As he writes in ‘Signature Event Context’, ‘the word *communication* . . . opens a semantic field which precisely is not limited to semantics, semiotics, and even less to linguistics (Derrida 1982, 309). He adds, ‘meaning, the content of the semantic message, is . . . transmitted, *communicated*, by different *means*, by technically more powerful mediations. Meaning or signification, in other words, is always already inscribed within and carried along by a field of *forces* – which Derrida calls, among other things, ‘writing’. (163)

In this context, then, *Archive Fever* might be perceived as a meditation on the social forces that shape memory and text, our access to it and its range of possible extensions. Derrida’s spectral patriarch is, according to this logic, not a hidden meaning to be uncovered through suspicious interpretation, but a real, perceptible force, delineating the text’s ‘order-words’² and shaping the text’s future uses. Such an idea is acutely perceptible if one considers Butler the ‘arch-patriarch’ of his English cultural work in Grahamstown. The force of Butler’s legacy, or his Freudian ‘markings’ on Grahamstown’s future inhabitants, need not be imagined as an interpretive exercise. It can be felt, materially, in the institutional architecture of the city’s arts-producing bodies.

Such is the case for Derrida’s work presenting room for applications beyond the interpretive framework of hermeneutics. It is also worth pointing out that Deleuze and Guattari, when describing the rhizome, remind us that the rhizomatic structure does not exclude the tap root schema – it is one direction of movement among many. It is necessary to quote extensively here to clarify possible compatibilities between the two texts. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari liken the arborescent ‘tap-root’ system of apprehension to an endlessly proliferating tracing rather than the generative map produced

² The ‘order-word’ is used going forward in the sense in which Adkins uses it, to mean ‘overcoding,’ as unpacked in the section “A Theoretical Segue.”

by the rhizome. Thus, the psychoanalytic basis of *Archive Fever* is informed, according to this logic, by a

genetic axis and profound structure [that] are above all infinitely reproducible principles of tracing. All of tree logic is a logic of tracing and reproduction. In linguistics as in psychoanalysis, its object is an unconscious that is itself representative, crystallized into codified complexes, laid out along a genetic axis and distributed within a syntagmatic structure. (Deleuze and Guattari 12)

In response, Deleuze and Guattari offer the map-like system of rhizomatic production, relying on the movement of “schizoanalysis” (13), rather than the stratified system of psychoanalysis (the system of Freud, and the Derridean arch-patriarch):

The map is open and connectable in all of its dimensions; it is detachable, reversible, susceptible to constant modification. It can be torn, reversed, adapted to any kind of mounting, reworked by an individual, group, or social formation. It can be drawn on a wall, conceived of as a work of art, constructed as a political action or as a meditation. (12)

However, Deleuze and Guattari recognise that in opposing the map and the tracing (the tree root and the rhizome, or psychoanalysis and ‘schizoanalysis’), they are falling into the trap of binaric logic they see operative in the arborescent model. Thus, a modicum of convergence becomes possible within their theory:

If it is true that it is of the essence of the map or rhizome to have multiple entryways, then it is plausible that one could even enter them through tracings or the root-tree [. . .]. For example, one will often be forced to take dead ends, to work with signifying powers and subjective affections, to find a foothold in formations that are Oedipal or paranoid [. . .]. It is even possible for psychoanalysis to serve as a foothold, in spite of itself. In other cases, on the contrary, one will bolster oneself directly on a line of flight enabling one to blow apart strata, cut roots, and make new connections. Thus, there are very diverse map-tracing, rhizome-root assemblages, with variable coefficients of deterritorialization. There exist tree or root structures in rhizomes; conversely, a tree branch or root division may begin to burgeon into a rhizome. (14–5)

Thus, we need not read Deleuze and Guattari’s linguistic theses as pertaining solely to surfaced reading methodologies, and Derrida’s to hierarchical buried interpretation. It is in fact clear that Derrida’s work makes room for the generative capabilities of surface forces, and that Deleuze and Guattari’s work need not preclude suspicious, metaphorical reading.

Early correspondence

With this in mind, then, it might be suggested that Derrida's concept of the archival patriarch is a fruitful lens for thinking about NELM's founding days, without the claim necessarily being at odds with the double articulation framework that informs the previous chapter. In fact, it is possible here to attempt a kind of "map-tracing, [or] rhizome-root assemblage" (Deleuze and Guattari 15). While the archive is profoundly rhizomatic, and can be read in myriad directions according to the particular set of impressions that any given reader brings to bear upon it, the archive is not a *tabula rasa* (body-without-organs); its content works back upon the researcher. The relativism proposed by Derrida in terms of possible meaning does not signify the absence of *any* meaning. The continuities of agreed-upon meaning, the regularities of organisation, the inclusion of certain documents and exclusion of others – these are the extra-textual regions of meaningful clarity upon which readers can agree, where the configurations of Deleuzian 'force' are most visible. These textual regularities are visible in the archive in the most basic places; for example, the idea that 'this document is worthy of conservation, that one is not' or 'the teleological narrative implied by chronological organisation matters more than thematic groupings.' It only takes the regularities of sense to break down in order for us to realise how fundamentally this project of common meaning-making underpins our reading of the archive; for instance, those moments where received wisdom on what constitutes an item of historical interest is undermined. There exists in NELM's artefacts store a paint-stained pair of old underpants used by Anthony Farmer as a rag when working on set models. Such stories are carried down in the institutional lore of the place, humorous because their inclusion in the archive runs counter to these agreed upon regularities of meaning regarding historic importance. In these areas, where we implicitly and explicitly denote the historic worth of artefacts, where the archival 'order-word' becomes active, the markings of the archival patriarch are most visible.

In *Archive Fever*, Derrida concerns himself with the Freudian archive, which is interesting, since he takes into account all the permutations of the Freudian figure, through the writings in his life, to the collected archival documents, to the institution of psychoanalysis and, crucially, the transformation of Freud's home into a museum. Butler inhabits notably similar roles in his memorialised form in Grahamstown: writer of a body of work, gatekeeper of a larger institutional canon (South African English literature), founder of an archive that

has since transmuted into a museum. Thus, in Derrida's writing on the Freudian patriarch figure, one might bear Butler in mind. Derrida writes here of a Bible, inscribed by Freud's father and given to Freud as a gift. Derrida wonders whether this Bible belongs with the archive of psychoanalytic science or the personal archive of Freud, since psychoanalysis as an institution deals in the personal and the secret.

A corollary of this fluidity exists in the myriad ways that Butler's doodles are catalogued in NELM's archive. If Derrida is unsure of which archival context might naturally fit Freud's personal Bible, it has been similarly difficult for NELM's archivists to decide upon the contextual placement of Butler's personal doodles, often found on the back of institutional meeting minutes or departmental circulars. A search on NELM's database for mention of "doodles" in the Butler collection throws up 27 separate records. Some are catalogued as artworks in their own right, in keeping with how they were clearly subsequently viewed by Butler, as in the case of a "signed and mounted doodle, dated c. 1980, damaged by water in the top right hand corner, on the back of the cover page of some document relating to the English Olympiad, exhibited for sale at R300" (Mounted doodle record).

Other doodles form part of an item whose sense is governed by the fact of the artwork, so that one entry collects together disparate drawings whose paper backings appear unimportant in the context. This time the database records "Doodles, c. 1970s, including two on the bottoms of cigarette boxes, some on pages of minutes of university meetings and some on pages from an Allied Building Society notepad" (Doodles c. 1970s record). In other places still, the doodles are mentioned incidentally, as the governing sense of the item is dictated by the document on which the doodle appears, as in "[a] list of people to whom complimentary tickets for the premiere of *Richard Gush of Salem* on 7 September 1970, should be given, with Butler's doodles on the side of the photocopy" (*Richard Gush* doodles record).

The fluidity of these organisational boundaries, evidence of which is borne out in both Freud's and Butler's archives, is emphasised later in *Archive Fever*, when Derrida considers the elements required for the construction of an archive. These elements might be simplified, for the purposes of clarity, as that which informs the framework housing the archive, and that which informs what becomes collected, memorialised content itself. For the forces shaping the framework, Derrida takes the context of the archive's instantiation, the law, and the physical domicile in which the archive is to be housed. That which dictates the content is similarly multiple, residing in semantics, memory, and desire:

In the body of this inscription [the dedication in Freud's gifted Bible], we must at least underline all the words which point, indeed, toward the institution and the tradition of the law ("lawmakers"), that is to say, toward that archontic dimension without which one could not have archives, but also, more directly, toward the logic and the semantics of the archive, of memory and of the memorial, of conservation and of inscription which put into reserve ("store"), accumulate, capitalize, stock a quasi-infinity of layers, of archival strata which are at once superimposed, overprinted, and enveloped in each other. (Derrida and Prenowitz 20)

There are a few things worth highlighting here. First, Derrida's language used to describe the constitution of the archive very much echoes the language used by Deleuze and Guattari to explicate the process of 'becoming' (consider the use of terms such as 'strata,' 'layers,' 'superimposition' and 'envelopment'). Second, the boundaries between institution and archive, canon and museum, are flexible (where does Freud's Bible, inscribed by his father, belong? Or, indeed, *how* do certain items – Anthony Farmer's painted underpants, or a commemorative ceramic plate celebrating Guy and Jean's wedding anniversary – fit within the literary historical framework governing the NELM collection?). Third, the framework informing the creation of the archive bears out in its eventual constitution – thus, Sigmund's father Jakob is the "arch-patriarch" (Derrida and Prenowitz 19) of the Freudian archive, as is Freud's home, turned later into a museum of Freud. The personal becomes the institutional, and vice versa.

Similarly, the context of Butler's personal, professional, poetic, and political development forms the framework through which he becomes NELM's founding patriarch. On this point, it is worth remembering that, in a distinctly Deleuzian, material sense, such a framework plays into, and is borne out by, the physical housing of the archive as much as the semantics framing its memorialisation. The patriarchal influence is as much economic as discursive, dwelling in the bricks of the building as much as the narrative circumscribing it (in that, a network of economic and social power has generated the physical building of the archive). There is no clearer evidence for this than the fact that NELM was, for a short while, housed at the 1820 Settlers Monument, another of Butler's institutional children. The desire to house the NELM collection – birthed from a personal interest, incubated at the Rhodes University Library and the ISEA – at the 1820 Settlers Monument connects Butler's personal interest, historic lineage, and institutional clout.

The centrality of Butler's professional connections becomes clear in a series of letters from the Museum's first director, André de Villiers,³ to a Mr Austin of the 1820 Settlers Monument complex. In July 1973, he writes: "I was told informally some time ago by Professor Butler that your council had agreed to make temporary accommodation in the Monument complex available to the Thomas Pringle Collection/Documentation Centre" (Letter to Mr. Austin, 20 July 1973). By August, plans for the move are firming up, and de Villiers asks if "[p]erhaps your Council, if it agrees to lease us the accommodation, would be prepared to indicate what limits should be placed on the space available to us" (Letter to Mr. Austin, 13 August 1973). He explains, "it may be that in a year or two we will need to expand rather more than we can imagine at this stage, and it would be disastrous [sic] to discover that we had so to speak reached a brick wall" (Letter to Mr. Austin, 13 August 1973). Thus, the very brick walls surrounding the early collection are imbricated in Butler's professional reach. It is for this reason that the preceding chapter was of importance, as it laid out the particular contextual network of forces, the arch-patriarchal framework, that informed Butler's public works and legacy.

Bearing in mind Derrida's insistence on the interrelated nature of Freud's personal archive and the institutional archive of psychoanalysis, it is interesting to note the patently fluid way Butler himself perceived archival and historical influence. Indeed, Butler's conception of the many cultural institutions with which he was working is markedly expansive. In October 1972 (before NELM began its brief period of housing at the Settlers Monument), Butler writes to C.S. Barlow about the archives of the Rand Mines. He says:

There are three possible archival repositories in Grahamstown which are all likely, within the foreseeable future, to be united to create a major national Africana collection with a special, but not exclusive interest in the English-

³ The relationship between Butler and de Villiers is hard to make out. Some correspondence between the two is stored at NELM, but it pertains only to their professional contact with one another. They certainly would have had a lot to do with each other professionally, since de Villiers moved from his position as director of the ISEA, which he had held from 1972, choosing to continue to oversee the Thomas Pringle Collection when it was granted its own premises and status as a Declared Cultural Institution in 1980 (Walters 24). Butler seems to have been involved in the process of approaching authors to solicit donations throughout the 1970s, while the Documentation Centre was still housed by the ISEA organisation up until 1980, when NELM became an independent organisation and Butler was appointed to the council. A clue to Butler's perhaps overbearing presence as a council member for NELM is hinted at in a letter where de Villiers expresses regret at Butler having been unceremoniously dropped from the NELM council in 1990. De Villiers says, "It was a shock to return from sick leave and find that you had not been reappointed to Council. [. . .] We didn't always see eye-to-eye about the institution's aims nor about its management, but we shared a deep concern for its interests and a conviction that it serves a useful, valuable set of purposes" (Letter to Butler, 09 August 1990).

speaking contribution to a South African life in all its aspects. Such a collection would form a necessary adjunct to the 1820 Settler's Monument itself. (Letter to C.S. Barlow)

This mention appears to show that Butler considered all of his cultural institutional work to be connected, and that he perceived his historical, literary, and linguistic interests to all be working in the service of “the English-speaking contribution to a South African life” (Letter to C.S. Barlow). This is fairly solid evidence for the assertion that Butler's public works were part of an explicit cultural politics whereby the English language, and Englishness, are coded in benevolent and celebratory terms. This merging of institutions never came to pass, but the letter provides insight into Butler's aspirations for his Grahamstown project at this time.

An interesting reminder of the network of professional and poetic work underpinning Butler's approach to the archive he was setting up comes in the form of a scribbled poem draft found in Butler's collected correspondence. “After a Friend's Divorce,” an early version of the later published “To an Ageing Friend, After Her Divorce,” appears on the back of a copy of the standard letter that was, at that time, sent out to solicit donations of material from authors for the fledgling Thomas Pringle Collection for English in Africa (“After a Friend's Divorce,” draft). It provides a pointed glimpse into the context of Butler's literary production at the time: the donation forms would have been lying about and were being used as scrap paper.

A strong authorial voice is heard in a scribbled note that presumably originally accompanied a donation of Butler's papers. The letter, dated 1992, gives insight into the meta-archival, patriarchal role Butler was playing in relation to NELM. It sorts the material, ahead of the archivist laying hands on it, and is worth quoting in its entirety:

For NELM from F.G. BUTLER for long loan as before.

1. Correspondence from early 1950ies to +- 1976.
Have done a rough division, sending you my literary/publishing/creative stuff & my University/1820 Monument/History/Historic Grahamstown to Cory.
2. Drafts of Plays & Poems in various stages, some in duplicate. Others will follow.

N.B. Someone has “been at” these files eg. the J.M. Coetzee, F.T. Prince, Roy Campbell & other important files are empty – not that they contained many letters, but infuriating nevertheless.

3. In due course, let me have an inventory. (Letter to NELM)

This note was written in 1992, two years after Butler had retired from the board of the Museum, and so indicates his level of involvement even after the days in which he was formally connected to NELM. This chapter must, however, mostly concern itself with the phase during which Butler was not only active in an advisory capacity, but as one of the key thinkers behind the birth of the core museum collection.

At this stage, the fledgling Thomas Pringle Collection, formed out of personally collected material by Butler, had been handed over to the ISEA. Butler and André de Villiers, then director of the ISEA, simultaneously approached the Rhodes University Vice Chancellor, Dr. Hyslop, who

advised the setting up of a Steering Committee to work towards the establishment of a truly national, comprehensive collection of documents relating to the SAE cultural heritage. [. . .] The point is that SAE literature was not, at this stage, the only focus of the proposed centre, though it was of the Pringle Collection. (Letter to Butler, 10 August 1989)

The Committee was duly arranged, and on their second meeting, it became clear that not all participants were enamoured of Butler’s vision for Grahamstown’s disparate archives and libraries. De Villiers recalls much of the history in a letter to Butler that seems to have been written at Butler’s request for details to be included in his autobiography, *A Local Habitation*. De Villiers notes that Professor Maxwell of the History department, and representative of Cory Library,

Had some difficulties with the concepts implied by the term “documentation centre”. They amounted to a conviction that the centre would either compete with Cory, or swamp it. When the scope of the HSRC’s collecting activities was described [. . .], Prof. Maxwell was left in a state of considerable agitation. [. . .]

The Minutes do not record this, but reading between the lines and my own memory of the occasion suggest strongly that it was at this point that we tried to narrow the focus of the proposed Centre’s activities to material related to SAE as a language, with the primary emphasis on SAE literature. Anyway,

Prof. Maxwell stated that we were attempting to ‘turn the whole thing into another English fiesta’. (Letter to Butler, 10 August 1989)

These examples, of which there are many others, highlight a few intersecting pressures at work.

Firstly, one of the explicit traces that must be borne by NELM, left by its ‘arch-patriarch,’ is that NELM was founded as part of a desire to instantiate a certain brand of liberal-humanist English influence in South Africa. Much can be debated on the subject of Butler’s legacy, but it cannot be denied that Butler considered the English language to be the greatest gift brought to South Africa by the settlers; he says as much in various lectures and published writings. This sentiment might be found in both “The Future of English-speaking South Africa” (first published in 1968) and ““The Language of the Conqueror on the Lips of the Conquered is the Language of Slaves”” (delivered in 1975), the two most famous papers produced during the time of NELM’s founding. Butler writes, in “The Future of English-speaking South Africa” of English South Africans, that “[w]e are fortunate to have reached a stage [. . .] when the more extreme nationalist virus has burnt itself out” (116). Nevertheless, Butler implores his readers to “act in the belief that we [English-speaking South Africans] have been cast for an important role, and to perform it with intelligence, energy, and without apology” (116). Seven years later, Butler extrapolates on the “important role” to be played by English as a *lingua franca* in the South African political struggle. Thus, despite the provocative title, ““The Language of the Conqueror on the Lips of the Conquered is the Language of Slaves’,” Butler’s primary argument is that “in certain circumstances and for certain purposes, this conqueror’s language, on the lips of the conquered, is seen as the language of potentially free men. Competence in English can be an essential step in economic, cultural and political liberation” (148). By 1975, Butler’s understanding of the role of English in South Africa is admittedly more careful, but it might still be suggested that NELM was instantiated under the energies of a very specific desire: to recognise a fairly colonially-coded understanding of the role of English in Africa.

The second feature worth highlighting in this quoted archival material is the nature of the recollections themselves. All of the archival examples come from letters, the nature of which are more ephemeral, and less consciously edited, than a published work. They represent the thinking of a moment in time, rather than consciously delineated politics.

Whether this brings the reader closer to, or further away from, any sort of ‘authentic’ truth, a term we should regard with suspicion anyway, is a subject of debate. The letter to Barlow constitutes a musing, an expressed hope rather than historic fact; the poem draft and donation note show how Butler’s personal and institutional lives intersected in interesting ways; and the final missive from André de Villiers is patched together from a mixture of evidence and memory, partially taken from meeting minutes, and partially recollected by the author.

These letters, notes, drafts, and scraps are mentioned here because they point to two contradictory tendencies: the authorial, patriarchal control Butler perceived himself to have over the Thomas Pringle Collection (NELM), and the various ways his work was used interchangeably in the service of Butler’s South African English project. The institution both has and has not borne out his expressed desires – the interdisciplinary and interdepartmental connections Butler envisioned in his “Letter to C.S. Barlow” never came to fruition, although it would appear that his self-sorting of his own papers has, for the most part, been respected.

This is particularly interesting given NELM’s contemporary alignment with more multilingual forces, with a more contemporary focus on professional museology, and with a strong adherence to a much narrower definition of its ambit of influence. How does what we know of Butler’s founding desire transect with NELM’s contemporary future-facing desires? And how do we come to know what we know of Butler’s desires anyhow, mined as they are from an archive set up by this very patriarch, an archive whose boundaries are shifting and fluid, both conceptually by nature *and* according to Butler’s own early designs? Will Butler’s founding influence prove to repeat itself in tracings upon the markings of the founder, or are there ways in which the material itself resists such easy closure, working with the interruptions mapped by the future-to-come, in a map-tracing, or rhizome-root assemblage?

Early collecting practices: connecting the systemic and the personal

NELM’s contemporary goals are largely concerned with reconstituting its policies and practices to bring itself in line with international and local professional museology. One of the ways in which this intersects, very visibly, with the conditions of the archive’s founding is the attempt to impose, retrospectively, a more stringent and narrowly focussed collecting policy. This has been expressed in an ongoing reclassification of some of the older

collections, such as the Percy Fitzpatrick collection, which is organised according to an outdated accession numbering system, and also in what the Museum chooses to actively seek in terms of material going forward, as set against the contents of earlier collections. It is instructive, therefore, to look briefly at the ways in which NELM expressed its purpose through official channels at the time of its founding, before overviewing how this translates in terms of those collections accessioned before 1980.

In the standard letter sent out to multiple authors at the time of the founding of the Thomas Pringle Collection for English in Africa, the institution is still very much aligned with the work of the ISEA. In fact, as Paul Walters points out in “Origin and Early History of the ISEA,” one of the criteria for de Villiers’ appointment as director of the ISEA in 1972 was his familiarity with the work of the Thomas Pringle Collection:

Clearly, De Villiers had already been extensively involved in the new major work of the Institute, because the terms of his appointment included the motivation that it was “to ensure continuity in the correspondence on the Thomas Pringle Collection”. The latter had been formally inaugurated at a special meeting of the board on 8 June, where it was designated “The Thomas Pringle Collection for English in Africa, comprising of primary source materials for the English language and literature in South Africa and in Africa further afield”. Again, Guy Butler was the prime mover. (15)

Accordingly, the requested materials are broad, and largely to do with ‘English’ in South Africa, rather than only English literature specifically. Evidence of Butler’s perception of the collection falling into his broader Grahamstown-wide (indeed nationwide) English project is seen in his contextualising the work of the ISEA in the aforementioned letter to donors by mentioning “*New Coin Poetry Quarterly* [. . .]; the South African English dictionary project; various research projects [. . .]; the premieres of several indigenous plays, including Fugard’s *Boesman and Lena*; undergraduate and honours courses in African literature in English” (Letter to donors). If one adds to this collection of achievements the Molteno Project, a far-reaching and transformative intervention into literacy and second-language English acquisition teaching in South Africa in the late 1970s through to the early 1990s,⁴ then listed

⁴ The Molteno Project was the flagship mission of the ISEA for approximately 15 years (from its initial tabling by André de Villiers in 1976 to its departure to new headquarters in Braamfontein circa 1991), developed by the then honorary director of the ISEA, linguist and personal friend of Butler’s Len Lanham, and run for many years by Paul Walters. The initiative, named for the fruit company that provided the funding for the project, worked to support literacy and English language acquisition in rural and under-funded South African schools through a

here are the major projects with which the ISEA, and Butler, were concerned at this time, showing how the work of NELM was seen as fitting into a nexus of English cultural, linguistic, and literary interventions.

Here, again, can be seen the cross-fertilisation of Butler's institutional and creative works. If Butler did not help compose the actual letter soliciting donations, he certainly sent it out to numerous of his writer friends, with additional chatty notations. The tendency to trade on these personal connections is not limited to Butler, either. In 1974, de Villiers sends a note to Yvonne Burgess in thanks for a recent donation of material. The letter is written in his capacity as Museum director, and yet reads as a personal missive:

I don't know if Guy has written to acknowledge receipt of the material you sent to the Collection as listed in your letter of 25th May – if he has then this is superfluous, except that I'd like to say thanks very much indeed personally, and warn you that we're going to keep coming back at you forever. Price of fame, dear.

Are you well? Are you happy? What are you working on now?

(Letter to Yvonne Burgess)

The official letter to donors also points to the fact that the collection was not as closely defined, in terms of its collecting ambit, as it is these days. It informs the prospective donor:

The Institute for the Study of English in Africa (founded 1964) has recently decided to expand its collection of materials into a research library of documents, books, illustrations and other items relating to the English-speaking heritage in South Africa and to the use of English as an African language. This will be called the Thomas Pringle Collection for English in Africa. (Letter to donors)

Interestingly, the original core collection is referred to as a "research library" rather than an archive, a diction choice that perhaps reflects that the archive was always intended for active engagement rather than pure conservation. In the same letter, the function of the collection is delineated as three pronged. Donation of materials ensures for the author's work "(1) Secure

teacher training programme and the creation and dissemination of teaching materials. The Molteno Project still exists today as an NGO, although it is no longer connected to the work of the ISEA. Paul Walters credits the Molteno Project with "revolutionis[ing] the teaching and learning of initial, mother-tongue literacy and the accelerated acquisition of English as a second language throughout southern Africa (including Botswana and, later, Namibia)" (18).

preservation for the future. (2) Cataloguing and care by a skilled library staff. (3) Study and use by a strong and growing body of undergraduate and research students” (Letter to donors). Additionally, the collections will pertain to “the English-speaking heritage in South Africa” (Letter to donors), rather than South African literature specifically. This level of flexibility is echoed in the options presented to authors for ways of depositing material: “[w]hile we would naturally prefer you to donate materials, you may be reluctant to part with them. In this event, you may lend them to us, either for safe keeping, or for cataloguing, photo-copying and return” (Letter to donors). These days it is rare for the Museum to undertake to dedicate curatorial time and resources to photocopies (when NELM will not be able to claim to house the original, primary artefact), or to documents on permanent loan, since they might be reclaimed at any time.

The institutional borders of the early Thomas Pringle Collection are thus quite permeable, and this is visible in how it defines itself (broadly, pertaining to South African English), what it would accept (donations, loans, or copies), and its context of existence (coming from a network of artistic production, academic research, publishing, linguistics, and education). This might be a function of its fledgling presence on the South African literary scene at the time: in order to solidify its position, it needed to take in a broad sweep of materials, as it was competing with larger, more economically attractive, established libraries and archives for the attention of local authors.

The most notable competition faced by NELM at this time was with the University of Texas, at Austin, which was developing an archive collecting Commonwealth writers. A professor called Joseph Jones was, in 1960, visiting South Africa on a Fulbright American Literature lectureship, and was simultaneously sounding out authors on the possibility of their donating work to the archive at Texas. His travel diary from this time is now housed at NELM, and surprisingly little mention is made of Butler, even though Jones was making connections with many South African authors on his journey. He notes in his diary of seeing Butler’s wife Jean at least twice during his first visit to Grahamstown, over an evening and then at a “very nice dinner party at Butler’s” (Jones diary) at High Corner, although Butler himself appears to have been away.

Certainly, Jones had already approached Butler for his papers by this stage, as is recorded in Butler’s collected correspondence from the time. It seems they first met at a Modern Language Association conference, as Jones writes to Butler in 1959, “I’m sorry

indeed that you were obliged to fly off home before we could meet again at the MLA” (Letter to Butler, 13 January 1959). In their next correspondence, just before Jones’ visit to Grahamstown, he expresses sadness at missing Butler, but assures Butler:

I shall hold you to your promise about some of your books for the Texas library, and I’d be most delighted to negotiate for manuscripts, too. [. . .] I’m hoping to assemble the beginnings of an interesting body of source-material relating to recent and contemporary South African writers, if possible [. . .]. But we can talk about this at length sometime later.

(Letter to Butler, 19 March 1960).

Butler and Jones maintain a cordial relationship for the rest of their working lives, with further correspondence pertaining largely to Jones’ inclusion of Butler in an introduction to African literature he was compiling. No further mention is made of the purchase of Butler’s manuscripts, and it must be assumed that Butler explained his own plans and declined Jones’ offer, either in person or in a return letter.

That Butler was aware of Jones as a threat, however, is clear. He recollects in *A Local Habitation* that the idea for NELM was conceived upon being first contacted by Jones:

In the late ’fifties I was approached by a charming American professor who wanted to buy manuscripts of South African authors, including my own. This made me think of the need for a local repository for such materials, which I started gathering. (235)

By 1960 Jones was certainly in talks with all the major authors of the day. He was in discussion with, among others, Lionel Abrahams, and was particularly interested in securing the purchase of Bosman’s papers for the Texas archive. It seems Abrahams was present while the Bosman deal was finalised, as is related in the 26 July 1960 entry of Jones’ diary: “us to Mrs R.J. Lakes [. . .] along with Lionel Abrahams, to discuss possible purchase of Bosman papers. Her price was £300, wants to let S. Africans know papers are for sale before closing a deal. Tea and talk with Mrs L., her husband, brother-in-law, & children (presents from Lionel, leaving for Cape Town + Europe tomorrow)” (Jones diary).

Thus, despite Abrahams’ knowledge of the sale of other papers to Texas, and despite the friendly relations that appear to have been established between Abrahams and Jones,

Butler's longstanding claim to Abrahams' loyalty seems to have won out in the end, as Abrahams' response to Butler's donations request in July 1973 promises:

For the Pringle Collection..... I have no visions of selling manuscripts to Texans or anyone else. I think I must bequeath my papers to the Pringle Collection. [. . .] Just now I'm not in the state to arrange things so that it would make sense to lend you the work for copying. Perhaps a few months hence I'll let your call spur me into doing the editing I've been wanting to do for a long time.

As for letters, I have a horrible, indiscriminate accumulation bundled into bags and boxes, dating over perhaps 20 years. [. . .] But could you want that pile of old stuff anyway? It seems to me to pose problems – so much of it not relevant to English in Africa, and some of it is confidential. Many of the letters have been precious to me, but I think unless I can sort and weed them they ought to burn. (Letter to Butler)

It seems, on the contrary, that Butler very much *did* want “that pile of old stuff” since NELM was, as is evidenced here, playing catch-up with the more established and economically competitive Texas archive. Jones might have had international and financial clout, but Butler had ready access to the network, which was of inestimable value. If the Jones travel diary shows anything, it is that a significant amount of time, energy, and money was being dedicated to making the connections that were already established for Butler. This exchange points to the way in which early collections were shaped around personal connections, and were expansive in their reach – Abrahams himself did not anticipate that all of his papers would be preservation-worthy.

The elasticity of the early collections policy allows the ISEA and Butler to approach authors through personal connection. Butler can approach friends with literary connections and interests, and spread the word about the collection through his social and collegial circles, without all donors necessarily having to be published authors (this is one of NELM's criteria for accepting donations at present – that the writer must have been published). It is notable that most of the instances of these letters found among Butler's papers are addressed personally, by Butler, to a colleague or friend, and include a chatty note. Thus, the letter that Ralph Currey received is addressed to him and signed off by hand, and Butler adds a postscript reading: “PS. Think hard about this one, please. Progress on *Africa Within Us* has been slow, I'm afraid, but is speeding up now!” (Letter to R.N. Currey). A similar approach seems to have been used with Abrahams, who begins his reply thanking Butler for inviting

his poetic contribution to “the anthology” (Letter to Butler). It seems that the proposed anthology, to be edited by Butler and published by Oxford University Press, was eventually dropped because too much of the planned material was banned under the Censorship Board of the time. However, both notes form a reminder of Butler’s, Abrahams’ and Currey’s relationships outside this matter of the Thomas Pringle Collection, in the capacities of editor and contributing poets respectively.

Such personal relationships, chance encounters, and unregulated connections proliferate in the framework surrounding the setting up of the Thomas Pringle Collection. What was being devised as a methodological attempt to document South Africa’s literary contributions to the English-speaking project was often informed by the fairly unsystematic method of starting with one’s colleagues and acquaintances, and working from there. Hedley Twidle makes the point that most collections function in this way, informed both by the inflexible and rigorous power systems governing their existence and also by more contingent factors of personality and human connection.

Twidle’s contribution to Van der Vlies’ *Print, Text and Book Cultures in South Africa*, titled “From *The Origin of Language* to a Language of Origin: A Prologue to the Grey Collection,” spends much time unpacking the colonial systems of governance that shaped the history of Grey’s collection, or as he puts it, “the complex networks of exchange across the southern hemisphere through which it was constituted” (253). However, he also notes, briefly, that “a literary approach to the [Grey] [C]ollection still wonders what traces can be discerned of the many interview, transcriber-informant ‘couples’ and other text-making encounters on the colonial periphery that gradually accumulate in late nineteenth-century Cape Town” (258). Twidle’s comment points to the element of chance involved in the generation of a collection. For instance, it is an element outside of the methodological systems being constructed to set up the Thomas Pringle Collection that allows Butler to draw on personal connection to Currey as leverage for soliciting a donation. Chance is at work in the “text-making encounter” (258), but not, as Deleuze and Guattari say of the settling of molecular elements into molar bodies, brute chance, since it is a function of the literary/academic circles informing Butler’s work that the authors know one another at all.

Following Deleuze and Guattari’s stratification model, Butler’s mutually influential roles as poet, editor, and spearhead of the new Thomas Pringle Collection might be characterised as differing strata. Thus, the stratum of the early Thomas Pringle Collection is

founded upon the stratum of Butler's other professional roles, which are interdependent in themselves. Crucially, NELM's early collections are not a pre-existing structure (an empty building, an open shelf) that are 'populated' with material from appropriate authors; rather, the very existence and shape of the Collection comes about *because* of Butler's other professional and creative networks. Deleuze and Guattari remind us, in "The Geology of Morals" (a chapter in *A Thousand Plateaus*), that "if we assume the presence of an elementary or even molecular population in a given milieu, the forms do not preexist the population, they are more like statistical results" (48).

This consideration of the molecular and molar building elements of the early Collection suggests a process of double articulation, whereby the contextual information already furnished on Butler's exploits in the service of the English language in South Africa form the content out of which the Thomas Pringle Collection might be expressed (content and expression being the two sides, the doubled 'pincer' of double articulation). We must remember not to think of this process in developmental, linear, terms. Deleuze and Guattari stress that "[t]he difference between materials and substantial elements is one of organization; there is a change in organization, not an augmentation" (49). Thus, the colony, evidenced on the one hand in the geography of Grahamstown (to which I shall return later) and on the other hand in the literatures and documents produced in its wake, is *newly organised* in an archive – it is a different expression of a linked framework of power.

Both influencing factors in the creation of the early collecting policy, namely the systemic and the personal, which are, in turn, interrelated strata of the Collection's organisation, are present in the letters between Butler, Abrahams, and Currey. The multitudes of stock letter left over from those initial days (turning up in the NELM collection even as the scrap paper on which poem drafts are recorded, giving the reader a view of the piles of sheets that must have been present on Butler's desk) suggests the methodological way in which writers were approached for material. The handwritten additions and emendations on the letters (of which those quoted here provide just a small sample) point to the more personal exchanges on which archival collecting is also based. There is something to this interconnection within the methodology of growing the early collections, where the systematic soliciting of donations meets the slippages that occur in those connections and relationships that escape the striated grids of the institution.

This method of building a collection speaks to the foundations on which this archive is constructed. Despite Butler's best efforts at a categorical and objective approach to the project, it appears that the archive is fundamentally rhizomatic, and doubly articulated, gesturing to potentially approachable authors from Butler's other professional roles as poet, professor, and public speaker. It is impossible for Butler to have conceived of the shape of NELM's early collections without influence from his overlapping personae, and, obviously, it was Butler's placement within this network of writers and thinkers that made his spearheading of NELM possible.

An overview of the early collections

At this stage, it becomes necessary to provide a brief overview of the shape of the early manuscripts collection, as it will prove instructional on which authors were being approached and which authors were responding to the proposition of a local repository. The collections examined were all donated before 1980, a date chosen as the boundary between NELM's 'early days' and its coming-into-being as a governmentally funded museum. 1980 is the seminal point at which the name settled on the National English Literature Museum, and this is the stage at which NELM as a body came to resemble the organisational structure that is recognisable today.

