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DISTURBING PASTS: MEMORIES, CONTROVERSIES AND CREATIVITY. INTRODUCTION.

Leon Wainwright

Abstract

This themed issue of the Open Arts Journal, *'Disturbing pasts: Memories, controversies and creativity', brings together a range of artists, curators, policy-makers and academics from around the world, who explore creative engagements with controversial and traumatic pasts in art practice, curating and museums. The material is presented in three parts: 'Difficult Pasts and Public Space' (writings on historical issues and museums), 'Visual Investigations' (artists' statements and criticism), and 'Collaborations' (visual analysis and artist-scholar pairings of writings and original artworks). This collection was developed through a two-year international research project led by Leon Wainwright, which involved three consortia of researchers from universities throughout Europe, and focused on a major public event at the Museum of Ethnology Vienna/ Weltmuseum, Wien (November 2011). The project is funded by HERA (Humanities in the European Research Area, the European Science Foundation).*

Biography

Leon Wainwright is Kindler Chair in Global Contemporary Art at Colgate, New York, Reader in Art History at The Open University, UK, and Academic Visitor at the University of Oxford's Department of History of Art and School of Anthropology and Museum Ethnography. He is co-editor (with Beccy Kennedy and Alnoor Mitha) of *Triennial City: Localising Asian Art* (Cornerhouse, 2014), and the forthcoming anthology (with Øivind Fuglerud, University of Oslo) *Objects and Imagination: Perspectives on Materialization and Meaning* (Berghahn, 2015). He is the author of *Timed Out: Art and the Transnational Caribbean* (Manchester University Press, 2011) and a recipient of the Philip Leverhulme Prize for the history of art.

An earlier version of this material was presented on the occasion of the project conference 'Disturbing Pasts: Memories, Controversies and Creativity' (20-22 November 2012, Museum of Ethnology/Weltmuseum Wien, Vienna). To view the film footage on the Open Arts Archive, www.openartsarchive.org, follow this link: http://www.openartsarchive.org/oaa/archive/947

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DISTURBING PASTS: MEMORIES, CONTROVERSIES AND CREATIVITY. INTRODUCTION.

Leon Wainwright, Colgate, New York and The Open University, UK

> Thus the subject-matter of history is in an important sense not fact but possibility, not past but future; or, more precisely past possibilities and prospects, past conceptions of the future: futures past.
>
> David Carr (1987)[1]

In many countries, legacies of war, colonialism, genocide and oppression return again and again to dominate contemporary culture, politics and society. The controversies surrounding traumatic pasts can shape policy, make or break governments, trigger mass demonstrations, and even spark violent confrontation. These pasts also inspire creative means by which the past is remembered, remade and challenged. This, the third issue of the *Open Arts Journal*, explores the theme of traumatic pasts and their complex and often dramatic influences on the present day, bringing to the foreground the rich visual and creative responses to such pasts that issue among artists. Much as David Carr has characterised the future horizons of possibility, the material collected here carries suggestions for effective ways that such 'disturbing' pasts may be confronted, so that settled or consensual views may in turn be disturbed, troubled and transformed.

Contributors to this volume are keen to register the important idea that any meaningful encounter with the past has to be felt at the personal level, no matter how difficult to recall and painful to represent, however contested or fraught with risk and freighted with emotion. They demonstrate how recollecting stories of that kind is a complex and ongoing task, moreover, that the process requires a joint effort between artists, curators and academics when trying to confront dominant historical narratives and shape alternative interpretations. As the contributions show, these histories are challenging at all levels: personal, collective, institutional. Certainly, such attempts to 'disturb' a settled picture of the past may call upon an individual's

creativity, courage and sensitivity as well as specialist or institutional knowledge. But such endeavours are significantly strengthened through harnessing a *shared* will to re-assess the past. This requires an effective exchange of knowledge with a high degree of comparison and empathy, and careful measures to balance a range of often competing priorities.

Confronting the past: A shared project

The editors of this issue share an interdisciplinary background in memory conflicts in Eastern Europe (Blacker); the visualisation of colonial pasts in public narratives of history (Edwards); and the cultural understanding of images and objects in the context of globalisation and postcolonialism (Wainwright). Their coming together was the occasion of a major knowledge exchange project that focused on a three-day event at the Museum of Ethnology, Vienna (subsequently renamed Weltmuseum Wien) in 2012. Sponsored by Humanities in the European Research Area (HERA, European Science Foundation) in relation to three research strands under their auspices, the project drew on the energies of individuals from the arts and heritage sectors and the wider public.[2] This diverse range of creative practitioners, including artists and photographers, curators, cultural policy-makers, and academics together explored museums, public and other types of space for what they offer as venues for responses to difficult and traumatic histories. The event saw oral presentations and, in response, as organisers we feel that this selection of the presentations – the majority of them in the form of scholarly articles, developed through a process of rigorous peer-review – will illuminate the distinctive perspectives that emerged. Further, taking advantage of the digital open access medium, the speakers' presentations and discussion with the public who attended in Vienna are cross-referenced (by clickable hyperlinks), to each author's contribution.

The Disturbing Pasts project was made possible by a formal collaboration between individuals from countries around the world. It was underpinned by the coming together of three groupings of researchers at universities throughout Europe, the consortia:

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1 David Carr review of Reinhart Koselleck's 'Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time' in *History and Theory* (1987) vol.26, no.2, pp.197-204 (p.198).

2 Members of the organising committee for the project were: Principal Investigator Dr Leon Wainwright (The Open University, UK and Colgate, New York), Dr Barbara Plankensteiner (Museum of Ethnology, Vienna/Weltmuseum Wien), Julia Binter (Weltmuseum Wien/ University of Oxford), Dr Maruska Svasek (Queen's University, Belfast), Professor Elizabeth Edwards (De Montfort University, Leicester), Dr Uilleam Blacker (University College London) and Professor Alexander Etkind (University of Cambridge).

'Memory at War' (MAW),[3] 'Photographs, Colonial Legacy and Museums in Contemporary European Culture' (PhotoCLEC),[4] and 'Creativity and Innovation in a World of Movement' (CIM).[5] All these projects addressed contested, challenging and disturbing histories and the role of creativity within them.

The 'Memory at War' (MAW) project set out to expand the boundaries of Memory Studies by shifting the focus to post-socialist Eastern Europe. The 'memory boom' that has overtaken Western Europe and North America at both a popular and scholarly level since the last decades of the 20th century has centred overwhelmingly on West European memories of the Holocaust and Nazism. Meanwhile, East European memories of the 20th century, which differ sharply in both form and content, often contradicting and clashing with their West European counterparts, have been relatively under-studied. MAW, which brought together researchers from the UK, Norway, Estonia, Finland and the Netherlands, as well as from the region under study, aimed to address this emerging dichotomy between West and East European memory. With a focus on three main target countries, Poland, Russia and Ukraine, the project's international team of scholars mapped and analysed the dynamics of cultural memory in the region, and developed new tools and concepts for approaching and understanding memory in Eastern Europe. The team focused on the interplay between memory, identity and political developments more broadly in this region, and the topic of the present volume – cultural representations in their public context, commemorative art, and in particular museums – were at the heart of the project's activities. While the project's main aim was to analyse developments in the context of Eastern Europe, it also set out to use that context in order to investigate and refine the field of Memory Studies itself.

'Photographs, Colonial Legacy and Museums in Contemporary European Culture' (PhotoCLEC) was an international research project studying the role of the photographic legacy of colonialism in the contested histories of contemporary European multi-cultural identities. Partners from the UK, the Netherlands and Norway explored this through museums, as these are major sites for historical narrative making and dissemination. Overall, the project showed that despite the centrality of the colonial past to European identities, its presence in public narratives of history was seen as deeply challenging. The resistance to these

narratives, and particularly the unstable possibilities of photographs within them, pointed to a collective amnesia or even a structured forgetting of such histories. Significantly, these responses manifested themselves differently in each of the European research sites. Conversely, other engagements with photograph collections revealed the inclusion of the histories of postcolonial immigrants and repatriates from all over the world in contemporary European history in ways that challenge the grand narrative of national citizenship made in Europe. Such responses also force us to think of museums beyond the notion of national tools of empire. PhotoCLEC thereby offers the insight that photographs in museums enable us to rethink how mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion in society, European as well as colonial, connect with feelings of belonging and estrangement within the contemporary postcolonial societies in Europe.