In the interest of brevity, the following list includes all collections containing more than 50 items, ensuring that notice is taken of authors who were supporting the Museum seriously, either themselves, or in their names, as material might have been donated by others. This is to weed out collections created incidentally, because material on the author might have arrived in another's collection (correspondence, for example, can sometimes work in this way). Additionally, authors for whom the initial contributions may not have been substantial, but whose collections were added to frequently over the time span indicated, have been added as a secondary consideration. Collections to which donations were added seven or more times in the seven-year span under question have been selected as "Frequently donated." Repetitions across the two categories have been deleted, so that authors only appear once (i.e. some substantial collections might also have been augmented frequently, but the two categories are intended to be used together, and so duplicates have been removed).

Substantial collections

Bosman, Herman Charles	Packer, Joy
Butler, Guy	Pater, Elias (pseud.)
Cloete, Stuart	Paver Collection
Cope, Jack	Plomer, William
Dlomo, HIE	Schreiner, Olive
Eglinton, Charles	Sculley, William Charles
Fitzpatrick, Percy	Winterbottom, J.M.
Meintjes, Johannes	

Frequently donated

Brink, André	Macnab, Roy
Campbell, Roy	Miller, Ruth
Clouts, Sydney	Naude, Adele
Currey, Ralph Nixon	Rive, Richard
Delius, Anthony	Roberts, Sheila
Fugard, Athol	Sephamla, Sydney Siphon
Gordimer, Nadine	Small, Adam
Gray, Stephen	Swift, Mark
Lerner, Laurence	

Measuring the substantial collections only is not a fool-proof system, since it measures only the number of items donated in this period, but an item might register differently in terms of significance. For instance, a single letter, or a set of draft manuscripts, might both be registered as one item, respectively, by the archivist accessioning the donation. It is for this reason that frequent donors have also been included, to gain an idea of those for whom the new collection clearly featured in their movement through the literary/critical scene of the day. The list points to those donating regularly and substantially to the museum, and might be taken as imperfectly representative of the shape of the early collections. It must be noted that this research is confining itself to primary literary artefacts, and in this particular instance, to individual authors, since secondary material such as published works and newspaper clippings might be bought or sourced independently to populate the research library; notable publishers collections that donated substantially during these years include literary magazines *Contrast* and *Donga*.

In other words, the primary authors amassed in the artefacts collection depends on NELM acknowledging and recognising the author as a writer of worth, and *also* on the donor (not necessarily the same person as the author under whose name the collection exists)

recognising NELM as a reputable institution. Materials that might be purchased depends only on one side of this process of recognition. It is the relational connectedness that is of particular interest here, or what Twidle calls “the transcriber-informant ‘couples’ and other text-making encounters” (258) in relation to colonial linguistic and anthropological research. In such a way is the making of the artefacts collection doubly articulated, with each half of the donor/archivist pairing relying on the other for recognition in order for the collection to come into being.

Some brief initial observations on this narrow sample of authors show that NELM’s calls for donations were sent to (or at least, were answered by) primarily white, male authors. This much is to be expected given the timeframe, 1973–1979, when much writing by authors of colour was either banned or not in print, and when authors of colour were not being afforded the same institutional access to critical and creative opportunities. However, since NELM at this stage was joining the ranks of the network of institutions forming this framework of creative ‘gatekeeping’ in South Africa, and since Butler’s tireless work in support of the South African English language and culture was branded as explicitly liberal, non-racist, and in support of equal opportunities, it bears mentioning. The lack of women in the collection has perhaps not been so actively recognised as a gap in the collections in later years.

Altogether, 448 collections were accessioned during these years, amounting to 2113 records. Of the total collections, removing publications, organisations, and catch-all categories such as “Reviews,” only 364 are verifiable in terms of race and gender (many authors and donors are so obscure as to no longer be easily searchable). Using these imperfect statistics, and some informed guesswork, the contributors during these years might very roughly be said to comprise 12% authors of colour and 26% women, and while in all probability this was an above average representation in the literary arts for the time, it still leaves the contemporary NELM with a substantial task regarding historic redress.

Of additional interest is what might be broadly termed a qualitative rather than quantitative overview, provided by Karin de Jager and Ingrid Winterbottom, on the subject of the Thomas Pringle Collection. The draft overview is undated, although it is presumably a draft of the 1976 print article “The National English Documentation Centre, Grahamstown,” published in *Cruix*. Another list follows here, this time of those authors mentioned in the overview, signalling not the quantity of items donated, but the importance attached to the

collection as perceived by NELM. As de Jager and Winterbottom note, the mentioned collections signal “the highlights of the Collection as well as the nature of the material that interests it” (“The Thomas Pringle Collection” 1). Collections noted in the overview, in the order in which they appear, are as follows:

Thomas Pringle Collection overview

Pringle, Thomas	Brett Young, Jessica	Livingstone, Douglas
Schreiner, Olive	De la Mare, Walter	Small, Adam
Slater, Francis Carey	Blunden, Edmund	Delius, Anthony
Brettell, N.H.	Cloete, Stuart	Jacobson, Dan
Bancroft, Francis	Du Plessis, Enslin	Paton, Alan
Cripps, Arthur Shearly	Black, Stephen	Fugard, Athol
Macnab, Roy	Gordimer, Nadine	Jonker, Ingrid
Plomer, William	Van der Post, Laurens	Breytenbach, Breyten
Campbell, Roy	Krige, Uys	Packer, Joy
Fagan, H.A.	Meintjes, Johannes	Butler, Guy
Malherbe, D.F.	McIntosh, John	Maynard, Kathy
Eglinton, Charles	Cope, Jack	Gilliland, Barend

The number of substantive donors of these years, 1973–1974, is significantly smaller, with just Guy Butler, Jack Cope, Johannes Meintjes, Elias Pater, William Plomer, and Charles Eglinton constituting large collections (or at least, large by contemporary standards – it is worth remembering that at this time the Museum had only been actively soliciting donations for a few years). Of the 36 writers mentioned in the overview, only 19% are women, and fewer still writers of colour – both groups, but especially black writers, are underrepresented even in relation to the collections holdings themselves.

The points of difference between those authors whose donations formed the bulk of the collection, and those who were considered important by the archival staff, are instructive. Is it possible that, in including authors in an overview who did not represent much physical shelf space at NELM, de Jager and Winterbottom are signalling not the shape of the holdings so much as the shape they wished it to take? For what reason was such a substantive donor as Elias Pater left off the list, for example? Why do black and women writers feature even less, statistically, than they do in the overall holdings? This brief foray into statistical research is flawed, primarily because this research is discursive and not scientific; however, it might still be suggested that these lists show, at the most basic levels, the names deemed important

enough to mention. In this most fundamental sense, this collection of names shines a light on actors in the established literary canon in South Africa at this time, as perceived by NELM, and its complicated relationship with donors, collections management, and its own self-portrayal.

Hedley Twidle comments, in his introduction to the Grey Collection, on the limits of the straightforward overview. Frustrated at the “overweening comparative philology that drove so much nineteenth-century linguistic enquiry,” Twidle asks, “what is the contemporary reader to make of the immense textual and geographical variety Bleek records in his 1858 sectional catalogue?” (255). He is speaking here of the Bleek and Lloyd Collection at the National Library of South Africa, of which he calls the Grey Collection “the precursor and enabler” (255), but the thinking might equally be applied to contemporary research on NELM, founded in the second half of the twentieth century. NELM’s founding figure was so imbricated in the colonial markings that informed the English South African heritage of Butler’s day, that Twidle’s comments on nineteenth-century archive-building remain incisive:

How, one wonders, might the larger narratives implied by the abbreviated entries of the catalogue best be approached? What methodology would take one beyond just another “General survey” or “Some notes on” (in the phraseology of earlier scholarship on the collection), or the temptation simply to reiterate the listed items [. . .]? (255)

How to provide any kind of enduring statement on such a diverse collection of artefacts?

The reader is told that “[a]s a collector, Grey was an opportunist, wide ranging and speculative rather than focused or ‘completist’; the result is a heterogenous and – one is tempted to say – unresolved assemblage of primary materials on which later scholars (who never materialized) were to work” (Twidle 256). Although NELM’s early holdings were put together much more systematically, with clearer goals in mind regarding the future uses of the collection, the collecting ambit has since narrowed, and so the proposed uses of the space have shifted slightly. This means that much of the early collection is simply historical, rather than specifically literary, made up of the kind of artefacts that would never be accepted in the first place at the contemporary NELM. One example of many is the expansive Stuart Cloete collection, which includes a sizeable collection of pan-African artworks that might now be deemed to be more properly housed elsewhere, were they

offered in the contemporary moment. Cloete's correspondence with de Villiers, when considering the terms of his donation, make clear that NELM was seeking as much material as it could find, for exactly the reason speculated earlier – that NELM was attempting to establish itself on the map of South African heritage institutions. De Villiers' first letter to Cloete expresses great excitement at the

samples of material which you are willing to pass on to us. This is exactly the sort of thing – in addition to literary manuscripts – which we are interested in. Boston Public Library has been operating in our field for ages now, but I hope very much that if other S.A. writers give us the kind of support which you propose, our collection will become as famous as theirs.

(Letter to Cloete, 28 June 1974)

This expansive collecting policy was possible in the days before NELM was defined as a specifically literary institution, as evidenced in de Villiers' second missive to Cloete:

Engravings and Art – it sounds horribly greedy but we want everything you're prepared to give us. [. . .] We are going to establish a literary museum in the collection – along the lines of the Afrikaans one in Bloemfontein – with, I hope, reconstructions of authors' studies and so on. Wouldn't your library go well in that sort of set-up? (Letter to Cloete, 23 September 1974)

The core functions of the modern museum are such that these kinds of outlying collections cannot simply be abandoned – the contract of care undertaken by the archivist remains necessarily binding, and rightly so. If the collecting ambit were to shift again in forthcoming years, what would be made of precious items lost because in their day they were considered irrelevant? Thus, every museum collection must be characterised by a certain disparateness, since it is held in the double bind of faithfulness to the collecting priorities of its precursors, as well as the potential and unknown needs of its future public.

For Twidle, the answer lies in following those rhizomatic nodes, the lines of flight, to which the archive suggests itself. He notes that the most comprehensive account of the Grey Collection is to be found in Donald Kerr's *Amassing Treasures for All Time* (2006). Twidle argues, however, that Kerr's success lies partly in narrowing the scope of the work, so that the text begins by explicitly outlining that which it will not be covering:

It is not a study of Grey's political activities, there is little attempt to explore the psychology of collecting, nor does it cover the more specialized areas of

comparative linguistics and philology. Yet my [Twidle's] account will suggest how impossible it is to disentangle these threads and that their vexed interrelation constitutes all that is most interesting about the collection as both an object of knowledge and also a node of late nineteenth-century knowledge production, one that has, for a variety of reasons, subsided into a kind of stasis and inertia. (Twidle 257)

If NELM is not to follow this trajectory, if it is to avoid fading into “a kind of stasis and inertia,” (and in fairness, by all indications it is reterritorialising in its contemporary moment), then tracking the “vexed interrelation” of the personalities making up the early collections, and examining the bedrock of the Museum as a “node” of twentieth-century knowledge production, becomes crucial.

A note on Thomas Pringle and NELM's core collection

In following the interrelations of personalities present in the early collections, and in thinking through Butler's personal markings, his influencers, and the literary forefathers by whom he is haunted, it would be remiss not to pay brief attention to Thomas Pringle. The Collection, grown out of Butler's personal acquisition of Pringle papers, is named for this figure, and it is in this relationship, perhaps, that the links between the personal and the institutional become most clear. If the early collections are characterised by an overt attempt at systematic organisation, and yet are consistently marked by reminders of personal connection, then perhaps this is due to Butler's success at making his personal affinities with the historic character of Pringle part of his professional landscape. It is in this connection that NELM's genealogical imbrication in the nineteenth-century project of museum building and knowledge production might be mapped. This point of connection enables us to draw a line of flight, between Pringle and Butler, and between nineteenth-century colonial Cape Town and twentieth-century (newly) postcolonial Grahamstown.

It is useful to turn here to Saul Dubow, speaking of Cape Town's city centre:

In the course of a brief stroll through the old Company Gardens, first laid out under Dutch occupation, the tourist may encounter the National Library of South Africa, the Iziko South African Museum and National Gallery, as well as Parliament and the cluster of buildings that housed the country's first institutions of higher learning.

It is easy to overlook the underlying messages and sinews of association that link these fine buildings. Taken together, they bear testimony to a set of overlapping, interlinked networks of power and authority that significantly shaped the Cape's distinctive colonial identity. Within their portals a considerable repository of scientific and societal knowledge was assembled and conserved. They all exemplify, in subtly different but complementary ways, the ethos of progress and improvement that took root from the beginning of the nineteenth century. (1)

Grahamstown, too, is home to a set of interlinked colonial buildings that bear similar resonances in relation to Butler's English project, if one considers the colonial historicity of the architecture of the Rhodes University campus, from the Drostdy arch, to the old military barracks (later the department of Linguistics, with which the work of the ISEA was so closely aligned). One might take into one's gaze the old St Peter's building, saved from demolition by Butler himself, and later inhabited by the ISEA and NELM in its early days as the Thomas Pringle Collection.

Laurence Wright recalls that

[t]he derelict St Peter's Home, former mother house of the Sisters of the Community of Resurrection, was a crumbling ruin smothered in creeper and in dire need of restoration and a new use. This historic red-brick William White-Cooper building had narrowly been saved from demolition some years before by the intervention in senate of Guy Butler. (35)

Were one to follow NELM's germination from the departments of English and Linguistics (housed in the former colonial army barracks), one might trace the Museum's journey via the Rhodes University Library, to the old house on Rhodes Avenue that has since been expanded into the current university Psychology clinic, the St Peter's building with the ISEA, to the 1820 Settlers Monument, until NELM finally comes to rest (until 2016) in the "Old Presbytery" that, de Jager notes, "had been Bishop Moran's house where the Hope Town diamond had been identified in 1867 and is also known as the 'Priest's House'" ("The Story of NELM" 86). The Priest's House was on loan to NELM, not incidentally, from the Albany Museum, repository of much of Grahamstown's colonial history. Seen this way, one might map out the colonial geography of Grahamstown in much the same way that Dubow links the institutions and architecture of Cape Town's city centre to its ongoing systems of knowledge production. Thus, drawing connections between Butler and Pringle might not be

so fanciful, in light of Deleuze and Guattari's encouragement when it comes to rhizomatic map-making.

Dubow, in his rich and comprehensive *A Commonwealth of Knowledge: Science, Sensibility, and White South Africa 1820–2000* (2006), writes a character sketch of Pringle that is striking in its similarity to writings on Butler:

As a lowlander Scot displaced onto the eastern Cape frontier, Pringle was 'precariously situated on the threshold of culture and nation' in South Africa as well as Scotland. For this reason he was, as Damian Shaw argues, a 'Borderer' in a double sense. Pringle's attempts to invest the exotic eastern Cape landscape with an aesthetic and moral meaning, and his efforts to envision Africa within a recognizably European optic, point to the indeterminacy and ambivalence that so characterized nascent anglophone colonial identity. (29)

The points of similarity between Butler and Pringle are obviously striking: both sketching out an African identity while remaining aware of connections to Europe; both intent on generating a poetically truthful representation of the South African landscape; both interested not only in poetic aesthetics but also moral citizenship. This doubled identity and ambivalence about anglophone heritage is a central characteristic of the development of South Africa's middle classes, as Dubow explains. Fairburn and Pringle, operating as a force for liberalism and humanism at the Cape in the late 1820s, are often linked to

the campaign by the missionary emancipationist John Philip to improve the legal and social rights of the indigenous Khoi population, the fight against slavery, and the battle to establish representative political institutions at the Cape. It is around these related causes that the core foundational myths of South African liberalism have been constructed. (Dubow 27)

These morally laudable sensibilities are criticised, however, by "[r]adical and Marxist critics of the liberal school [. . . who] are more inclined to focus on the links between Fairburn's advocacy of colonial liberties and his role as a spokesperson for the Cape's nascent mercantile bourgeoisie" (27). In fairness to Pringle, he is certainly remembered as the more politically and morally committed of the pair, fighting for abolitionist causes throughout his life, unlike Fairburn, whose opinions on race and the rights of South Africa's indigenous inhabitants become markedly more conservative as he ages (Dubow 28). Even so, it is interesting to note how these aesthetic, moral, economic, and political concerns become

mixed up with middle-classness, and how they are expressed in the development of knowledge institutions (in Pringle and Fairburn's case, as founders of the *South African Commercial Advertiser*, and in Butler's case, as the founder of NELM).

These founding figures of Butler and Pringle can be read as twinned in many ways, situating Butler as patriarch and Pringle as arch-patriarch of the contemporary institution respectively. It seems appropriate, then, that the Museum was originally named for Pringle, and that his documentary remains acted as seedlings for the modern literary archive in South Africa. Of course, NELM is no longer named for Pringle, and has become more commonly associated with Schreiner research than with Pringle scholarship. It will be interesting to investigate the extent to which this signals a move away from its founding spectres (the reputation for a Grahamstown-specific brand of liberal-humanist middle-classness, for example, from which the modern institution is trying to distance itself), and in which ways the founding influences are retained.

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In these myriad ways, the landscape of NELM's early aims, collections, institutional functions, and relationships is of crucial importance to an understanding of its contemporary role. The disparate patchwork of NELM's early building blocks, in terms of people and policy, is variously knitted together by Derrida's understanding of patriarchal haunting, and Deleuze and Guattari's demonstration of the ways in which bodies might be rhizomatically structured. Such institutional developments are necessarily replete with reflections, shadows, tracings and maps leading to new directions, always articulated relationally, always doubled with the conditions of possibility out of which the body grows, and out of which new formations might be produced.

The shape of the foundation upon which NELM finds itself is borne out by the early correspondence, which speaks to a flexible conception of archive and in turn spawns a markedly fluid early collecting policy. NELM's institutional relationships with other Grahamstown bodies, such as the 1820 Settlers Monument and Cory Library, as well as the personal relationships that emerge out of the founding figure being creatively employed himself, means that an overview of the early collections throws up regularities that might be

read in terms of the politics of the Grahamstown literary set of the day. There are politics present, also, in how one chooses to represent the collections, and which face of the Museum this choice will show. Finally, if the texture of NELM's holdings before 1980 seem imbricated in Butler's liberal-humanist politics, then it is interesting to note the similarities and reflections visible when Butler is twinned with Pringle, another spectre haunting the centre of the collection.

4. A Book of South African Verse

It would be remiss to discuss Butler's brand of cultural politics, which informed the way he spearheaded the early formation of NELM, without considering poetic values and voice. He self-identified first as a writer, after all, and so it is in this sphere that his most considered utterances on his world might be found. It has so far been made clear that all of Butler's numerous professional and artistic employments were interconnected, a "complex entanglement of interests" (*A Local Habitation* x), in his own words. Such interests together forged a response to the place of English in South Africa that was controversial in its day, interestingly both for its radicalism (Butler's fight to include South African literature on educational syllabi was met much resistance initially), and later for its outdated liberalism, a charge that still follows him posthumously. The divergent responses to his work signal the inherent complexity of his literary values, which must have been evident during his years spent setting up and guiding NELM through its instantiation.

Butler's engagement with NELM's early collecting policies, outlined in the previous chapter, is markedly practical, and his approach to collecting is informed by no further qualifiers than South African literary-historical value. It is useful to investigate the qualities Butler valued in writing, both in his own work and in the work of others, through the lens of the material surrounding his editing of the seminal *A Book of South African Verse* (1959). This thesis must confine itself to Butler's employments outside that of poet, since valuable and exhaustive material has been written on the poetry of Butler already, and will examine Butler's poetic 'voice' through a consideration of the choices he made while working in an editorial capacity. This is important, because such poetic values surely informed his interconnected professional sensibilities – work which is imbricated in the contentious reception of the 'liberal-humanist tradition' that underpins much of South African literary and canonical history.

The legacy of the liberal-humanist tradition in South African literary and critical history is widely debated, and it is necessary to explore the ways in which the phrase is received and interpreted in various stages of South African literary history. Butler is first branded as a liberal humanist in a negative capacity by scholars such as Chapman and Kirkwood, who accuse Butler of outdated poetic aesthetics in what they see as his resistance

to the inclusion of political content. Kirkwood and Chapman, forged in the materialist critical milieu of the 1970s, critique what they perceive as a complacent acceptance of the South African political status quo, echoed in the white liberal political cause that was appearing increasingly ineffectual, evidenced, as these critics saw it, in the favouring of a reasonable, educated poetic voice that values aesthetics over content. Such a sweeping classification points to Butler's supposedly old-fashioned Romanticism, where he seems to hold fast to a settler mythology that excuses and dehistoricises the violence enacted at the Eastern Cape frontier.

The linking of Romanticism to liberal humanism is curious, as Stephen Watson points out, given that Romanticism in its original iteration represents a radical rejection of received wisdom regarding both church and state. Perhaps the unlikely allegiance of Romanticism and traditionalism comes about because the Romantic tradition in South Africa, specifically, has been used for more conservative ends, as pointed out by Coetzee in *White Writing*. He reminds the reader that Romanticism becomes intertwined with the Pastoral tradition in South African literary history. Pastoralism in South Africa, according to Coetzee, "is essentially conservative [. . .]; it looks back, usually in a spirit of nostalgia, to the calm and stability of the farm, a still point mediate between the wilderness of lawless nature and the wilderness of the new cities" (4). It seems there is considerable slippage, nevertheless, in the reception of Butler's political and poetic positioning: his radical Romantic localism (according to critics such as Watson) becomes tempered by his increasingly conservative, neo-colonial Pastoralism (according to Kirkwood). Butler is often called a 'liberal humanist,' and liberal humanism is often linked to Romanticism in the South African context, in differing ways, so it is necessary to think carefully about what both terms mean. The use of the designation 'liberal humanist' is often an easy short-hand in the contemporary literary context for an absence of political alignment, and an outdated adherence to an 'art-for-art's-sake' perspective. In this chapter, the use of such terms must remain contingent, and contextualised by the literary historical moment within which it is being deployed.

Delineating Butler's liberal-humanist brand of poetry, Thurman points out that Butler's resistance to political literary content was two-pronged: "[t]he first was his anti-Leavisite stance," (195) which informed his opinion that "[l]iterature is literature, a major human activity which should be studied in its own right" (Butler, *A Local Habitation* 239). The second motivation "stemmed from a perceived threat to aesthetic standards – a fear that

the ‘poem as petrol bomb’ often ignored ‘the need for writers to practice a craft as well as exercise their consciences’” (Butler qtd. in Thurman 196). Hand-in-hand with Butler’s aversion to poetic aesthetics being subsumed by political messaging is his resistance to the introduction of sociological and linguistic theory into literary teaching departments. It is unlikely that Butler would have approved of the theoretical framework of this thesis, for example, since in his view “departments of literature have allowed their minds to be colonised by the linguistic, psychological, and sociological theorists” (qtd. in Thurman 197). His use of the term “colonised” bears particular venom here, as this quotation stems from a letter to Patrick Cullinan over the Kirkwood Poetry ’74 affair, in which Butler’s brand of poetry and politics is accused of being neocolonial precisely because he resists such overt politicisation at the expense of poetic technique.

However, to relegate Butler’s influence to the realms of outdated liberal colonial, as opposed to revolutionary sociological writer, is to impose a false dichotomy of the kind Butler was attempting to transcend in his infamous Apollo/Dionysus poetic trope. Butler was incensed at the tendency, in his eyes, of proponents of French linguistic philosophies to subsume the literature to the theory, “by *proving* that some poem or play or novel displays moral and intellectual relevance and integrity, never that it gives profound pleasure or joy” (qtd. in Thurman 917). On the other hand, despite Butler’s resistance to overt theorisation in literary criticism, were the theoretical jargon of this thesis removed, another of Butler’s utterances at the same Poetry ’74 conference fits directly within the framework being used here. He says that “[w]e – and the world – derive our present meaning from the past which has brought us here, and the future into which we are moving, and which we are, in some measure, making” (“On Being Present Where You Are” 82). One might easily interpret this comment in a way that speaks to the contingency of the historic moment in which literature and archives are produced. It seems that Butler recognises that an awareness of historical context is indispensable in the project of making and using such textual assemblages, and that the context of writing (or cataloguing, in the archival context) can dictate the future reception and recombinations of texts.

Butler insists, in words resonant of Deleuze and Guattari’s concern with the production of bodies from contextual circumstance, that “[m]an knows who he is and where he is by reference to his origins and history, as well as by looking out of the window, or at his watch or calendar. No man can escape geography or history, time and space, for very long”

("On Being Present Where You Are" 82). The link to the Apollo/Dionysus trope is made to illustrate Butler's own resistance to easy binaric classifications – whether separating Africa and Europe, the mythological and the material, or even the theoretical and the aesthetic, Butler consistently gestures towards the possibility of transcendence, even if this possibility has been subsequently called into question. Thurman, for example, uses Gareth Cornwell's critique of the post-1994 South African rainbow nation rhetoric of syncretism to investigate Butler's gesture towards synthesis and transcendence of binaric division. Cornwell suggests that "the gestures toward syncretism which inform this discourse often mask a view of the cultural domain as an arena of political struggle in which the winner takes all, in which, at the end of the day, one side emerges victorious as the authentic national voice, and can then set about consolidating a new hegemony" (qtd. in Thurman 92). Thurman uses this frame to question whether Butler does indeed achieve the synthesis he seeks, or whether his cultural philosophy falls into the same trap as that outlined by Cornwell, the achievement of syncretism over synthesis in "an incomplete and imbalanced fusion" (92). Thurman argues:

Although Butler's search for synthesis stemmed from and was expressed in different historical circumstances, it is worth testing it against the same critique. In his desire to see Africa and Europe fused in South Africa, did he dispute the binaries of colonial discourse or did he work within them? Did his synthesis imply hegemony, the dominance of one over another? (92)

Does Butler transcend or reinforce the binaries he identifies in South African culture? Is his liberal humanism dominated by a reasonable, educated speaking voice because of an adherence to conservative pastoralism, or is there space to argue that his Romantic influence is radical in its own way? In light of these complexities, this chapter will investigate Butler's liberal-humanist values through the lens of his editorial work on *A Book of South African Verse*, and more briefly, *A New Book of South African Verse*, published 20 years later in 1979. To begin with, it will be necessary to demonstrate what theoretical links might be drawn between the activities of anthologising and archiving, and to tease out the double bind that is created in using the body of the anthology to comment on the body of the South African literary canon, when that anthology was formed under the canonical conditions it was simultaneously actively creating. The anthology and the archive can also be viewed as theoretically linked bodies, since both display the same contradictory tendencies towards stasis and flux that have been explicated earlier. In the case of the anthology, the flux might

come about from its differing contexts of reception and readerships. Such considerations of archival and anthological productions will be further complicated, of course, by the fact that this chapter will be relying on archival material generated in the wake of the anthology's production to comment on the published work. As always, the foregrounded question will be: how do we come to know what we know of the archival and published texts, given the fluid conditions under which both must always be apprehended? Both are, in a Deleuzian sense, bodies.

The liberal-humanist organising principles of the anthology¹ will then be examined (looking at both *what* might be meant by a liberal-humanist framework, given the contested meanings that plague the phrase, and *how* such a framework, once established, might interact with the collected literature contained within) through a close reading of Butler's introduction to the text, both the published form and the draft material and notes pertaining to its writing, found in the Butler collection at NELM. This will be contextualised within the greater liberal-humanist tradition in South African English writing, focussing on the biographies of the poets selected for inclusion and the interpretations Butler applied to their work. The reception of the anthology will also be of interest, and will be gleaned from the published reviews Butler kept and subsequently donated to NELM. Both the positive and negative reviews are elucidating within the context of the South African literary scene of the day. Under what frameworks was the anthology being judged either a failure or a success? How do the historical remnants of such judgements, which haunt and destabilise the Butler archive by introducing voices and perspectives not taken into account by Butler's professional and artistic vantage point, colour contemporary sites of reception for Butler's cultural works? Material in Butler's collection at NELM also points to the popularity of the work over the following years, suggesting its use as a pedagogical tool in the academy and bringing to light the interconnected ways in which Butler's work was both responding to, and reinforcing the South African literary canon simultaneously.

It will be useful to give brief consideration to the changes in voice and organising principles evident in *A New Book of South African Verse*, published at 20 years' remove from the first volume. The new anthology certainly includes more black protest writing than the

¹ Since *A Book of South African Verse* (1959) forms the content under examination for the bulk of this chapter, any mention of 'the anthology' can be assumed to refer to this publication. References to *A New Book of South African Verse* (1979) will be made explicit.

previous one, but a judgement process seems to have been applied according to which technically proficient poetry is still valued above politically motivated writing. The reception of this tome will also be interrogated, and will be counterpoised by what Butler had to say about other anthologies of protest writing being compiled at the same time. This second anthology might be considered a type of ‘reterritorialisation,’ according to Deleuze and Guattari, as it responds, whether voluntarily or out of increasingly pressurised necessity, to a changing literary landscape in South Africa. A consideration of the context of production for the second anthology will thus prove imperative to understanding the space in which Kirkwood’s literary politics were forged, in stark opposition to the sensibilities that informed Butler’s work on the first anthology.

Archives and anthologies: drawing connections

In the concluding paragraph of an article on the history of the *Norton Anthology of English Literature*, Sean Shesgreen writes:

Every book lives a double life. One is public and visible. The other is private and invisible, sometimes even carefully cloaked at great effort or expense. The public life of a book is lived in its physical appearance, its author’s name, its publisher’s imprint, and, of course, its reception – the written reviews it garners and the popularity it earns. A book’s private life is lived in its solitary making, anonymous readers’ reports, the contract governing its publication, the advance it earns, royalties it yields, even the changes it brings about in its maker’s life. (317–18)

Shesgreen’s observation lays out the relationship between the books held in NELM’s library and the related material gathered in its archival boxes in the adjacent rooms. The public and private lives of books are gathered together here, where researchers might access the ‘whole’ story of a given text, from the correspondence in which an idea for a book is musingly posed, through publishers contracts and manuscript revisions, through the physical publication of the text and its public reception in reviews and critical articles, and finally to royalties statements, and the correspondence tying up and ironing out particularities of print runs, second editions, or corrections.

But of course the nature of the archive insists that there is no such thing as the ‘whole’ story, tied up as the text is in endlessly proliferating effects and productions with each new

reader engagement. In addition, when considering an anthology as the text at the heart of this process, infinitely more layers and entanglements materialise, since the anthology draws together a network of individual texts and writers, all of which have their own public and private lives.

Deleuze and Guattari call these networks ‘assemblages,’ observing that assemblages arise from their given strata by way of the abstract machine. Brent Adkins, whose primary focus in his critical introduction to *A Thousand Plateaus* is on the assemblage, comments that “we must suppose that machinic assemblages and abstract machines are simultaneous” (62). It is useful to reiterate that, according to Deleuze and Guattari’s ontology, there are three kinds of strata out of which assemblages might arise: the physical, the organic, and the linguistic. It is the linguistic stratum under consideration here, since the content under examination is textual. What distinguishes the strata is the work of their relative abstract machines in ordering the relation between content and expression. Without becoming overly caught up in the technicalities of the model, what differentiates our archival and textual matter here from an animal or geological substance is the manner in which it processes and effects a shift in being. Thus, a literary idea germinated through note-taking might shift into a published work of fiction through a process of translation (to which we shall return shortly), which differs from the reproductive capacities of organic matter (which generates new forms of selves through the ‘transduction’ of genetic material), or the shifts in stable states of definable physical matter (which changes its expressed form, as in water to steam, through a process of ‘induction’).

Adkins simplifies matters by summarising: “I think we can straightforwardly say that an assemblage is a concrete expression of an abstract process” (61). To tie these abstractions down with a concrete example, what is of interest here would be the way in which the assemblage of the anthology, *A Book of South African Verse*, has been generated according to the particular linguistic abstract machine that regulates the interrelation between content and expression. The ‘content’ in this instance might be the poetry selected for inclusion, and the ‘expression’ could be described as its ordering, the highlighting of themes, and the weaving together of poems to foreground a certain kind of poetic ‘voice.’ This is one iteration of the many assemblages to which the material lends itself; another process of interest might be the change in functionality that is effected when an edited manuscript, used previously as a disposable reference tool towards the more significant published work, undergoes the

translation process of becoming an archived artefact, preserved under careful conditions and validated as important within the context of the archive (in fact, in the museum context, even more worthy of careful preservation than the published text, due to its rarity).

It is worth remembering that it is only the linguistic stratum that has the ability to overcode the other strata according to its logic of regularities. Deleuze and Guattari caution:

Translation should not be understood as the ability simply of one language to “represent” in some way the givens of another language, but beyond that as the ability of language, with its own givens on its own stratum, to represent all the other strata and thus achieve a scientific conception of the world. The scientific world [. . .] is the translation of all the flows, particles, codes, and territorialities of the other strata into a sufficiently deterritorialized system of signs, in other words, into an overcoding specific to language.

(*A Thousand Plateaus* 62–63)

Language, as it were, ‘colonises’ human ontology and epistemology, leading us into the trap of a certain set of assumptions. Adkins lists these as the “illusion that the strata are hierarchically organised,” the illusion brought about by the “linguistic turn” in philosophy, namely that “[t]he possibility of overcoding has led to the supposition of the necessary mediation of language,” and finally, what he calls “the anthropocentric illusion,” where “[t]he ability to overcode the other strata seems to assure human superiority,” a superiority codified, he says, “at the dawn of Western philosophy in Aristotle’s definition of humans as ‘rational animals’” (58).

Adkins’ choice of words here is enlightening. He quotes Aristotle and the central value of rationalism as a defining aspect of human epistemology, which is significant in relation to Butler’s liberal-humanist outlook. It might be asked to what extent, and how, a process of translation, in the Deleuzian sense, dominates Butler’s collection and editing activities, coding the material according to the rational and liberal politics outlined earlier. A critic such as Chapman is straightforward in his assertion that Butler’s political liberalism (perceived negatively here) consists in the fact that, while he insists on the English South Africans’ role as “sane broker between Afrikaner and African nationalisms” (*Southern African Literatures* 225), he forgets how “English-speaking South Africans have been thoroughly implicated in the racial-capitalist structures of oppression” (225). Of course, later critics such as Thurman and Watson take a more sympathetic view, pointing to Butler’s

lifelong philosophical commitments to equality as expressed in all his cultural and artistic work.

At the risk of becoming repetitive, it is worth highlighting that the network of pressures (inherent in Butler's own contested politics, and the way in which the work is received in subsequent decades) at work in the compilation of linguistic bodies, such as those under consideration, operates by way of translation, overcoding other strata and reforming the connections between content and expression. For a linguistic assemblage (such as an anthology, a published poem, or an archival collection) to come into being, a tension between stasis and flux must constantly be in action, where the body is constantly in a process of de- and recoding its contents, and de- and reterritorialising its expressed forms, through this process of translation.

A useful direction of inquiry might then be how this linguistic abstract machine governs the translation of each poetic assemblage (the poems, the poets) into the newly expressed assemblage of the anthology. How does the anthology resist change, and in which ways are its boundaries being tested, according to its changed conditions of reception (what Deleuze and Guattari would call a de- and reterritorialisation)? In order to investigate this, we must rely on archival material that has already been subject to its own set of translations and de/recodings imposed by the archivist. Such interrelations and complications challenge the possibility of fixed and regulated interactions between a publication and its reception in a shifting spatial and temporal milieu, highlighting the ways the text both responds to and reinforces – even acts as gatekeeper – to the canonical tastes of the day.