'Creativity and Innovation in a World of Movement' (CIM) explored the dynamics of cultural production and creativity in an era of intensifying globalisation and transnational connectivity, conducted by a team of scholars in the United Kingdom, Norway, the Netherlands and Austria. Instead of assessing the relative novelty of end products, the project took a processual approach by analysing practices of appropriation, consumption and (re)contextualisation in the spheres of (popular) art, religion and museums. Acknowledging the significance of individual or group-specific understandings of 'creativity', CIM explored critically how different notions of cultural value and processes of authentication, authorisation and commoditisation have affected people's engagements with objects and images. A broad perspective was obtained by investigating concrete, partially interlinked processes across five continents, following successful ethnographic fieldwork in India, Sri Lanka, Ghana, Argentina, Brazil, Barbados, Trinidad, Suriname, Guyana, Canada, Australia, Norway, France, Austria and the UK.

Each consortium of researchers that offered the background to Disturbing Pasts has examined diverse critical perspectives on selected modern histories, in order to highlight and problematise their continuing contemporary significance. The ground that they share is identified in this volume through three groupings of material, as follows.

Part 1, 'Difficult Pasts and Public Space', presents articles relating to historical concerns as they have arisen through contexts of display in museums and galleries. The theme cuts across the lives and professional involvements of a range of authors who evaluate colonial histories and the record of innovations (and difficulties) that has ensued in the

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3   http://www.memoryatwar.org/
4   http://photoclec.dmu.ac.uk/
5   http://www.qub.ac.uk/sites/
      CreativityandInnovationinaWorldofMovement

process of tackling such pasts, often through strategic partnerships with artists. Senior researcher (for the Archive and Public Culture Research Initiative, University of Cape Town, South Africa) Anette Hoffmann's 'Echoes of the Great War: The recordings of African prisoners in the First World War' examines what the interpretation of archival materials such as voice recordings may tell us about the historical memory of communities in Africa whose ancestors were conscripted into World War I. A related concern to the sharing of traumas and memories of European contact in Africa, is treated by museum curator Clara Himmelheber (Rautenstrauch-Joest-Museum of the Cultures of the World, Cologne, Germany) in her essay 'The exhibition *Namibia-Germany: a shared/divided history*. Resistance, violence, memory'. Curator and academic Carol Tulloch's (University of the Arts, London) '*A riot of our own*: A reflection on agency'*,* expounds on the significance of the author's Caribbean descent and her Britishness for setting the parameters of an on-going challenge to dominant 'truths' about people of the African diaspora. In an extended article, she reports on recent exhibitions that have brought new audiences into museums and exposed the vital 'conjunctive' nature of black and white cultural histories and heritage. A constructive overview of how Norway has recently tackled issues of heritage is given by cultural policy-maker Liv Ramskjaer (Norway) in her '*Break!* On the unpleasant, the marginal, the taboo and the controversial in Norwegian museums'. 'Making meaning from a fragmented past: 1897 and the creative process' by Peju Layiwola (Lagos, Nigeria) shows how historical episodes of violence and the removal of cultural property – a British punitive expedition of 1897 – have been explored in Layiwola's own creative practice, and that of her peers, in furtive attempts to keep the issue of colonial exploitation open. Finally, the political historian Susan Legêne (Netherlands)*,* in her 'Mallaby's car: Colonial subjects, imperial actors, and the representation of human suffering in postcolonial exhibitions', addresses the complex story of decolonisation evidenced by photographs taken in Surabaya in Indonesia in 1945 during the uprising against the restoration of Dutch colonial rule.

Part 2, 'Visual Investigations', features artists' essays and statements, and works of cultural criticism. In particular, it offers an exploratory look at the value of visual materials and creative processes for considering colonial pasts, as well as postcolonial, diaspora or minority ethnicity communities in their continuing attempts to come to terms with difficult histories. The lawyer Malte Jaguttis and Berlin-based artist Dierk Schmidt offer a collaborative reflection on art practice

and archival research, 'Comments on the art and research project "The division of the earth – Tableaux on the legal synopses of the Berlin Africa Conference"'.

In 'Late photography, military landscapes and the politics of memory', art historian Simon Faulkner (Manchester Metropolitan University) employs methods from visual culture studies in a critical debate on the Cold War and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, addressing photographs by Simon Norfolk, Angus Boulton, Gilad Ophir and Roi Kuper. Maruška Svašek (Queen's University, Belfast) collaborated with several artists, including Sophie Ernst, in a deep emotional and creative exploration of concepts of 'home' and 'homeland', which she analyses in her '*Forced displacement, suffering and the aesthetics of loss*' alongside the politics of public commemoration surrounding the post-World War II expulsion of ethnic Germans from the Sudetenland in Czechoslovakia. Concluding this part of the collection, the artist John Timberlake (Middlesex University, London) in his 'Nuclear war as false memory' outlines aspects of his own creative practices which highlight discontinued historical trajectories. Timberlake expresses his fascination for the 'fictions of nuclear war' – a war that never happened and so became the subject of 'false memory'. He shows how the cultural legacy of Britain's nuclear test programme of the 1950s and '60s may be explored meaningfully in his paintings and photography resulting from archival research at the Imperial War Museum in London.

Part 3, 'Collaborations', comprises studies in visual analysis that have benefited directly from artist-scholar pairings. Focusing on Poland, the Gdańsk-born artist Rafał Betlejewski takes a more performative approach, and his text here – entitled 'I miss you, Jew!' – is a brief meditation alongside the artist's provocative photographic works on Poland's 'absent' Jewish presence. Literary scholar Uilleam Blacker (University College London) provides a nuanced account of this latter creative practice in his 'Spatial dialogues and the memory of absent Jews in contemporary Polish art', drawing attention to how the artworks by Betlejewski, Polish artist Joanna Rajkowska and Israeli artist Yael Bartana have confronted Jewish and Holocaust histories by linking the Polish context to wider Holocaust discourse and other historical and geographical contexts. A pairing of works by the artist Bente Geving (Norway) – her text 'Margit Ellinor: Forgotten images' – and that by art historian Sigrid Lien (Bergen, Norway) – 'A comment on contemporary Sámi art' – underscore how processes of making and showing art can be effective and integral to autobiography. Geving's intimate account of her Sámi lineage and the

domestic collecting habits of her mother are the focus of a distinctive photographic practice which reveals how her family's identity was privately constructed in the everyday objects and organisation of the home. Lien writes about this body of works by Geving as a new mode of historicity, whereby the raw material of photographs articulates 'a sense of memory loss'. A final artist-scholar pairing comes from Heather Kamarra Shearer (South Australia) and anthropologist Fiona Magowan (Queen's University, Belfast) which frames matters of justice and the issue of 'intercultural trauma'. Shearer's 'Troubled traces: Painting and displaying intercultural traumas of Aboriginality' offers an arresting personal reflection on her life experience as one of the 'stolen generation' of Aboriginal Australians, the inspiration for her vocation in the field of legal rights and her practice as a painter. In her 'Empowering art: Reconfiguring narratives of trauma and hope in the Australian national imaginary' Magowan draws on her longitudinal ethnographic research in this field, bringing into sharp focus how Aboriginal history has been vocalised in entirely new terms among contemporary artists.

About the editors

Uilleam Blacker is a Lecturer in Comparative Russian and East European Culture at the School of Slavonic and East European Studies, University College London. He was previously a postdoctoral research associate on the project Memory at War (HERA JRP), based at the University of Cambridge, from where he participated in the Disturbing Pasts project. His current research focuses on the memories of communities that disappeared from cities across east-central Europe as a result of the Second World War, as reflected in urban commemoration, literature and art. His general research interests include contemporary Ukrainian, Polish and Russian literatures, and memory, gender, urban and postcolonial studies. Uilleam has also translated the work of several contemporary Ukrainian writers.

Elizabeth Edwards is Research Professor of Photographic History and Director of the Photographic History Research Centre, De Montfort University, UK, where she specialises in the social and material practices of photography. She was Project Leader of the HERA-funded project PhotoCLEC which finished in March 2012. She has held curatorial and academic posts in Oxford and London and has worked extensively on the relationships between photography, anthropology and history in cross-cultural environments. Her monographs and edited works include *Anthropology and*

Photography (1992), *Raw Histories* (2001), *Photographs Objects Histories* (2004), and *Sensible Objects* (2006). Her most recent book, *The Camera as Historian: Amateur Photographers and Historical Imagination 1885-1918* was published by Duke University Press in 2012.