Derrida's comments on the functioning of the archive are compatible with this notion of translation and coding. Speaking of the changed conditions of use for material once it becomes archived, Derrida points to the essential fact of consignation. The material must be consigned – that is, located externally and accessible via a trace – to function archivally, but the choice of the term “consignation” is not arbitrary. Derrida's gloss appears to speak directly to the challenges and opportunities thrown up by this process of consignment:

By consignation, we do not only mean in the ordinary sense of the word, the act of assigning residence, or of entrusting so as to put into reserve (to consign, to deposit), in a place and on a substrate, but here the act of *consigning through gathering together signs*. [. . .] *Consignation* aims to coordinate a single corpus, in a system or a synchrony, in which all the elements articulate a unity of an ideal configuration. [. . .] The archontic

principle of the archive is also a principle of consignment, that is, of gathering together. (Derrida and Prenowitz 10)

Derrida speaks here to the essentially linguistic function of archival organisation, that is, that the archived material becomes related, in a historiographical sense, through this linguistic coding. This means that documents placed together in a folder become related by their proximity (*where* they have been stored, physical consignment) but also by the implicit narrative that develops to relate them (the coded translational system of archival consignment).

One exemplary folder in the Butler collection, housing undated notes made in preparation for *A Book of South African Verse*, contains documents that appear to have been generated while Butler forges a draft of the introduction for the anthology. The papers are quite neatly catalogued in a folder titled “Notes (n.d.) in preparation for *A Book of South African Verse*, O.U.P. – 1959” (Introduction Notes), and they all pertain very obviously to the gloss (one could replace ‘gloss’ for Deleuze and Guattari’s notion of recoding, or Derrida’s specific wielding of the term ‘consignment’). None of the pages appear out of place or difficult to interpret given the wording of the record; in fact, their relation appears quite obvious and natural under the archival narrative that has ordered them so. However, each kind of document contained in the folder gestures towards a range of different editorial and interpretive activities. The folder contains notes made on the poets and poetry included – under each poet’s name, a handful of quotations is scribbled down, quotations that Butler presumably considers illustrative of his interpretation of each poet’s overriding thematic concerns. The folder also contains a few pared down sheets containing mostly just poet and author names, perhaps a shortlist of those to whom he might refer in the Introduction and their relevant works, and finally two pages of typescript copied from *The Lusiads*, “Canto Five,” to which Butler refers in the Introduction.

The pages record the organisational work of selecting material for inclusion in the Introduction, the interpretive work of applying thematic links to some of the poets, and the referential and intertextual work of connecting South African poetic influence to Camões’ description of the country’s geographical power. Thus, the work of coding becomes doubled, by Butler in the historic moment and again by the archivist in the moment of consignment. All of these taken together represent exactly the process of de- and recoding the content under

examination, translating the collected poetry into a new assemblage of Butler's own making in the Introduction, and even reterritorialising the poetic concerns according to the geographic thematics governing *The Lusiads*, a process which is repeated when the documents undergo a reterritorialisation, or consignment, to the archive, where they in turn undergo a secondary de- and recoding. This is not to suggest that Butler or the archivist (or future reader) is creating entirely new and unsupported textual connections. Many of the poems refer to *The Lusiads* explicitly, for example, and it is almost certain that these papers arrived bearing a physical relation (they were filed together); in other words, it is unlikely that the organising archivist plucked papers at random to include together with no supporting evidence to suggest their prior relation. What is of interest here is that the actions involved in the creation of the new piece, the Introduction, are those of selection, interpretation, and intertextual reference, all explicitly translational activities, which have been further translated by the archivist organising the papers together, and glossing their contents. In this way, through the kinds of work informing their formation, the archive and the anthology under consideration are conspicuously intertwined.

“An educated man’s affair”: the liberal-humanist voice

Michael Chapman's discussion of Butler's liberal humanism is perhaps the most comprehensive of its kind, but must be read with an awareness of Chapman's own historical positioning as an emerging critic reacting against the perceived conservatism of Butler's established voice. In the introduction to his own compilation, *A Century of South African Poetry* (1981), Chapman argues that Butler's liberal humanism is rooted in an old-fashioned Romantic traditionalism (at odds with Watson's reminder that Romanticism as a literary movement has decidedly radical roots). Chapman asserts that

This is a poetry which, in keeping with those conciliatory ideals traditionally associated with the English intellectual life, broadly characterizes a humane and reasonable speaking voice which dominates over image-making. The tones are 'familiar', community-inspired; and, while there is a willingness to criticise social authority [. . .], the poetry's syntax, which is usually logically arranged, implies an underlying confidence in given moral and literary values.

(16)

Thus Butler's claim, in the introduction to his anthology, that "[s]ocial pressures in South Africa are such that we are forced to examine big words like Liberty, Love, Justice, Truth and Civilisation" (xxxiii). Chapman makes the point that this strain of poetic style, as valorised in *A Book of South African Verse*, "virtually enshrined as *the* South African English tradition [. . .] a line of liberal-humanist poetic activity" (*A Century of South African Poetry* 16). Despite outlining, in a similar vein to Butler, that his anthology appreciates 'literary' rather than 'sociological' qualities in the poetry, Chapman goes on to delineate the falseness of this division, by outlining the "far from reductive relationship between poetry and historical pressures" (13).

The point must be made that this is a *perceived* traditionalism, in line with Coetzee's linking of pastoralism to the *Plaasroman* and political conservatism. Chapman makes the argument for Butler's Romantic conservatism in order to insist that *A Century of South African Poetry* differs from the preceding anthologies because it offers more in the way of the development of "literary radicalism (not necessarily the same as political radicalism), which has since the 1820s appeared, sometimes furtively, at other times boldly, alongside an 'official' South African English liberal humanism" (18). If one were to link this metaphorically to Derrida's thoughts on the function of the archive, Chapman might be positing that the more 'radical' strains of poetic activity figure as a kind of repressed alternative literary history haunting the margins of the official canon. Citing underrepresented authors such as Andrew Geddes Bain and Albert Brodrick, Chapman claims that the alternative, radical English tradition in South Africa inheres in "the experimental, the demythicising stance; [in] that poetry in which image dominates over statement, the cryptic over mellifluous syntax [. . . and in] a poetry which often daringly signals its emancipation from received conventions" (19). It is by remedying the underrepresentation of this strand of South African poetic history, Chapman insists, that his anthology offers something new to the literary scene in South Africa in the 1980s. He states:

Literary traditionalism, then, has from the beginnings notably informed South African English poetic activity and continues to do so today. [. . .] Nevertheless, and in spite of what most anthologies might imply, humanism, 'familiar' art, is not *the* South African English tradition – but only one important aspect of it. (18)

According to Chapman's summation, liberal humanism has come to be seen as the dominant poetic value in South Africa thanks in no small part to Butler's anthology. He identifies this tradition as 'familiar' poetry dominated by a 'reasonable' speaking voice, and it is easy to see how a liberal-humanist outlook would become so dominant when, as Deleuze and Guattari identify, the very function of the linguistic assemblage has historically been identified by Western philosophy as imbricated in the Aristotelean, rationalist outlook. Deleuze and Guattari devote much time to the formation of the linguistic order-word in the chapter titled "Postulates of Linguistics," asserting that, in contradiction to the literary assemblage, the basis of any linguistic system is the order-word, or the command, which organises the relation between speaking and acting. They refer here to the interlocutory aspect of language, inciting action. Adkins, who is particularly enlightening on the linguistic plateaus of Deleuze and Guattari's work, clarifies: "organizing the relation between speaking and acting does not require information or communication, nor does it require belief or the inculcation of belief. It only requires that certain actions follow from certain words. Order-words are not to be believed only obeyed" (66). This means that "Deleuze and Guattari argue that language is fundamentally illocutionary. That is, language is inseparable from action. There is no pure language, only language already bound up with action" (67).

Literature is understood as being opposed to this teleological framing of the order-word by critic Paul de Man. De Man understands literary and critical writing to be so dialectical – in other words, capable of being read in so many directions – that it is plagued by a kind of necessary blindness, whereby in order to read for any kind of clarity, the exclusion of competing voices becomes necessary. Herein lies the difference between the verbal act and the literary assemblage. In the introduction to *Blindness & Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism* (1971), Wlad Godzich explains that de Man's thesis progresses via the

familiar dialectic of blindness and insight that give the volume its title, for it permits him to characterize various individuals' reading practices in terms of the necessary exclusion that their mode of reading implies, not simply as a form of neglect or ignorance, but as the very originating locus of such insight as they achieve or illumination they can provide. (xxi)

Where the order-word, or verbal act, is teleologically directed, the literary product is capable of so many interpretations that a measure of excluding bias is necessary in order to make

meaning from the assemblage, and in fact informs the meaning that might be drawn from the literature.

Thurman, responding to Chapman's work, complicates matters in a similar vein to de Man. He points out that "Butler features prominently in Chapman's distinction [between 'modern' and 'traditional' poetry in South Africa], representing a supposedly 'traditional' (as well as 'rural') school of poetry – by comparison to a 'modern', 'city' poet such as Wopko Jensma" (99). However, Thurman quotes Watson, who introduces Butler's collected *Essays and Lectures*, outlining the essentially rebellious and *untraditional* nature of the Romantic movement in its inception: "A rebellious child, Romanticism was a criticism of rational criticism. To Historical times it preferred the time of origins, before history; to the utopian future it preferred the immediate present of the passions, love, and the flesh." (Watson qtd. in Thurman 99). Thurman continues:

Romanticism may have been a 'rebellious child' of modernity, but it shared a 'filial' relationship [. . .] with its forebears in the Enlightenment in so far as it represented, in its more radical forms, a similar challenge to the authority of the state and, in some instances, the church. Questions of faith and religious practice are a crucial part of the 'tension' between tradition and modernity experienced by Butler from a young age. (Thurman 99)

In response to a literary assemblage as varied as that produced by Butler, various kinds of blindness are applied by critics through the ages in order to produce their own, contextually guided insights, such that Chapman, writing from the period of the 1980s, can classify Butler's Romanticism as conservative and traditional, and Watson, further removed from the immediate reaction against 'Butlerism' and seeking to enrich the critical responses to Butler's oeuvre, can remind his readers that Romanticism in its inception is a rebellious and revolutionary, rather than conservative, stance.

Answering these tensions, Thurman posits that Butler, drawing from his Quaker upbringing, utilises the extra-linguistic gesture of silence in his poetry. In apprehending the transcendent, Thurman says, it is important to remember that for Butler, "[t]here is one component of Quaker worship that is not recognisable as 'reasonable' or even rational: the mystical and almost transcendental focus on silence" (100). In a country where Butler perceived language to be a primary barrier to inter-cultural understanding, a conceptual and poetic focus on silence poses a way out. As Thurman explains:

Silence, then, offers an escape from language as a point of conflict and separation between people in South Africa. The cultural and political implications of multilingualism are ultimately, however, secondary hurdles; the ‘ontological problematics of language’ present themselves on a more fundamental level. Those systematic, logical (rational) meaning-makers, ‘time, place and language’ cannot fully encompass or comprehend the fluctuations of existence. (102)

Thurman’s interpretation is borne out in many of Butler’s better known poems, and dealing with this tension often provides impetus for his most successful work. In “Karoo Town, 1939,” Butler is thinking through these problematics. He consistently highlights and contrasts the cultured and the natural worlds, so that the banal is counterpoised with the eternal and transcendent. Thus, “the market price of wool/ comes second only to the acts of God” (lines 12–3). The repetition of the “remote” (line 27) in reference to Europe’s imposition on farming life in the Karoo with the War, in the sixth stanza, and the “remote” (line 48) influence of the sun on rock shadow formations, in the final stanza, achieves the same ends. The fifth stanza contrasts the unified baying of war trumpets at its opening (line 38), representing the collective and the metropole, with the solitude of “death in the desert” (line 46) at its close, signalling singularity in rural or wild places, emphasised by the broken single word lines physically dividing the stanza as the poem crystallises the metaphorical binaries at work. Through all the human turmoil represented in the climactic fifth stanza, where the call to arms is brash and loud but the lone soldier’s dislocation and death are silent, the final lines represent transcendence of the natural world (immovable even through wars and human deaths) in a quiet image of landscape, aurally enhanced by the choice of diction “rockstill” (line 48).

In “Mountain,” the speaker weighs up the decision to remain in South Africa in the face of a worsening political situation through the depiction of a sublime landscape. He fears that the “magnetic field” (line 16) of South African politics is “shifting” (line 16) just as he experiences vertigo at the edge of the mountain and questions the gravitational forces holding him in place. The tension is resolved, not through a “still small voice” (line 22) of spiritual guidance, for which he was hoping, but through “mountain silence” (line 22), where in the transcendent moment he seems to become something akin to Deleuze and Guattari’s body-without-organs. The extra-linguistic experience is rendered, again, through broken-off lines

and monosyllabic diction, a paring down of language and a dramatic slowing of the pace: “I was/ on the rock/ in the sun” (lines 27–9). The illogical act of representing the extra-linguistic moment of silence, the escape of culture and history, in writing, is echoed in the inverted logic of the conclusion: “Perhaps that moment which refused so firmly/ to be a turning point/ should be the only point” (lines 41–3).

A less dramatic representation of the virtues of silence is found in a poem depicting a reunion of schoolfriends, “Near Hout Bay.” Structurally, the poem follows the group on the way up the steep hike, attempting to bridge their divergent lives by chatter, through a silent pause at the summit, taking in the view, signalled with the shorter lines and a slowing of the pace at the end of the fourth stanza, and back down the path again, where talk resumes, comfortably aware of its limitations. The shorter lines in the last two stanzas seem to be enacting the lessons learned on the walk, of the inevitability of alienation and separation with age (one might map this finding onto Butler’s thoughts on the linguistic divisions between South Africa’s various ethnic groups). In this iteration, the celebration of silence is paired with an imperative to listen, so that the speaker becomes reconciled to the friends’ mutual alienation in the same way that “the ear [accepts] those ignorant sounds/ that filled that primitive silence/ with sadness and with praise:/ cicadas; doves; wind; surf” (lines 36–9).

If Butler does not land at the same conclusion as many post-structuralist theorists, namely that the linguistic attempt at interpersonal connection through perfectly shared meaning-making must always necessarily fail, then he is certainly debating the same questions: how to represent the sublime in language, and the striving for extra-linguistic experience. Ignoring the ethical implications of what Thurman sees as Butler’s desire to ‘escape’ the linguistic and cultural conflict points in South Africa through the symbolic use of silence, the overlap here between Butler’s carefully nuanced consideration of the role of language, his investigation into how much a linguistic system of signs and symbols might achieve, and the kinds of questions addressed by the post-structuralist theories he so disparaged, is striking. Thurman dismisses this kind of post-structuralist framework as “a flawed construction” (102) without further explanation, but it bears mentioning that although post-structuralism often highlights the limitations of linguistic systems, where Butler continues to believe in the possibilities offered by poetic language as a meaning-making system, both he and they are inhabiting the same sphere of linguistic questioning even though Butler is not explicitly engaged with the ‘linguistic turn’ in literary academia.

So which is it? Is Butler a proponent of a rational liberal humanism, a ‘familiar’ poetics that relies on reason? Or is his Romanticism and transcendental poetics of silence an attempt to engage with the problematics inherent in the linguistic systems outlined by Deleuze and Guattari (a profoundly radical interpretation of the poetry)? It seems to be a question, ultimately, of translation and interpretation, dependant on the content/expression interactions governed by any given reader/interpreter engagement, whereby the literature is, on each occasion, de- and recoded, de- and reterritorialised in every new iteration. The work of this thesis is not exempt from such a process – it forms one of the endlessly possible assemblages that might emerge out of the network of forces surrounding the figure of Butler. If this analysis is beginning to sound suspiciously ‘post-truth,’ it is because it is attempting to highlight the contingent nature of the commentary that might be offered on Butler when there appears to be so much development in his own thinking through his career.

It is unsurprising, in any case, that divergent interpretations are made of Butler’s poetic and political voices, and that there is such a temptation to draw non-committal conclusions in the contemporary moment. In taking stock of the polarised views on Butler, and trying to tread a careful path between them, one runs the risk of renouncing critical convictions altogether. The differing analyses of Butler’s oeuvre might, in fact, be classed along the Apollonian/Dionysian lines that he favours in his critical and creative writing. Accordingly, what follows here is an attempt to offer a more committed interpretation (in other words, one which avoids the safety of the middle road, or ‘fence-sitting’) of Butler’s rationalist sensibilities at one point in his career, as explicated through his now-infamous Apollo/Dionysus trope.

One might think through this interpretation within the logic of Butler’s Apollo/Dionysus metaphorical linking. Thus, the liberal-humanist, rational, reasonable voice identified by Chapman would represent the characteristics of Apollo, and the rebellious sensuousness of the Romantic impulse on which Watson focusses, Dionysus. To identify both tendencies in both the work and the criticism is not to suggest, however, that Butler is necessarily achieving the synthesis towards which he strove, and following the same line of thought, highlighting the opposing historical responses should not lead to an attempt at critical synthesis (a kind of critical fence-sitting) either. The assemblage is not a synthesis – the assemblage allows for tension, shift, and ever-changing reconfigurations of force according to contextual circumstance. Two potentialities (in this example, perhaps, opposing critical

conclusions, or else, in Butler's work, Apollonian and Dionysian symbolism) might be held within the assemblage, but never permanently, and never peacefully, and under significant pressure the tension might resolve itself along the trajectory of a line of flight. Critics have pointed out that despite Butler's expressed desire to transcend the European's alienation from Africa by recognising the interdependence of Apollo and Dionysus, the Apollonian values tend to win out (along a line of subconscious flight?) in Butler's writings, whether intentionally or not.²

In "The Republic and the Arts," Butler's central contention is that the Apollonian and Dionysian elements from which South African society derives must recognise their interdependence and mutual necessity in order for the country to thrive. Butler contends that the Dionysian elements of sensuousness, and the elevation of the collective over the individual, despite being ostensibly linked to the indigenous inhabitants of the land, are neither essential to blackness nor denigrated as a result of this association, even in light of the Apollonian values (rationality, self-control, cool judgement) having been imported, often violently, by colonial forces. In support of his argument, Butler draws links to Greek mythology, where the Dionysian factions within Greek society came to interrupt the prevailing Apollonian norms, generating, at their interface, the golden Athenian age. Butler draws substantially on Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy* (1870) to make the argument, contending that "[i]n Greece, the invader was Dionysus; in Africa the invader is Apollo. In both cases they start as enemies, but discover that they cannot do without each other, that they are complementary" ("The Republic and the Arts" 104).

Remembering that we are analogously linking Apollonian values to Butler as rational liberal humanist, and Dionysian values to Butler as rebellious Romantic, it becomes useful at this point to turn to Dirk Klopper's work on Butler's Apollonian/Dionysian trope. Klopper outlines a number of fallacies inherent in the Greek analogy used by Butler. Interpreting the analogy under Jungian and then Freudian frameworks, Klopper shows that, according to Jung, so long as the elements represented by Apollo and Dionysus are complementary, "it does not matter whether Apollo or Dionysus is seen as the invader. Nor does it matter that in the case

² Thurman concedes that "The Republic and the Arts," the lecture in which Butler makes this statement, fails to wholly synthesise the Apollo/Dionysus binary it establishes, and resorts to stereotypes in its descriptions of ethnic language groups (93), while Klopper demonstrates Butler's failure to synthesise the Apollonian and Dionysian forces in his paper, "Soliciting the Other: Interpenetration of the Psychological and the Political in Some Poems by Guy Butler."

of Greece the invasion was from within, while in the case of Africa the invasion was from without” (“Soliciting the Other” 148). Alternatively, if a Freudian perspective is applied, “Dionysus’ invasion of Apollo’s realm can only be construed as an interruption of the unconscious from within. By contrast, Apollo’s invasion of Dionysus’s realm would have to be construed as the original repressive gesture from without” (“Soliciting the Other” 148). Klopper investigates the Apollo/Dionysus division from a more nuanced psychoanalytic perspective than this work has the space to replicate, but it is still worth noting that the crucial difference between the Greek and South African models set up by Butler is that Apollo’s invasion of Dionysus’ sphere functions as a primary and original disruption, necessary in the first instance for Dionysus to be able to mount its own internal disruption. In this way, “the dialectic invoked by Butler shows both insight and blindness” (Klopper, “Soliciting the Other” 143).

The ‘insight and blindness’ invoked by Klopper to describe Butler’s dialectic is clearly meant in the sense of de Man’s philosophy (expounded in *Blindness & Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism*). Butler’s insight lies in the provision of a lens through which to dismantle the old colonial assumptions of white, foreign civilisations. His blindness, in pursuing synthesis between European and local styles, is that in representing the two stereotypes in order to dismantle them, he tends to fall into repeating and reinforcing, rather than subverting, the colonial logic. Butler’s critics will argue that this is due to his formalist, liberal-humanist approach, as this chapter will explore, rendering him supposedly blind to more radical emergent critical responses (which, in Butler’s defence, were still some 15 years off at the time of writing “The Republic and the Arts” in the 1950s). De Man contends that criticism is a double-edged sword: in order to develop the necessary focus and expertise for creating new and surprising approaches, one must necessarily exclude other critical potentialities, and so acute insight is always accompanied by a necessary measure of blindness. The double-edged sword of Butler’s Apollonian/Dionysian dialectic is that in order to transcend the European literary influence on South Africa, he must describe the existing poles of culture as he perceives them to be understood by a colonial generation, and through a lens that does not take stock of the identity politics that became accepted critical practice later in the century.

Klopper enumerates, as have other scholars, the ways that in poems such as “Home Thoughts” and “Myths” (the two poems which most fully discuss the Apollonian/Dionysian

dialectic), “it is Apollo who takes the initiative and sets the terms of the reconciliation between reason and instinct. It is at his pleasure that Dionysus is allowed ‘elbow room.’ He controls the process” (“Soliciting the Other” 145). Similarly in “The Republic and the Arts,” Butler characterises the problems of the African ‘tribe’ as having to do with a lack of intellectual rigour, and the problems of white South Africa lying in its overdevelopment of these organising principles: “[o]ne of the main reasons why the tribe is doomed is that it is intellectually boring: it does not allow for questions, for speculation. One of the reasons why we are doomed is that we are slaves to our own tools, our own organising ability” (101). Leaving aside the racist assumption that tribal Africans are “intellectually boring,” it is further worth noting that Apollo seems to win out again, since Butler’s demonstration of an idealised synthesis of these values is not in the Apollonian white South Africans learning Dionysian tactics, but rather, Africans who are “fashioning an urban way of life for themselves, and a literature to match. [. . .] The urbanised, Westernised African is here to stay. He is the personification of the African paradox” (“The Republic and the Arts” 100).

Finally, even if a value-equivalence is granted Butler (in that, we believe his insistence that Dionysian values are to be sought after *just as much* as Apollonian ones), his work often fails to surmount the dichotomy it sets up. As Klopper notes,

Butler’s attempt at transcending the manichaeic dichotomy of colonial society by imbuing the colonized other with the positive qualities of instinct, ecstasy and vitality seems not to have been entirely successful. The hierarchical relationship between Apollo and Dionysus, evident most clearly in the passivity of Dionysus, simply perpetuates the colonial hierarchy of Europe over Africa. When the union of Apollo and Dionysus is imagined, it is a union that is unsolicited by Dionysus. (“Soliciting the Other” 146)

Klopper continues to show how “Myths,” first published two years later, manages a more sustained attempt at “acknowledging the equality of the other” (“Soliciting the Other” 146).

There is a corollary to this reading of Butler’s interpretation of Apollonian and Dionysian elements. The critiques which have been used thus far have suggested that Butler’s use of Greek mythology means that he resorts to stereotypes, meaning that he ascribes to Apollo, and thus Europe, the qualities of rationalism, order, and morality, while Dionysus (and Africa) is aligned with sensuousness and uncivilised barbarism. However, Dionysus’ appearance in classical material is not so straightforward. In Alexander Pope’s translation of

The Iliad of Homer, the first mention of Africa in Book One is a reference to “Æthiopia’s blameless race” (1.557). In Fagles’ translation, the Ethiopians are “loyal, lordly men” (1.424). Both translations ascribe moral qualities to the Ethiopians encountered by the Greeks. Prudence J. Jones, of Harvard’s Centre for Hellenic Studies, suggests that in Homer’s work, the Ethiopians are “notable for their privileged relationship with the gods” (par. 11). Additionally, according to the classical tradition, Dionysus was raised in Mount Nysa, a mythic region generally agreed to be in the vicinity of Ethiopia. Herodotus says that “no sooner was Dionysus born than Zeus sewed him up in his thigh and carried him away to Nysa in Ethiopia beyond Egypt” (2.146.2). If the ‘lordly’ Ethiopians can thus be considered people of Dionysus, then it is possible to construct an alternative African/Dionysian narrative of upright godliness, according to a classical register that would have been central to Butler’s literary and imaginative consciousness.

Nevertheless, there is sufficient evidence, it seems, to align Butler’s work during this phase with the Apollonian, reasoned voice of liberal humanism. His “deep-seated dread of certainty” (qtd. in Thurman 33) seems to have been forged later, in works such as “Pilgrimage to Dias Cross,” and explicated in *A Local Habitation*. Thus, even within his own lifetime, Butler’s own perception of his collected archive is being haunted by the shifts he perceives in his political and artistic philosophies, brought into assemblage with his later ‘ethics of uncertainty’ through the process of writing his autobiographies. Thus, in the prologue to the final instalment of his autobiography, Butler explains that “[t]he attempt at a historical biography changes after 1952 into a series of memoirs of particular activities. I have tried to present my life by teasing it out into the main strands from which it seems to have been woven” (*A Local Habitation* x). The switch from faithful teleological history to a thematic organisation demonstrates Butler taking a longer view of his own life history, bringing old and more recent philosophies and approaches into conversation. The autobiographies might be said to be Deleuzean bodies, or Derridean archival repositories in their own right.

The ideas expounded in the Introduction to *A Book of South African Verse* are less controversial than in the case of “The Republic and the Arts,” although similarly rooted in a liberal-humanist epistemology. Judging by the archival material, the Introduction appears to have been written in a formalist fashion, starting with the poetry and the overriding concerns, as explicated in the textual evidence, and working up from there to a determination of meaning. In an article on the history of “Literary and Cultural Criticism in South Africa,”

David Johnson identifies the formalist strand in South African English literary criticism from this period as having its roots in the Cambridge literary academy. He asserts that

South Africa's English Literary critics produced a relatively sedate body of criticism from the 1940s to the 1970s. In the late 1940s Cambridge-educated graduates like Geoffrey Durrant returned to South Africa and promoted the practical criticism of I. A. Richards and the cultural diagnoses of F. R. Leavis.
(828)

In the first issue of *Theoria*, the journal edited by Durrant upon his return, the journal's task is outlined as being "to discover those successful patterns of symbols that we call 'good poems', to live the experience of them as fully as we can, and to help others to the same experience" (qtd. in Johnson 829). If Johnson includes Butler among this literary-critical set, it is not as an adherent of Richards or Leavis, but rather as a proponent of formalist methodologies to which Durrant similarly adhered. After all, Butler completed his postgraduate studies at Oxford, not Cambridge.³

The published Introduction consists of six sections, delineating: 1) the cultural position of South African English speakers, 2) the language of South African poetry, 3) a concern with landscape, 4) the African-European encounter, 5) roots and rootlessness in South African poets, and, finally, 6) the development of a South African meta-poetry, aware of itself as a craft. Indeed, this sixth section seems to hint at an awareness of the emergent radical poetry of South African English authors to which Chapman refers. Chapman would accuse Butler of ignoring that "poetry which often daringly signals its emancipation from received conventions" (*A Century of South African Poetry* 19). However, Johnson seems to consider Butler to be one of the "less restrained" (829) critics of a relatively sedate period. Within this context, it must be remembered that Butler and Ruth Harnett would come to produce *New Coin* in 1965, which according to Johnson was among a collection of small literary magazines to include "articles and reviews reflecting diverse critical opinions" (829). Ultimately, in the consideration of Butler's editorial organising tendencies, it is useful to bear in mind both Chapman's and Johnson's slightly differing interpretations of Butler as editor (Chapman credits Butler with the instantiation and maintenance of the liberal-humanist

³ Formalism, liberal humanism, and the schools of Richards and Leavis have come to be grouped together in contemporary literary academia as standing for traditionalism, or perhaps an outdated and privileged adherence of the Oxbridge model. However, it is important to maintain the distinctions here for a more nuanced perspective on Butler's shifting position and subsequent interpretations as editor and critic.

tradition in South Africa; Johnson considers him one of the less restrained critics of a ‘sedate’ bunch), and to remember that the anthology itself, separate from Butler’s shaping of it, has come to its own life and legacy in the academy, giving rise to both restrictive interpretations and literary lines of flight.

Butler explicates his selection process for the 1959 anthology as follows:

I searched, in the first instance, for the best verse written by South Africans, and, second, for any good verse written in English which in some way or other deals with the European–African encounter. It was only after I had made my preliminary choice that it struck me as possible to trace the development of certain common themes. (“Introduction” xx)

One might suggest that the thematic coherence of the anthology is a self-fulfilling prophecy. Butler both searches for, and finds as common poetic concern, the European–African encounter, for example. Also, if his primary selection criteria is governed by poetic value (a formalist would posit that such a literary judgement is both possible and necessary), then those poems that are technically accomplished in the formalist sense will naturally lead the editor to assume that South African poetry is “an educated man’s affair” (xix). It is astonishing to note how many of the poets selected for inclusion are either Oxbridge educated, or have been professionally connected to an Oxbridge college – of the 34 included, 17 (exactly half) are shown, in their biographical notes, to have spent time at Oxford or Cambridge colleges.

The predetermined criteria mentioned in Butler’s interpretive notes align with the governing poetic concerns that Coetzee identifies in white English poetry from this period in *White Writing*. In this work, Coetzee identifies persistent refrains to which white South African authors must return over and over again, where the conscience of the white writer is persistently shadowed by recurrent concerns, which in their turn make their way, via a process of Deleuzian translation, into the South African literary archive. Coetzee writes that Butler’s apprehension of the English South African poet’s difficulty is two-fold. First, as explicated in “Home Thoughts,” the African landscape “just is, without the ‘depth’ that landscape possesses when, from long association with a particular language, with the inherited and written culture of the people who speak that language, it comes to carry the historical resonance of voices from the past” (Coetzee 169–70). Or, in Butler’s words:

my loveless, shallow land of artless shapes
where no ghosts glamorize the recent graves
and every thing in Space and Time just is:
what similes can flash across those gaps
undramatized by sharp antithesis? (“Home Thoughts” III, lines 26–30)

This is one of the pieces Butler chose for inclusion in the anthology, demonstrating, as Coetzee describes, the landscape’s resistance to connection with the newly imported English language.

In other poets, too, Butler identifies the problem of landscape incisively. Coetzee argues that “here is the point at which Butler is most acute” (170), namely, that the second difficulty faced by the English poet in South Africa is that “the route taken by poets from Pringle onwards who have described Africa as not-Europe, dramatizing it by antithesis, makes Africa into a mere negative reflection or shadow of Europe, insubstantial” (170). Butler identifies a similar impulse in Peter Jackson’s “In Loco,” noting the lines in his preparatory material: “Stupid, to ask an echo and a shade/ Out of this time with no known precedence” (lines 15–6).

Butler’s preparatory notes substantiate Coetzee’s assertion that South African English writers “employ a geological, not a botanical gaze” (167). For this theme Charles Madge is mentioned, in whose poetry Butler notes a “[p]reoccupation with the promises of culture and civilization – a realisation of the ‘relationship’ of beliefs etc” (Introduction Notes), quoting these lines from “Poem by Stages”: “Among all the myths and masks and make-believes/ Is the solid marvel in the antique bed,/ A decent idol. Long washed in the tides of the spring estuary, the salted stone/ Is big and smooth” (Stanza 32, lines 1–5).

Evident also in Butler’s notes is Coetzee’s identification of the poetic view that English does not articulate the African experience in the way African languages and cultures do. Butler employs Plomer to make this point, misquoting slightly from “The Devil-Dancers”, perhaps pulling the line from his head, which would indicate his familiarity with the material: “We catch the air mail tomorrow; how/ Can ever these messages by us be read” (Introduction Notes). For the South African English-speaker’s anachronistic view of England, mentioned by Coetzee, there is the way in which Butler picks out John Peter’s preoccupation with the supposed innocence of return, linking it to a “prelapsarian cliché” (Introduction Notes). For the South African English speaker’s tendency to project the self on to the landscape, another

theme identified by Coetzee, Butler chooses David Wright's reflexive poem "A Voyage to Africa," noting the lines

A mirror more perfect than any of glass
She is: when looked in, the looker sees a shape
Of his emotion, and of what really was
There, looking in; of an angel or an ape. (qtd. in Butler, Introduction Notes)

Butler is making incisive commentary on South African English poetry here – it is a commentary that has been enumerated on by the critics who follow, perhaps a literary critical moment reaching forward, via a line of flight, to Coetzee's seminal *White Writing*. While it would be unfair to charge Butler with deliberately distorting the poetic scene in South Africa at the time, a Romantic preoccupation with landscape and the poetic voice can be seen from these snippets, as well as a veneration of idyllic, pastoral, poetic encounters. This is a version of Romanticism that was adopted for the purposes of the *Plaasroman* in Afrikaans literature of a slightly earlier period, and far from being radical, was used historically in South Africa to reinforce and legitimise a white claim to farming land.⁴ Thus, when Butler laments the highly educated, sophisticated demographic among his poets, and muses that what South African poetry is lacking is a pastoral history, since "the presence of cheap indigenous labour [has] meant that the lonely, ruminative jobs of herding sheep and cattle were done by others; and that the bucolic muse in English was deprived of the mouthpiece which it found in the United States" ("Introduction" xix), this is Butler in the voice of a traditionalist rather than a rebellious Romanticism. The original Romantic poets were, after all, always city dwellers observing rural farmers, never in fact herding sheep and cattle themselves. In the South African context in the 1950s, where the only access indigenous populations were granted to arable farming land was as 'cheap labour,' to bemoan the effect this has on the development of a Romantic poetic tradition seems in bad faith.

In arguing that Butler's liberal-humanist voice spearheaded and shaped the tradition of South African poetics, selecting as he did fellow writers for his *Book of South African Verse*, this work runs the risk of implying that such a tradition has been developed on the strength of

⁴ It must be noted that many of the novels focussed on by Coetzee in *White Writing*, particularly those of C.M. van den Heever, might be considered radical in their own way, since they are aimed at critiquing social practices such as patriarchy, commodity capitalism, and religious bigotry. As ever, terms such as 'radical' are slippery, and should be treated relationally.

Butler's guidance alone. If *A Book of South African Verse* shows anything, it is that the voice Butler identifies in the Introduction is alive and well in the poetry of his contemporaries. If the argument can be made that Butler consolidated and cemented into history this strand of poetics, it must also be remembered that he was not creating a tradition on his own, and this work does not wish to suggest that Butler was somehow perverting the 'message' of the poets among whom he was writing. To point out bias in the selecting criteria is not to label Butler as particularly or intentionally biased; it is to understand the bias inherent in the very practice of collecting and binding up a body of work within a historically contextualised moment.

This chapter has sought an understanding of Butler's contextual history to offer comments on how, *in this instance*, such a historical context gave rise to a liberal-humanist editorial focus in South African literature. In other words, Butler's editorial position is key, but he was not working in a vacuum. This is displayed in a letter he receives from W.D. Terry on the subject of the draft Introduction. Terry, similarly to Butler, was South African-born and Oxbridge-educated (although at Cambridge rather than Oxford, a crucial distinction in critical positioning at the time). He espouses a literary criticism that Laurence Wright categorises as comprising close reading, shot through with early semantic theory. Wright understands Terry as an early proponent of a literary-theoretical academic culture, before the 'theory-wave' of the 1960s and 1970s ("Theory before 'Theory'" 12). After bemoaning that the Introduction lacks Butler's usual poetic spark, Terry comments: "[g]iven the material (and that's the catch, of course) anybody of a moderate degree of literacy could have written this" (Letter to Butler), indicating that Terry recognised the interpretive work of the editor to be in the selecting process, but that once *given* the material, the interpretation process, by way of close reading, might be arrived at in a relatively straightforward fashion, and could be considered, according to this formalist framework, as relatively objective and factual. This displays Terry's curious mix of formalism and early semantic experimentations, insisting on both the interpretive and therefore contingent nature of the editorial selecting process, but also at the possibility of arriving at a measure of objective fact in Butler's provision of an overview in the Introduction. Ironically, even as he insists on the objective adequacy of Butler's Introduction, Terry signals a desire for a discursive finesse that would take the Introduction beyond the realm of formal and objective correctness; he seeks semantic 'spark.' This shows how Butler was working within a context of other critics using formalist approaches, in their

own ways and to varying effect, informing a literary assemblage on which Butler's own interpretive work was based.

Reception: the literary landscape in 1960s South Africa

Interrogating the interpretations Butler drew from the poetry of his contemporaries and predecessors is one way of investigating the shape of the literary landscape of the late 1950s in South Africa. Another way to 'take the temperature' of the tastes and values of the day is to examine the reception of the anthology, while taking stock of the differing contexts of those sites of reception. Butler kept a number of reviews on the anthology, positive and negative, local and international, from which one might glean a sense of how the anthology fitted into the critical scene of the day.

Many reviewers note the overall tone of disillusion, perhaps expecting a more celebratory or laudatory volume of verse. Eric Forbes-Boyd of *The Christian Science Monitor* (a paper known for its even-handed and anti-sensationalist reporting) notes that "[d]escription and disillusion are, indeed, the trends most apparent in these moderns" but adds, somewhat relieved, that "if one gets tired of the scorn and the satire and the imagistic obscurity of the moderns, one can turn to the romantic, simple verse of F.W. Pringle [sic], who went to South Africa in 1820" ("Poetry from South Africa"). If later critics were concerned that Butler did not include enough radical modernism in his anthology, it is worth noting that this American reviewer was more comfortable with the "romantic, simple verse" of Pringle. Forbes-Boyd, like Terry, considers the Introduction solid but not punchy: "Mr Butler's introduction is sound in its appraisal, and does not claim too much; while it succeeds very well in suggesting background and perspective" ("Poetry from South Africa").

Dan Jacobson, a South African-born novelist living in England at this stage, and by the looks of it a friend or at least collegial acquaintance of Butler's (he sends Butler a clipping of his review in the *Manchester Guardian*, along with a covering note congratulating him on the anthology), occupies a slippery subject position as a reader of the anthology. He is, in many ways, similar to Butler, born in South Africa and making a living in England,⁵ but in crucial ways different: as a South African Jew, he would have appreciated the privileges of

⁵ For a sense of the time periods Butler spent in England after the war, and early on in his career, consult the chronology included in Appendix A.

whiteness but suffered the privations of anti-semitism in the country in the 1930s and 1940s. He also has, at this stage, chosen to remain in England, whereas it was about this time that Butler was taking his decision to commit permanently to South Africa. At the time of the anthology's publication, Jacobson had just been awarded the John Llewelyn Rhys Award for his collection of short stories, *A Long Way from London*, and would in 1960 publish *The Evidence of Love*, a novel dealing with an interracial relationship. It is safe to say that his review would have held weight in literary circles. This goes to show that, if Jacobson and Butler are aligned in their formalist views on literary worth, and this is a value set belonging to middle-class, well-educated white South Africans of the day, it is not a narrowly defined version of white privilege, since Jacobson's subject positioning means that, like Butler, he worked in his own way to denounce social injustice in his writing. The shared elements and the points of difference between Butler's and Jacobson's biographical details point both to the areas of fixed regularity and the contingent and shifting make-up of the readership of Butler's anthology, whose future-facing interactions with the literary canon depend implicitly on the interaction between text and reader.

Jacobson's response to the poetry presented in *A Book of South African Verse* takes the same line as Butler in the Introduction, emphasising the solitary and isolated nature of the South African English writer. Judging that South Africa has not yet turned out any "truly great" poets or novelists, he concurs that there is not yet a South African English literary tradition, meaning that "every South African writer must still do his work on his own, unsupported, unaccompanied" ("The Poetry of Division"). Additionally, he follows Butler's formalist line that the work ought to be judged by technical accomplishment rather than sociological merit, praising the anthology on the grounds that "it has more good poems, and fewer bad ones, than any of the previous dreary, duty-bound compilations, which measured poems far more by their 'South Africanness' than by their merit" ("The Poetry of Division").

The Times Literary Supplement, the most acclaimed voice for establishment-approved literary matters, is similarly laudatory, again picking out the "sense of exile" ("Minority Poets") identified in the poetry by Butler.⁶ The reviewer repeats Butler's diagnosis for South

⁶ Many of the newspaper articles referenced in this section are written by unknown authors, and most are clippings that were found in an archival collection at NELM, and therefore do not contain page numbers either. I have chosen to reference them all by article title, in-text, and if the article is not attributed to a specific author, it is listed under the newspaper in which it was published in the bibliography. This example can be found under the *Times Literary Supplement* in the bibliography.

Africa's "real lack of anything approaching a cultural climate [. . .], its poverty of literary magazines, its dearth of serious readers" ("Minority Poets"), namely that due to the availability of cheap labour, the "'lonely ruminative jobs of tending sheep and cattle' are done by others" (Butler qtd. in "Minority Poets"). This reviewer, like Butler, seems unconcerned at the blunt yoking together of a colonial and cultural violence with the development of the historic oppressor's poetic sensibility. This seems to develop an alternative history of Romanticism, one where the bucolics themselves were doing the writing, not the more financially stable and therefore idle city-dwellers observing them. The reviewer repeats the sentiments of Jacobson, valuing technique over sociological interest, and concludes: "an anthology is, after all, a collection of poems, and however interesting its themes from a sociological viewpoint, if the poems are without distinction individually, then they will not add up to much" ("Minority Poets").

The remaining positive reviews kept by Butler come from *The Times* (London), the publication from which the *Supplement* sprung, and *The Forum* (North Dakota), both of which might reasonably be classed as conservative, weighty publications. Both are more circumspect in their praise and engage with the anthology in terms of its proposed framework of selection, rather than making sweeping statements about the value of South African poetry (these sweeping statements, in other words, take as a starting point that Butler has made a true and representative selection of South African poetry in the first place).

The reviewer from *The Forum* recognises Butler's force as a cultural figure, noting that "[a]s a poet, as a university teacher, as an editor of *Standpunte*, the force of his enthusiasm has been the most significant influence in producing a school of poets in the unpromising setting [of South Africa]" ("Development"). This reviewer identifies the primary themes of the anthology as being "the absorption in rural landscape and the devoted search for the revealing image in each perception" ("Development"), and recognises that poets whose work does not fit within these expressed themes do not sit as naturally within the ambit of the collection: "The poets who are naturally more gentle, more detached, more logical or more eccentric than Butler himself do not seem to be entirely happy within this definition of poetry" ("Development"). Two things are worth noting here: first, that by this judgement, while Butler might display the liberal-humanist qualities of detachment and logic in his poetry, this reviewer does not seem to think him especially stylistically conservative, and perhaps sees Butler in the same sense as Johnson, as one of the less restrained figures among

a group of 'sedate' contemporaries. Second, the reviewer recognises the centrality of the question of editorial selection, suggesting that Butler's criteria are subjective and aligned to personal taste.

The reviewer from *The Times* comments again on the tone of "disenchantment," springing from the replacement of the settlers' "Eden" with "a vast industrial civilization [which] has grown up – one, moreover, torn by internal dissensions" ("A Minority Art"). The reviewer notes (whether as a comment on thematic consistency or a colonialist apprehension of the South African countryside, it is unclear), "[t]he empty country remains; and this has given South Africa some of its highest themes" ("A Minority Art"). The writer concludes, "[a]ll that is missing is an awareness of the experimental" ("A Minority Art").

Many of the international reviews are faintly patronising in this sense, considering the best of South African literature to be located in the past, not in its contemporary scene. The reviewer from *The Times* assumes that South Africa lacks experimental writing because of the limits imposed by the harsh environment, and a reviewer for *The Observer* credits Butler only with making "the best of what there is," with the acid observation: "[t]he total yield from this strenuous reaping is still only dubiously worth making into a book" (*Observer* Review). W.H. Gardner, in a letter to Butler, opines: "I think that John Wain, in his *Observer* review (July 19) [. . .] deserves what R.C. would bluntly call 'a kick in the pants' for saying 'the total yield...is still only dubiously worth making into a book'" (Letter to Butler). Gardner was English-born but by this stage teaching at the University of Orange Free State, having emigrated for a post at Natal University College in 1947, and can therefore be considered a local authority.

It is easy to assume from the international reviews that the general literary scene is, in the late 1950s, elitist. In light of reviews that consider South Africa's best output to be located in the disillusionment and exile generated by the 'empty land,' and the worst to be a result of the unfortunate situation of too much cheap labour disallowing the development of a proper Romantic tradition, Butler appears, by comparison, positively radical. It is interesting to consider Butler's colonially-coded views, as explicated in this thesis, as an adjunct to the rampant imperialism visible in the patronising voice of many English critics.

However, at home, where Butler is better known as a personage independent from the publication of this anthology, the situation is rather different. The most engaged criticism for the anthology comes from local writers, who take Butler as editor to task, rather than

assuming the lack to be located in South African writing. A good many cite Roy Campbell's epigram of South African novelists:

You praise the firm restraint with which they write –
I'm with you there, of course:
They use the snaffle and the curb all right,
But where's the bloody horse?

(Campbell qtd. in Stein, "Verse in One Colour")

Responding to the anthology in his essay "Verse in One Colour," Sylvester Stein (who might be considered local, although he had left South Africa for England around this time) accuses the poets in Butler's selection of limpness, and exactly the kind of English apolitics against which Butler rails in "The Future of English-speaking South Africa." However, his criticism is of Butler's definition of South African English poetry, rather than the state of the country's literary output. He applauds Campbell and Plomer for their apprehension of the "nonsensicalities of South African (white, English-speaking) attitudes" ("Verse in One Colour"). Butler's contemporaries, by contrast, are treated to Stein's full stinging critique:

The younger men in this collection have taken things a little farther. They are of course opponents of *apartheid*, most of them, but they have not equipped themselves to lead the war against it.

They seem withdrawn from the conflict – their verse, accomplished though it is, has a strange iciness in today's overheated climate. Restraint again, firm restraint?

When they do become properly involved one day and work out a relationship with the other fourteen millions [of non-English-speaking South Africans], we may get from them some great poetry, with more bloody horsepower to it [. . .]. ("Verse in One Colour")

As an erstwhile editor of *Drum* with links to the ANC at this time, Stein's comments might be understood as coming from a more radical and less 'restrained' political positioning.

An English article critical of the anthology without resorting to patronising platitudes is to be found in *The Listener*, and charges Butler (for all his claims of letting quality dictate his selection process rather than 'sociological' concerns) with the following: "There is in fact a dichotomy between theme and quality, and in his search for some integrating agent, the compiler has gone far to disintegrate his book" (*The Listener* Review). *The Listener's*

reviewer takes much the same line as Stein, noting: “I fear the famous epigram of Campbell’s [. . .] could be applied to most of the younger contributors here” (*The Listener Review*).

The most sustained critique of the anthology comes from *The New York Times Book Review*. Though it appears in an international publication, it is written by local author Peter Abrahams, who was by this stage already living in his adopted home of Jamaica. It is important to note that Abrahams is a writer of colour, who takes as the particular focus for his novels South African identity politics, since questions of personal identity were central to his existence under the apartheid state. Classified as ‘Coloured,’ Abrahams was born to a mixed-race South African mother and a black Ethiopian father, and subsequently married a white Englishwoman, Daphne Miller. Abrahams’ racially sensitive approach to Butler’s anthology therefore provides a counterpoint to the other responses filed away by Butler, which were largely written by white South Africans, Englishmen and Americans. Abrahams takes issue first with the statistics included by Butler in the Introduction, which states that there are “slightly over one million English-speaking people in South Africa, scattered over some five hundred thousand square miles” (xvii). Abrahams elaborates:

This, strictly speaking, is not true. What he really means is that there are that number of white South Africans who speak, read and write only in English.

[. . .] This omission of such a vast section of the country’s “non-British” English-speaking people leads to the feeling of isolation expressed by Anthony Delius [. . .]. (“A Feeling of Isolation”)

He concludes, bitingly, that “a few African Negro poets have written verse that would more than qualify for inclusion if merit were the sole yardstick” (“A Feeling of Isolation”). The review was sent by Butler’s sister-in-law, Valerie, who comments in a covering note: “I thought you would like to see this very odd review. ‘And a few Negro poets have written verse etc’ – not very nice is he” (Letter to Guy).

Why did Butler keep this critique of the anthology? Abrahams was by this stage a recognised author, credited, after the publication of *Mine Boy* (1946), as being one of the first African writers of colour to garner international attention. Perhaps Butler was pleased to have had a response from such a significant figure, and in such a significant publication as *The New York Times*. Perhaps Butler kept was critically sympathetic to the call for representation of writers of colour, even if South African governance at the time made the inclusion of such writing imprudent for a developing critic. Whatever the reasons, this review – the only one to

take issue with the anthology on the grounds of race representation – gestures towards the ‘future-to-come’ of the South African literary archive, signalling one of those points of slippage where the boundaries of the archive are rendered less stable than anticipated. The inclusion of a dissenting voice among the largely white reviewing caucus means that this collected assemblage connects itself along a line of flight (or trace) to a later, post-Kirkwood approach to Butler’s collected papers, more cognisant of postcolonial identity politics and representation.

Derrida insists on the importance of the trace, the connecting point between living memory and storage in the archive, and later the connection between the archive and the future-to-come:

[T]he archive does not consist simply in remembering, in living memory, in anamnesis; but in consigning, in inscribing a trace in some external location, that is, some space outside. Archive is not a living memory. It’s a location – that’s why the political power of the *archons* is so essential in the definition of the archive. (“Archive Fever” seminar 42)

Derrida’s statement draws together de Man’s thoughts on insight and blindness, the connections between archived past and archival future, the importance of physical location, and the assembled, contingent nature of that which becomes archival content. Abrahams is on the ‘outside’ of Butler’s political reality in the late 1950s, living in exile in Jamaica, and his critique is also ‘outside’ the majority of canonical responses kept by Butler – it speaks to Butler’s necessary blindness (according to the theory of de Man) in the anthology’s criteria for construction, and yet this dissenting review is found *inside* the Butler archive, at the heart of NELM’s operational collections, in one of the most substantial archives at the Museum belonging to its founder, this archive’s arch-patriarch, the *archon*. This trace, connecting inside and outside, past and future, figures as a kind of haunting, or an intrusion of the repressed unconscious into the otherwise stable conceptual framework of the consciously preserved reviews.

Some observations that might be gleaned from the range of reviews are as follows: The positive international reviews (apart from the one published by *The Forum*) take Butler at his word that his selection is a true and valid representation of South African poetry, using only quality as the criteria for inclusion. The negative international reviews, for the most part, operate on the same logic, that Butler has fairly represented the South African English poetry

scene, and that the resulting selection is found wanting, even parochial. However, this kind of review, assuming the formalist truism that poetry *can* be judged, quasi-scientifically, for objective value, disproves itself when viewed as a body. The very fact of differing opinions on the quality of the poetry across different reviews shows the impossibility of truly objective quality control. On the other hand, the local reviews (of which Butler kept significantly fewer) offer a more engaged and critical interaction with the anthology, and tend either to support or attack Butler's editorial decisions, and his definition of Englishness in South Africa.

For what reason were these specific reviews collected and preserved? Many have covering notes attached, and appear to have been sent to him and filed with correspondence, rather than independently sought out. It seems probable that a good many more reviews were published than were retained by Butler among his personal papers. A letter from an Oxford University Press publicity manager, John White, shows that review copies were circulated to a larger than usual range of journals and papers. White indicates the broad potential appeal of the anthology, even internationally:

I have pleasure in sending you a list of the journals &c to which we are despatching review copies of your book, and would welcome your comments upon it. It is a good deal longer than the average review list for books of verse but I am sure that your Introduction will interest editors of the critical journals, and, I hope, the editors of periodicals with a particular concern for Africa. (Letter to Butler)

This wide circulation of review copies to garner advance critical attention signals that the publishers saw the anthology as having a potentially lucrative market as a pedagogical tool in the academy, hence the focus on scholarly journals and elite newspaper supplements rather than marketing it to a general 'popular' readership.

This assumption seems to have been sound: in 1968, almost ten years later, Butler receives a letter from editorial manager David Philip concerning a reprint. Butler responds: "It is interesting that it should still be selling. Could you let me know how many copies it has sold to date, and how many you intend to print now? I know this does not involve royalties but am naturally curious" (Letter to David Philip). It is at this stage, in 1968, that the idea for *A New Book of South African Verse* is first floated. Butler continues, "[w]ould you be interested, within the next year or so, to bring out a book of South African verse since 1945?"

The last decade or so have been extra-ordinarily productive. I would not be prepared to do this alone, but might find a collaborator” (Letter to David Philip).

The idea is picked up enthusiastically, which is unsurprising given the seeming success of the first anthology (within the bounds of expected readership for a poetry anthology, which even then cannot have been considered a likely bestseller of popular fiction) – 5000 copies in the first nine years after publication, and going into reprint. Two things are worth highlighting here. First, did the reviews Butler kept have any bearing or significance for the second anthology, which appears to deal more directly with the criticisms of exclusion and lack of radical experimentation that Peter Abrahams levelled at the first? Such a question can, of course, only ever be answered speculatively, informed only by the Derridean spectres that arise out of archival encounters in a dislocated time and place.

Second, a more prosaic reason for generating a new volume would be the economic success of the first, a success based largely on the volume being taken up in academic circles, if the review copies list sent to Butler is anything to go by. If all of the criticism raised in the reviews kept by Butler feels cogent, surprisingly contemporary in places, could it be precisely because these are the problems still haunting the current South African literary academy? A resistance to the radicalism of French linguistic theory, a lingering liberal-humanist basis, accusations of exclusion in the prescribed reading lists – all can be fruitfully woven into the network of future-facing forces inflicted by the Butler archive, forces that are active *because* Butler’s anthology cemented into reality its own prophecies about South African literature, both reviewing and informing the canon simultaneously.

A New Book of South African Verse, and a new literary climate

At the time of the publication of *A New Book of South African Verse* (11 years after Butler first proposes the idea in a letter to David Philip at OUP), the literary-critical scene in South Africa still displays the same divisions – the by now tired debate over sociological concerns governing poetic value – but there seem to be newer voices added to the critical arena. Space limits a sustained engagement with the second anthology, and this interlude is being used instead to indicate the changing academic and creative literary scene in South Africa in the 20 years between the publication of the first anthology and the second. It is worth remembering

that NELM is founded during these intervening years, while the academy experiences an influx of new voices. Suffice to say that the second anthology, jointly edited by Butler and Chris Mann, now includes black poets, and deals more directly with the ‘sociological concerns’ of which Butler was originally so wary, although Lewis Nkosi notes that the inclusion is perhaps “not so much a response to cultural need as a yielding, and none too soon, to political pressures. Not so long ago black writers were routinely excluded from anthologies of this kind” (“From Veld-Lovers to Freedom Fighters”).

The choice of Mann as a co-editor represents a response to a changing literary scene (or yielding, according to Nkosi’s comment) in its own way. Mann was, at this stage, an emerging poet known for his Afrocentric style. His work is described in the *Colombia Guide to South African Literature Since 1945* as “[e]mploying a plain idiom that aims at disclosing reality” (Cornwell et al 132). The poetry “finds inspiration in such diverse cultural traditions as Zulu folklore, Romantic poetry, and a beer-swilling, sport-loving, South African way of life” (132). Perhaps this merging of Romantic and local mythic traditions represented an attempt at cultural synthesis, of which Butler would have approved.

A different study might fruitfully give much attention to the kinds of black voices that were chosen for inclusion – certainly more nuanced, considered voices seem to have been selected over those using poems in service of a radical political end-goal. In his preparatory notes on each of the poets considered for inclusion, Mann writes next to Motshili Nthodi’s “South African Dialogue”: “Like it, witty protest verse” (Preparatory Notes), whereas the proposed pieces for Mongane Wally Serote, whose work is more explicitly sociologically directed and references the Black Consciousness Movement, are treated more circumspectly: “A Friend – Zuma” is, according to Mann, “unimaginative,” with a “dull start” (Preparatory Notes). In “A Wish to Eye God” he “[does not] like the short lines,” and in “City Johannesburg” he critiques the “formless, flat language” (Preparatory Notes). Perhaps most revealingly, in Butler’s own early notes on the potential poets for inclusion, he lists the poets he thinks should be retained from the first anthology, and makes a separate list of poets to be sourced from his work on *New Coin*, including, among others, the likes of “Livingstone, King, Paton, Abrahams, Driver, Segal, Macnab” (List of authors). Under a final heading, “Other,” he lists only “Sinclair” and “Africans” (List of authors).

Those critics that praise Butler’s continued work in the literary academy, such as Lionel Abrahams and David Wright (whose pieces shall be used as examples here), continue

to do so along the same lines as in 1959, beseeching contemporary critics to recognise that good poetry is its own justification, and need not be abused in the line of political service. Those that critique Butler's work, such as Lewis Nkosi, do so by pointing out that the older guard's poetry is not devoid of politics, but rather that the outdated central tenants of liberalism govern the poetic principles.

In a long piece for *The Christian Science Monitor* that predates the publication of the *New Book*, and in which significant space and attention is devoted to Butler, Lionel Abrahams returns to the question of what it means to write poetry in English in South Africa. Abrahams figures during this time as a primary mover in the formalist poetic politics of the day, representing a quintessentially urban, modernist voice. Cornwell et al characterise Abrahams' position as follows:

From the 1970s through to the 1990s, at a time when traditional literary studies was energetically challenged on theoretical and political grounds, and in defiance of what he saw as the emergence of a normative practice of the cliché and the slogan, he remained committed to liberal-humanist values of literary research, tenaciously subscribing, in his many published articles, to a notion of the relative autonomy and the imaginative complexity of the literary work. (43)

In the piece for *The Christian Science Monitor*, Abrahams identifies the central problem of South African English poetry as one of exclusion, saying that “[i]n confining one's thoughts to the poetry in English one acts out the most characteristic habit of the South African consciousness, which is to suppress awareness of ‘the others’ – and be haunted by them” (“The Poets”). Abrahams identifies Butler's 1959 anthology as an important publication that exposes poets beset by a liberal conscience:

Deploring sorrow, the contorted *mea culpa* of the white man in relation to the black, was the note struck in poem after poem. Butler's own *Myths*, a major poem, showed a less self-alienated conscience attempting to assimilate the poet's experience of Africa and the black man into the terms of the inherited mythology of European culture. (“The Poets”)

Thus, Butler's poetry succeeds where others fail because it avoids the trap of self-alienation and the contorted cry of *mea culpa* seen in the majority of white liberal artistic output.

Of course, together with the increasing political oppression of the previous decade, during which many black or dissenting authors were forced into exile, the Sharpeville Massacre of 1960, in the year after the publication of Butler's anthology, proved a critical turning point. Abrahams acknowledges that "[t]he distanced civilized confession of guilt was now insufficient. The poets, except those willing to give vent to outrage over social injustice, by and large, wearily took to avoidance" ("The Poets"). What follows is an outpouring of the so-called sociological sloganeering to which Butler was so averse. Abrahams identifies the arrival on the scene of many new black poetic voices, including Oswald Mtshali's acclaimed work, which Abrahams similarly celebrates. He goes on, however:

We have to ask, is this an interest in poetry? [. . .]

These clues suggest that it is not poetry but social testimony that is drawing the special attention of editors, publishers, readers, reviewers, newsmen, campaigners, and bureaucrats. There is no reason why poetry should not have social significance. But an emphatic demand for this factor leads out of art into the utterances of one-dimensional thought, reportage, declarations, slogans. ("The Poets")

Abrahams, having given careful attention to the history of South African English-speaking poetry, concludes the article by writing of the new influx of black protest poetry that it is charged with a "sad irony" ("The Poets"). The irony is that "having established their due sway over the power of English Verse, black poets are now bending it increasingly into an instrument of division under the recently imbibed influence of 'Black Consciousness' which also insists on the separateness of black and white" ("The Poets"). Abrahams, of course, considers this a sad irony because it counters another, unrecognised irony, that Abrahams' statement on what poetry really should be, far from being neutral, is governed by the formalist techniques and value set identified earlier, which might prove exclusionary and divisive in its own way. Abrahams' understanding of poetic value systems is dictated by a canonical norm that he was influential in instantiating. His insight into the shortcomings of the newer Soweto poetry is generated from a blindness to his imbrication in the creation of a fast-receding poetic norm of the recent past.

Abrahams charges the new turn towards protest poetry with the flatness of sloganeering, and thereby implicitly urges poets to a subtler inclusion of politics within poetic art. David Wright, writing a general review of Butler after the publication of *A New Book of*

South African Verse, gives insight into the persisting liberal factions in the literary scene, insisting that Butler's politics is poetically effective because of its obliqueness:

Plomer also made the point that Butler's poems are non-political. An achievement in itself – everything in South Africa is political – were it wholly true; but the humane stance taken by Butler's poems are an implicit condemnation of the world that they portray. There are overt statements, but the South African atmosphere and dilemma are best caught and expressed in poems like "Near Hout Bay", whose subtle and oblique approach perfectly renders the silences and divisions. ("A South African Poet")

Wright aligns himself with Butler's brand of liberal politics in his comment that English-speaking South Africans are mostly new arrivals to the country, "come for the gold or the climate or else on the run from the Welfare State" ("A South African Poet"). What Abrahams identifies as lacking in protest writing, Wright finds to celebrate in the work of Butler: restraint again, subtlety, and politics only obliquely. Do the silences in Butler's poetry indicate a repression of personal imbrication in the country's interpersonally enforced divisions? Is this clinging to silence a kind of Derridean textual suppression? Is this the interstice at which the work is haunted by what it leaves out? Most uncomfortably, is this part of its success – a kind of poetic insight generated by a conscious blindness?

Lewis Nkosi, reviewing *A New Book of South African Verse*, describes Abrahams' and Wright's liberal positions as outdated. The drive to render South African scenes for the English-speaking child in a poetry that feels familiar, fed as they are on mythologies from England and not South Africa, is identified by Nkosi in a Doris Lessing short story as early as 1951. Nkosi finds it surprising, therefore, that this should still be the primary content of Butler's presentation to the English Academy of Southern Africa in 1969, some 18 years later. This is a result, according to Nkosi, of the English-speaking South African persistently dreaming of "another kingdom at once British, stable and inexhaustibly full of traditions" even though "the cultural values to which they claim allegiance have become forbiddingly remote and no longer fully serviceable in the new African environment" ("From Veld-Lovers").

Even from a critical standpoint, however, Butler and Mann's collection does not come in for the same withering commentary as Jack Cope's new collection, or Leo Aylen's "bland verse" ("From Veld-Lovers"). The former, says Nkosi, "suffers from a well-mannered

reticence and a deliberate obliqueness” (“From Veld-Lovers”). The latter, Nkosi writes off as “deodorized, packaged poetry, including an all-purpose ‘liberalism’ (the ‘end-of-all-ideology’ kind) which refuses to distinguish between the ‘drill perfect’ violence of the oppressor and those driven to employ violence in order to liberate themselves” (“From Veld Lovers”). It is here that one understands what Butler’s cultural cache has come to signify in the late 1970s, in contrast to his earlier reputation as a young force for vitality in South African literature. Where once his anthology was ground-breaking for taking South African poetry seriously, on a technical level, Butler is now relegated to the ‘old guard’ of South African academics by writers such as Chapman and Kirkwood for dismissing the newer Soweto poets, whose work was largely infused with Black Consciousness philosophies, as sloganeers. With the influx of French theory in the South African academy, catalysing the so-called “theory wars” (Johnson 831), and the renewed popularity of materialist approaches in response to the increasingly repressive apartheid state, Butler’s ‘art-for-art’s-sake’ mandate begins to appear dated and ineffectual.

A final note on Butler’s own apprehension of his changing position in an altered South Africa might be found in his commentary on other anthologies of black and protest writing from the era. His description of the politics advanced in the anthology *Voices from Within*, edited by Michael Chapman and Achmat Dangor, sounds bitter:

Although the Soweto riots are rightly taken as a turning point, and although these were in great measure a revolt against Bantu Education, the editors concentrate their barrage on the missionaries and then the liberals. Little blame is attached to the Verwoerdian ‘reform’ of South African education. Evidently Bantu Education is preferable to what those bourgeois Christian whites were handing out at Lovedale, Adams College and St Peter’s, Rosettenville.

The introduction suffers much from leftist clichés of this kind [. . .].

(Draft Review of *Voices from Within*)

Abrahams, his liberal ally, sounds similar notes in his response to *Voices from Within*. Taking issue with Jeremy Cronin’s praise for the collection, he insists in a letter to the editor of the *Weekly Mail* that “when Cronin discusses the debate about workerism and populism, it seems

he has valuable things to say. But on aesthetic matters, ideology seems to have turned his thinking inside out” (“Poetry is Difficult”).⁷

Butler’s review of *Modern African Poetry and the African Predicament* by R.N. Egudu comes across as incredulous: “Poets are to be measured by their commitment to the struggle against the destroyers of that [pre-colonial] past and to the re-establishment of the (imaginatively reconstructed) African Eden. But for neo-colonialist exploitation the African Predicament would disappear” (Draft Review of *Modern African Poetry*). The review, destined for *The Times Literary Supplement*, ended up not being published due to printers’ strikes, ostensibly, but one wonders if the editors cavilled at the relentlessly embittered tone Butler espouses here in response to the more leftist politics of the late 1970s. These statements seem to point to a different, older Butler, enraged at the changing historical tide that implicates English liberalism as much as Afrikaner conservatism in the politics of cultural domination. The remarks come from a Butler who has been caught off-guard at the Poetry ’74 conference by Kirkwood, and who perhaps feels a need to more staunchly defend the cause of liberalism than before.

Although, as Thurman and others have identified, the propensity to characterise Butler as an outdated liberal or transformative pathfinder for South African poetry and English studies is to reduce the discussion to the false dichotomy of a binary comparison, the responses to Butler’s life work appear to be becoming, in the 1970s, more rather than less polarised, with each faction fighting defensively to entrench and validate their position in a rapidly changing literary landscape. This work does not wish to state categorically that, by the 1970s, Butler was coming down on the wrong side of history. There is, after all, value in Farouk Asvat’s comment, in defence of Butler and Abrahams’ poetic camp, that “[s]logan poetry merely stunts the growth of our people. If poetry is to be meaningful, it must not only capture the complex humanity of people’s emotions, it must also interpret people’s lives so that they can have a better insight into themselves” (“Poetry is Difficult”).

It might be suggested that the vehemence, during the late 1970s, with which poets and cultural commentators ‘dug in’ on either side of the materialist debate seems to speak to a

⁷ The article “Letters: Poetry is Difficult, That is the Price We Pay for Depth” refers to two letters to the editor, one by Abrahams and one by Farouk Asvat, published under the same title in the *Weekly Mail*. The item was found by the author in clipping form, folded into a second-hand personal copy of *Voices from Within*, and does not include a page number. Thus, Farouk’s and Abrahams’ comments are cited in-text under the same article title, which is somewhat confusing.

period of especially fluid and shifting politics, in which the old truths regarding apartheid resistance are suddenly called into question. Resistance to the shifting ground of literary reception, exemplified by Butler and his contemporaries, illustrates beautifully the Deleuzian mechanics of stasis and flux inherent in the formation of new bodies, in this case the protest poetry of the late 1970s. The urge to deterritorialise the boundaries of the old, white liberal canon, where poetic worth is judged largely by formalist criteria, is met with an immediate reterritorialisation, a need by Chapman and others to stabilise and anchor the new movement towards social consciousness, the recognition of protest poetry, and the incorporation of the ideas of Black Consciousness into concrete apprehension, to make the movement repeatable, viable, definable – a rhetorical choice that the ‘old guard’ resist by branding it ‘slogan poetry.’ The impulse to deterritorialise cannot exist independently of its opposite impulse, and so perhaps Butler and the materialist faction against whom he struggled might be fruitfully viewed as a body reforming, or as South African poetry rethinking itself in the later stages of apartheid.

If, until approximately the 1960s, poetry seems to occupy a special place in literary thinking, and is regarded as the quintessence of the literary, then it might be tentatively suggested that an anthology such as Butler’s can shadow the South African literary archive of the same period. Both consist of subjective selections of material, which reflect on the compiler and the contextual circumstances in which they are born. Both, by the same double-edged logic, not only reflect but create the canon into which they insert themselves – the anthology into the poetic canon, and the archive into received historical narrative. The difference between the first and second anthologies, then, might be metaphorically linked not only to a reterritorialising South African historical and poetical moment, but also to the ways in which the archive de- and then reterritorialises historical meaning-making.

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This consideration of Butler’s work as an editor has had more to do with ‘bodies’ than the NELM archive *per se*. What connects the activities of editing and anthologising is of interest here – the processes of coding, translation, and territorialisation are inextricable from the formation of bodies, whether archival or poetic. The examination of writing from Chapman

has been useful in interrogating the cultural and historic forces active during the years in which Butler was territorialising the South African literary landscape into a liberal-humanist, 'educated' English poet's club. Klopper's article demonstrates this liberal bias by exploring the epistemological implications of Butler's Apollonian/Dionysian trope. Further, this reading of Butler in an editorial role, from the notes and draft copies of the Introduction for *A South African Book of Verse*, works to shed light on the ways in which Butler was reterritorialising English poetics, from a naïve and outdated traveller's Romanticism to a critically engaged and introspective contemporary humanist genre. At the same time, by tracing the volume's reception, it is possible to see how Butler's cultural position was being de- and recoded within the context of the political pressures of the day, translating for a new audience the meanings that might be drawn from his work.

This is always, of course, a doubled process when working with archival documentary evidence. The conclusions reached about Butler's poetic and cultural translations and codings within his own lifetime are subject to a series of translations and codings imposed by the archival organisational process. What can be gleaned of Butler's cultural positionality in the late 1950s, and again in the late 1970s, is dictated by a set of documents that were sorted and resorted, coded and overcoded, by both Butler and the institutional regularities in place at NELM. With Butler's changing popularity, in line with the received meanings drawn from his liberal-humanist cultural position, it will be interesting to track whether NELM's own self-image changed (in other words, whether NELM as an institution appears to have been affected by, or to have responded to, the charges brought against Butler by Kirkwood in 1974, around the time of its birth). Butler's approach to the formation of bodies must have significance for the way that NELM perceived its literary purpose at the time of its foundation, and it will be useful to investigate the permutations of Butler's cultural standing for NELM's institutional alignment in terms of South African literary culture.

5. Butlerism, and the Black Bibliography

It has already been established that NELM's early collecting policies seem to fall in line with Butler's cultural politics, a term that has been unpacked by Thurman to show the interconnections between Butler's liberal political leanings in opposition to apartheid governance, his quite complicated view of 'Englishness,' and Western colonial cultural imports in South Africa. This work does not seek to suggest that Butler single-handedly steered the development of NELM to reflect his personal cultural politics, but rather, that the development of both NELM's activity and Butler's standing in the South African literary scene must be read as both actors in, and recipients of, a South African literary intellectual-moment. It is useful to remember that Butler's early conceptions of English liberalism and the worth of 'Apollonian' Western art forms, as played out in a 'Dionysian' African setting, were shared in some ways by thinkers across a broad swathe of South African intellectual positions.