Leon Wainwright is Kindler Chair in Global Contemporary Art at Colgate, New York, Reader in Art History at The Open University, UK, and Academic Visitor at the University of Oxford's Department of History of Art and the School of Anthropology and Museum Ethnography. He is co-editor (with Beccy Kennedy and Alnoor Mitha) of *Triennial City: Localising Asian Art* (Cornerhouse, 2014), and the forthcoming anthology (with Øivind Fuglerud, University of Oslo) *Objects and Imagination: Perspectives on Materialization and Meaning* (Berghahn, 2015), and author of *Timed Out: Art and the Transnational Caribbean* (Manchester University Press, 2011) He is Principal Investigator of the Disturbing Pasts project, and a recipient of the Philip Leverhulme Prize for the history of art.

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ECHOES OF THE GREAT WAR: THE RECORDINGS OF AFRICAN PRISONERS IN THE FIRST WORLD WAR

Anette Hoffmann

Abstract

Apart from army registers, some (often anonymous) photographs and the files of anthropometric examination, the involvement of thousands of African soldiers in WWI and their presence in POW camps in Europe seems to have left few traces in European archives. Vis-à-vis a mass of autobiographic texts on the Great War, written by Europeans and Americans, there are very few published accounts of African soldiers that would allow for their historical experiences and views to be included in historiographies of WWI. A collection of sound recordings produced with African prisoners of war in German camps by a group of German linguists, musicologists and anthropologists between 1915-18 offers a notable documentation of their presence. Yet, similar to the anthropometric registration, these recordings were not designed to accommodate the soldiers' accounts, but to create a collection of language recordings. If these cannot be considered as 'authentic voices from the past' and unmediated accounts of WWI, how do we understand and theorise these hitherto untranslated voice recordings, their form and content?

This essay understands the recordings not as 'voices' but as echoes, that is, as mediated, often effaced reverberations of accounts of the self and the war. The notion of echo in this essay grapples with issues of extraction, attenuation, limitation, distance and distortion, or outright effacement, that is the result of the form and the mediation of those speech acts, the belatedness of listening to them, as well as, the gaps in meaning and intelligibility the recordings entail. By conceptualising the recorded voices and their translation as echoes, I seek to understand the status of the recordings, the effects of this linguistic practice and gain a sense of the situation in the camps, so as to position these subaltern articulations in their mediated, distorted form as part of the colonial archive.

Biographical note

Anette Hoffmann is a senior researcher in the Archive and Public Culture Research Initiative at the University of Cape Town, South Africa, where she works on the sound recordings of African prisoners of the First World War. She obtained her doctorate at the Amsterdam School for Cultural Analysis (University of Amsterdam) in 2005 with a dissertation on praise poetry in Namibia. Her work on the Namibian voice recordings that were produced together with life-casts and anthropometric photographs in 1931 is the basis of her exhibition *What We See* that has been shown in Cape Town, IZIKO Slave Lodge (2009), at the Ethnographic Museum in Vienna (2010), as well as in Basel (2009), Osnabrück (2011) and Berlin (2012). In collaboration with Regina Sarreiter and Matei Bellu, she produced an installation with sound and text, with the title *Unerhörter Bericht über die deutschen Verbrechen in*

den kolonisierten Gebieten und über das fortwährende Wirken der Gewalt bis in die Gegenwart that is currently shown in the exhibition *Acts of Voicing* in Stuttgart (Württembergischer Kunstverein). Her recent publications include *What We See. Reconsidering and Anthropometrical Collection from Southern Africa: Images, Voices, and Versioning* (2009); *Sensible Sammlungen. Aus dem Anthropolgischen Depot* (with Margit Berner and Britta Lange, 2011); *Was Wir Sehen. Bilder Stimmen Rauschen. Zur Kritik anthropometrischen Sammelns* (with Britta Lange and Regina Sarreiter, 2012).

An earlier version of this material was presented on the occasion of the project conference 'Disturbing Pasts: Memories, Controversies and Creativity' (20 -22 November 2012, Museum of Ethnology/Weltmuseum Wien, Vienna). To view the film footage on the Open Arts Archive, www.openartsarchive.org, follow this link: http://www.openartsarchive.org/oaa/content/disturbing-pasts-memories-controversies-and-creativity-conference-10

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ECHOES OF THE GREAT WAR: THE RECORDINGS OF AFRICAN PRISONERS IN THE FIRST WORLD WAR

Anette Hoffmann, University of Cape Town

1 Colonial soldiers and imperial knowledge production

Like a vagrant picking up every cigarette stub
he can find on the street,
the French are collecting even
the last man from West Africa
and send him to war.
It is a time of sadness.
Only women and children are left.
In the cities, only men liable to military service are
    left,
they play big men now
When I come back, and such a guy comes to my
    house and talks big about the war, I'll strangle him.[1]

During WWI an estimated 650,000 colonial soldiers, recruited by the Triple-Entente, were sent to European

battlefields. France sent vast numbers of African troops to fight in Europe, including 172,800 soldiers from Algeria, 134,300 from West Africa, 34,000 from Madagascar and more than 2,000 men from the Somali coast (Koller, 2008, pp.111-33; Koller 2011a, pp.130-48). Whereas about a million Indian soldiers were sent overseas, the British army did not deploy Africans as combatants on European battlefields, but did draw on a large number of African 'war workers' (more than 30,000 of whom came from South Africa, for instance).[2] Altogether more than four million non-white men and women were actively involved in the war,[3] which includes two million Africans and over a million Indians, who served in the British army. 'Indeed', writes Santanu Das,

> … if one had been at Ypres [Belgium] during the war years, one would have seen Indian sepoys, tirailleurs Sénégalais, North African spahis, Chinese and Indo-Chinese workers, Maori Pioneer battalion and First Nation Canadians, in addition to white troops and workers. In a grotesque reversal of Conrad's vision, hundreds of thousands of non-white men were voyaging to the heart of whiteness and beyond to witness the 'horror, the horror' of Western civilization.
>
> (Das, 2011a, p.12).

Yet only in recent years has the involvement of colonial soldiers in the war been increasingly included into the historiographies, films and exhibitions, which engage with WWI.[4] The wish to de-centre, multiply and

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1   Citation of a Wolof-speaking prisoner of war in Carl Meinhof's letter to Felix von Luschan, 13.12.1917, (Staatsbibliothek Berlin, Handschriftensammlung, Nachlass Felix von Luschan, Korrespondenzen mit Carl Meinhof). The original reads as follows 'Wie ein Straßenjunge jeden Zigarettenstummel aufliest, den er auf der Straße findet, so haben die Franzosen den letzten Mann aus Westafrika aufgelesen und in den Krieg geschickt. Es sind nur noch Frauen und Kinder da. Das ist jetzt eine Zeit des Weinens. In den Städten sind die Männer weg und nur noch garnisonspflichtige Gesellen sind zurückgeblieben, die spielen jetzt den großen Herren, aber wenn ich zurückkomme, und solch Kerl kommt in mein Haus und will große Worte reden vom Krieg, dem fahr ich an den Hals' (my translation from German). Since I do not have a re-translation yet, this quotation has to be treated with caution.

2   Whether or not this separation – between active combatants and war-workers – was always so neat, is questionable.

3   On the active role of West-African women in WWI see, for instance, Zimmerman (2011). For women and children accompanying the *askaris* in the East Africa Campaign, see Moyd (2011).

4   The sound recordings of the Lautarchiv feature in (at least) two films: *The Halfmoon Files – A Ghost Story*, by Philip Scheffner (2007) and *Boulevard d'Ypres* by Sarah Vanagt (2010), both of which showcase the relevance of the recordings in the presence. Given the complexity of speaking positions, and the opacity of the poetic language represented in some recordings, the use of the voice recordings of POWs in exhibitions demands careful curation. To my mind, the multi-directionality, complexity and haunting instability of meaning the recorded voices of the prisoners entail, as well as the significance of the Lautarchiv have been captured most profoundly by Britta Lange and Philip Scheffner's audio-visual installation *The Making of … Ghosts. Voices and Apparitions in the Archives of the First World War*. The installation has been shown (again) from May to August 2014 at the Humboldt-University in Berlin. (See also the essays in Das, 2011b; Eschenberg,1991; Fogarty, 2008; Ahuja et al., 2011; among others).

version the historiographies of WWI, as articulated by Das and others, is not easily achieved. As an example, vis-à-vis a mass of autobiographic texts on the Great War written by Europeans and Americans, there are very few published accounts of African soldiers. There are, for instance, only a handful of memoirs by West African veterans of WWI, one of which was written by a Senegalese *griot,* who attained French citizenship after the war.[5] The absence of letters, poems and memoirs, which Das describes as the 'cornerstones of European war memories' from the side of the colonial troops may not only be the result of an often assumed illiterate background of many of the colonial soldiers, but, arguably, of the favouring of different forms of representation and cultural mnemonic traditions (2011b, p.6). In other words, autobiographies may not have been the chosen form to articulate war experiences, and the absence of letters in archives does not necessarily connote their non-existence. Nor does the unavailability of letters and the scarcity of written memoirs by African soldiers indicate an absence of memories, which may still circulate in the more elusive medium of oral poetry, songs and story-telling; rather, these memories are hard to trace and less likely to be held in European archives.