Peter McDonald, in *The Literature Police* (2009) – a work charting the development and effect of South Africa's apartheid-era literary censorship board – reminds us that black intellectuals such as Es'kia Mphahlele held views remarkably similar to Butler's in the 1950s and early 1960s. Mphahlele, a humanist like Butler, was by the 1970s espousing a more radical and nationalistic humanism; this was to be a humanism “‘for [black South Africans'] own edification.’ Instead of ‘entertaining the white world’ or ‘shouting about African values we should rid ourselves of white standards in areas of our national life where none but African standards should be paramount’” (Mphahlele qtd. in McDonald 243). However, 20 years earlier, Mphahlele was outlining his humanism in more transcendent terms, describing “‘a unitary national culture conceived in humanistic terms [. . .] and the all-embracing cultural aspirations of the [Freedom] Charter, which were at once liberal and socialist, national and internationalist’” (242). Mphahlele later ascribes this thinking to the “‘euphoria’ with which he and other African writers of the 1950s ‘assimilated Western ways in an industrial context’. It was, he recalled in 1980, only later that ‘it occurred to me how we had assimilated the West on its own terms, as a conquered people’” (qtd. in McDonald 242).

McDonald unpacks Mphahlele's developing humanism here to show how, ironically, sometimes his liberationist humanist writing was passed for publication by the apartheid

ensorship board because it occasionally intersected with more conservative Afrikaner intellectual humanism of the time, as inscribed in ‘*volks*’ culture. McDonald clarifies:

Such anomalies [of only parts of an author’s output passing the censorship board regulations, according to seemingly random criteria] were not unusual. What gives them a special significance in Mphahlele’s case is that they were fuelled in part by the censors’ own less reflectively situated version of humanism, which was both broadly Western and narrowly Afrikaner or, more accurately, *volks*. (245)

Thus, it might be argued that the ‘liberal-humanist’ sensibilities to which Butler is said to have subscribed cannot be reduced to a straightforward signification, since the term appears to mean shifting things to a diverse span of writers. The term is alternately co-opted by Mphahlele on one end of the spectrum and the conservative ‘*volks*’ humanists populating the censorship board on the other. Butler’s particular brand of liberal humanism must be fitted into this epistemological genealogy in order to understand the reaction it engendered, a reaction spearheaded by Mike Kirkwood in the 1970s.

This chapter seeks to unpack the specific moment at which the challenge to Butler’s cultural politics is mounted, at the Poetry ’74 conference, with reference to Kirkwood’s paper, in which the argument is mounted, and also Butler’s paper given at the same conference. Butler was unaware of the content of Kirkwood’s presentation going into the conference, and so it is interesting that while his paper cannot be considered a direct rebuttal, it speaks to Butler’s own thinking on literary value and the place of the arts in South Africa at the time. The lack of an official rebuttal from Butler is fascinating; it speaks to one of the primary gaps in NELM’s archival record of his life. He never responded publicly. Additionally, NELM *appears* not to have taken into account the academic and literary development that Kirkwood’s challenge to Butlerism represented, as no institutional record of it exists. The lack of institutional response is enlightening in itself, and provides a springboard for thinking about historical and archival gaps, and silences.

It might be argued that a belated response to the changing literary landscape came from NELM in the 1990s with the launch of the Black Bibliography project, led by Andrew Martin, which was a recuperative effort to redress the dearth of published black writings in the library section of the museum. An interview with Martin gives insight into NELM’s methodological approach to historic redress. Additionally, while efforts towards the better

representation of writers have been made among the published works, change has been slower to materialise in NELM's primary collection of literary artefacts and archival material, raising an ongoing discussion about how to address gaps in a collection. This chapter aims to generate insights on the permutations of the historic silencing of writers of colour, the effects of which still resonate among the collected literary remains of South Africa's authors.

Butlerism

In a volume that collects together selected proceedings of the Poetry '74 conference – called *Poetry South Africa: Selected Papers from Poetry '74* (1976) – Peter Wilhelm's introduction provides insights into some of the tensions developing in South African poetry at the time. It is useful to remember this moment as a broadly experienced cultural shift, which has in many ways become focalised through the Butler/Kirkwood standoff, but is not limited to it. Kirkwood begins his paper with this observation:

[W]e wish to indicate the preliminary line of the argument without giving the impression that a live human target is what we have in our sights. In Professor Butler's descriptions of the English South African writer's cultural orientation we recognize assumptions, attitudes, a cast of mind, a consciousness which is thoroughly representative of the group he speaks for. (102)

However, it cannot be doubted that Kirkwood's attack on Butler came to be a characterising event at the conference. Without naming the actors, Wilhelm acknowledges in his introduction that “[s]ome writers went to Cape Town to devour their fathers” (10). While pointing out the danger of generalising the South African poetry scene as an opposition between “the Stalinists, so to speak, who promote – in Douglas Livingstone's phrase – Polit-Lit, [and] the Introspectives, who want purity, love, madness, landscape” (9), Wilhelm concedes that “it would be misleading to suggest that polarities do not exist” (10).

Kirkwood, occupying the materialist pole, takes issue with Butler's oeuvre and cultural work as follows: “Butler's vatic Athenianism which looks to the English South Africans as ‘transmitters of new ideas and ways of feeling’ cannot be viable if it is lumbered with the self-inflating false-consciousness of the colonizer” (106). What Kirkwood calls Butler's “vatic Athenianism” is, of course, a reference to Butler's most contentious paper, “The Republic and the Arts,” in which he contends that the mutual support and interaction of

Dionysian and Apollonian elements in South African society will usher in a golden ‘Athenian’ age.

Kirkwood takes issue with Butler’s assertion that English South Africans find themselves ‘in the middle’ of South African society, a minority population located as a conceptual buffer zone between the Manichean poles of Afrikaner and indigenous language-speaker. Kirkwood dismisses this assertion with a consideration of coloured South African social and intellectual history, the real recipients, he contends, of “exposure to the South African no-man’s land” (108). He turns Butler’s argument on its head, by suggesting that we use a vertical, rather than horizontal, perspective:

If the English South African is not in the middle, where is he? We need only to use the vertical rather than the horizontal model to establish that we are not in the middle because we are on top. It is only in numerical terms that we constitute a minority of English. It is clear that in sociological terms we are of the White *majority*, the dominant group. (108)

As a result, Kirkwood’s main contention is that the position espoused by Butler and similarly placed white liberals is acted out in bad faith. This subset of literary actors have, according to ‘Butlerism,’ retreated into the English South African ‘identity crisis’ so as to be able to ascribe to a kind of victimhood that distances the group from the position of the oppressor. ‘Butlerism’ encourages a limited awareness of historical positioning – enough self-awareness to be considered liberal and progressive, but not a sufficient enough engagement with colonial history to realise oneself imbricated in its crimes. Kirkwood focalises this argument through Butler’s “Bronze Heads” poem (*Collected Poems* 130), written in 1954, eight years before his 1962 lecture “The Republic and the Arts” (98). He is arguably working from Butler’s most problematic and contentious material. Butler’s cultural positioning had become moderately more critical by the time of this critique in 1974. However, although Butler was not so straightforwardly glorifying the settler project by this time, and was writing more circumspect poetry, some of Kirkwood’s critiques can still be tested against Butler’s own statement of poetic and critical intent made at the same conference.

Kirkwood identifies in Butler’s poetry and public statements an “insoluble” contradiction between “the long view of history and a romantic, nostalgic identification with a partial aspect” (104). Although “the long view of history is a liberatory technique when used critically” because “it helps us to avoid anachronistic judgements founded in moralism,”

Butler collapses this view when he “sentimentalises certain aspects of that history” (104). In Kirkwood’s view, Butler is “far from being about to make a cool Engelsian assessment of those frontiersman who manned the triumphal chariot through all those ‘Kaffir wars’” (105). Instead “a sentimental loyalty to 1820 ancestordom and the ‘English South African heritage’ blunts what should be Butler’s most dependable tool in fashioning an adequate self-awareness: his historical sense” (105).¹

Interestingly enough, Kirkwood is taking his argumentative lead from Butler here. He begins by positing that “the road beyond Butlerism lies, then, in taking his ideals of self-awareness and self-transcendence seriously” (103). Kirkwood aligns such self-awareness to the ideal of ‘a long view of history’ (assuming an entirely ‘scientific’ perspective of dialectic historical change is possible), and suggests that Butler’s failure is located in his inability to maintain this perspective. Perhaps what Butler realises, that Kirkwood does not, is that a wholly objective or scientific ‘long view of history’ is impossible. All historic apprehension is imbued with some sort of perceptive value system. Thus,

We can [. . .] only know where we are, by knowing what process we are part of. [. . .] But the facts of history and geography do not provide the comforting, reassuring or enlightening answers we would like them to. It is not mere event or mere locality that matters; it is the meaning of event and of locality to us, to people that counts; and this is something we learn from the value systems we inherit, the myths, traditions and histories we learn, or create for ourselves.

(Butler, “On Being Present Where you Are” 83)

Butler is attempting to merge a ‘long view of history’ with an awareness of the processes that return us to the minutia of the personal; the small vagaries of everyday life and inherited perspective that shape how we perceive ourselves, as well as the facts of history. What Kirkwood identifies as Butler’s failure, Butler posits as an inevitability. This *is* a kind of self-awareness. Klopper makes the same point, in his article on Guy Butler for the *Dictionary of Literary Biography*. He observes:

¹ The ‘Engelsian’ perspective referenced by Kirkwood here refers to Friedrich Engels’ conception of historical dynamics, expounded for a popular audience in *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific* (first published in French in 1880 and translated into English in 1892). Engels argues that historic change is produced by dialectic forces, and founds his philosophy in materialist, scientific principles. Thus, while Kirkwood identifies Butler’s commitment to the ‘long view of history’ in some instances (seen in Butler’s ability to perceive history thematically, according to the Hegelian concepts of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis), he argues that this commitment is undermined by his sentimental attachment to 1820 settler history.

Perhaps what Kirkwood has in mind is simply that Butler ought to have aimed at an objective and inclusive view of history. But this critique is no less problematic than assuming a callous “Engelsian assessment.” For how is such an omniscient perspective to be arrived at? If Butler is guilty of a partial identification with colonial history, at least this is done in full consciousness of the fact, and in despair of any viable and honest alternative. (92)

Kirkwood is right, however, when he claims that Butler’s self-awareness does not extend far enough to be useful for the postcolonial project. Thus Butler does not seem to notice the conflict of interests inherent in his persistent flagging of his imbrication in the history of colonial domination while maintaining an unexamined affection for the human settlers who constitute his forebears.

This enables Butler to grant colonials the benefit of a close history; he prefers R.N. Currey’s personal portraits where “South African whites [are] given their due as mere human beings, not as allegorical colonialist exploiters” (“On Being Present Where You Are” 89). In a conference paper presented in 1969 and published in *English Studies in Africa* the following year, he suggests that “it is possible that in this difficult country, in the midst of its agonizing complexities and pressures, veils are being drawn aside for those who have time to look with something of Keats’s negative capability: to look at men, as men, not men serving causes” (“The Purpose of the Conference” 17). In the very next paragraph of his Poetry ’74 presentation, however, speaking on N.H. Brettel’s career as a “devoted schoolmaster of black students,” Butler reverts to archetypes: “[Brettel] knows what the intellectual and cultural encounter of the two continents means” (“On Being Present Where You Are” 89). There seems to be no consideration of black South African students, similarly, as ‘mere human beings’ rather than representatives of the cultural and intellectual history of a continent.

There are blind spots in both arguments: Kirkwood does not apprehend that a subjective approach to, and identification with, small-scale histories is inseparable from the ‘long view.’ Butler would perhaps agree with Kirkwood that such a position is contradictory, but would be more comfortable with the contradiction – after all, “‘Without contraries is no progression’” (Blake qtd. in Butler 84). However, it is also true that Butler, unlike Kirkwood, does not recognise the necessary interconnection of the political and cultural spheres, or perhaps Butler subscribes to a more limited concept of the political and the poetic than was customary by the 1970s. This limitation is identified in Kirkwood’s contention that, related to

“the basic contradiction already noticed between a long view of history and an emotional identification with a partial aspect” is a “separation of cultural and political reality” (110).

Butler, if read sympathetically, actually undoes Kirkwood’s argument in his presentation at Poetry ’74 by readily acknowledging the interdependence of political and cultural sensibilities, but still he seems to suggest their necessary separation in poetry. Thus he reaches the end of his paper with the somewhat torturous logic of the following sentence: “Now I think that there is a very great confusion of thought here. Anne Welsh [taken here as representative of a ‘back to nature’ school of poetry] is engagé in a far deeper, practical manner than most of our protest poets [sic]; but she realises that poetry and politics, while frequently affecting each other, are difficult to mix” (100). He takes an even stronger line five years earlier, at the English Academy of South Africa conference in 1969. There, he implores: “As citizens let us take note, make our individual decisions as responsible and moral creatures, and join political parties, vote, and even enter parliament. But as writers it is our business to think and feel in other terms” (“The Purpose of the Conference” 17). While in 1969 Butler denies any conceptual overlap between politics and poetry (“as writers it is our business to think and feel in other terms”), in his Poetry ’74 presentation, Butler seems to mean that the forms of poetry and the content of political sloganeering should not be mixed, but that the conceptual underpinnings are mutually affective. It seems short sighted not to be able to envisage a future in which both genres expand and intermingle.

What is interesting is that, like Butler’s conception of ‘political’ versus ‘introspective’ poetry, Kirkwood and Butler’s positions, similarly, seem to be differentiated along the lines of form and content. Both writers are concerned with the morals and ethics of being white and historically advantaged in a country of such rife inequality as South Africa (the content of their attention), although they reach different conclusions about what moral citizenship and engaged poetry looks like (in its formal aspects). The primary difference really seems to be generational, a time-dependant moment of resistance and reaction, in a Deleuzian sense. South African poetry is, at this point, reterritorialising its boundaries, in part because no body (in this instance, Butler’s cultural politics) can exist in stasis forever. According to Deleuze and Guattari’s theory of becoming, Butler’s primary failure is in his relative stasis in a rapidly shifting landscape. His politics, considered progressive in the 1950s, were appearing outdated by the 1970s. The silence, on Butler’s part, that results from this interaction speaks in an

interesting way to the interconnected concepts of stasis and flux, or content and expression in an abstract sense.

In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari mostly trace bodies' tendency towards change, in the way that this thesis is tracing changes in the body of the NELM archive, but in the chapter titled "10,000 BC: The Geology of Morals," they explore how bodies come to resist change, and solidify into identifiable forms. Such insights might be applied to the two arguments at work in the 'Butlerism' saga, and used to trace not only their mutual entrenchment but also their similarities in substance. First, it is important to remember that while this thesis has been viewing Butler's cultural philosophy, and the later attack on Butlerism, chronologically, along a temporal progression model, Deleuze and Guattari remind us in the title of "Geology of Morals" that other perspectives are available.

The title "Geology of Morals," intended to invoke Nietzsche's *On the Genealogy of Morals* (1887), reminds the reader that the "the rhizome is an anti-genealogy" (Deleuze and Guattari 11). In place of the chronology of the genealogy, the "Geology of Morals" suggests a topological perspective. This perspective allows, according to Adkins, "for transduction [. . .], for genetic drift, [and] for transversal communication" (56). Adkins' critical approach to Deleuze and Guattari is particularly focussed on linguistic formulations, so that, following Adkins' comment on topology and transduction, a topological perspective might be established that allows one to pick out the connections as much as the points of discontinuity between Butler's and Kirkwood's arguments. The two arguments, coming from different discursive positions, might be viewed as two assemblages born of the same abstract machine. Although the arguments, counter-arguments, and literary formulations of the delegates at Poetry '74 exist firmly in the linguistic stratum² of the geology of morals, a stratum characterised by "temporal linearity (superlinearity)" which is "what makes translation (overcoding) possible" (Adkins 59), imagining a topological ordering for a moment reminds the reader that, removed from their linguistic overcodings, these cultural philosophical positions are points on the map of a South African literary coming-into-being.

Adkins explains: "This is how you make a map: show how assemblages are not simply the tracing of a pre-existing form (possible/real) but how they connect with the outside.

² Deleuze and Guattari organise the formation of all bodies along three strata, "physical stratifications, organic stratifications, and linguistic stratifications" (Adkins 43), which dictate and presuppose the particular workings of the assemblages generated along their axes.

Assemblages are solutions to a problem, whereas abstract machines are the problem itself' (63). If the problem of South Africa's repressive apartheid literary landscape is cast as the abstract machine producing varied and various responses, then Butler's and Kirkwood's philosophies of morally committed literature are not mutually exclusive or discrete, nor are they either correct or incorrect tracings of the pre-existing truth of literary value; rather, they are two mutually affective assemblages formed in response to the abstract machine of apartheid literary production.

Silence in the NELM archive

At this point, the trail goes cold, so to speak. The aftermath of this turning point in South Africa's literary history is largely undocumented, certainly by Butler himself, whose only recorded views on the matter are dated from the 1990s. The correspondence that makes reference to the Poetry '74 attack, between Butler and his brother Jeffrey, is stored at Cory Library, but, crucially, not much material on the matter is to be found in Butler's collection at NELM. This constitutes a kind of archival silence, which will prove a concept around which much of NELM's work in the intervening years can coalesce.

In an article written for the *Rand Daily Mail* in March 1974, directly after the conference, Lionel Abrahams, despite being of Butler's 'introspective' school, gives a fairly level account of the events at the University of Cape Town (UCT) Summer School.³ His interpretation of the critical and philosophical clashes that took place speaks directly to the de- and reterritorialisation of South African English poetry and criticism at the time. Adkins explains that in Deleuze and Guattari's work,

a concept will always display two opposed tendencies. One of these tendencies is towards chaos, which would be the inability of a concept to hold its components together. This is the tendency toward change. The other tendency is toward opinion. This is the tendency of a concept to become (re)absorbed in a dominant or traditional way of thinking. The result of this tendency is that the concept is no longer singular but ordinary. It no longer creates something new but reproduces the usual ways of thinking. (18–9)

³ Poetry '74 formed part of the UCT Summer School programme for 1974.

The deterritorialisation of a body such as South African poetry in the 1960s and 1970s is characterised by the introduction of new forms. The concomitant and inevitable reterritorialisation of the body is characterised by widespread recognition of the new forms *as* acceptable poetry, whereby the new forms are made ordinary through their adoption into and analogous comparison to an accepted body. In other words, the new form loses its discreteness.

The introductory paragraphs of Abrahams' article, titled "Poetry '74 – a Turning Point for the Art in South Africa?", may be read, according to Deleuze and Guattari's model, as describing the reterritorialisation process of the changing body of poetic production in the key moment of the Poetry '74 conference. Abrahams likens South African English poetry to a growing industry, with the late 1960s characterised by "a recruitment of hundreds of hands and a multiplication of outlets" and in the early 1970s, by "going public" ("Poetry '74").⁴ The use of an economic analogy is quite apt given that the socialist and materialist perspectives adopted by the so-called "political pleaders" ("Poetry '74") come under his critique later in the article, a problem which he witheringly terms 'ideology.' Abrahams notes that "several speakers laid more stress on the rally to political freedom than on issues of poetic freedom" ("Poetry '74"), and shows how all assertions of 'ideology' came at the expense of the introspective tradition.

However, Abrahams goes on to assert that "in a profound sense they are right. In lumping them together I show that I don't accept the details of their various positions. But they have recognised that we are in a social situation where the poet has to stand up politically (although not necessarily, as they assert, in his very poetry)" ("Poetry '74"). In a society where the education authorities prevented poets from carrying through their planned readings of work at government schools, and where poet and journalist Don Mattera, previously scheduled to deliver a paper titled "Poetry as Art for Liberation," was banned in the months preceding the conference, poetry as a cultural sector had become political. On this point, both the 'committed' poets and the 'introspectives' seem to agree. Thus, when Abrahams asserts that English poetry is "going public" ("Poetry '74"), the assertion can be read in the socialist economic sense, according to his analogy of the poetic body as an industry, and also in the

⁴ As with the Farouk Asvat article "Poetry is Difficult," this article by Abrahams in the *Rand Daily Mail* is taken from a clipping, so that the page number is not visible. This particular clipping comes from the Abrahams collection at NELM, and was clipped out in this fashion by Abrahams himself. The in-text citations thus refer to an abbreviated title.

sense that “[b]y carrying poetry into the arena of social conflict, [committed poets] have pushed not only socially conscious poetry but the whole of contemporary South African English poetry into new prominence” (“Poetry ’74”).

This press clipping, stored in Abrahams’ collection at NELM, is one of a few items catalogued with “Poetry ’74” as a critical finding aid. It is the only item that is dated contemporaneously with the conference itself, that deals in some depth with the conference’s critical and cultural outcomes. NELM does have a “Poetry 74” collection, consisting of a single box of typescripts of some of the papers delivered at Poetry ’74 that were under consideration for use in the *Poetry South Africa* volume, published two years later in 1976. Apart from this, not much attention is given to the event, certainly according to its catalogued descriptions.

The discussion that follows centres on material from the 1990s, which is the point at which the catalogued material in Butler’s (and others’) papers returns to the issue, after roughly two decades of silence. Thirty years after the delivery of “The Republic and the Arts” and 20 years after Kirkwood dismantled the Apollo-Dionysus metaphor at Poetry ’74, Butler writes to his brother Jeff, in 1993: “I infuriated the Marxists because I thought Nietzsche’s *The Birth of Tragedy* more relevant to the arts in SA than *Das Kapital*. Water under the bridge, words into the wind. But it all makes you think” (qtd. in Thurman 95). It seems the attack needed 20 years to become “[w]ater under the bridge,” sufficient to penetrate Butler’s defences and cause him to question his poetic philosophy.

Contrary to Kirkwood’s accusations, Butler does seem capable of philosophical reflection, and takes responsibility for the genesis of his sensibilities, which he recognises to have been in flux over the years. In 1989, whilst working on his autobiography, Butler writes to Stephen Watson about some of his critical statements, lamenting that he is being pushed to state a critical historical position by his early readers. In response to a suggestion that he “write a series of chapters in response to key issues and debates” (Letter to Stephen Watson), he says: “‘Bugger off!’ To sit down and seriously precis my own critical, political and other utterances is simply not on. Not when I’m not yet quite poetically dead, or when the utterances are, after all, there, somewhere, and available in print or ts” (Letter to Stephen Watson). The division between political, critical, and poetic selves is still evident, with his self-identification as poet foremost (“I am not yet quite poetically dead”), but Butler seems most upset by the suggestion that a life’s philosophical growth and critical development might

be summarised neatly into one position. In this moment he seems more akin to the Deleuzian assemblage-in-process than the calcified, outdated body his detractors seem to paint him as.

Butler characterises his lecture, “The Difficulties of Teaching a Non-Indigenous Literature,” delivered at a refresher course for English teachers in Johannesburg in 1949, as putting “an Oxonian cat among the Leavisite pigeons” (Letter to Stephen Watson):

From then on I was known as a parochial-minded nut. (And I still am, for rather different polemical reasons. It seems to hurt and frighten people when they encounter someone who ‘remains his own man’, and won’t nail his colours to any damn mast. I’m with Keats: one must learn to ‘dwell in the midst of uncertainties’, not follow the smug insistence of the latest big drum. Excuse the digression.) (Letter to Stephen Watson)

Butler’s decision to “dwell in the midst of uncertainties” reminds the reader that, while by the 1990s he was coming to be perceived as the “‘grand old man’ of South African literature” (Thurman 34), he had been active in the literary academy for so long that he had once been considered radical for suggesting tailoring the teaching of literature to suit local sensibilities.

He invokes an Oxford/Cambridge divide in the quoted material, referring to the two schools of criticism which were in vogue during the post-war period. Cambridge, led by scholars such as F.R. Leavis and I.A. Richards, advocated an approach of practical criticism, where the literary text, apprehended according to formalist techniques, was expected to meet essential artistic standards for the reader even in the absence of contextual or background information. Oxford, by contrast, advocated the study of authors and literatures in context at this time. When Butler characterises his lecture, delivered in 1949, as “putting the Oxonian cat among the Leavisite pigeons,” he is referring to his assertion that English literature on a South African syllabus needs to be apprehended with some understanding of the geographical and cultural context that accompanies the text. What was especially ground-breaking about this position is the suggestion that some literature of South African origin be taught, so that not all poetic imagery remained foreign for local children. In the lecture, he argues that “because the origins of the imagery of [Plomer’s poetry] are known to [the South African child], it has a greater impact. Moreover, from a poem like this he is less likely to get the idea that imagery is merely vague and decorative” (35). By the 1970s, far from being dismissed for radical ideas, he was now considered ‘parochial’ for entirely different reasons – namely a perceived adherence to the colonial standards he was once accused of dismantling.

This sea change in the left-wing academy's response to Butler intersects in interesting ways with the long arc of Butler's career. This was a career characterised by his insistence, on the one hand, on "remaining his own man" (Letter to Stephen Watson) – arguably a calcifying impulse – and on the other, staying committed to the project of "dwell[ing] in the midst of uncertainties" (Letter to Stephen Watson), or a kind of reaching beyond one's self, and beyond the calcifying impulse. It is these mutually affective forces that seem to have worked in assemblage in the formation of the archive of South African literary development.

It is interesting that Butler's would-be defender after the Poetry '74 conference, Patrick Cullinan, was effectively silenced, either through error or conscious decision. His review of *Poetry South Africa: Selected Papers from Poetry '74*, submitted to *Contrast*, a journal edited by Jack Cope at the time, remained unpublished. It seems Butler did not know of the review's existence until many years later when, following a dinner party in 1996 at which the topic presumably came up, Cullinan writes to Butler: "[h]ere is the piece I wrote in 1977 which Jack Cope 'lost'. I am just sorry that you did not see it when it was written. I am also sorry that Mike Kirkwood did not see it then as well" (Letter to Butler).

In the review, Cullinan points out that the volume's value is in the philosophical shift it represents, and should continue to represent. The reader should resist allowing the insights to calcify into the new molar body of South African literature, particularly at three-and-a-half years' remove from the original event, when the ideas no longer feel quite so new or radical. He warns that "these essays should not be enshrined, seen as the last word on their subjects. Their value should be to inflame further controversy" (*Poetry South Africa Review*). He describes the inevitable solidification of the molecular components of the conference into molar literary hegemony, observing that "[m]any of the pristine insights, the sparkling aperçus have now become commonplace, coffee-table platitudes" (*Poetry South Africa Review*).

Cullinan's defence of Butler takes issue with Kirkwood's use of 'the long view of history': "One must decide whether to interpret history and poetry in the light of an anachronistic, nineteenth century dogma [Engels' philosophy], or whether to interpret these subjects freely, taking into account their many 'insoluble contradictions'" (*Poetry South Africa Review*). This line seems to follow Butler's insistence that we "dwell in the midst of uncertainties" (Letter to Stephen Watson), and rejects the post-structuralist notion that there is

no such thing as ‘free’ or untainted interpretation, where interpretation is not culturally and historically conditioned.

Cullinan accuses Kirkwood of what is now, in decolonial parlance, colloquially known as ‘virtue signalling’: he suggests that Kirkwood sets Butler up as a scapegoat, “a bogeyman, a white Tokolosh called Butlerism or The Colonizer. Having created, with some straining, it must be allowed, a caricature of his target, he then proceeds to pull it to pieces saying: ‘See what a good boy am I’” (*Poetry South Africa Review*). Cullinan concludes, in the vein of the introspectives, that the primary purpose of literature, and by extension literary criticism, is to delight and instruct, or teach by way of the generation of literary pleasure. Thus, the volume, while remaining a valuable contribution to literary criticism, displays “a tendency to lecture rather than to inform, to tell rather than to entertain. More sophistication and less didacticism is needed” (*Poetry South Africa Review*). Butler laments, in his response to Cullinan’s letter and the enclosed review, that “the old theory that poetry delights and teaches – in that order – is altogether too simple for [Kirkwood et al]” (Letter to Patrick Cullinan). Now, “[p]oetry provides footnotes for doctrines fanatically fashionable” (Letter to Patrick Cullinan).

The crucial point, really, is not in the contents of the argument, but in the fact that Butler did not see it for 20 years after it was written, and Kirkwood not at all. In Butler’s eyes, “Kirkwood got away with it, just as most of the idol worshippers do!” (Letter to Patrick Cullinan). Its non-publication by Cope (who also comes in for criticism in Cullinan’s review) ensures that this moment generates a palpable silence in the literary archive of the time. Cullinan’s sarcastic comment that Cope “lost” (Letter to Butler) the review – insinuating rather than Cope declined to publish it because he did not agree with its content – resonates with Derrida’s comment on the function of the archive and its simultaneous potential for repression and loss.

Derrida, speaking at the archival conference at the University of Witwatersrand in a lecture that was transcribed and published in *Refiguring the Archive*, reminds his audience about the exteriority of the archive. He stresses, “[a]rchive is not a living memory. It’s a location” (“Archive Fever” seminar 42). This exteriority, or the archive’s locatedness, raises two important issues, worth quoting at length:

Now, because of this exteriority, what is kept in the archive, of course can be erased, can be lost, and the very gesture which consists in keeping safe – in a

safe, so to speak – is always, and from the beginning, threatened by the possibility of destruction. That’s one point.

The other point is that the possibility of the destruction of the archive [. . .] is not simply a risk which is run because of this exteriority. The risk has to do with what Freud describes as a death drive – that is, a drive to, precisely, destroy the trace without any reminder, without any trace, without any ashes. So on the one hand you have a device, a structure, in which what is repressed – that is, forgotten in the trivial sense – is kept safe in another location of the psychic apparatus. Okay? And, in this economy of repression, nothing is lost. Okay? What is forgotten or repressed is kept safe somewhere else, and then, in some situation, the repressed can of course come back. [. . .] But this economy [. . .] is, let’s say, threatened or in conflict with the aneconomic death drive, that is, a drive which motivates, so to speak, a radical destruction of the archive. (“Archive Fever” seminar 42)

Cope’s decision not to publish Cullinan’s review seems to function as an attempt to repress the living memory of Butler et al’s approach to poetic criticism, or, the white liberal ghosts in the South African English literary closet. But by not entering the piece into publication, is he not also acting on the drive to destroy that undesired colonial past entirely? Cope’s action might fancifully be termed a kind of postcolonial psychic death drive. Both potentials, for repression and destruction, are resonantly invoked in Cullinan’s suggestion of Cope’s intentional loss of the piece.

Extra-linguistic moments in Butler’s poetry

Butler’s non-response to the Poetry ’74 saga might be brought into brief assemblage with some of his poetic oeuvre, to characterise his retreat into silence when he feels a problem exceeds the boundaries of language. This section seeks to investigate how Butler utilises silence against words, his poetic medium, in his poetic oeuvre, while keeping in sight the question of how archivists cope with gaps and silences in archival work. What might be gleaned from the silences in Butler’s papers as set against a contemporary, post-apartheid South African literary landscape?

The concepts of silence and uncertainty, remembering Butler’s commitment to “dwell[ing] in the midst of uncertainties” (Letter to Stephen Watson), might be brought into confluence here by operating on two assumptions: first, one is often silent on those things about which one is not certain, and so uncertainty or ambivalence may be connected to the

rhetorical gesture towards silence in Butler's poetic work. Second, the silences and gaps in Butler's collected papers render the future reader uncertain, there being no documentary evidence to go on. Butler's preoccupation with silence dates back as far as his first poetic collection of war poems. Geoffrey Hutchings links the depictions of quiet moments of uncertainty to "the merging of inner and outer history" (29).⁵ He is speaking in the specific instance of Butler's poem "Camouflage," about the soldier's ambivalence at military service in a country not his own, but to which he owes his heritage – a world historical moment in which the course of his personal history is caught up:

Through a double cage of cotton bars
(Yellow mesh of mosquito net
And camouflage with coarser squares)
His eyes stare out at Dante's stars
Where smoke from his rationed cigarette
Jerks in a gust and disappears. (lines 1–6)

The non-conscripted soldier, voluntarily fighting for a heritage that both is and is not his own, is beautifully rendered in that image of constraint behind a double cage of cotton bars, his eyes staring out at Northern Hemisphere stars he knows through book learning rather than childhood familiarity. However, when Hutchings speaks of the linking of inner and outer history, he also refers to the never-far-off theme of exile within home (being of English heritage and born in Africa), and of a kind of belonging in a country not his own (England), a mediated belonging learned through cultural heritage, which links a very personal concern for Butler with a very pertinent historical theme for South Africa in a postcolonial moment. Butler returns to this theme in varying guises throughout his career, with varying degrees of success, but it is perhaps in his use of silence to signify disquiet and ambivalence that he most feelingly delivers the question of belonging.

The complexity of Butler's thought on the question of his colonial heritage is illustrated, most famously perhaps, in his poem "Stranger to Europe," where the names of European flora, book-learned in his South African youth, are intimately greeted in the flesh. The speaker, who identifies as a war-wearied foreigner with a "torn-up, drying root" (line 2) for a heart, comes to recognise the lush landscape of Ireland (with its own colonial resonances

⁵ What Hutchings terms 'inner and outer history' is analogous with Kirkwood's invocation of, on the one hand, the Engelsian 'long view of history,' and on the other, identification with a 'partial aspect.'

of historic subjugation), hesitantly, in “a love not born and not to be learnt/ but given and taken, an ultimate trust” (lines 27–8).

Another way to read gaps or silences in Butler’s oeuvre is bibliographically. In the same way that Butler goes silent for a time in his collected papers after the Kirkwood saga, some of his most successful poems are written after lengthy lapses of time, and at quite a distance from the catalysing moment – years, in the case of *On First Seeing Florence*, an ode finally completed and published in 1968. The sixth section of the ode documents a moment of terror amidst the fading gunfire and shelling of the enemy troops, ahead of an advance on the southern bank of the Arno, outside Florence. Suddenly, as light floods in at dawn and fear recedes, the speaker first catches sight of the fabled city, in what Butler calls (in homage to Wordsworth) a “renovating spot of time” (*Collected Poems* 54) in the Author’s Note that precedes the poem. As often happens in moments of significance for Butler’s poetry, a kind of temporary transcendence is rendered in the absence of human speech, so that the vision of the city appears, “ringing and singing through space and time, through eyes/ and skies, till in the first sun’s level light/ man, stone and tree stand stripped of all disguise/ and seer and seen fuse in the arc of sight” (VI, lines 49–52). The alliteration and assonance give a real audible quality to the sensory transference Butler hints at here (a visual perception, rendered second-hand through the sound sense activated by poetry).

Thurman makes two useful points on the concept of silence in the life and work of Butler. First, he unpacks Butler’s poetic and spiritual relationship with silence in a chapter dealing with the confrontation of the rational with the mystical in Butler’s life, where silence offers an escape from the rational and limiting axis points of space and time. Importantly, Butler’s religious faith as a Quaker instils this role of silence as a mythic and religious experience early on. It is Butler’s Quakerism, perhaps, that has remained (in this thesis) an unexamined point of irreconcilable difference between Butler’s belief in the mystic and the ‘Polit-Lit’ faction’s committed materialism. Butler explains, in a letter to Cullinan quoted by Thurman, that “[s]ilence is the centre of Quaker worship. When that silence comes down, the entire Bable [sic] of civilizations can disappear and an assurance come that Time is *not* everything, nor Material” (Butler qtd. in Thurman 101).

Thurman’s second, related argument contends that Butler’s response to the divided and dividing ramifications of linguistic difference in an apartheid-era, postcolonial South Africa differ fundamentally from Kirkwood’s. Butler perceives the solution to be decidedly

immaterial. Thurman invokes Watson on this point, who suggests that “several of Butler’s poems [. . .] ‘are really about a confrontation with the cultural, political and even ontological problems of language’” (Watson qtd. in Thurman 101). This means that ‘silence’ as the future reader experiences it in Butler’s collected papers on the topic of Butlerism, and the trope of ‘silence’ as it is invoked in Butler’s poetic oeuvre, can be brought into working assemblage with his approach to the ethics of postcolonial belonging in apartheid-era South Africa.

Recuperative history

In *A Local Habitation*, in a chapter titled “Enter my Ancestors,” Butler begins to unpack the beginnings of his historical interests. During a visit with a relative, Uncle George, whilst awaiting demobilisation in Britain, Butler is set straight on the family fables of an illustrious shared ancestor, Captain Lucky, who died from wounds acquired at the battle of Waterloo. Uncle George unpicks supposed historic fact from fabrication for Butler (Captain Lucky was in fact a Sergeant Major, who died of dysentery, not of wounds) because, as Butler puts it, “[i]t was important to Uncle George to be as exact as possible about the past” (*A Local Habitation* 13). This deliberateness, exactitude in historic fact and belonging in the landscape, Butler seems to recognise in Uncle George and envy: “Uncle George’s love of facts about people and places, his familiarity with landscapes, and his sense of belonging to and being possessed by his country was so easy and natural” (14). All of this forms a useful context and foil for Butler’s own early encounter with the messiness and uncertainty of recorded history and archival memory. Butler finds himself, soon after, on assignment at the behest of Uncle George, taking a day trip to a cemetery to find Captain Lucky’s grave. Butler, on the bus heading through the countryside towards the cemetery, musingly poses questions to his long-dead relative:

Through all my responses to the changing views and villages the captain/sergeant-major drew ever closer to me. Who, my dear sergeant-major ancestor, first gave you the bogus commission of captain? Who paid for your tombstone? Why, my dear fellow, did you volunteer? How many children did you leave your widow to raise? From which of them am I descended?

He could answer none of these questions. (15)

Shortly afterward, Butler finds himself in the cemetery:

Leaning on headstone after stone, inspecting the illegible inscriptions and obliterated dates, I moved irregularly among mottled shadows under the trees. I sat down on a horizontal slab, so weathered that no trace of a letter could be seen beneath the green, grey and orange circles of lichen. I ran my fingertips over the surface to see if I could find any remnant of the legend by braille. Nothing. So I stopped moving my hand and still kept my eyes shut.

Nothing. Not even the awareness of nothing. No one to be aware. Like sudden, absolute sleep.

I came to, startled and confused. Where was I? How long had I been away? Where had I been? My eyes picked up the inscription beneath a dial of the church clock: 'For our time is a very shadow that passes away.' *Tempus fugit* again. I looked at my watch, took lightning stock of myself. I was in the graveyard of the church at Rye, looking for someone without whom I would never have been. (15)

Butler is describing, in short, the archival encounter. The questing for resolute answers, displayed by Uncle George, the apprehension of both closeness to and distance from the object of study, the existence of concrete material from which to glean evidence (in this case quite literally concretised in headstones), and yet, sometimes, nothing. It is a lovely moment because while Butler fails on his fact-finding mission, he realises something quite important about the arcs and narratives of human time and makes some kind of unconscious connection with historic time, world time, before returning again to particularities, or, 'inside history.' He looks at the clock. Looks at his watch. Recentralises and reasserts his own life. It is this oscillation between the subjective filters through which one accesses historic material, counterpoised against the shadow of an other, a life lived through a different strand of time, that characterises archival research, and it is often in the failures of fact-finding, in the silences and the gaps, that one comes closest to this other, more haunted understanding of the past.

The conversation with a deceased ancestor, where Butler muses on the unknown facts of his life – “Why, my dear fellow, did you volunteer? How many children did you leave your widow to raise? From which of them am I descended? He could answer none of these questions” (15) – reminds the reader of Yerushalmi’s “Monologue with Freud,” invoked by Derrida in *Archive Fever*. Wanting confirmation from a dead Freud, in order to have the ‘final word’ on a question that cannot be fully answered in life, because the archive of that life, of Freud’s opinions, is not yet closed while the subject lives, Yerushalmi (and Butler, in this historical quest) is seeking “an ultimate repetition, at the last minute; [. . .] an ineffaceable

countersignature” (Derrida and Prenowitz 36) on the meaning of Freud’s life and work. The impossibility of such a quest, and the one-sidedness of the project (engaging in a “monologue *with*” the subject), is what characterises the bind of historic research and the archival impulse, for both Derrida and Butler. In many ways, scholarship on Butler has remained divided precisely because of the variety of the living Butler’s personal, critical, and philosophical opinions, so that an “ineffaceable countersignature” from Butler on his critical sensibilities (a final word that Butler, in life, refused to give), is both all the more desirable and even further out of reach.

So far, it has been asserted that Butler paid significant poetic attention to gaps in time, perception, and understanding, and that his poetry takes on an interestingly double-edged logic when it attempts to represent those extra-linguistic moments through the linguistic art of poetry. It has also been suggested that in Butler’s archive, we might find evidence of his interest in the double-edged process of conducting historical research, where one’s personal historic context is always, to varying degrees, providing a lens on the material at hand, and where the desire for unassailable truth is always faced with a knowledge that an archive can never tell the whole truth, that there will always be gaps and silences between the lived moment of history and the evidence left behind.

Kwame Anthony Appiah, in an article titled “Identity, Politics and the Archive,” takes the bias of any archival narrative as an inevitability, which he does not let dissuade him. He accepts that

the archive, oral or written is, naturally, a creature of history. It reflects what people once thought worth recording, and what other people once thought worth holding onto or suppressing, forgetting or passing on. It is equally obvious that in making those decisions, state officials [or, I would contend, those who hold institutional power of any sort], in particular, will shape the archive to make its contents reflect and support particular interests. (99)

He goes on to assert, in fact, that the basis of the fast-receding model of the nation state is shared identity on the grounds of common memory, and also the mutually agreed repression of certain histories. Appiah quotes Ernest Renan, saying ““the essence of a nation is that we have many things in common, and also that we have all forgotten a lot of things”” (105). Such an observation might be fruitfully applied to NELM’s complicated existence as a liberal body

under late apartheid-era state funding, and the ways this played out in their collection of writings by authors of colour.

Black Bibliography

The ways in which Butler's resistance to the rhetorical aspects of 'committed' poetry during the apartheid era might have impacted his choices in an editorial role on journals and anthologies have been explored, but it is very unlikely that he or NELM would have refused collection donations from these authors, were they offered. This is evidenced in NELM's broad collecting ambit in these years, where very little material, even material bearing only the most tenuous connection to the 'literary,' was refused. Little evidence exists on exactly which authors were approached by Butler for donations, only on which authors responded to his calls, so the blame for NELM's non-representative collection make-up, come the 1990s, cannot be laid squarely at Butler's feet. Rather, a complex system of pressures was at work during the foundational years of NELM's existence, which ensured that both state-funded entities, and latterly, the English liberal project of which NELM was seen as representative, might have come to be regarded with suspicion by black authors. Also, although NELM was legally allowed to collect banned works under apartheid law, the physical acquisition of such works could prove difficult for an emergent, cash-strapped institution, and the general effects of literary censorship in the 1970s and 1980s meant that the published body of work in South Africa was far from representative in the first place.

The literary splits that were dominating South Africa at the time of NELM's coming-into-being in the 1970s are described by Peter McDonald, who lays out how, rather than forming a rallying point of commonality for all South African writers, the imposition of censorship generated disputes in the writing community:

In certain cases, particularly for white-led campaign groups, some of whom acted as if censorship of the arts could be treated as a distinct threat, opposition itself entailed a form of complicity. By contrast, for many black groups, especially following the rise of Black Consciousness in the 1970s, censorship was just one manifestation of white domination, which had to be circumvented as well as opposed. As such the ideal of 'commonality' was a central point of contention at the level of strategy, not a question settled once and for all in the face of censorship. (160)

McDonald points out that two of the most significant black poets of the day, Mongane Wally Serote and Mbuyiseni Mtshali, had their debut collections published by Renoster Books, an imprint of the 'little magazine' *Purple Renoster*, founded by Lionel Abrahams and Robert and Eva Royston. McDonald demonstrates that Serote's own conception of his poetic project, explicated in the author's preface to *Yakhal'inkomo* (1972), focusses on communal concerns and black experience, such as inter-generational divisions and relationships, while Abrahams' publisher's blurb highlights the liberal-humanist values of individualism. Thus, "despite the 'brute impediments' of his background, [Serote] manages to retain an acceptably literary identity as the 'most intense and lyrical' poet of his generation" (Abrahams qtd. in McDonald 282).

McDonald argues that Mtshali gained far greater international acclaim for his *Sounds of a Cowhide Drum* (1972) because the collection fitted more easily into the liberal white publishing model. McDonald quotes activist Barry Feinberg, who explains that "where Mtshali's mildly provocative irony struck a sympathetic chord in the liberal white conscience, Serote's caustic and personally complex vision did not find much empathy" (283). According to McDonald, the contrast in reception "raised further questions about the consequences of white liberal patronage" (283). A reviewer in the 1973 issue of *Black Review*, who McDonald tentatively identifies as Mafika Gwala, advocates for a new poetic form to express black experience for black readers, or, a "Black aesthetic[s]," and rejects "the reactive passivity implied by the term 'protest'" (181). Thus, the poetry produced by writers associated with community arts groups, rather than the white liberal literary publishing complex, such as those brought together under the umbrella body Mdlali in Soweto in 1972, "avoided the pitfalls associated with protest poetry, which the reviewer [Gwala] felt were exemplified by Mbuyiseni Mtshali's *Sounds of a Cowhide Drum*" (181). Gwala insists that, like Black Consciousness, "'the underground Black poetry does not have time to complain': 'it seeks to find positive alternatives'" (Gwala qtd. in McDonald 181).

If NELM was not actively seeking to exclude radical writing from black authors in the 1970s and 1980s, it did find itself squarely aligned with the white liberal "process of cultural production" (McDonald 280) of its day. Butler's and Kirkwood's positions, solidified as oppositional after Poetry '74, were in fact not the "most momentous cultural rift in the 1970s" (McDonald 179), which was catalysed, not by either of the white-led writers' groups (PEN-SA and the Artists' and Writers' Guild), but by "the numerous black-led, generally regional

community arts groups that began to emerge in townships across the country in the early part of the decade” (180). That NELM was unable to track the development of this literary history *as* it unfolded is unsurprising, since it was still a body in constitution, the assemblage reforming itself along different lines of flight. Once the dust had settled, as it were, by the early 1990s, NELM was in a position to look back upon the now more solidified body of black-authored resistance-, protest-, and Black Consciousness writing, and begin to respond to the archival pull away from the silence of uncertainty, towards the voice of the “ultimate repetition,” or the “ineffaceable countersignature” (Derrida and Prenowitz 36).

In 1990, the lack of representation in the Museum’s library section was considered to be a pressing enough concern that a restitutive project was launched. Andrew Martin, lead bibliographer on what came to be known as the Black Bibliography project, explains in an interview that the same methodology of relying on personalised networking was used. This is the methodology unpacked in Chapter 3, where it is argued that the Museum’s early collecting practices were dominated by a collegial approach, since Butler’s primary strength lay in his personal access to a network of writers and critics. In Chapter 4, it was demonstrated that this network was forming itself into the body now labelled ‘liberal humanist,’ whose authors and editors valorised a formalist conception of literary value. The implied outcome is a lack of representation in NELM’s archival literary collection, but it is worth thinking about how the colonial roots of archive creation and the subject of museology have as much to do with the development of a non-representative collection as do the personal literary tastes of its founding authors.

The informal approach used by Butler and later Martin can be linked in many ways to a colonial legacy from the roots of museums and archives, which were often originally personal hobby projects, dominated by single enthusiasts collecting haphazardly in a specialised area but, simultaneously, transmuting the collected information into a body of work that continues to wield tremendous ideological power. Stephen Weil suggests that the place of the amateur in museum practice was rife until around 1960 in America, and it can be assumed that the practice might have hung on longer in the culturally conservative apartheid-era South Africa. Weil describes the old-model landscape of the museum or archival institution as “dotted with volunteer-dominated and often amateurishly managed charities – the realm of stereotypical bumbling vicars, fluttering chairladies, and absent-minded professors” (82). However, it is easy to see how the cultural messaging that accompanied

such apparently benign institutions could come to be exclusive and excluding, particularly in a South African context. In America, prior to 1960, the heritage institution is regarded, Weil argues, as “essentially benevolent or philanthropic [. . .]. It was imbued with a generous spirit, its supporters were worthy and honourable people, and it was, above-all, respectable” (82–3). By extension, for a previously subjugated people in a country governed along racial lines until roughly 25 years ago, what then for those who are institutionally excluded from these benevolent, worthy, personality-led projects (a question that continued to haunt the liberal project in South Africa during this time)?

The personalised approach was systemic, and in many ways effective. Martin recalls how even his move into the position from within the library department at NELM relied on the knowledge of the director, Malcolm Hacksley, of Martin’s personal skills and interests. Martin remembers:

Malcolm actually recalled that when I had been at UCT I had been working in the religious studies department doing research [. . .] in South African history and I had been going round the country looking for key documents for that project. [. . .] Malcolm recalled that afterwards and he came to me and suggested would I like to take that post? I had done some of the closest work in terms of what [he was] looking for. (Personal Interview)

Martin clearly had particular skill in nurturing these personal connections, so that it became his primary mode of operating. James Matthews was first contacted by Martin due to a chance incident of serendipitous networking:

I have a friend in Cape Town who was a librarian and James Matthews, the author, was one of his regulars at the library. I just had no idea, how does one get hold of James Matthews? [. . .] I mean I knew him by reputation and my friend said [. . .] I’ll set up a meeting with him! James Matthews introduced me to a lot of people, gave me numbers, [. . .] and actually was able to speak about the political and literary climate at the time. [. . .] I sort of befriended him, and that [. . .] friendship opened the way and a whole lot of other ways of thinking how to do this [sic]. Now it’s more a case of meeting the authors, talking about their work, asking what material they had. [. . .] I showed them a list of what we have [. . .] and they could show me the gaps and they pointed me to the gaps. (Personal Interview)

It seems apt that direction and advice is taken from previously silenced black writers such as Matthews, whose work *Cry Rage!* was the first poetry collection banned by the apartheid

editorial board in 1972. These writers, existing in the gaps of the white-dominated publishing industry, are best placed to “show [Martin] the gaps” (Personal Interview).

Interestingly enough, while Weil has been quoted above to suggest that the development of collections from personalised network of donors seems to hark back to a colonially-coded system of meaning-making, a system devised to appear benign while symbolically excluding black voices in the first place, the same methodology seemed to be effective in efforts at redress, too. Martin explains that writers of colour may have dismissed more formal, public calls, because immediately following the abolishment of the apartheid state, institutions such as NELM, which were state-aligned and had always been governmentally funded during the apartheid years, were regarded with suspicion. As Martin says: “It does have a bit of a legacy as being an institution that existed before 1994. [. . .] I think with that comes some sort of suspicions. [. . .] Because it’s a government organisation [. . .] coupled with the idea that museums were places that only white people could go” (Personal Interview).

Martin specifies that the potential for misrepresentation and misappropriation was particularly worrisome for such authors: “I mean, what are you doing with my work, how are you presenting it? I can’t see what you’re doing with my work” (Personal Interview). Letting go of manuscripts and trusting that they would not be used against you by the state was no simple task so soon after the governmental change: “[w]ell, [says Martin,] you had to keep your manuscripts yourself, and keep them locked away, so that nobody could find them, in case you got in trouble” (Personal Interview).

In other words, Martin’s more personal, targeted approach often went some way towards mitigating a suspicion of the institutional, particularly among a generation of traditionally persecuted writers, although not with everyone. There also exists in the collection a letter to Martin from Peter Abrahams, which reads as follows: “I have indeed received both your letters. I had hoped you would read my silence as a signal of no interest in your project. Post-Apartheid South Africa has not yet reached the stage where any of the surviving structures and bureaucrats of the old system can ask for or get my co-operation” (Letter to Martin). Interestingly, the resonant void of silence is used here by Abrahams to signify his non-cooperation with a system of cultural production that sought to silence him under apartheid. Abrahams’ silence, once demanded, is now weaponised and turned against his perceived erstwhile oppressors.

For NELM, and I suspect many other archives, this legacy of using personal networks is complicated by the fact that it has had positive outcomes in many senses, too. If Butler had not called on his in-group for donations, more material on South African English authors would exist outside the country than in it. Similarly, Martin's powers of personal persuasion have gone *some* way towards redressing the gaps in NELM's published works collection, although the presently unaddressed question (or 'gap,' perhaps) is why the focus was turned on the library collections alone when the manuscript collection has benefitted from no such institutional project. These are questions that haunt the contemporary collection at NELM, which must grapple in the present day with the politics that informed its foundational values.

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This chapter has covered some chronologically and contextually disparate subject matter, that can nonetheless be thematically linked by the trope of silence. Specifically, the chapter has highlighted the places where the gaps and silences seep into the collected papers of Butler and the broader arc of the archival collection at NELM. The close reading of Butler's and Kirkwood's papers, delivered at Poetry '74, sought to demonstrate not only the points of disconnect, but also the point of connection between their respective positions at this seminal literary-cultural watershed moment. In this way, the Poetry '74 conference might be read not as an arbitrary event, where the discrete positions of two literary camps came into juxtaposition, but rather, using Deleuze and Guattari's imagery, as the body of South African literature reforming, de- and reterritorialising, where the two contradictory positions work in assemblage to reconstitute the formal properties of literary writing in English. In other words, because bodies are always in flux, and because static bodies tend towards erasure, the challenge to Butlerism mounted at Poetry '74 is a symptom of an organic and dynamic literary landscape. In terms of its received legacy, rather than disproving Butler's efficacy as a teacher, writer, and critic, the challenge to Butlerism might be seen to signify the vitality of the changing literary scene at the time.

Butler's lapse into silence on the topic might be regarded as a generative point of departure, where his silence in the collected correspondence at NELM, immediately after Poetry '74, might be taken as a starting point for investigating the broader archival impulses at work in this project. Taken together with a consideration of how Butler uses silence in his

poetry, the gaps in his personal collection might be read as signifying not the absence of thought, but the presence of philosophical turmoil. It is only at a distance of 20 years that Butler feels capable of addressing the issue again, once its molecular constituents have settled. Butler recognises silence, in his poetry and, more explicitly, in *A Local Habitation*, as informing the impulse to investigate history. This is the impulse that Derrida unpacks in *Archive Fever*, where the impossible quest for a final word on history is the driver of historic research and archival collecting.

The impulse is acted upon, in one instance, by NELM's attempt to redress the deficiencies in its published works collection through the Black Bibliography project, a project which itself has lapsed into silence in recent years. The project leaves unaddressed the primary resources wing of the Museum, which retains significant gaps, as is common to all archives, and which must as a condition of being remain incomplete. The holes in the collections, and the concept of a de- and reterritorialising body, are today the primary concerns of the Museum, which is occupying new premises. Accordingly, our archival view must turn inward, to the current moment, and forward, to NELM's conception of its work in the future-to-come.

6. Present Moment: A Second Founding

In a volume charting much the same journey for MuseumAfrica, a cultural museum in Johannesburg, as this study is attempting to do for NELM, Sara Byala contends that her biography of the institution “opens onto larger questions of change and stasis, and thus of the utility of colonial spaces in the postcolonial world” (14). Byala’s book, *A Place That Matters Yet: John Gubbins’s MuseumAfrica in the Postcolonial World* (2013), tracks and unpacks many of the same lines of questioning for MuseumAfrica that this study has highlighted. Although MuseumAfrica is an older institution, founded under the energies of a pre-apartheid, colonially governed South Africa, many of the museum’s contemporary challenges in navigating and contributing to a post-apartheid, post-transitional and postcolonial national context are salient for NELM, too. Some of the points raised in Byala’s book might be used comparatively to open up ways of viewing NELM’s place in a contemporary South Africa.

Much of the previous work of this thesis has tracked the ways the Museum came to resist change in a rapidly transforming South African political landscape. The process has been considered from the perspective of Deleuze and Guattari’s theory of becoming, so that the formation of NELM might be explained according to a materially embedded philosophy. Although Byala does not explicitly draw on Deleuze and Guattari, her spotlighting of the question of institutional “change and stasis” (14) in her introduction points to similar concerns of institutional shift and flux. By chance, this study has followed much the same format and methodology as Byala, unpacking the philosophies of its founding figure (in MuseumAfrica’s case, John Gubbins) in order to generate a lens for contextualising an institution in a changing and changed South Africa. In a trajectory similar to that of NELM, Byala tracks the history of MuseumAfrica to describe a museum whose institutional politics were sometimes compliant with and sometimes resistant to the broader forces at work, both nationally and internationally.

This final chapter will seek to establish points of contact between MuseumAfrica’s and NELM’s stories, to see how the disparate museums’ histories might speak to each other within a South African national context. The historical trajectory of the study will be brought into the present moment by theorising the arrival at NELM of a museologically-trained director, and the move to new premises, as a reterritorialisation of the Museum body that

existed for so long as part of the architecture of the Priest's House at Beaufort Street, Grahamstown. NELM's contemporary concerns and public-facing image construction will be compared to that which preceded it, to show how the new face of NELM intersects with a changing role for museums globally, in a postcolonial and postmodern international space. Some of NELM's recent challenges will be considered, counterpoised against those of the renovated MuseumAfrica in the post-apartheid and post-transitional moment. The materialisation, finally, in 2016, of the new NELM building and its changed collections mandate will be unpacked to demonstrate that the NELM body is still in a space of flux, reforming itself once again in response to changing national and international forces.

A place that matters yet: cross currents in South African postcolonial museology

A natural point of contact between Byala's study on MuseumAfrica and this study on NELM is found in her invocation of Butler himself in her introductory chapter. Unpacking Gubbins' complicated South African philosophy of belonging, which he was fleshing out some 40 years before Butler came to his own pronouncements on English 'South African-ness,' Byala notes the contemporary resonances of his project:

That Gubbins was asking questions in the early decades of the twentieth century about what it means to be South African, about how the nation could create an identity that comfortably encompassed all of its inhabitants, and that the museum sought to address these challenges more than a decade before the advent of apartheid, appears significant in a twenty-first century South Africa that is both racked by xenophobia and still deeply fractured. (14)

In making this observation, Byala points to the ways in which minor histories such as this can run counter to the teleological and chronological storytelling methods we employ for grander-scale histories. Thus, in a postcolonial moment, it is not enough simply to ignore or dispose of all colonially-founded and -funded institutions in South Africa, however much elements of their coming-into-being reads problematically in the present day. Byala's study of Gubbins and MuseumAfrica functions, she says, in much the same way "as Ann Laura Stoler's inquiry into Dutch colonial archives does against prevailing accounts of that time," arguing that we cannot "let our understanding of the dominant colonial – and in this case preapartheid – narrative override smaller, sometimes counterintuitive stories" (10).

In order to flesh out the “counterintuitive” (10) story of Gubbins and MuseumAfrica, Byala pays particular attention to his specific matrix of political leanings and personal sensibility to understand the kind of stewardship behind the collection of Africana that eventually became MuseumAfrica. The points of connection with Butler’s strand of white liberal thinking, for example, are made explicit. Byala invokes Jonathan Hyslop, noting that “[Butler] ‘was a far more interesting and complex thinker than . . . [a simple] dismissal would imply’” (11). She proposes that for Gubbins’ 1930s South Africa, as for Butler’s South Africa in the following decades, “‘the white intelligentsia . . . harboured non-Marxist strands of thinking which, though undoubtedly marked by racism, were considerably more egalitarian, democratic, and diverse than is generally recognised’” (Hyslop qtd. in Byala 11). This points out the contradictions inherent in a founding figure who, through the course of his career, came in for criticism for being too radical and too conservative, according to the political and cultural context. Byala’s description of Gubbins’ hard-wrung personal philosophy, explicated in his volume *Three-Dimensional Thinking* (1924), could equally be applied to Butler:

Gubbins’s philosophy aimed to surpass the incongruity he perceived between the intellectual notions that he brought from [England] and the reality he found in South Africa [. . .]

Ultimately, Gubbins came to see the disconnect that crippled him not as a personal affliction, but rather as a product of the modern world itself [. . .]. Determining that all human suffering stemmed from faulty reasoning that demanded binary opposites – like ‘good’ versus ‘evil’ and ‘black’ versus ‘white’ – Gubbins aimed to transcend this conundrum with nothing less than a new manner of thinking. (8)

The acute awareness of the importance of national identity formation, and the shared wariness of glib or neat categorisations, connect these two thinkers across geography and generation. Although Gubbins was English-born, and Butler South African, and although Gubbins was doing this work approximately a generation ahead of Butler, they are connected by these shared concerns, so that they might be read as acting independently but in a kind of disconnected tandem in the formation of South Africa’s heritage sector.

It is useful to track the two museums’ de- and reterritorialisations against one another. MuseumAfrica, founded in the 1930s, faced a physical and ideological split in the 1970s when part of the collection was granted a permanent home in Newtown. As the building was incomplete at the time of the move, the following solution to space limitations at the new

venue was reached: “All objects of black Africana – the so-called ethnography collections – would be moved to the new space, which would open at once as the Africana Museum in Progress (AMIP)” (12–3). By contrast, the white Africana collections remained on the top floor of the public library. Byala links the collections split to a generational split among curatorial staff: “The older guard of the museum – those workers who believed wholeheartedly in a kind of ineffectual liberalism – would stay where they were, while a younger group of curators, intent on rendering their institution meaningful to a changing world, would move with the ethnography collection” (13). Meanwhile “the world outside its doors erupted in flames with the youth calling for the end of apartheid, [as] the museum fractured both physically and ideologically” (13). Clearly, rather than being coincidental, the physical relocation of part of the MuseumAfrica (then the Africana Museum) collection exposed the ideological fault lines at work in a changing institution. NELM found itself, unwittingly perhaps, at the centre of an ideological split in South African literature in the 1970s, crystallised at the Poetry ’74 conference, at just the same time as it was moving to its first dedicated premises on Beaufort Street, marking its shift from hobby collection to national institute. The choice of the Beaufort Street premises at this juncture is significant, given the building’s material link with a colonial history deeply embedded in nineteenth-century evangelical-missionary thought. It is worth considering how this initial reterritorialisation resonates both with Butler’s position as a committed Christian and proponent of the English cultural project, as well as with the project of museology more broadly, which arose out of the same nineteenth-century colonial nexus of ideas. NELM’s second reterritorialisation must be treated as equally portentous.

The crucial point here is that locatedness, or the physical architecture of the museum-archive, is always inextricably interlinked with its abstract philosophical standing. This is a point made by Derrida in *Archive Fever*, and picked up on by Byala. In focussing on NELM’s contemporary moment in this chapter, the study must take as its present focus the move to a new building; but in the same way that MuseumAfrica’s institutional history might be said to be shaped by its various physical locations, NELM’s physical relocation in Grahamstown signals an epistemological recalibration initiated around 2010, with the arrival of its new director, Beverly Thomas.

Deleuze and Guattari are clear that territoriality is inextricable from the rhizomatic process. Because of the body’s susceptibility to change – in fact, because the ability to

change is essential to the survival of the body – Deleuze and Guattari theorise the process of de- and reterritorialisation in the opening chapter of *A Thousand Plateaus*: “Rhizome.” One of the chosen examples used to describe territorialisation in *A Thousand Plateaus* is of the book, which is apt considering the museum under discussion revolves around the life of books. Explaining that the tendency of a body to begin to resemble surrounding, external forms according to its needs (one might consider the example of camouflage adaptations in animals) requires further theorisation than thinking about the process as mere mimicry, Deleuze and Guattari claim that “contrary to a deeply rooted belief, the book is not an image of the world. It forms a rhizome with the world, there is an a parallel evolution of the book and the world; the book assures the deterritorialization of the world, but the world effects a reterritorialization of the book, which in turn deterritorializes itself in the world (if it is capable, if it can)” (10). Thus, when MuseumAfrica and NELM’s physical changes in location seem to reflect internal reconfigurations of the organisations, or vice versa, this is not simple mimicry, but rather an “a parallel evolution” (10), whereby the internal and external positionings of the museum effect de- and reterritorialisations upon one another.

The concept of territorialisation is also frequently drawn on in the “Geology of Morals” chapter, because the tendency towards change (deterritorialisation) is always accompanied by a concomitant need to resist change, to solidify along the strata (reterritorialisation). Thus,

Deterritorialization must be thought of as a perfectly positive power that has degrees and thresholds (epistrata), is always relative, and has reterritorialization as its flipside or complement. An organism that is deterritorialized in relation to the exterior necessarily reterritorializes on its interior milieu. A given presumed fragment of embryo is deterritorialized when it changes thresholds or gradients, but is assigned a new role by the new surroundings. (54)

The movement away from an existing form (deterritorialisation) must operate according to degrees and thresholds if the changing body is to assume a new form. Deterritorialisation taken to its logical end would result in annihilation of the body. For this reason, deterritorialisation must always occur in tandem with reterritorialisation. As the body follows its tendency towards change and shift, it must also stabilise and reterritorialise at some point in order to inhabit a new, working form. When the body changes in form, in relation to the

exterior, it must remain stabilised in content (the interior milieu), in order to remain in existence, or vice versa. Deterritorialisation is never total.

Using this format, NELM's physical "deterritorialization in relation to the exterior" (54) – the renouncing of the Priest's House on Beaufort Street – is necessarily accompanied by a reterritorialisation of its "interior milieu" (54). The move was consciously heralded as a step away from its unspoken self-identification as a research library to fall in line with a more contemporary concept of what museums can be, namely community centres, proponents of environmentalism, gift shops, or even cafés. Crystal Warren, head of the curatorial department at NELM, reinforces that "the biggest shift [the new director] brought was the move from museum by name, but really a library and research centre, to *being* a museum" (Personal Interview). She links this shift in self-identification to the museum's physical relocation: "[t]he timing [of the relocation] was good as the move to the new building worked with rethinking what we do, what we can do. The old building determined a lot of what we did; you work with the space available" (Personal Interview).

Adkins explains the tendency towards solidification of the body in tandem with its response to the allure of change as what keeps the body alive. This process is called "faciality" (108) when described in relation to linguistic signification. The "face" (108) is located at the intersection of the "despotic" regime of signification, or meaning-making, which Deleuze and Guattari evocatively conceptualise as an inscription upon a white wall, and the "passional, postsignifying regime" (Adkins 109), which they conceptualise as a black hole towards which bodies tend along a deterritorialising line of flight. This section of *A Thousand Plateaus* is perhaps most legible to scholars of post-structuralism, dealing as it does with the realm of signs. Adkins, who is especially lucid on Deleuze and Guattari's pronouncements on the linguistic stratum, reinforces that meaning-making is achieved by relational distinctions, so that

[t]he abstract machine of faciality [a system comprising white walls and black holes] normalizes through exclusive disjunctions. That is, it establishes arborescent, biunivocal relations. This face is a man or a woman. This face is an adult or a child, rich or poor, leader or subject, military or civilian.

(Adkins 110)

The normalising impulse to categorise, or to establish "discrete units" (Adkins 110) by which things may be recognised (for example, this is literature and that is non-fiction, or, this is

performance poetry and that is rap music), is accompanied always by the impulse towards deviance, towards a deterritorialisation (should we begin to collect on children's literature, cartoons?), which, taken to its end limit, forms a black hole. This means, according to Adkins, that the normalising tendency of the regime of signs is "a product of its tendency toward stasis" (Adkins 111).

This sounds abstract, but Adkins shows the real permutations of Deleuze and Guattari's thinking for the postcolonial project. He reiterates Deleuze and Guattari's argument that the standard towards which stabilisation or normalisation tends, in our current iteration of the abstract machine of faciality, is the face of Christ. In *A Thousand Plateaus* this assertion is not meant as an essentialist truth, but as an illustration of a contextual reality produced by a "particular combination of the signifying and postsignifying regimes that resulted from the mixture of the despotic Roman Empire with certain passional elements of Judaism that broke away to form the suffering Messiah narrative of Christianity" (Adkins 111). The colonising impulse to normalise culture according to a Western optic "is a white wall/black hole system organised around the face of Christ" (111). Thus, when Christ promises to sit in judgement on all the nations upon his return, Adkins shows that "that judgement has been happening alongside the spread of Christianity itself. It happened through colonialism (often under the guise of conversion). It continues to happen in the prevalence of both explicit and implicit racism" (111).

This digression serves to show that the signifying textures of NELM's formation, under the energies of a committed Christian who shaped and was shaped by an English colonial outpost city in the Eastern Cape, are significant to the territory it occupies. This is not merely a coincidental point of connection. The "mixture of the despotic Roman Empire with certain passional elements of Judaism that broke away to form the suffering Messiah narrative of Christianity" (111), which Adkins credits as a bedrock for the formation of our contemporary signifying regimes, is the same arid Cradock bedrock upon which Butler himself comes into being. The importance of Butler's religious positioning to his professional and poetic output cements into place connections between 'the face of Christ,' in Deleuze and Guattari's parlance, and the system of coloniality, the system of meaning-making, and the individual actors and personalities involved in the production of NELM.

NELM's specific abstract machine of faciality is made up by two interrelated parts. There are the staff and visitors who adhere to an older concept of what NELM is for, namely

to provide a public service directed at researchers in the field of South African literature, a service that worked to “distinguish [itself] by the friendliness of its staff” (Hacksley, Personal Interview). But this contingent is mixed together with those displaying a deterritorialising desire for change, towards the black hole, and towards a total recalibration of the Museum’s core purpose, advocating for “a greater sense of being part of the heritage sector” (Warren, Personal Interview). Because the deterritorialising impulse is unspecified and uncontained, both the tendencies towards change and stasis are necessary for the survival of the body. The very idea of what a museum signifies is at stake. To effect change, it must deterritorialise, fleetingly, towards deviance, chaos, and the black hole. To survive, it must reterritorialise, submit again to the signification of what it is and is not, writ on the white wall of normality. Institutional change is perceived as threatening in a very real sense.

Peaks and troughs: change in the national and global heritage sectors

Byala uses the fate of a bronze plaque at MuseumAfrica, once positioned at the entrance to the Africana Museum, where it heralded Gubbins’ service in the creation of the institution, to begin her concluding remarks on the state of the South African heritage sector. The plaque, “dust-covered and upside down in a dank storeroom” (237), speaks to a wider state of affairs; “for we live today unsure of whether to adore, ignore or expunge the remnants of old orders” (237). The argument of much of this study has been that the conflicting desires for archival closure and the gesture towards change, the future, and the unknown, is what animates the archival and museological project. This is a position Byala seems to support when she suggests that modern museums must be read *as* archives, in the broad conceptual sense, and insists that “regardless of how they were collected or displayed in the past, objects within the museum-as-archive, once focused on the future, enable multiple possibilities” (6). However, she also seems to suggest that the fracturing of the historic metanarratives about the past has been part of what has bedevilled the museological project in modern times. While the recalibrated MuseumAfrica succeeded well in dismantling apartheid-era “singular dogma” (225), and opted for a fragmented, thematic approach with its new exhibitions, it has found, according to Byala, that “all people crave some sort of national narrative” (225).

Byala quotes Sarah Nuttall to argue that the result of this desire for a ‘national narrative’ has meant the promotion of the struggle narrative at the expense of other accounts,

so that “[t]oday, post-transition, the story of the struggle continues to drown out all other competing narratives, witness the success of spaces like the Apartheid Museum and the new Freedom Park” (Nuttall qtd. in Byala 225). Byala attributes MuseumAfrica’s high point, with its re-launch in 1994, as being in part due precisely to its embracing incompleteness, arguing that at the time, it was “reflecting society’s inability to envision an inclusive metanarrative” (224). However, as time passed and the need for a new national narrative “reasserted itself” (224), MuseumAfrica, starved of funds and unable to attract its old cohort of visitors, fell into what Byala calls its “nadir” (226), circa 2004. She traces this shift to the reasons mentioned here, but also connects the move away from crowd-pleasing grand narratives to global museological trends.

Byala shows, first, that the move away from apartheid-era “singular dogma” (225) in South Africa coincided with a global move “away from metanarratives [. . .] as part and parcel of postmodern thought” (228). However, in South Africa as globally, a more pragmatic reason exists for the traditional museum’s decline: economics. In South Africa, as in the rest of the world, the *raison d’être* of the museum has been contested for some time:

Out of the Victorian world from which they sprung, museums (and other such civic places) were long seen as existing above the fray of economics. As former [MuseumAfrica] head Hillary Bruce explain[s], ‘we were brought up . . . to believe that museums and libraries were a service. They were something that was given that we [the people] were entitled to.’ Yet from the late 1970s onwards, in South Africa – and elsewhere – a distinct shift in reception could be felt. [. . .] At that time, the notion that museums had to be lucrative – and that they had to adhere to generally accepted business practices to do so – came into fashion, and with great effect” (214).