In the European discourses of the time, apart from racism in the armies,[6] the presence of colonial soldiers was met with vitriolic, racist propaganda in the German *Kaiserreich*. But the response in Germany was also Janus-faced: on the one hand, African soldiers (especially, not exclusively) were verbally and visually abused as savages. In the German press and in propaganda pamphlets they were depicted as monstrous rapists – both in a metaphorical and literal sense, that is, as raping German women *and* the German nation/soil (Koller, 2011a). Germany's campaigning against colonial soldiers reached its hysterical peak during the French occupation of the Rhineland after WWI, when many African soldiers were based in the area.[7] On the other hand, Muslim prisoners of war became the target of intensive German propaganda activities that sought to convince them to change sides and join forces with

the German armies and the Ottoman Empire to fight against the Triple Entente (Liebau 2011).

At the same time, linguists and anthropologists were alerted to the presence of colonial soldiers in the POW camps, who became targeted as objects of research.[8] Both the research activities that took place in the camps, and the visits of photographers and artists led to the accumulation of a massive amount of written and visual documents, published and unpublished. The interlacing of propaganda material, racial studies and artistic depictions of the captured soldiers resulted in the rather uncanny accumulation of archival material, which refuses disentanglement. Unsurprisingly, the nationalist sentiments are by no means clearly separable from what was seen as scientific studies of race. There were various agendas at play: for instance, in the studies of the anthropologists Felix von Luschan, Egon von Eickstedt, Josef Weninger (1918) and Rudolph Pöch, the artistic portraits of Hermann Struck (von Luschan & Struck, 1917) and Otto Stiehl (1916), and Leo Frobenius' (1916) loud depiction of the British army as 'a dompteur in a circus of peoples' (Dompteur im *Völkerzirkus*). But the production of all of these texts, photographs, painted and drawn portraits was triggered by the availability of an always, albeit to different extents and ends, racialised Other in the camps.[9] Much of the anthropological material from the camps in German and Austrian archives has been meticulously described and analysed by Britta Lange, who quotes the Austrian anthropologist Rudolph Pöch's enthusiastic response to the opportunity: 'The prisoner of war camps provide a hitherto unknown and unique opportunity for scientific research, they are an unparalleled *Völkerschau*!'[10] (2011a, p.156)

This said, the representations generated in the camps cannot easily be disengaged from the history of *Völkerschauen* in Germany, which can be described as a cultural practice of displaying foreign people, often on fairs and in zoos, in a way that mainly staged European fantasies of 'the exotic' and 'the wild' in the presentation of colonised people to a German public. Much of the visual material generated in the camps was in some or other way related to either propaganda against the presence of 'savages' on German ground, as

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5   For details on this example, see Diallo ([1926]1987), Lunn (1987, 1999 and 2011) and Koller (2011a).

6   Whereas the French included African soldiers in their army as actively fighting soldiers, the British army refused to train African American soldiers.

7   The severity and cruel effects of this propaganda speaks from the fact that in the Third Reich many of the children of German women and African men – who were called *Rheinlandbastarde* – where sterilised in a secret operation organised by the raciologist Eugen Fischer. (See, for instance, Lebzelter, 1985.)

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8   For further reading see: Das, 2011a; Lange, 2011b, p. 93; Lange, 2012; Stoecker, 2008.

9   For further details see also: Weule (1915, pp.205-6 and pp.249-53); Vorst (1915); Backhaus (1915); Doegen (1925).

10   The original Rudolph Pöch quote can be traced to the journal *Die Umschau* (1916), 20, p.989. On the subject see also Lange (2011b); Berner (2003); Evans (2002); Evans (2003). I thank Britta Lange for generously sharing her research and thoughts with me.

well as to the aims of colonial knowledge production and racial studies.

However, in at least one case the profitable presenting of 'exotic people' to the curious German public produced a cautiously formulated criticism from the side of 'the object'. The articulations of Somali-speaker Mohammed Nur were published in an article on Somali grammar, and surfaced in preserved acoustic documents of the Lautarchiv. Nur had come to Germany with a group of performers, but left them after refusing to perform on the stage, only to find himself stranded in a foreign country. His attempt to join the German army to fight against the British, the colonial power that occupied his home country, Somalia, resulted in his internment in a camp for British civilians, where his voice was recorded. On Carl Meinhof's request he was released to become a 'language assistant' at the institute for colonial languages in Hamburg (*Institut für Kolonialsprachen*), under Meinhof's tutelage. A short account of his experience in Germany appears in Maria von Tiling's *Somali-Lautlehre* (1925). Mediated by practices of colonial knowledge extraction, in which captured soldiers presented an *opportunity*, Nur's experiences of war and captivity entered the grammar of Somali.

The systematic nature of the abusive practice of imperial knowledge production with prisoners of war and colonised people during and after the violent wars that led to their subjugation, as well as the gory results of measurement, casts, anthropometric photography, the registration of bodily features and the collection of human remains are not the focus of this essay.[11] Here, I wish only to remark that the results of these practices, which dissected and de-personalised the bodies of the prisoners beyond recognition, and left an archive of distorted fragments – photographs, results of measurements and the like – do not tell much beyond testifying to the symptoms of an anatomy of imperial epistemology.[12] Yet there are archival traces of the

involuntary presence of colonial soldiers in German camps, which resonate beyond the indexical (as trace to a person): voice recordings. Produced under the same conditions, the production and archiving of these recordings, at times, created a platform for the articulation of manifest experiences, or the interventions of the people who left the trace.

The Lautarchiv

Figure 1.1.1: Recordings with Indian Prisoners of War in the 'Half-Moon Camp' Wünsdorf, reproduced from Doegen (1941), xxii.

The 'veritable anthropological [and linguistic] tourism' to the POW camps, as Franziska Roy and Heike Liebau (2011, p.12) describe it, led to the accumulation of the *Lautarchiv* (sound archive) in Berlin, which, combined with the musical recordings with POWs (that are held by the Phonogramm-Achiv) amount to 2681 recordings of prisoners of war. All recordings with POWs were produced between 1915-18. On the initiative of the director of the *Phonogramm-Archiv*, musicologist and psychologist Carl Stumpf, and the philologist Wilhelm Doegen, a commission was established – the *Königlich Preussische Phonographische Kommission* – and funded by the Prussian ministry of science, art and education in 1915, with the aim of phonographically recording all languages present in POW camps on German ground.[13] All recordings are accompanied by a written file (*Personalbogen*) that number the recordings (PK…), register the time and place of the recording, the (often misspelled) name of the internee, the name of the person who did the recording, the (often estimated) age of the internee, his place of birth, whether or not he was literate, if and where he went to school, where he had lived, the languages he spoke, the languages his parents spoke, his religious denomination, his

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11   On this topic see Hoffman et al. (2011), among others.

12   I therefore wish to signal unease vis-á-vis János Riesz' assertion (2011, pp.93-4) of the anthropometric photographs of African POWs that were produced in the camp Turnu Magurele in (the at that time occupied) Romania by Josef Weninger (1927), as part of his anthropological research of Africans. Riesz rightly points out that these photographs, that are supplemented with information (often misspelled names, places of birth, language spoken by prisoners, age, marital status, religion etc.) may be the only surviving documents of African POWs, and therefore of some value for research. Yet his description of the photographs as artful and invested with a 'timeless aura', I find questionable. Further, as results of a practice of racial classification I think it is highly problematic to register the photographs as the result of 'a century-long discussion and collaboration' between African and Europeans.

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13   For further details, see Lange (2011b) and Stoecker et al. (2013), as well as Hoffmann & Mnyaka (2014).

(pre-war) occupation, and the type of speech act or song recorded. Although there was a standardised procedure, and some standardised word lists were applied, there often was room for accounts of the speaker's own choice. Stories were told, whose content rarely entered the file, since for once, these recordings were objects (statement-things, in the Foucauldian sense) of linguist research, and their narrative content rarely attracted the interest of the researchers. Secondly, in most cases, the content of the speech acts or songs was screened off from the understanding of musicologists and linguists, since they were, in most cases, incapable of understanding the language. Not many of the recordings with Africans have been translated so far, and my project of organising the translation of (some of) the 360 recordings in African languages, although still at its beginning, has already shown that accounts, of war and imprisonment or even criticism of the process of archiving were relayed (and thus recorded) under the guise of 'telling a story'.

Some of the recordings in Indian languages, which have been translated since the digitisation of the archive in the 1990s, allowed for the emergence of surprising repercussions: the recording (PK 676) of Sundhar Singh, a Sikh imprisoned in Wünsdorf, a camp for Muslims who were the target of the German *jihad* propaganda and therefore enjoyed special treatment, harbours a direct message. Sundhar Singh appropriated the medium and the platform for speaking that emerged to ask for a clean blanket to enfold the holy book of their religious community in the camp.[14] Recorded documentation of his direct appeal – 'Think about the case yourself and answer us swiftly' ('*Denken*

sie selber über die Sache nach und geben sie uns schnell Antwort') conveys the urgency of his request (Lange, 2011b, p.124).

Even the recordings of formalised speech acts include the (uncertain) reverberation of small interventions inserted by the speakers: in the event of recording, a standardised series of words in isiXhosa was turned into a persiflage that revealed the irony of the exercise. On another occasion, a speaker inserted his sonic signature by shouting his name – Schihabeddin Imadeddinoff – into the phonograph at the end of a de-personalised speech act that was thereby converted into a *personal* speech act (Lange, 2011b, p.107). Yet even the most direct of these acoustic traces have been severed from their speakers, who remain *acousmêtres*, the invisible remainders of sonic ghosts of a colonial archive of voices.[15]

I suggest to understand these acoustic traces as echo-voices, that is, not only in the sense of their sonic qualities as abbreviated, mediated and often distorted traces of speech acts, songs and stories, which implicate the modification of the voice that spoke, but also as the uncertain reverberations of accounts, messages, interventions, commentary and critique that was articulated from subaltern positions in the process of producing an archive of languages. As echo-voices, the acoustic traces elude their containment or assimilation in the archive. The conceptualisation of the voice recordings as echoes offers an approach to understanding the recordings of African prisoners of war, which were generated under the auspices of a project of colonial knowledge production, as a locus of reverberation that evades complete containment. The notion of the echo-voice may be good to think with, since it allows for the re-surfacing of ambiguous responses that resided in the interstices of formalised speech acts, between the lines of grammatical examples, and that were at times emerging blatantly direct in the recordings of soldiers' songs and accounts of suffering and fear. Yet even in the case of the most direct enunciations, these voiced traces, as reverberating drift bottles encapsulated in a collection of sound-objects for linguistic research, risked remaining unheard.

II Echo
In the following passage, I offer a detour along Ovid's tale of Echo, and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's reading of the tale. This reading is an attempt to come to terms with the elusive, truncated, mediated quality of voices whose speakers remain unknowable.

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14 The use of the event of recording as a platform for the articulation of criticism has emerged and is documented in other sound recordings as well: speakers sent messages to Germany in Hans Lichtenecker's recordings in South-West Africa in 1931, a Tswana-speaker articulates his dismay about the working conditions under South African rule in his recording in the Dammann collection (also in South-West Africa) in 1954 (see Hoffmann 2009a, Dammann collection (Basler Afrika Bibliographien) 1954). Nor should one assume that the function of the phonograph was unknown to the speakers. Meinhof describes a street-scene in Khartoum: 'Ausser den Läden für die Bedürfnisse der Eingeborenen, finden sich auch einige, die für den europäischen Gescmack berechnet sind. … selbst ein Phonograph schmettert täglich europäische Weisen in die erstaunte Menge – das ist uns in diesem Fall willkommen, weil es dazu beiträgt, die Scheu vor unserem Apparat zu überwinden' ('Apart from shops for the needs of the natives, there are also some [shops] catering for European tastes … even a phonograph daily blares out European melodies into the surprised crowd – which suits us well, since it contributes to losing the fear of our apparatus' (my translation) (qutoted in Meinhof, 1916, p.13).

15 On this subject, see also the 2007 film *The Halfmoon Files. A Ghost Story*, directed by Philipp Scheffner.

The noun 'echo' derives from the Greek ἠχώ (ēchō) from ἦχος (ēchos), 'sound', it describes reverberation. Joan Scott writes:

> Echoes are delayed returns of sound; they are incomplete reproductions, usually giving back only the final fragments of a phrase. An echo spans large gaps of space (sound reverberates between distant sources) and time (echoes are not instantaneous), but it also creates gaps of meaning and intelligibility.
>
> (2001, p.291)

In Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, the nymph Echo (*vocalis nymphe*), is punished by the goddess Juno for distracting her with beguiling talk (or stories) while Juno's husband, Jupiter, delights in other nymphs. The sanction, or say, measure against distracting talk, for Echo is her disablement: the loss of the ability to speak. From then on, she may only repeat an abbreviated and therefore distorted version of someone else's words. The disconnection of voice from intention has major implications: the figure of Echo becomes a repercussing automaton, the host of a mimicking voice that is severed from (her) intention and has become the sonic symptom of *palilalia*,[16] which places each of Echo's utterances outside meaningful articulation or communication and thus is the verdict of her social death.[17] Falling in love with Narcissus, she cannot respond, let alone address him, but merely repeat his words, and, as Scott has already told us, her response as echo can only be a deformed fragment of Narcissus' words. Her inability to speak or respond as a person, that is, to speak according to her own intentions and in her own(ed) voice, leads to Narcissus' rejection of Echo. In grief, her body withers away until nothing is left of her but a voice (*vox manet* – the voice remains). Her voice transforms into a disembodied, dislocated sound effect: an echo.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's article 'Echo' suggests reconsidering the tale – arguably in response to the discussion of her famous (and notorious) article 'Can the subaltern speak? (1988) – by offering a reading that seeks to fathom the elusive traces of female subalternity in hegemonic discourse and the colonial archive. In her reading, the myth of Narcissus is the tale of self as an object of knowledge, whereas the figure of Echo is staged as a respondent *as such*, albeit responding with a twist – creating gaps of meaning and

intelligibility, and leaving us with an ambiguous trace. While Ovid's tale narrates the instance of a *complete* severance of agency or intention from speech, in the instance of Echo's reverberations (that become a mere parroting, and thus are no longer 'human') Spivak grapples with the possibility of an ambiguity withheld in his tale. She writes:

> Throughout the reported exchange between Narcissus and Echo she behaves according to her punishment and gives back the end of each statement. Ovid 'quotes' her, except when Narcissus asks: *Quid …me fugis?* (Why do you fly from me?). Caught in the discrepancy between second person interrogative (*fugis*) and the imperative (*fugi*), Ovid cannot allow her to *be*, even Echo, so that Narcissus, flying from her, could have made of the ethical structure of response a fulfilled antiphon.
>
> (1993, p.25, italics in original)

In other words, when Narcissus asks 'why do you fly from me?' according to Spivak, Echo's response (which is withheld in Ovid's text) would have been 'fly from me'. This move opens the possibility of a reverberation that carries a shift of meaning, a difference, which cannot be appropriated by that which it repeats (Hiddleston, 2007). In this way, Spivak's reading of the myth of Echo creates a space of ambivalence in which the echo that is almost, but never quite the same opens a space of ambiguity, or alterity, that allows for the possibility of a 'faint residue' of an uncontainable, yet slippery intention (Hiddleston, 2007, p.627).

Echo's voice is 'stable-yet-unstable, same-yet-different, and non-originary' (Spivak, 1993, p.27). Whereas the difference between Narcissus' interrogative phrase (*why do you fly from me?*) and her answer that involuntarily must turn into an imperative (*fly from me!*) marks the impossibility of echoing as sameness, and designates the asymmetric positions of Narcissus and Echo, it is Ovid's position to fill in the lacuna. This, as Spivak tells us, is impossible: the account of what happened is never quite what happened – but always a belated interpretation, which can only fill the gap with a difference. Echo, writes Spivak (1993, p.27), guards this dissimilarity, since her imitating-yet-not-quite-the-same response must always slightly alter the meaning of the phrase, which is her 'punishment turned into reward, a deconstructive lever for future users.'