Faced with a chronic lack of funds in the late 1990s and early 2000s, it would be easy to assume that the new Ministry of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology was not prioritising spending on museums. While, according to Byala, this department had its overall budget reduced in these years, overall spending actually increased on cultural institutions, at least throughout the 1990s. She makes the point that “[t]he availability of funding for museums during this period thus indicates not an acceptance of the state of museums in the country, but rather, and importantly, profound unhappiness with places of commemoration” (216–7). Significantly, then, MuseumAfrica remained cash-starved not because it was considered to be

insufficiently transformed, but because, given its colonial founding circumstances, it was perhaps considered beyond transforming.

It is a problem that NELM has come up against too, as Andrew Martin suggests in the previous chapter regarding a suspicion of pre-1994 institutions on the part of writers of colour. Byala explains that MuseumAfrica “continues to suffer the taint of its colonial and apartheid history, as it has for some time. This is because it, like other longstanding museums, is still regarded as a bastion of the old South Africa” (218). Previous head of both MuseumAfrica and the Johannesburg Art Gallery, Rochelle Keene, says that “[w]e are battling against a perception that it’s only [places like] the Robben Island Museum [and] the Nelson Mandela Museum that are transformed,’ [. . .] ‘and there’s a very real perception that any museum established before 1994 is not transformed’” (qtd. in Byala 218).

One of NELM’s most financially precarious years came in 1998. In August of that year, it emerged that the planned move for NELM to the Eden Grove Complex on the Rhodes University campus was to be suspended because of “[b]ureaucratic bungling by the ministry of arts, culture, science and technology in Pretoria” (Earl-Taylor 1). Butler was contacted for comment, and called the episode “nothing short of a tragedy” (1), laying the blame at the door of the fledgling ANC government: “I think it’s an example of the damage done to a cultural institute by a government not meeting its obligations” (1). This comment is interesting because it reinforces the older view of cultural institutes such as museums being a basic service expected of a state, a perception that was in flux at the time. By November, the *Grocott’s Mail* reported that NELM was to retrench four staff members due to the non-receipt of an addition to the annual subsidy of “R145 000 which had been promised orally for salary increases” (Earl-Taylor and Loewe 1). This, despite then-director Malcolm Hacksley’s comment that “usage of NELM’s resources by academic and literary institutes around the world [was] rocketing” (1). It is worth noting that the focus at this stage in NELM’s history is still on its research value to literary academics, rather than on its potential broader public value, or what Stephen Weil calls the museum’s recalibrated role as a social enterprise (81).

Situating NELM in the contemporary heritage sector

Extrapolating from Byala’s account of MuseumAfrica, the problems facing museums in the post-apartheid period are then as follows. The local need to dismantle the grand narrative of

apartheid has been replaced by a need for a new national narrative, which disjointed or thematic exhibition designs failed to meet, and the international tendency towards more fragmented designs and narratives in line with postmodern trends does not always prove popular with museum-going audiences. There are local funding problems where, as is common in developing nations, cultural spending is curtailed in favour of providing basic services, and there is the international change in the idea of the museum from its perception as one of those basic services provided by the state to an enterprise that needs to be economically self-sufficient. Finally, there is the issue of transformation, where, locally, historic museums are tainted by an association with the old South Africa and, internationally, museums are increasingly uncertain about how to deal with collection items whose provenance suggests exploitation by colonial authorities, the most obvious example being the current debate between Greek authorities and the British Museum over the rightful ownership of the Elgin Marbles.¹

NELM has not been immune to the effects of these shifting trends in the heritage sector. Its exhibitions calendar, once dominated by author-specific exhibitions following an easy-to-digest narrative, has become theme-based, with the final permanent exhibition at Beaufort Street (“This is what I’m made of: Landscape in South African Literature”) centring on South African writers’ responses to various landscapes in the country. Similarly, the permanent exhibition installed at the new Worcester Street premises picks up on points of South African history thematically rather than chronologically. This was a conscious decision taken in light of a more postmodern, self-reflexive realisation that reflecting the whole of South Africa’s many-voiced experiences in one exhibition is impossible, and so the Museum has, in accordance with contemporary trends, scaled back on what it purports to represent, in favour of a thematic design. The new exhibition, if not strictly following the now popular struggle narrative, does support the equally popular narrative of ‘unity in diversity.’ The new exhibition is titled “Voices of the Land.”

Additionally, coinciding with the arrival of Beverley Thomas as the new director in 2010, the annual reports in recent years display a desire to catch up with professional contemporary museological standards. Stephen Weil, commenting on the American

¹ For an account of this ongoing debate, which was reignited almost ten years ago when a new museum was opened at the site of the Parthenon in Athens, see the *Mail and Guardian* piece, “Greek fury at Elgin marbles ‘loan deal’,” 14 June 2009.

museum's transformation, re-imagines a favourite American tale of "Rip Van Winkle, the amiable New York farmer who fell into a profound sleep as a loyal subject of George III, woke up some twenty years later, and was astonished to find that he had become a citizen of an entirely new country called the United State of America" (7). Using this story as a point of departure, Weil imagines a similar rupture for "an old fashioned curator in a New York museum – a tweedy Rip Van Recluse – who dozed off at his desk some fifty years ago and woke up today [1999]" (81). Of the many transformations Weil details in the contemporary museum, he notes that the ability to articulate and report on its own public-facing goals, common to the entire non-profit organisations sector, has become commonplace. Weil explains,

Among the forces driving this [. . .] revolution has been the emergence, primarily in graduate schools of business, of the new organisational concept of 'social enterprise,' pursuant to which a socially driven enterprise and a profit-driven one can best be understood as being basically similar entities that differ mainly in the nature of the bottom lines that they pursue [. . .]. In the end [. . .], 'managing for results' – to use a Canadian phrase – is no less essential to one enterprise than the other. (83)

Not only must the museum now be a social enterprise – nobody now believes, according to Weil, that the museum is still "its own excuse for being" (82) – but it must also follow standardised procedures for articulating and reporting on its efficacy in meeting the goals it sets.

This international background contextualises one of Thomas' first moves, after her first full year as director at NELM, to rectify "a backlog in performance monitoring and compliance with financial legislation and regulations" (Thomas, *Annual Report 2010/11* 9). Crystal Warren similarly identifies "an increasing level of accountability, for example the auditing of performance information, increased reporting, [and the implementation of] all the supply chain management regulations" (Personal Interview) as one of the major developments, nationally, in the sector in recent years. Additionally, in line with this newer museological focus, the first major spending authorised under Thomas' directorship was not on the collections or even on exhibitions, but on the education department: "In March 2010 the NELM Council authorised the withdrawal of R270 000 from investment funds for the completion of the new education facility at the Eastern Star Gallery in Anglo-African Street"

(*Annual Report 2009/10* 10). The focus paid to the curatorial department in these early days was administrative: “Policy gaps and inconsistent accessioning systems dating back to the early days of the museum are two of many challenges facing the collections section” (*Annual Report 2010/11* 11). To this end, she initiated a project “reviewing outdated policy and developing new policy to guide the development and care of the collections” (11).

This immediate shift in focus seems to reflect another of Weil’s points about the reterritorialised museum, pertaining to “how museums are staffed and how their operating budgets are allocated” (88). Soon after the arrival of Thomas, an organisational restructure was undertaken, whereby the education and public programmes (EPP) division was created (or augmented, from the old education department) with the hiring of an external applicant for its manager, Zongezile Matshoba. Significant attempts to ensure the visible transformation of this most public-facing division of the Museum were reported on by Michael Titlestad, chair of the NELM council at the time. He notes that “while the collections policy has always been rigorous and inclusive, and the development of scholarship related to black South African authors has long been prioritised, the education initiatives have begun to concentrate on those schools serving previously disadvantaged groups in the Eastern Cape” (*Annual Report 2011/12* 3). Warren explains that an external appointment was necessary because of the new focus of NELM’s educational programmes: “the head of EPP needed to be a teacher and someone who could speak [isi]Xhosa” (Personal Interview). In 2013, Titlestad reports that

The council is [. . .] pleased to register the appointment of a black isiXhosa speaker as the manager of the museum’s education and public programmes division, as well as the promotion of an internal female candidate to head the NELM curatorial functions. These appointments speak to the institution’s commitment to both fundamental transformations and staff development.

(*Annual Report 2012/13* 6)

Weil reinforces this shift in museum organisation, commenting that “when collections were at the core of the museum’s concern, the role played by those in charge of the collection was dominant. In American museums, curators were resident princes” (88). By contrast, following the shift to a more “outwardly focused, public-service museum” (88) model, “curators have been forced to share some of their authority with a range of other specialists; first with museum educators, and more recently with exhibition planners, with public

programmers and even with marketing and media specialists” (88). The most difficult transition, particularly felt in the NELM curatorial department, is that “[a]s the museum’s focus is redirected outward, an increasing share of its operating costs, particularly salaries, must concurrently be diverted away from the acquisition, study and care of collections, and toward other functions” (88). At NELM, the organisational restructure that saw the augmentation of the EPP department simultaneously initiated the consolidation of the curatorial department. Curatorial was henceforth to fall under one managing head of department, instead of the previous individualised library, press clippings, manuscripts, and collections heads. The aim of this, as Warren puts it, was “to stop [the various department personnel] working in silos” (Personal Interview). Weil notes, archly, that “this has sometimes been a bumpy transition – power is not always relinquished graciously, even by otherwise gracious museum people – with still some distance to go” (88). Certainly, although the curatorial department at NELM remains significantly larger than the EPP, there is a persistent perception among the Museum registrars, especially, of under-staffing and lack of attention.

A further, ongoing challenge, signalled in the 2010/11 and 2011/12 reports, was that of implementing a digitisation strategy. Although NELM now has a functioning process for digitising existing paper manuscripts, progress is incremental. Only an infinitesimal percentage of the collection is digitised so far. Apart from incidental digitising undertaken on the request of researchers, the only two collections that are nearing complete digitisation are the Olive Schreiner and Eugène Marais collections. Given that student assistant time is directed to digitisation only when nothing else pressing is required of them, it took most of 2018 to digitise the Marais collection (approximately nine boxes of material). A further problem is the ongoing struggle with those items that are ‘born digital’ – in other words, the item was donated in digital format and no hard copy exists. Both staff training and the current database system in use at NELM are not particularly good at accommodating items that do not have a physical storage location.

It is worth returning to Premesh Lalu’s comment, quoted in the first chapter, which points out that the simple matter of digital storage considerations forms only a small part of the necessary deliberations. Lalu suggests that the digitisation question might open up space for “a different intellectual input that may offer the potential to extend the ongoing debate about the archive and its place in society” (“The Virtual Stampede” 30). Indeed, Lalu

perceives this digital de- and reterritorialisation of the fabric of museology to be the site at which South African historiography might transform itself. He reminds the reader that, in the digital space, the “conceptualisation of the archive is now increasingly up for grabs, and digitising initiatives are seemingly intensifying the contests over the redefinition of the archive” (37).

For NELM, a paper-based archive, this is a particularly pressing question, but Byala shows how, even for object-based collections in museums of cultural history, the importance of the physical collection item has become contested:

Today – to the extent that it is able – MuseumAfrica continues to collect objects, something that was once considered to be a prerequisite for any museum. Yet, this is no longer thought to be integral to museums. Now, new museums are tasked not with amassing physical remnants of the past (though they may do this) since, it is felt, such a mission necessarily privileges a Eurocentric model. Rather, these new spaces are charged [by Mpumlwana] to “collect, preserve and access memories, stories, ideas, concepts, music, oral testimonies.” They are empowered to reclaim and protect the histories of those whose stories may or may not be documentable via artefacts.

(Byala 222)

In many ways, NELM is better poised for this deterritorialisation than many others. NELM has always dealt in the collection of stories, and is more comfortable in the abstract space of narrative than many other object-based museums, having always had as its primary collection focus the storytelling impulse of South Africans through history, even if it has previously done so through the collection of physical paper-based artefacts. On the other hand, the digitisation problem is more pressing for NELM, since the process of story production is already digital, which generates problems for how museum collections are traditionally perceived. Even if the cataloguing of digital items such as manuscripts and email correspondence becomes more sophisticated, the promise of originality is lost – no museum with a digital copy of a manuscript can claim with certainty to have the only copy, however stringently copyright laws are enforced. Such is the nature of information sharing in the digital age: the ‘aura of the artefact’ (to use Walter Benjamin’s phrase) will be lost.²

² Walter Benjamin was an eminent theoriser of the production of fine art and its consumption based on historic, cultural and political context. In *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (1935), Benjamin introduces the concept of the “aura of the artefact,” arguing that the aura of originality is lost in the age of easy reproduction of the art image. Byala draws on him extensively.

These shifts are not unusual in the contemporary South African sector, nor is NELM by any means more unstable than many other national museums. The changes do speak, however, to a fundamental move away from Butler's vision of the research library and archive he founded, used primarily by scholars and researchers in its first 30 years of existence. These changes in self-perception, budgetary organisation, staffing, and collections policy management, among much else, might be characterised as the internal reterritorialisation mentioned by Deleuze and Guattari, set into motion in response to a quickly reforming, externally deterritorialised international and local heritage sector. The external conditions of change are, obviously, as important as the internal responses that take place as a result. The changing body of the museum is a necessity here, in the contemporary moment, so that it may be read sensibly against its changed surroundings. As Deleuze and Guattari remind us, "it is not the individuality of the face that counts but the efficacy of the ciphering [chiffage] it makes possible, and in what cases it makes it possible" (qtd. in Adkins 113). Adkins confirms that Deleuze and Guattari are not only interested in the conditions that gave rise to an assemblage, but also in the conditions "under which it might become something else" (113). Perhaps the most fundamental line of flight along which NELM has travelled has been its relocation from a literary landscape to a museological one. It now needs to be legible not only to literary scholars, and not primarily as a literary research institution, but rather against other museums, and to other museum professionals. This is not merely conceptual – the change is central to its very survival, if it is to continue a programme of accurate self-reporting (making itself legible under new circumstances) to a changed national government and cultural budget.

A new building and a new mandate

One of the larger external deterritorialising contextual shifts amidst which all South African museums have had to rethink their self-composition has been a change in terminology. Byala explains that museums and similar cultural institutes, which had "hitherto been ascribed to the flighty world of arts and culture now became a weighty sounding 'heritage sector.' Heritage, or the accumulation of a past legacy, connoted something that had long been denied, something that was being reclaimed, something that demanded attention in a nation intent on remaking itself" (221). In a newly formed heritage sector, the museum must do

more than preserve its collections. Byala quotes erstwhile Minister of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology, Ben Ngubane, introducing this shift in 2000 as being squarely aligned with the transformation agenda: with “the new context of broad social transformation [. . .] officially under way in all sectors of our society . . . The heritage sector is not going to be an exception” (220). The announcement came as a spate of new ‘legacy museums’ were conceived and established, including the Nelson Mandela Museum in Umtata. Ngubane confirmed that this museum would “mark a complete departure from the notion of a static view of museums, to the one that prioritizes accessibility, broad participation, tourism promotion and community ownership” (qtd. in Byala 221).

It is with this historic context in mind, and in light of the view that NELM had perhaps come to be seen as ‘static’ under a new democratic government, that NELM’s new building, practically completed in 2016, was heralded primarily for its energy efficiency, and its progressiveness from an environmental perspective, rather than simply because it suited the needs of a historic paper collection. Thus, in every *Annual Report* and press release in which it is mentioned,³ the building is described in terms of its cutting-edge environmentalism, and becomes almost detached from its literary purpose altogether. When it is first mentioned, in the *Annual Report 2011/12*, the building’s concept designs are reported to have been presented by the Minister of Arts and Culture at the 17th Conference of the Parties (COP17) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in Durban, in November 2011. In subsequent reports, and in all interviews with local newspapers, much is made of the fact that NELM stood to become South Africa’s first ‘green’ museum, as confirmed by its receipt of a five star rating from the Green Building Council of South Africa. Once staff had taken occupation in 2016, the key elements of environmental friendliness and usefulness as a community space were highlighted. The new features mentioned were:

- Integration of the building into a park-like setting with outdoor education facilities in the indigenous garden,

³ All of the articles pertaining to the new building published in local Eastern Cape newspapers covered similar content. The following representative selection can be found in the bibliography: Macgregor, David, “G’town’s Green Museum First”; Macgregor, David, “R100m Plan for SA’s First Eco-Friendly Museum in G’town”; Mini, Prudence, “Beam Me Up... G’town to See Green as Literary Landmark Grows”; and Solomon, Leah, “G’town’s Green Museum.”

- Storage facilities below ground with a roof garden to reduce temperature fluctuations,
- Rainwater harvesting, and
- Heavy massing of materials to assist in maintaining constant interior temperatures. (Thomas, *Annual Report 2015/16* 6)

The “community ownership” (Ngubane qtd. in Byala 221) element of NELM’s new building is consistently highlighted, with frequent mention of the various educational spaces contained within the new premises, the public gardens, and the availability of the main foyer space for various community events. NELM’s new building also boasts a theatre, which is used for such diverse purposes as a lecture theatre, a conference venue, a space used by the local film club, a venue for musical performances, and a traditional theatre space in operation as a venue during the National Arts Festival. It is these features, rather than the impressive new reading room for visiting scholars, or even necessarily the new literary exhibitions, that are invoked over and over to make the new museum legible to a Department of Arts and Culture interested in transformation and a demonstrable shift away from old practices. When the new permanent exhibition in the main foyer is mentioned, its role as an indicator of new diverse national identities is highlighted. The new exhibition “is about the literary representation of the South African Landscape from early colonial times to the present day. Through literary imaginings, the landscape is presented as a physical place with its long history of ownership conflict, and as an aesthetic symbol of cultural identity” (Thomas, *Annual Report 2015/16* 6).

Importantly, the Museum has managed to secure a changed mandate in recent years, which charges it with the collection and preservation of literatures in all South Africa’s indigenous languages that are not yet served by their own museums. At the time of writing, the Museum is at the end of the public consultation process of selecting a new name, and the title ‘Amazwi – South African Museum of Literature’ has been submitted to the Minister of Arts and Culture for approval. “Amazwi” translates as “voices.” The securing of a new mandate is highlighted in the recent *Annual Reports* by both the director and the chairman of the council, Mr Gcinisizwe Dlanjwa. Dlanjwa, not a literary expert like his predecessor Michael Titlestad, chooses to focus in his foreword to the *Annual Report 2015/16* on precisely those elements of the changing museum that are legible to the Department of Arts and Culture, making mention of the new building, the progress on the “Revised White Paper

on Arts, Culture and Heritage, and the Draft National Museums Policy,” and, crucially “the literatures of the historically disadvantaged languages of South Africa” (5). This is the only mention made of literature in the entire report, in which it is transformed from what might historically have been perceived as an elitist pursuit so that it becomes recognisable according to the framework of transformation.

This argument is not intended to sound cynical. In many ways, the new initiatives are rehearsing the aims of previous efforts at diversity and inclusion under newly recognisable terminology. The previous director, Malcolm Hacksley, speaking of the Black Bibliography project, dismissed a question about attempts at diversity and transformation, and branded the initiative simply as “doing what *should* be done” (Personal Interview). It is useful to frame the shift in public-facing communication on the part of the Museum not as a shift in its internal moral or ethical underpinnings, but in the way it makes itself readable in a transforming national context. Far from dismissing the use of buzzwords, and framing transformation in liberal ethical terms (as indicated in Hacksley’s response), the new Museum strives to make its self-reporting effective enough to ensure its continued financial survival in a transforming South African heritage sector. This language of transformation becomes the condition of possibility that allows the Museum to conduct its actualised work in the sector, one-half of the double articulation making up the new Museum.

As Crystal Warren points out, the heritage sector has been ahead of the curve on some academic developments, concerning itself with the transformation of a colonial heritage long before the popularised terminology caught up. Speaking about the primary changes in the heritage sector that have been noticeable during the span of her career, she articulates that the sector has been desirous, in the last decade, of going “beyond adding sites and museums” and works now to “examine the existing collections and memorials. Even before the decolonising of knowledge was a buzzword the heritage sector was grappling with the concept” (Personal Interview). In many ways, this research, which has been ongoing for the last five years, forms part of that work.

Back to the founders: mapping the collections of Butler and Gubbins

The language of change is paramount under the post-apartheid transformational rubric, and Deleuze and Guattari’s vocabulary of shift and flux is regularly invoked in the museological

and archival criticism in South Africa today. But even further afield, Stephen Weil, speaking from an American context, regularly uses the profound late twentieth-century transformation in museum organisation – to being a service-oriented enterprise rather than existing for the sake of the collections – as a framing concept for many of his articles on museology. In *Making Museums Matter* (2009), a collection of his essays, he charts the shift in collections policy in public museums in recent years. The primary shift, he argues, originates not only in the postmodern museum's more circumspect idea of its possible scope, or in the economic considerations of caring for and storing an ever-growing collection – both of which play a role – but also in the more fundamental shift of the modern public institution moving away from the personal tastes and mores of the private collections from which they are often originally formed.

Where, for the private collector, the acquisition, composition, and preservation of the collection might be thought of as an end in itself, in the in the modern service-oriented museum, the collections become “a ‘means,’ [. . .] an instrument for the achievement of a larger end and simply one among a number of resources that the museum can employ to carry out its service obligations to the public” (Weil 148). It is at this point, argues Weil, that “institutional collecting is at its greatest distance from individual collecting” (148). Where the private collector might ask: ““Is this a truly remarkable and intrinsically desirable object?”” (148), the institutional collector must ask: ““How might this object be useful to the museum in carrying out its institutional mission?”” (148). The purpose of Weil's essay is to illustrate the difference in collecting philosophies between individual collectors and public institutions, and to show that, because public institutions are often founded around a core of an individual collector's bequest, creative and self-reflexive frameworks and collections policies must be developed to help the contents of the museum work to the benefit of the framing institution's stated goals.

To this end, it is useful to return to the founding figures of the two contemporary South African institutions that have been under scrutiny in this chapter: Butler and Gubbins. Connections might be drawn between the two private collectors that are instructive in thinking through some of the shared ideological origins of many of South Africa's contemporary museums that are working to adapt to transforming political and cultural contexts. First, both are interested in developing a comprehensive worldview that allows the thinker to overcome binaries, or thinking in dualities. Butler, who once proposed the pursuit

of synthesis through the Apollo/Dionysus model, comes, later in his life, to advocate for “dwell[ing] in the midst of uncertainties” (Letter to Stephen Watson). Gubbins, faced with the breakdown of his previously held prejudices about colonial hierarchies and the British purpose in South Africa, initially decides “to remain indecisive” (Byala 32), but he soon realises that he is no longer “content with stasis and irresolution” (32) and seeks out an encompassing philosophy, fleshed out in *Three-Dimensional Thinking*.

It is interesting that both these demonstrably flexible thinkers should be interested in the reassuring comforts provided by historical pursuits. For Butler, this was enacted in his interest in minor settler histories, so that despite the complications in his thinking about race and cultural identity in his contemporary South Africa, Butler enjoyed a relatively simple relationship with his settler characters, regarding himself as a straightforward truth-seeker. Gubbins, too, when faced with emergent hostilities between Briton and Boer in Marico in the early 1900s, and unable to react with simplistic nationalism, would “seek refuge in his ordered world of objects and stories” (Byala 40). Both were drawn by the power of book collecting, and the allure of library creation. Gubbins, newly arrived in South Africa, considers an interest in books to be a mark of a civilised city, and laments of the new city of Johannesburg that “[p]eople do not read much here,” and moreover, that “they never seem to talk of books. . . . This is a town of 70,000 or more and money to spend on pleasure is certainly not scarce and yet there is no circulating library” (qtd. in Byala 28). In Butler’s primary collection of artefacts, handed over to the Thomas Pringle Collection when it came into being, was a substantial collection of rare books, so that the acquisition of publications for NELM’s extensive library has always been part of the Museum’s primary collecting activities, building on Butler’s lead.

Byala observes of Gubbins that, spurred on by early successes in historical investigation into the Marico district, he “was well aware that his prior reconstructions of the past were only made possible by the combined usage of objects and the written word. Thus, he felt assured that it was as important for him to amass all written material on the region as it was to search for tangible remains” (39). Byala invokes Walter Benjamin on the subject of the collection’s allure, suggesting that the relationship between a book collector and his library is animating: “Ownership is the most intimate relationship that one can have to objects. Not that they come alive in him; it is he who lives in them” (qtd. in Byala 40). If the original collector ‘lives’ in his collection, and if this is particularly true for the personal book

collection, then this animates a number of cross-currents between the early and late twentieth century in South Africa, the collecting impulses of Butler and Gubbins, and the museums their personal collections engendered.

Both NELM and MuseumAfrica (previously the Africana Museum) have historic associations as libraries rather than museums. Although NELM was named a ‘museum and documentation centre’ in 1980, in reality it functioned mostly as an academic library and research centre until Thomas’ arrival in 2010. Similarly, the MuseumAfrica collection was once housed at the Johannesburg public library. One of the primary changes that has been visibly noticeable for both is in becoming more public-facing exhibiting museums in a transforming South Africa – a discernible departure from their erstwhile identities as library bodies. The old-fashioned librarian seems to figure foremost in Weil’s evocative description of the old museum staffed by “benevolent,” “worthy,” or “respectable” types (82). This librarian figure feels central to this now outdated conception of the museum in general, and more specifically the museums as they were envisaged by their bibliophilic founders, Gubbins and Butler.

A difficult and anxiety-inducing change for NELM has been prompted by one of the most profound moves away from its original core functions: a drastic downscaling of the library and press clippings sections of the Museum. Under one of the new auditing compliance directives recently undertaken by NELM, the majority of the books in the library, excluding rare books and those donated as personal libraries belonging to literary authors, as well as its extensive collection of press clippings, were classified not as heritage assets, but as museum resources. The published collection has become a support library, essentially, for the research work undertaken by its curatorial staff. Where Hacksley’s NELM considered the library and the press clippings divisions to comprise two of the three main arms of the core collection, the core collection now has been consolidated: it contains only literary artefacts. The Museum, as a service-oriented body, cannot continue to dedicate multiple salaries and hours to the collection of a secondary resource library for the sake of approximately 100 visits annually by academic scholars. The contents of the ‘manuscripts’ section are now the literary artefacts at the heart of the museum: they are exhibitable and can inspire new primary literary research, and therefore continue to have relevance as a modern museum resource.

It is evocative to think of Gubbins’ historical adventures and pursuit of individual human stories in the Groot Marico district as linked somehow to Butler’s endeavours in the

Lower Albany region of the Eastern Cape. Their shared pursuit of small histories – so unusual for their time, which was more informed by the grand historic narratives of the nineteenth century than the pluralist minor histories of the late twentieth century – places these two complicated founders in the present moment of their respective museums. As much as both NELM and MuseumAfrica attempt to make themselves legible to a transformed South Africa by distancing themselves from the bibliophilic, truth-seeking activities of their founders, the very need visibly to entrench this transformation shows the extent to which the two men continue to live in their collections.

A small and final note on historical connections and coincidences: another son of the Groot Marico district, who was similarly interested in recording the lives of its rural inhabitants, is of course Herman Charles Bosman. It was Joseph Jones' trip to South Africa, and very likely his successful acquisition of the Bosman papers from Bosman's widow (perhaps reported to Butler by his and Jones' mutual friend, Lionel Abrahams, who was present at the closing of the Bosman deal), that prompted Butler to found NELM in the first place, so that he might have somewhere local to deposit his own personal collection. In this way, Gubbins and Butler might be imaginatively connected in a historic process of archival shift and flux, tracing lines of flight along this Deleuzian, rhizomatic map of South African history, collecting practices, and storytelling.

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Imaginatively connecting NELM's history to the earlier, but in many thematic ways, parallel history of MuseumAfrica has opened up ways of placing NELM in a contemporary national museological context, while simultaneously enabling thought about how that context is formed by a shared colonial history of collecting in South Africa. While both NELM and MuseumAfrica are entirely individual in their founding stories and collecting areas, they can be twinned in many ways by mapping the changes they have both had to undertake, and the national landscape in which they both now operate. Both museums can also be fruitfully placed in a changing international museological sector, which has developed in ways that might be linked to local experiences. South Africa is not immune to the global pressures of late capitalist economic organisation, or the revolution of sensibility catalysed by

postmodernism, both of which find unique expression in South Africa in a post-apartheid and post-transitional moment.

Although this chapter deals with the contemporary and future-facing nexus of NELM's challenges and successes, articulated through very specific developments such as a changed collections policy and self-identification, the ghost of the founder might still be read in NELM's shifting (re)formation. The title of the section suggests that this watershed moment in NELM's history might be interpreted as a second founding: the very fact that the current NELM must be read against museological trends rather than literary ones indicates the scope and breadth of the shift. But, of course, etymologically inherent in the new founding is the foundation, the stratum forming NELM's molar bedrock, so that its molecular reformation can never be materially divorced from its early crystallisation as an archival collection. In this way, Deleuze and Guattari's theorisation of the shift and flux of a body, ever in tension with its tendency towards stasis, might be used fruitfully with Derrida's explanation of why the very locatedness of an archive, its physical architecture, is integral to its being. For these reasons, NELM's reterritorialisation of new ground (literally) marks a productive point of departure for the work it might conceivably undertake in the future.

7. Conclusion

This work has relied heavily on a framework inherited from the archival turn as it was unpacked in transitional South Africa in the late 1990s, which was solidified with the publication of *Refiguring the Archive* in 2002. At a remove of 17 years from that watershed publication, this thesis seeks to posit that the perspectives fleshed out in that moment in the sphere of memory studies and historiography is now enjoying a renewed importance in the heritage sector. At a time when South Africans are experiencing deep ambivalence towards their institutional and monumental markers of national history – an ambivalence expressed by the collective phrase ‘Fallism’ and evidenced in the spate of student protests that occurred during the writing of this thesis – it is appropriate to investigate afresh the meanings of the colonial logics at work in the founding of some of our national heritage institutions. This investigation aims to go beyond the abstract sense of archive outlined in *Refiguring the Archive*, where archive can be taken as any body of collected memories, to the specific example of the presently politicised heritage sector.

The National English Literary Museum in Grahamstown, founded by Guy Butler, has proved a sharp lens through which to focus this nexus of intersecting concerns. Grahamstown, rather than being an incidental site at which the Museum was created, was integral to Butler’s historicisation of an English South African cultural history to rival that of the Afrikaner solidification of Voortrekker mythology in Pretoria. At the heart of that South African English cultural project, the creation of which leads Thurman to term Butler a “cultural politician” (1), is a certain figuration of the meaning and purpose of the literary arts for South Africa. Butler, a poet, worked hard to establish Grahamstown as a dramatic and literary centre for South African English language speakers through his varied institutional work. He did so in full awareness of the colonial history of this region of the Eastern Cape, evidenced in his attempts to harness the settler histories of the area for mythic ends, conceptualising a South African English identity and historic narrative.

This means that, in a contemporary moment, the fact that NELM and Grahamstown are still perceived to espouse a certain code of South African Englishness, and to signify as one of the final outposts of the English liberal political and writerly project, is not incidental. These historic resonances, felt in the present moment as though the town has been historically

and culturally “marked” (Derrida and Prenowitz 24) by this context, have come about through a specific nexus of pressures for which Butler was (and remains) a perfect conduit. This thesis has attempted to think of Butler and, as an example of the work he set in motion, the institution of NELM as embodying a site for exploring the making and remaking of South African thought on English literary history, heritage, and cultural politics.

Deleuze, Guattari, and Derrida: a framework

This thesis has attempted to combine the work of Derrida in *Archive Fever* with the surfaced, rhizomatic methodology offered by Deleuze and Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus*. That the two theoretical approaches might work well together is evidenced in an increasingly material perspective being used in archive studies, an area of investigation launched by Derrida himself. While the now commonly used spectral, fluid, and rhetorical perspectives on the archive are inherited from Derrida’s work, the material elements that cannot be ignored when working with physical collections are accounted for by Deleuze and Guattari’s thinking.

In a recent article in *New Literary History*, Laura Hughes investigates exactly this confluence. Titled “In the Library of Jacques Derrida: Manuscript Materiality after the Archival Turn,” the article posits that, in a further development from the archival turn, “[t]he study of literary artifacts is moving into a new phase, beyond the poststructuralist and historiographic forays that drew attention to the archive itself and the researcher’s experience in it as a subject of enquiry” (407). This means that the physicality of the paper manuscript exerts its own historical cue: “Bringing out the undeniable fragility of the artifact and the humans who interact with it, the materiality of a manuscript can prompt a reconsideration of the purpose and scope of archival research, its role in the lives, deaths, and afterlives of the manuscript object” (407).

Hughes pays much attention to the physicality of the paper with which she is working: its creases, water marks, and tears. She explores the epistemological work enacted by these material specificities, the annotations and asides, the approximate age of the scrap, its size, the type of paper on which it is written, and whether it has been torn off and interleaved in a book or folded up and mailed. All of these tangible considerations work in discrete layers of material and textual evidence in the literary archive, where the physical attributes of the manuscript add textual layers to the interpretive narratives that develop. In thinking through

the linguistic permutations of archival research (an area so fruitfully explored by Derrida), Hughes, while not mentioning Deleuze and Guattari by name, invokes exactly their vocabulary of shift and flux in the creation of material bodies:

Changeable and fragile, the manuscript object is always becoming something else, reworking and reconfiguring its material composition. Along with other kinds of artifacts, not readily identifiable, this *manuscrit volant* [flying manuscript] conveys unexpected glimpses, not only of what could have been, but also of what could still be; its potentiality registers here as *vivant* [animated]. (412)

I have chosen to translate *vivant* as “animated” here, as it seems to suit the context better than simply “alive” or “dynamic,” although “dynamic” establishes a useful connection with Yvette Hutchison’s conception of the archive as performative and transformative, as mentioned in the first chapter of this thesis (“A Beginning: Theoretical and Practical Approaches to the Butler Archive at NELM”). Alternatively, *vivant* may be translated as “spirited,” which might be mapped, along the rhizome, to include Derrida’s theorisation of archival spectres. Hughes owes her critical position to Jane Bennett, whose *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (2010) uses and modifies Deleuze and Guattari’s notion of the assemblage, and so it is easy to trace the conceptual overlap. Bennett’s work argues for the affective qualities of seemingly passive, inanimate matter, from which Hughes builds her theory of the vibrant potentialities enabled by the physical manuscript item, as a fragile, aged object.

Hughes argues that it is precisely the physical attributes of the writer’s archived scraps that signals their literary intertextuality, an aspect that has been explored in this thesis: when are Butler’s doodles characterised as artistic creations in themselves, and when are they incidental marginalia? The answer often lies in the doodle’s physical positioning on the page, how it has been preserved by Butler himself, its surrounding contents in the box or pile of papers in which it arrived. Hughes goes on to show how this perspective on archival meaning-making allows for a three-dimensional, layered temporal trajectory rather than a simple teleology. If South African historiography is becoming increasingly pluralist, taking into its ambit the many-voiced aspects of the past, then a rhizomatic perspective allows for the convergence and confluence of multiple temporalities, and gestures towards multiple historical actors, both animate and inanimate.

To use Hughes' example, in the library of Derrida can be found interleaved references and notes to and from Hélène Cixous, gesturing at two sides of a long and generative friendship. Hughes makes the following observations:

Derrida's "ad hoc filing system" reveals itself to be more than an efficient use of library space and indexing; it is also a way of making meaning through the convergence of materials. But who, or what, makes meaning in this case? Who, or what, can be said to enact connections or activate these artifacts? [. . .] Finding these objects or similar counterparts in the archive, the researcher in turn is brought into this convergence, along with the archival context suggesting multiple hands, multiple temporalities.