For an understanding of the recordings of prisoners of war, the notion of echo may serve as a conceptualisation of these sonic traces as neither merely signifying the theoretically 'untouchable' figure

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16 The compulsive repetition of syllables and words, described as a tic or pathological disorder of speech.
17 For Petra Gehrmann (2006), Echo's voice as *Wiederholungstimme* (voice as repetition) is therefore lifeless, yet unable to die.

of the subaltern[18] – nor marking an unproblematic recuperation of subjective agency in collections of sound recordings. Instead, I seek to point to historical voice recordings as an attenuated trace or discursive space that allows for the possibility of resonance, in which several instances of narrative agency converge: that of the genre of speech and song itself, for instance. This might sound odd, yet if one takes, for instance, the generic conventions of *omitandu* (praise poetry in Otjiherero) into account, it becomes clear that there *can be* a narrative agency of the genre itself. Albeit inviting and actually pursuing the performative negotiation of historiologies and historiographies, in which events, phases and personalities of the past may take the centre stage, genealogies form the core of the genre. Genealogies thus are the heart of the 'changing same' of *omitandu*,[19] without which they cannot be recognised or registered as *omitandu*. Alteration or additional inscription can only be accomplished within the existing frame of narrative conventions and by making use of the elements of its creative repertoire. The precondition for an *omutandu* to perform *as an omutandu* is recognition, that is, its citational quality. With genealogies as the sine-qua-non of this genre, the audience's attention is inevitably directed towards filiage, descent, ancestry, derivation – as vital to notions of both community and personhood. The prerequisite of every instance of poetic license in *omitandu* is thus not merely the genre of speech itself, which affords the speaker the opportunity to criticise in a specific way, but also allows for the intimation of genealogies – the performer's or those of the ones who are characterised, or both (at times in relation to each other). Thus genres carry their tropes and conventions, and with them a genre-specific agency, as something that is needed to be said in order to qualify as a performance of this specific genre, and to allow for recognition (Hoffmann, 2009a and 2012).

Further, instances of narrative agency may reverberate in the choice of the topics and tropes that appear, at times, to be out of sync or estranged and bewildering from the *position* of their printed appearance. Instances are Mohammed Nur's example sentences, which speak of the war in Maria von Tilings *Somali Grammar*, or Massaud bin Mohammed bin Salah's account of his infelicitous defection, which appeared in a sketchy description of 'the Mandara language', published by the Lautarchiv (to which I will return below).

Accounts of the self were not requested by the linguists, yet do surface in the plethora of songs, stories and narratives that were recorded. Further, one finds speech acts, which seem to take flight, and thus cannot be contained by the intentions of the linguists. The echo of a deconstructive intervention also appears in a recording, which commences as a monotonous repetition of prescribed words, from where it takes a turn, deflecting the series of words and thereby inserts a trace of alternative meaning. In other cases it is the voice itself that seems to take flight, escaping the prescribed form of the recordings, an instance which is then deemed 'meaningless ejaculations' by the linguist, but (on hearing it again) succeeds in thickening the 'plot', and thereby exploding the logic of the grammatical examples and discipline (I come back to all these instances below).

In hearing recorded voices as echoes – bouncing and fragmented – the listener's sense of directionality is blurred: one cannot know from where the (recorded) voice speaks, and the genres are (often) not revealed in the fragment. Yet this severance of the recorded, archived voice from both the intention and/or position of the speaker and his subjectivity does not annihilate the content of speech acts or songs. The contents are not entirely unknowable, even if the speakers remain exactly this.

III An unruly archive

> Western knowledge really does alter what it knows – while also embracing the possibility that what resists such power, both from within and without, will, if given the room to speak, tell us something 'we' are in no position to hear. About this of course, we can *know* very little. Nevertheless we must do everything in our power to listen.
>
> —John Mowitt (1992, p.222, italics in original)

Again, vis-à-vis the recorded voice, I battle with *'Spenstigkeit'* (I did not have to make up the word, I just stripped it to its root) – an entity that is once recalcitrant (*widerspenstig*) but also ghostly (*gespenstig*).

18   Hiddleston writes: 'Furthermore, with perhaps more nuance Peter Hallward criticizes Spivak's concept of the subaltern for positing her voice as singular and inaccessible, and for failing to think through the means by which she might consolidate her identity and voice. For Hallward, 'the subaltern, in other words, is the theoretically untouchable, the altogether-beyond-relation: the attempt to 'relate' to the subaltern defines what Spivak will quite appropriately name an 'impossible ethical singularity'. The result is apparently that the critic deprives the subaltern of a voice while endlessly theorizing and retheorizing the mechanics of her own critical, and unavoidably Western, enunciation.' (2007, p.624). (See also Hallward, 2001, p.30).
19   Paul Gilroy has established the notion of the 'changing same' in his interpretations of black music (1993, p.101).

The recordings appear like *djins* trapped in bottles, which will, once released from their 'reverberating tomb' explode both our expectations and our capacity to grasp and explain. I am acutely aware of not being able to trace all the genres to which these recordings in some 40 African languages relate. Nor will I be able to identify all the fragments of cultural repertoires of performing, singing, and story-telling that converge in these archives. The severance that separates the recorded voices from speakers, repertoires and, at times, from genres is permanent: it cannot be undone. Even when translated, the voices irreversibly retain the character of echoes, and that is what remains. A project that aims for recuperation of any notion of an 'authentic voice' would be a romantic overestimation of scholarly possibilities. On the scandal of incommensurability, of voice recordings, which are at once indexical, and indeed speaking, but *not answering* to the questions their speaking brings up, nor revealing the speakers, I wrote elsewhere (Hoffmann, 2009a). In the following I offer a somewhat sketchy overview of our[20] findings.

1 The book and the dance
Let me start with a minimal intervention that was inserted into the repetition of words, which were most probably requested as examples for the pronunciation of clicks in isiXhosa.[21] The following interpretation of the recordings with Josef T., an isiXhosa-speaker from the area of Port Elizabeth, stems from my collaboration with Phindeswa Mnyaka, who translated and analyzed the recordings.[22] Josef T. most probably shared barrack number 13, which accommodated men of colour in Ruhleben, a camp for British civilians, with Mohammed Nur. Like Nur, he had not been a soldier of the colonial army, but has been caught up in the war for reasons unknown.[23]

After having performed several songs and a story, Josef T. presented a series of words (PK 867/2) for Carl Meinhof's recordings.[24] The songs bring up the notions

of hunger and of being an initiate (866/1) – the latter an allegory that also appears in the West-African Tirailleur Kande Kamara's accounts of the war[25] – the train, and an uncertain future (865/1) as well as the request for work/labour (866/2). The previous series of words and the story (PK 867/1) evolve around terms for 'God' in isiXhosa, which refers back to Carl Meinhof's concern with the translation of the gospel into African languages (Meinhof, 1905 and 1907; Pugach, 2000). The last recording with Josef T., on 19 May 1917 in Ruhleben, consist of a repetition of the words 'book' and 'dance'.

> *Umngqungqo, umngqungqo, umngqungqo,*
> *umngqungqo, incwadi, incwadi, incwadi, incwadi,*
> *incwadi, umngqungqo, umngqungqo, umngqungqo,*
> *umngqungqo,*
> *yincwadi, yincwadi, yincwadi, yincwadi, yincwadi*

(PK 867/2)

The intervals between the words, together with the repetition create the serial monotony of an itemisation or inventarisation, that point to the process of phonetic objectification, which follows the needs of archiving and speaks to the archive's utopic endeavour of stabilising language as an object for research. Seeking to undo one of the intrinsic characteristics of spoken language, its alterability and with that, its ephemeral qualities, in favour of creating stable, lasting objects for grammatical and phonetic purposes, must create floating objects. The result is an orderly series of word-objects, which the linguistic archive divorces from their indexical relationship to a speaker, but also from the semantics of words, since the changeability of meaning would be antagonistic to the archive's flirt with posterity.

Listening to recordings, instead of reading transcripts, allows for a consideration of the anticipatory relationship of archiving with the utopia of conservation and containment *in situ*, if mediated, yet there are disturbances in its proceedings. In the very act of creating an acoustic record of language that is mechanically reproducible and allegedly objective, one can detect a shift that accentuates and alters the meaning (or meaninglessness) of a predictable series of words: the speaker's shift in his enunciation of 'book'. Whereas initially he says the word *incwadi* thus denoting what in the English language would be the indefinite article 'a' (in other words, the translation would be 'a book'), he shifts in the last line to the

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20   I refer here to the findings that were often the result of my collaboration with translators, who are always also interpreters.
21   There is more to say to the research of clicks in allegedly 'primitive languages', but that is beyond the scope of this paper. See, for instance, Bleek (1869); Stopa (1935); Bank (2000).
22   More on these recordings is to be found in an article we wrote together (Hoffmann & Mnyaka, 2014).
23   For more on the history of Ruhleben, see, for instance, Stibbe (2008).
24   The speaker's name appears as Josef Tuanumbee and Josef Twanumbee in different files, both of which most probably are misspellings (Personal Files of the Lautarchiv, Humboldt University Berlin).

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25   'To be a soldier in those days was like being circumcised. [When you went into the] secret bushes, there were many things you never knew about … And that's the same parallel as warfare, as being a soldier' (citation of Kande Kamara's account in Lunn, 1985, p.4.)

FIG. 1.1.2: Personal file PK 1116: Jámafáda. With the permission of the Humboldt University Berlin.

definite article 'the' by using the word *yincwadi*, which is translated as 'the book'. Such a subtle modification in determiners destabilises the exercise; moving away from the realm of the mundane repetition of phonemes whose value, for the linguists, solely lay in the peculiarities of clicks. Phindeswa Mnyaka writes:

> By deploying the definite article 'the' (and one could also translate the word *yincwadi* to 'that/this is a book') the speaker seems to denote a dialogue between him and another, not necessarily conversational but intimating that he is not speaking alone by referring to a manifest object ('the book').
>
> (Hoffmann & Mnyyaka, 2014)[26]

26 I thank Phindeswa Mnyaka for generously allowing me to include this part, which is really her analysis, in my paper.

This does bring up the question of possible, imagined addressee(s), which is difficult to assess. Although one does hear, in one recording a sound in the background that may be laughter, or coughing, this does not indicate that Josef T. would have spoken to someone specifically. Can we read the list as progressing, from dance to book, and finally to *the* book, that is, from performance to writing, as an implicit theorising, or commentary – *en passant* – that gestures towards the result of this exercise and process of archiving?

The move from *a* book to *the book* (*the Book*), of course, might have been a reference to the bible, and with this move, Josef T.'s recording may have crystallised the peculiar significance of the combination of terms: the dichotomy of 'the [W]ord' and performance, and with that, of archive and repertoire, which inevitably refers to the colonising mission. The dichotomy is

already inherent in the choice of words, but it is also marking the realms – of the written word and the performance – as spaces and concepts, between which the imperial project of recording did oscillate. The production of the recordings was underpinned by Meinhof's request for missionaries to learn 'native' languages, which led to the converging of the evangelising mission and the project of archiving. Josef T.'s minimal shifts of wording transform his recorded articulation from the mechanical pronunciation of 'random' clicks/sounds to the enunciations of a speaking subject.

The only statement of Meinhof on the recordings I could trace is: 'Einige kafirische Aufnahmen sind merkwürdig wegen der Schnalzlaute, bieten aber wissenschaftlich sonst nichts bemerkenswertes.' ('Some of the Kafir recordings are strange, because of the clicks, but do not offer anything scientifically noteworthy').[27] Although Josef T.'s pronunciation or accent was seen as peculiar (*merkwürdig*), which brings up questions of the representation of language (in this archive of languages), since no other isiXhosa speaker was recorded. Most probably, this is again related to *availability*: the linguists did not find another speaker of the language. Josef T. became the representative speaker of a language, he might not have spoken most of his life (the file says, he lived in India before 1897), simply because he was present and thus available.

2 Giving an account of oneself (at war)

Much like in the epigraph – albeit translated recently by a Mòoré speaker during the project of producing the film *Boulevard d'Ypres*, by the Belgian filmmaker Sarah Vanagt – the following quote from the recording of a man named Jámafáda speaks of his experience as a soldier in the colonial army.

> They took me and gave me to the whites.
> They have thrown me into the war
> The war is not interesting
> We marched off. I have not forgotten my wife.
> I left my wife and went to war.
> Since I left FadaN'Gourma, I marched.
> And I have not seen my compatriots again.
> I do not know whether they have died or not, but I have not seen them.
> I continue to march without having news of them.
> In the war since three years, I haven't seen my mother and father again.

I do not know if they have been informed of my departure.
I continue to march.
It is now three years in which I haven't seen my child.
Where I am now, I don't know, nor if I will return.
In the time of war, if I will return or not, I don't know.

I will return, but in the war, I don't know.[28]

(PK 1116/2)

Not much needs to be added to Jámafáda's recorded account of his situation as a French colonial soldier and prisoner of war. On the file, his age is estimated as 21, he is said to be a soldier since 1914, his recording was produced 24 November 1917. The file further states that he was illiterate, spoke 'Mossi' (Mòoré) and French, and that he was heathen. Being a soldier since 1914 – and much like the unnamed Wolof-speaker (of the epigraph) – stating that he has been 'taken' by 'the Whites', to be 'thrown' into a war that was 'not interesting' – points towards the conscription campaigns of the French army. Christian Koller (2008, p.115) describes French recruitment politics as based on the mixture of enlisting volunteers and conscription. Yet, 'the customary procedure [during the first years of the war in West Africa] was to ask local chiefs to provide potential recruits. Most often, men from lower social strata, especially from the group of domestic slaves, were presented to French recruitment officers.' Melvin Page writes that although many African men enlisted for various reasons:

> far more did not want to leave their homes for a cause they did not comprehend, or did not wish to understand. Many simply refused to be a voluntary part of any white man's enterprise. … [r]ecruiting in Africa took a variety of disguises which nonetheless only masked what were really methods of involuntary conscription.

(1987, p.7)

According to Jonathan Derrick (2008, p.45), the considerable resistance against the French military's conscription campaign was a crucial cause for the revolt against colonialism in Upper Volta in 1915-16, which is the area Jámafáda called home.

In a letter of Carl Meinhof to Felix von Luschan Jámafáda appeared as an anthropological '*curiosum*':

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27 This comment by Meinhof is found in the 'Bericht an die Phonographische Kommission', files of the Lautarchiv (my translation).

28 I thank Sarah Vanagt for making the translation available. The sound file was translated by Ousmane (no last name given). The quote also appears in Lange (2012, p.61).

I further wanted to inform you that there is a Mossi from Fada n Gourma in Wünsdorf. As far as I can see, he is of anthropological interest, his face is covered completely with scars, in a way I have not seen before. His facial expression and very fair skin color reminds me of Bushmen, although the man is not short. His nose is completely dented and his eyes are extraordinarily sunken, and he opens them barely. The impression is rather daunting for the uninformed, yet he is rather smart and when I asked him for textual examples, he spoke of not seeing his father and mother, his wife and two children, and said he fears to die before he will see them again. There is only one Mossi in the camp, you should find him easily.[29]

Meinhof's last sentence calls for an anthropological examination of Jámafáda, and unsurprisingly, his photograph appears in Doegen's publication (1925, p.32), which was based on the research of the *Kommisson* in the camps, with a note on the scarification of his face. His recording is not mentioned.

3 'My old friend and slave trader from Bornu'

By the way, my old friend and slave trader from Bornu, who had much dealings with Ful, is in Wünsdorf and he will certainly be able to inform you on these issues.[30]

The first of the Lautarchiv's publications of recordings in African languages - 'Mandara' - appeared in 1929, as issue No. 48 of the series. In the foreword, the initiator and (at times) director of the Lautarchiv, Wilhelm Doegen stresses that the written text is supposed to be concordant with the vital sounds (*lebendige Laute*) of the record, as far as the ear can capture the sound (*soweit das Ohr die Laute erfassen kann*). Yet in the ears of linguists the account of the prisoner presented in the following was merely an example of a foreign language that was yet to be researched. Under the heading 'Kriegserlebnisse eines Gefangenen' (war experiences of an internee) one reads the following text that was, according to the publication, spoken by Massaud Bornawi and recorded in Wünsdorf:

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29   My translation from Meinhof's German letter to von Luschan (13.12.1917, Staatsbibliothek Berlin, Handschriftensammlung, Nachlass Felix von Luschan, Korrespondenzen mit Carl Meinhof).
30   Letter from Meinhof to von Luschan (28.2.1917). The original reads as follows: 'Übrigens befindet sich in Wünsdorf mein alter Freund und Sklavenhändler aus Bornu, der viel mit Ful zu tun gehabt hat und sicher über die Sachen Auskunft geben kann.' (Staatsbibliothek Berlin, Handschriftensammlung, Nachlass Felix von Luschan, Korrespondenzen mit Carl Meinhof, my translation).