[. . .] Vaulting across intervals of space or time, joining one side to another: the time of writing and reading between two friends, and the multiple heres and nows of archivists and scholars in the archive [come together].

(418)

Hughes' work shows the practical applications for a materialist perspective that animates the archive, so that Derrida's archival spectres, often read metaphorically, might be brought into affective presence. We must consider Derrida's question, raised in the opening chapter of this thesis: "has one [. . .] the right to treat the said psychoanalytico-Freudian archive according to a logic or method, a historiography or a hermeneutic which are independent from a Freudian psychoanalysis, indeed anterior even to the very name of Freud, while pre-supposing in another manner the closure and identity of this corpus?" (27). Derrida suggests that the archival corpus cannot be closed because of the potential for future applications of the ideas in differing directions from those intended or envisioned by the originator of the content. It is safe to assume that Hughes has taken this suggestion to heart in using Derrida's archive to explore materialist realities for contemporary archival collections. This study, too, takes seriously the implications of bonding together these two theories of bodily organisation, and maintains that they might produce fruitful new combinations of thought for South African archive and heritage politics.

Literary history, liberal humanism, silence, and the South African English project

Butler's extraordinarily varied and successful career as a poet, editor, dramatist, teacher, critic, anthologist, historian, and archivist has brought into focus the following four, cross-fertilised concerns: 1) The development of a literary history for the South African English

academy; 2) the dominant liberal-humanist critical framework under which the literary academy operated for many years; 3) Butler's work to develop an English cultural meaning and identity for South Africans; and 4) his wielding of silence as a poetic and critical tool, and escape point, for the irresolvable conflicts that arose out of his varied and sometimes contradictory pursuits.

The literary historiography that Butler entrenched through his anthologising work on *A Book of South African Verse* seeks to present itself as rational and naturalised – a selection of objectively good South African English poetry rather than the expression of a certain ideology. Butler's mark on South African English literary historiography is explored in the fourth chapter, "A Book of South African Verse," where the perspectives of later literary historians on Butler's work, such as Michael Chapman and David Johnson, working from their own discursive contexts, are explored. The press clippings Butler chose to keep on the reception of *A Book of South African Verse* are also instructive. The clippings lay out a local and international literary context in which Butler was publishing but also, simultaneously, point to those opinions and reviews that mattered to Butler, and thus marked his thinking going forward, in one way or another. The brief foray into some of the differences between the first and second anthologies, with Chris Mann co-opted as co-editor on *A New Book of South African Verse*, gestures towards the changes in the intervening years in Butler's perception of important voices in the South African English literary scene, but also to the shifts in what was demanded by the literary and political actors of the 1970s as opposed to the 1950s.

It is important to remember Lewis Nkosi's more cynical response, to the second anthology, that it represents "not so much a response to cultural need as a yielding, and none too soon, to political pressures. Not so long ago black writers were routinely excluded from anthologies of this kind" ("From Veld-Lovers to Freedom Fighters"). The same might be said of NELM's response to the development in literary history signalled by the challenge to Butler's vision at the Poetry '74 conference, where Kirkwood coined the phrase 'Butlerism.' NELM's answer to that crucial moment was the instigation, 20 years later, of the Black Bibliography project. This belated shift in NELM's tracking of a literary history in part developed by its founder, Butler, is explored in the fifth chapter, "Butlerism, and the Black Bibliography." NELM's recalibrated method of conducting literary historiography occurs not

as newer forms of poetry are produced, in the 1970s and 1980s, but rather, as Butler's cultural and Grahamstown-centric hegemony begins to wane, in the 1990s.

Malcolm Hacksley, erstwhile director of NELM, frames the instantiation of the Black Bibliography project in an older liberal terminology, which locates action and decision-making at the site of the morally-motivated individual, so that the project figures not as a political move or a response to cultural pressure in the interregnum years but simply as "doing what *should* be done" (Personal Interview). Butler's anthologising projects have been shown by later critics to emerge out of similarly liberal politics, where poetry that is accomplished according to formalist techniques, and which represents the inner world experience of the individual, is elevated above more 'socialist' poetry, developed out of political resistance pressures.

Butler would not have considered his personal politics to impinge directly on his literary work, but critics like Dirk Klopper, as early as 1989, show that the naturalisation of such a position, which claims that it is free from ideology, in fact represents a discursive ideological stance, against which the explicit materialist ideological politics and forms of literary production coming to prominence in the 1970s were reacting. Klopper explains, "[a] non-essentialist conception of ideology is one that abandons the view of ideas as the property of individuals in favour of a notion of ideology as distinctive processes of signification. Such a conception regards ideology as inscribed in language. Ideology is understood as discursive procedures, rather than as the content of words" ("Ideology in SA Poetry" 73). This means that the liberal political actor, or the liberal-humanist writer, in hiding the ideological context and content of their work, can remain blind to their own complicity in a white supremacist system by focussing instead on the sphere of the individual. Klopper ends his article thus: "[White/European] supremacy is mediated through seemingly neutral aesthetic procedures and is therefore perceived as "natural". It forms part of the discursive unconscious which is inscribed in, and motivates, textual articulation" ("Ideology in SA Poetry" 92).

The markings left by an overwhelmingly liberal-humanist tradition on the development of a South African English literary canon are influenced implicitly by Butler's work in the cultural sphere. Butler's mapping of a literary history governed by liberal-humanist authors and techniques can be traced at the anthologising and editorial level, in his work creating poetry anthologies and in his editing of the *New Coin* journal, as well as at the archival level, since the core literary archive he founded at NELM was formed out of his

personal collection on another important South African liberal-humanist poet, Thomas Pringle. The historic and colonially-coded interconnections between the two writers is explored in the third chapter, “Early Days: NELM in its Infancy.”

In considering the ways in which Butler’s personal historical and cultural positioning influenced his work in a developing English literary historiography in the South African academy, and in thinking through the potential meanings of generic categorisations such as “liberal humanism” (a contested and shifting designation), we have already begun to encroach on the subject of Butler as a cultural actor. Thurman spends much time carefully unpacking the ways Butler was active in the coding of a national identity and role for English South Africans, and his work proves a key basis for the second chapter of this thesis, “A Cultural Politician: Butler’s English Project.” This section of the thesis figures NELM among a number of other cultural projects undertaken by Butler in the significant city of Grahamstown, as a kind of answer to the identity crisis Butler perceived among South Africans of English heritage. Many scholars have taken on this aspect of Butler’s work, from Williams and Kirkwood in the 1970s, to Chapman and Akal, later in the 1980s and 1990s, and finally Thurman in the 2000s. The divergent responses to Butler’s positioning as a South African Englishman, even today, are instructive, as they show how the existing archive of Butler scholarship, as well as his personally donated collection at NELM, open up, rather than close down, potential meanings for his legacy going forward. This thesis has attempted to envision a few of these meanings, and their applications for the South African English literary academy.

Some of the more difficult subjects thrown up by Butler’s work are covered in this thesis. Butler laboured under accusations of neo-colonialism in the latter half of his career, a particularly galling designation for a man who had chosen to dedicate his life to the generation of a local sensibility at a time when many liberal white South Africans were choosing to flee the country. Such a neat categorisation (of neo-colonialist) is difficult to apply to a subject so variously connected and employed. This thesis has tried to expose how, while Butler’s liberalism might have been discursively influenced by the register of colonialism (what I have termed ‘colonial coding’ in this study), and while Butler may have sometimes been blind to the systemic white supremacy that his work implicitly upheld, he was not untroubled by the accusations levelled against him, nor was he unthinking or

uncritical about his time and place in South African history. On these subjects, Butler often lapses into silence, a trope that is used in complicated ways throughout his oeuvre.

Sometimes an escape point, sometimes wielded as a moment of transcendent understanding, and occasionally as a point of release from the binds of human rationality, particularly in Quaker terms, silence as a trope in Butler's life and work has been considered at varying points throughout this study, but particularly in the fifth chapter, "Butlerism, and the Black Bibliography." The idea of silence in Butler's life has proved an important thread for the thesis, as it connects the unknown, and uncollected, to the known and categorised material in the archive. The idea of archival silences connects the abstract quality of spectrality in the archive to the physical material considerations of the work enacted by its collected contents; what work is similarly enacted by that which is physically absent, those uncollected documents still at large? The trope of archival absences turns the reader's attention to a unifying focal point for this study: what is exceptional about an archival perspective on this aspect of South African literary history, and what new meanings might be generated at the point of the archival encounter for this textual body of work?

Archive, library, or museum? Heritage in a contemporary South African moment

If the current moment is important for rethinking the South African literary and heritage sectors from an archival perspective in general terms, then it is also an important moment for NELM specifically. In 2016, NELM reterritorialised its physical location, from the old Priest's House on Beaufort Street (whose colonial history is unpacked in chapter three; "Early Days: NELM in its Infancy"), to the new custom-built museum facility in Worcester Street. The move has coincided with the arrival of a new director, Beverly Thomas, in 2010, and an internal reorganisation of the institution, which now seeks to present itself as a museum in more than name. This shifts NELM's contextual location from a literary-academic plane, where it functioned primarily as a research library, to a museological one. However, NELM's markings as a colonially-coded literary institution, invested in an English South African heritage, cannot be discounted.

In this regard, the body of NELM as an institution might be likened to the archival collections contained within its storage rooms: as the contents of the collection shift over time, or are augmented over the years, so too is the context and moment of perception

changed, so that the researcher/archival and museum/public interactions expand to new planes, and form new assemblages capable of different lines of work. The contents of this study must continually be apprehended from a perspectival remove, in the way that the perspective of the archival turn itself functions self-reflexively for the researcher. The core collection of Butler papers must also be thought of as an actor in a larger body, a molecule in a molar organisation, marked by its old expressions and capable of new potentialities in a double articulation. Revisiting the concepts unpacked in the first chapter becomes appropriate here, remembering the surfaced reading methodology articulated by Sarah Nuttall as a key to enacting this process of self-reflection, and remembering Hutchison's conceptualisation of the archive as performative to explore the dynamic ways heritage institutions might work on the South African memory landscape in the coming years.

In closing, I will return to Butler, whose collected remnants of a literary life at NELM do not function simply as a case study, or even an appropriate lens (although the Butler collection is both these things), but rather as a catalyst or conduit, doing tangible work in expanding the ways one might perceive and use this small corner of South African history and historiography. If Butler's archival desire was often informed by the stabilising need to solidify meaning and clarify fact, then it is also persistently troubled by the impossibility of such a project, and the slippery ways the collected documents reach always outside of themselves, to their ghostly markings from the past, through to their potential applications in the future. If Derrida traces his historic markings through Yerushalmi, and back to Freud, as the 'arch-patriarch' of his work, then Butler, who died before my academic life began, figures as the 'arch-patriarch' of this study.

Interpreting *Archive Fever* for a South African context, Verne Harris, quoted in the introduction to this thesis, identifies the impossibility of closure of the archive as one of its primary frustrations, but also, simultaneously, as a generative site of pleasure. He reminds us that "at best, archival contextualisation reveals the multiple layers of construction in text, and in doing so adds yet another layer. Properly conceived, archival contextualisation, indeed archival endeavour as a whole, should be about the releasing of meanings, the tending of mystery and the disclosing of the archive's openness" (71). How wonderful, to tend the mystery of a literary archive, whose textual layers and narrative construction envelop one another ever deeper, as the core texts referenced at the heart of the collection are themselves products of textual construction and excision. How wonderful, to see creative textual practice

made visible, in the “private life” (Shesgreen 318) of a book, seen through the physical markings left behind in the wake of its multiple revisions, edits, page proofs, and publishing correspondence. The archive might be haunted by the knowledge of its infinite incompleteness, but it is also enlivened by its reaching ever outward, towards new potentialities and configurations of meaning. It is this process that the preceding study has tried to render visible.

Appendix

A: Chronology of Butler's Life

- 1918 Born in Cradock to Ernest & Alice Butler (née Stringer)
- 1926–35 Educated at Boys' High School, Cradock
- 1936–38 Studies towards a BA in English and History at Rhodes University
- 1939 Second World War begins
Completes MA at Rhodes
- 1940 Marriage to Jean Murray Satchwell
Takes up teaching post at St John's College, Johannesburg
Enlists as Sapper in 9th Field Company, Active Citizen force
- 1940–45 War service in Army Education Services in Egypt, Syria, Italy and UK
- 1945 Second World War ends
- 1945–47 Attends Oxford University, Brasenose College
- 1947 Return to South Africa
Takes up post at the University of Witwatersrand
- 1948 National Party is voted into power in South Africa
- 1951 Takes up senior lectureship at Rhodes University
- 1952 *Stranger to Europe* is published
Becomes chair of the Department of English
- 1954 Awarded Fellowship to spend another year in London, Oxford and Bristol
- 1955 Travels to Nigeria and Ghana
- 1958 Visits English and Drama departments in USA
- 1959 *A Book of South African Verse* is published
- 1960 Sharpeville Massacre
Delivers a series of Shakespeare lectures in Holland
- 1964 The Institute for the Study of English in Africa (ISEA) comes into existence
Butler is appointed Chairman of the ISEA
- 1966 Speech and Drama comes into existence as a sub-department of English at Rhodes, and Butler is appointed its head.

- 1967 Becomes a member of the council of the 1820 Settlers National Monument
- 1970 Early courses in Journalism become available at Rhodes, at Butler's behest
- 1972 Finds the Thomas Pringle Collection
- 1974 Attends Poetry '74 conference at the University of Cape Town
- 1977 *Karoo Morning: An Autobiography (1918–35)* is published
- 1978 Vacates position of Chair of the English Department
- 1979 *A New Book of South African Verse* is published
- 1980 NELM becomes a Declared Cultural Institute and takes on its current name
Butler is appointed to NELM council
- 1983 *Bursting World: An Autobiography (1936–45)* is published
Created an honorary life vice-president of the English Academy of South Africa
- 1984 Retires as Professor of English
Appointed as a Research Professor at Rhodes
- 1985 Elected first president of the Shakespeare Society of Southern Africa
- 1987 Made a Professor Emeritus and Honorary Research Fellow at Rhodes
- 1991 *A Local Habitation: An Autobiography (1946–90)* is published
- 1994 ANC wins the first free and democratic elections in South Africa
- 2001 Dies in Grahamstown

Taken from:

Guy Butler: A Bibliography by John Read

Guy Butler: Reassessing a South African Literary Life by Chris Thurman

“Guy Butler (21 January 1918 –)” in the *Dictionary of Literary Biography* by Dirk Kloppe

Full references are reproduced in the bibliography.

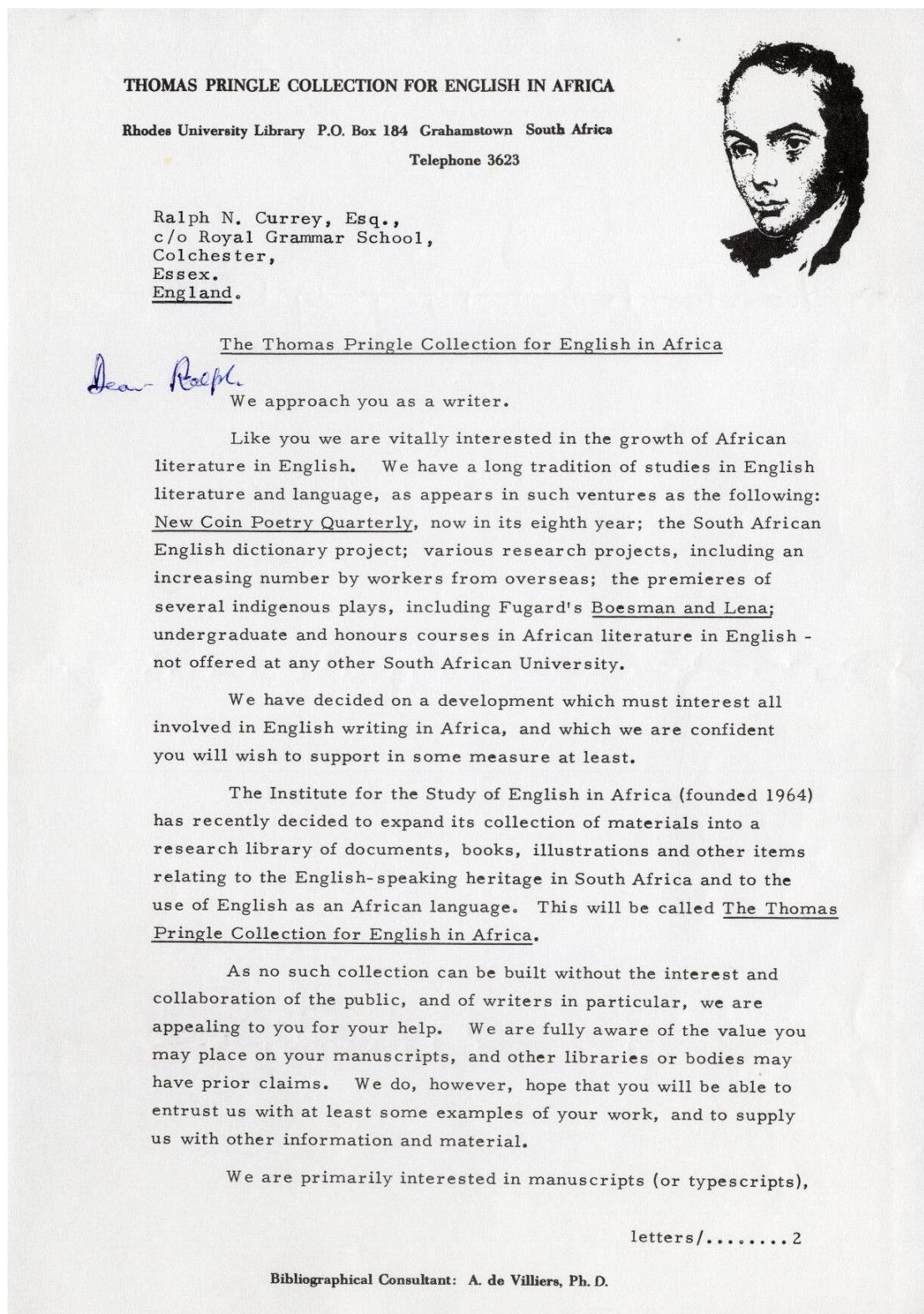
B: A Finding Aid for the Butler Collection

Anthology work	1973.349	Correspondence cont.	1998.5
	1973.372		1998.81
	1976.128		2000.87
	1983.15		2001.33
	1994.2.5		2003.17
	1999.92		2004.19.8.1-9
	2004.19.1.1		2005.4
	2004.19.1.6		2011.309
	2004.37.44		2011.366
	2004.37.108		2013.73
	2004.37.113		2014.28
	2004.37.117		2014.240
	2004.37.237		2015.172
			2018.10.1
Artworks	2004.19.20	Critical work	1976.256
	2004.19.23		1980.11
	2004.19.26		1997.11.7
	2005.47		1998.36
	2013.81		1998.56.4
	2015.4		2003.72
			2004.19.5
Autobiographies	1994.2.1-2		2004.19.14-15
	1978.1		2004.37.239
	1999.14		2010.117
	2004.19.1.7		2018.10.2
	2004.37.20		
	2004.37.166	Diaries	1998.56
	2004.37.197		2004.19.9
	2004.37.202	Journals	1976.105
	2004.37.238		2004.19.11
Correspondence	1973.78		2004.37.30
	1973.327		2004.37.155
	1973.368	Miscellany collected by	2004.19.26-37
	1973.369	Butler	2004.37.246
	1973.371		2005.9
	1973.401		2008.16
	1973.403-405		2014.9
	1974.111		2014.29
	1974.118		2014.144
	1974.180		2015.9
	1976.171		2004.19.16
	1976.257	Non-fiction	2002.32
	1976.71		2004.19.1.2-4
	1980.9		2004.19.1.8-9
	1997.11		2004.19.6
	1997.11.5		

Non-fiction cont.	2004.19.7	Poem manuscripts cont.	1979.21
	2004.19.25		1988.19
	2004.37.194		2001.48
	2004.37.206		2004.19.2
	2004.37.225		2010.24
	2004.37.227		2016.329
	2004.37.192		
	2005.5	Press clippings and tributes	1999.107
	2011.43		2000.112
	2012.170		2004.19.13
	2014.30		2009.86
			2012.262
Photographs	1994.2.6		2018.10.4
	2004.19.24	Professional miscellany	1973.439-442
	2004.37.222		1974.173
	2013.23		1994.2.3
	2013.91		1976.257
	2016.626		1979.12
	2017.91		1997.11.3-4
Plays, television and radio scripts	1973.395-400		1997.11.6
	1973.405-408		1997.22
	1974.17		1997.29
	1974.63		2000.78.3
	1974.168-171		2004.19.10
	1994.2.4		2004.19.12
	1979.10		2004.19.17-19
	1983.3		2004.37.29
	1983.15		2004.37.234
	2000.78		2012.102
	2004.19.3-4		2014.34
	2004.19.21		2015.173
	2004.19.29	Settler history	1974.172
	2004.37.26		1974.174-179
	2004.37.159		1976.279-280
	2004.37.176		2004.37.201
	2009.55		2009.55.4
	2009.110		2014.357
	2014.27		2016.4
Poem manuscripts	1973.176	Shakespeare	2004.19.5.1-12
	1973.255		2010.50
	1973.325		2013.8
	1974.9	Short stories	1976.258
	1973.408		2004.19.1.5
	1976.259		2012.324

C: Key Sources

A scanned copy of one of the letters sent out to solicit donations for the Thomas Pringle Collection, in this instance to Ralph Currey. Undated.
Acc. no 2003.61.10.1.9.2



letters, diaries and editions of your (or others') works; but also in photographs, press cuttings and tape recordings.

While we would naturally prefer you to donate materials, you may be reluctant to part with them. In this event, you may lend them to us, either for safe keeping, or for cataloguing, photo-copying and return. Whatever you may decide about such materials, we hope you will gratify us with items (k), (l) and (m) on the attached Form:

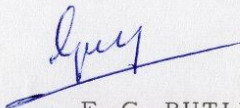
- (k) a curriculum vitae, or the completed Questionnaire, which we enclose. Please give as much material about your publications as possible;
- (l) a brief or extended statement of your aims as a writer. If you have already written on this subject, please give us the references;
- (m) a list of other places where you have deposited or intend to deposit your documents and/or books.

For any materials that you may wish, after consideration, to make available to us, the Thomas Pringle Collection for English in Africa will provide:

- (1) Secure preservation for the future.
- (2) Cataloguing and care by a skilled library staff.
- (3) Study and use by a strong and growing body of undergraduate and research students.

Should there be any point in this letter which you would like us to clarify, or any material you would like to donate, we should be very glad indeed to hear from you.

Yours sincerely,



F. G. BUTLER, Chairman
Institute for the Study of English in Africa.

PS. Think hard about this one, pse.
Progress on "Africa Within Us" has been slow,
in spirit, but is speeding up now!

THE THOMAS PRINGLE COLLECTION FOR ENGLISH IN AFRICA.

Rhodes University,
GRAHAMSTOWN.
South Africa.

GIFT OR LOAN FORM
(Delete where necessary)

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

I hereby

- (1) donate the following items to the Thomas Pringle Collection;
- (2) place on loan the following items in the Thomas Pringle Collection;
- (3) lend for photocopying, cataloguing and return by the Thomas Pringle Collection;

subject to the following conditions:

- (a) Manuscripts or typescripts of original works, in early or final Drafts.
- (b) Proofs.
- (c) Diaries.
- (d) Correspondence (including letters from publishers).
- (e) Photographs, sketches, and other visual material.
- (f) Books (own works, or other).
- (g) Periodicals.
- (h) Press cuttings.
- (i) Tape recordings.
- (j) Gramophone records.
- (k) Curriculum Vitae or Biographical Details.
- (l) Statement of aims as a writer.
- (m) Present or future home(s) of materials.
- (n) Other.

Date

Signature

Note 1: It would be a great help if you could affix to items brief details as to place, date and other circumstances, where applicable.

Note 2: Please claim postage; or if the amount of material warrants a large package, send carriage forward.

A scanned copy of the letter sent from Andre De Villiers to Butler, containing details about the history of NELM, for use in *A Local Habitation*.
Acc no. 2004.37.170



NATIONAL ENGLISH LITERARY MUSEUM
NASIONALE ENGELSE LETTERKUNDIGE MUSEUM

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Navrae Professor A de Villiers
Director

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Reference 4/2/2 Lit. Gen.
Verwysing
Your Reference
U Verwysing
Telephone (0461) 27042/27095
Telefoon
Date 10 August 1989
Datum

Dear Guy

Thank you for your letter of 7 August. I have asked Jeremy Fogg to check the awards and report to you.

Pringle Collection

In 1972 the HSRC announced the establishment under its auspices of a national documentation centre in Pretoria. This was to cater for all major language groups, and was to function as a sort of envelope around the National Afrikaans Documentation Centre which they had set up a short while before. Their choice of themselves as controllers and Pretoria as locale was, according to a document they released, the result of an investigation which they had carried out into the suitability of other cities and institutions for this project. Cape Town, with the SA Library and UCT's Jagger Collection, and Grahamstown with its Cory Library, were among those which were found wanting. Protests from Cape Town and Grahamstown were ignored by the HSRC, who did, however, indicate that any institution which wished to do so could start its own show—since such an initiative could not be prevented.

You as Head of the English Department proposed to me (then Director of ISEA) that we should start a collection which would be truly representative of SAE literature, situated in a city with rather more symbolic significance for the SAE cultural heritage than Pretoria. Your own status and wide ring of literary acquaintances would ensure that the fledgling collection would be able to approach many people for donations of material. ISEA could run the collection as a major project. Dr Rob Antonissen, then Vice-Principal, agreed with enthusiasm and the Board of ISEA did too. This was in early 1972. The University Librarian made available a small room in the Library to house the Collection's holdings.

We approached the Vice-Chancellor, Dr Hyslop, who advised the setting up of a Steering Committee to work toward the establishment of a truly national, comprehensive collection of documents relating to the SAE cultural heritage (or, as it was put in the letter to the HSRC mentioned below, "for English Language, Literature and Culture"). The point is that SAE Literature was not, at this stage, the only focus of the proposed Centre, though it was of the Pringle Collection.

The Committee was duly set up; members were Dr Hyslop (Chairman), Prof. D Hobart-Houghton (ISER), Prof. J V L Rennie (Albany Museum Board of Trustees and Vice-Chairman, 1820 Foundation), the Rev. Michael Nuttal (Archives of Diocese of Grahamstown), yourself (Pringle Coll.) Professor Winifred Maxwell (Cory Library), the University Librarian and I (Pringle Coll., ISEA and secretary).

PLEASE ADDRESS ALL CORRESPONDENCE TO THE DIRECTOR * RIG ASSEBLIEF ALLE KORRESPONDENSIE AAN DIE DIREKTEUR

The Committee met on 26 October 1972 and agreed to work toward the establishment in the short term of a Documentation Centre in Grahamstown. It also agreed to invite certain interested parties to nominate representatives to serve on the Board of the "Grahamstown Documentation Centre", viz. the CPA (1); Albany Museum (2); 1820 Foundation (1); Diocese of Grahamstown (1); Methodist Church (1); Grahamstown Municipality (1). Five Rhodes members were appointed: the V.-C., representing Council; Prof. W Maxwell (History and Cory); you (Pringle Coll.); Dr F van der Riet (RU Library); and I (ISEA). The Committee also discussed i.a. the possibility of gaining for the Centre material such as the archives of Rand Mines Ltd. Finally, the Committee agreed to inform the HSRC of the proposal to establish the Centre and to ask for the HSRC's assistance in developing it and its co-operation in running it.

There was a second meeting on 1 December 1972. Many more people were present and the whole question of the Centre's Board and its membership was reviewed. Professor Maxwell and Hewson had some difficulties with the concepts implied by the term "documentation centre". They amounted to a conviction that the Centre would either compete with Cory, or would swamp it. When the scope of the HSRC's collecting activities was described (e.g., records, tapes, photos, drawings, paintings, historical objects), Prof Maxwell was left in a state of considerable agitation, which was fuelled by a proposal that a CPA grant awarded for research into the existence of collections of historical mss in private hands should be diverted to the Centre, and fanned by the possible diversion of material which was clearly within Cory's ambit to the Centre. She remained convinced that establishment of the Centre would mean unnecessary duplication of existing resources and that it would disrupt the Cory Library's collecting plans and threaten its existence.

The Minutes do not record this, but reading between the lines and my own memory of the occasion suggest strongly that it was at this point that we tried to narrow the focus of the proposed Centre's activities to material related to SAE as a language of SA, with the primary emphasis on SAE literature. Anyway, Prof Maxwell stated that we were attempting to "turn the whole thing into another English fiesta". It was at this stage, in December 1972, that you decided to withdraw your loan books from Cory and deposit them in the Pringle Collection. The Pringle Collection itself was never part of Cory and was never "transferred from Cory".

The next meeting was held on 9 April 1973. The HSRC had written to congratulate the University on the steps taken to establish "a documentation centre in Grahamstown for the English language in South Africa". The road ahead seemed to the Committee to be fairly open and a subcommittee was appointed to go to Pretoria and engage the HSRC in discussion about material matters such as finance. You might perhaps feel it relevant that at this stage the Centre's thrust was still sufficiently wide for the Committee (or, rather, the "interim Board of Management" of the Centre) to speak of removing collections from Cory and the Albany Museum and, for the benefit of research workers, placing them under the Centre's eventual roof. Furthermore, the "Objects" set out in the interim Board's interim Constitution, approved at this meeting, include at (b) the following:

"To procure, collect and preserve, without infringing any prior rights of ownership . . . any items of interest in the field of English literature and language, history or records or other document which the Board considers to be worthy of preservation."

By 1974 HSRC funding had been arranged for the next three years, the eventual establishment of a Literary Museum had been decided on and the Centre's focus had been refined to concern "manuscripts, writings, articles, and documents of all kinds connected directly or indirectly with the English language in the Republic of South Africa." The Constitution of the Board of Management of the National Documentation centre for English was approved--and the Centre thus came into being--on 19th July 1974. The Centre was made a declared cultural institution in terms of the Cultural Institutions Act, 1969 (Act 29 of 1969) with effect from 1st April 1980; its official name was "The National English Literary Museum and Documentation Centre", which was later changed to the "National English Literary Museum".

I hope this is of use to you.

Yours sincerely

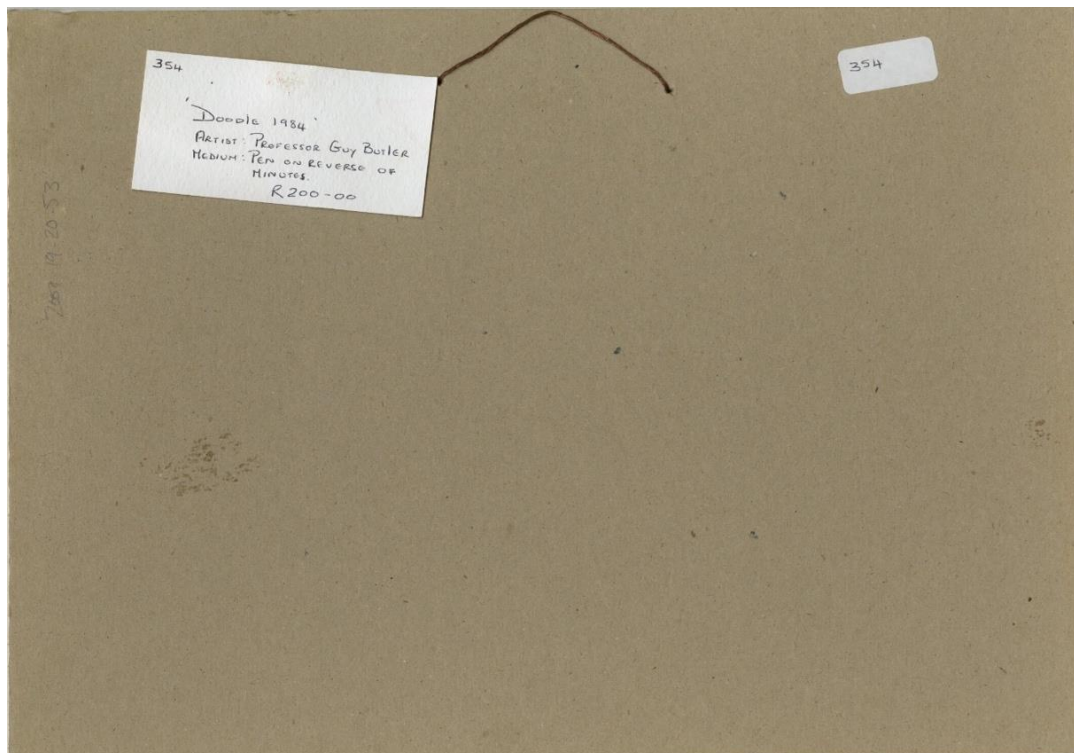
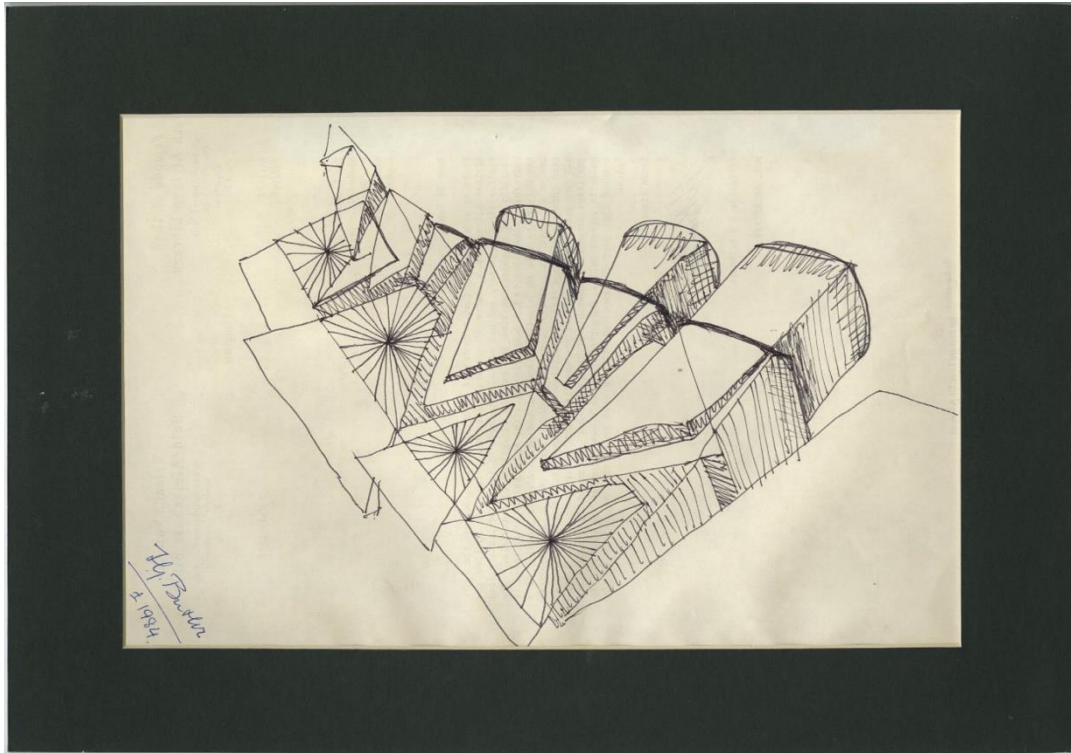


A DE VILLIERS
DIRECTOR

A Butler doodle, made on the back of a Molteno Project envelope
Acc. no 2004.19.8.3.129



A Butler doodle made on the back of meeting minutes, later mounted and priced for sale as part of a CNA doodles exhibition fundraiser. Label on verso reads: "Doodle 1984. Artist: Professor Guy Butler. Medium: Pen on reverse of minutes." Acc. no 2004.19.20.53



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