95. Massaud ben Mohammed ben Salah, Neger aus Mandra, Südtripolitanien, 30 Jahre, Händler, 5. Tirailleurs Tunisiens.

Figure 1.1.3: Massaud ben Mohammed ben Salah drawn by Herman Struck. Image from Luschan and Struck, 1917, fig. 95.

I came to the French, I have done service with them for four years. I did not want to go to Morroco. But … said: you go and you stay in prison for two years. When I went to war against the Germans, and came to France and Belgium, I said (to myself): 'The Germans are friends of the Turks, and I as a Mandara am an ally of the Turks and the Germans, the Mandara are allies of the Turks and the Germans and the Austrians. We are under one flag.' So I threw away my gun and ran away and came to the Germans. The German soldiers beat me with a rifle on my feet and hurt me with the bayonet on my hand. That's how I came to the Germans. And this white person said: 'How did you come here from your country?' And I replied: 'I come from Sudan and am a French soldier.' Then he said to his brothers: 'Leave him, don't kill him. He is our friend, he changed sides to come to us.' And they said: 'You are our friends, therefore we may not kill you, it would be a sin. We are now under one flag.' They brought me to their captain and now ….I spoke to him and said: 'I crossed over.' And he said: 'Who knows you from then, when you crossed over?' And I said: 'Captain …' And he said: 'I will see'. I am now interned here since 21 months. You have assembled the others who changed sides. They go to work outside the camp,

while you are keeping me here. I sat down and wrote three letters to France with the following content: 'I am here. My money, 600 Francs, is at the post office, the book has been lost. Take all my money and send it here!' But they answered: 'You defected. We are not allowed to send you the money. Stay with the Germans!' And now all people, the soldiers spend their money and you send them fruit and dates. But I don't have a friend. Now the Germans must let me go! All the people buy food in the canteen for their money, they eat and do not give me anything, I see it with my own eyes, but I do not have a friend who speaks the German language. Won't you let me go out to your cities, so that I can stay there and work until the war is over? Then, when I have earned something, I say to the king: 'I am going to Constantinople and then I go on a pilgrimage, and after the pilgrimage I will go to Mandara country.'[31]

(in Klingenheben, 1929)

The text in this publication leaves many questions unanswered. In the publication, it is referred to as a translation of the sound file PK 275. On the written file that documents the sound recording PK 275, the name of the speaker is Massaud ben Mohammed ben Salah (not Bornawi). In a letter to von Luschan, Meinhof stated that he met a man he had known already in the camp: 'Übrigens befindet sich in Wünsdorf mein alter Freund und Sklavenhändler aus Bornu, der viel mit Ful zu tun gehabt hat und sicher über die Sachen Auskunft geben kann.' ('By the way, present in Wünsdorf is my old friend and slave trader from Bornu, who knows about Ful and might inform you in this case').[32] When did Meinhof 'become friends' with the man who was now interned in Wünsdorf?

The Africanist, August Klingenheben, who was the translator in this case, stated that his knowledge of the language was far from elaborate and that he may have mistranslated some words. The omission of words (indicated with …) is sometimes related to Klingenheben's inability to understand them, but he also stated that 'einige dunkle Ausdrücke mussten unübersetzt bleiben' (Klingenheben, 1925, p.10), which translates as 'some dark expressions had to remain untranslated'. What exactly he means by 'dark expressions' – whether this refers to unknown words or, for instance, to utterances seen as too direct or obscene – is not clear to me.

Still, the account of the internee is quite compelling, and the next question brought up by his account would be whether or not his narrative, apart from being a complaint, was also contradicting the propagandist promises made to Muslims who were actively asked
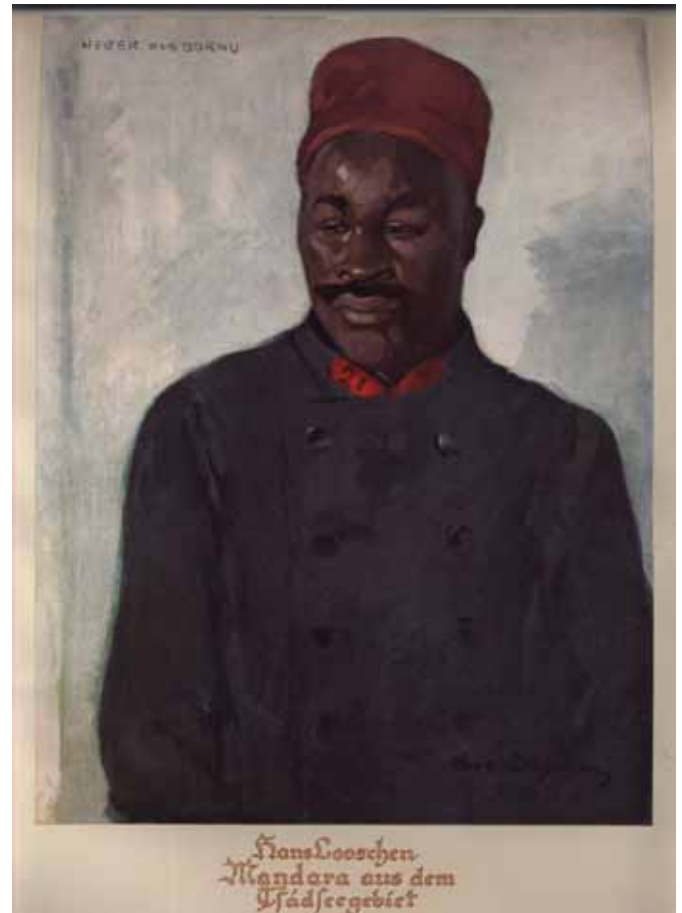
Figure 1.1.4: Massaud ben Mohammed ben Salah, drawn by Herman Loeschen. In Frobenius and Freytag-Lohringhoven, around 1924, fig. 27.

to cross over, and was therefore a *scandal*. The so-called *Halbmondlager* (Half-Moon Camp) in Wünsdorf was designed as a propaganda camp in which mainly Muslims were interned (as for instance Sundhar Singh, who had asked for the blanket to wrap the holy book) (Liebau, 2011). The activities and special treatment of prisoners (with regard to food supply and religious activities, but also the circulation of a propagandist camp newspaper in Hindi) can be read in this respect. When Turkey entered the war in November 1914, the Sultan issued a *fatwa* calling all Muslims to join the *jihad* against the Triple-Entente (Liebau, 2011). The German Foreign Office used the opportunity to harness Islam in their attempt to convince Muslim soldiers to cross the lines. Heike Liebau writes that the main target group of the agitation were *sepoys*,[33] but how explicit did this become within propagandist discourses of the time? Did the speaker believe in the rhetoric of 'one flag' only

31 My translation from German.
32 Letter 28.2.1917 (Staatsbibliothek Berlin, Handschriftensammlung, Nachlass Felix von Luschan, Korrespondenzen mit Carl Meinhof).

33 Indian soldiers in the British army.

to find himself interned and excluded from the 'favors' other prisoners in Wünsdorf enjoyed? '… and you send them fruit and dates. But I don't have a friend.'

Bringing up the notion of 'one flag' may also speak of Senegalese Commissioner Blaise Diagne's recruiting campaign in West Africa, during which he succeeded in negotiating concessions for the Senegalese soldiers, such as an exemption from the head tax, and forced labour, but most importantly the prospect of military service as an avenue towards a status of equality for the men who had served France in WWI. 'Those who fall under [German] fire, fall neither as whites nor as blacks, they all fall as Frenchmen and for *the same flag*' (Blaise Diagne in Lunn, 1987, p.43, my italics).[34] Diagne's promises and campaign had an immense resonance throughout West Africa and resulted in the enlistment of 60,000 recruits. This is of some importance, especially given the history of revolts against recruitment mentioned above, and in the light of Jámafáda's statement: the war is *not interesting* (which referred to conscription campaigns in or before 1914).

The unpublished files, which include the transcription of PK 274, inform us further that Massaud ben Mohammed ben Salah was a Tirailleur Tunésien who had volunteered for the French army in Tripolis, to where he had fled after the outbreak of a war in French Sudan, during which he had lost his trade goods (among which were slaves). Remarkably, his image appears in three different publications: he had been drawn by Hermann Struck (von Luschan and Struck, 1917, fig.95), painted by Hans Loeschen (Frobenius and Freytag-Loringhoven, 1924, fig.27) and appears on a photograph in Frobenius' *Völkerzirkus* (1915, p.115).[35] Could the fact that he appears on all these images be credited to his diplomatic efforts to find a way to leave the camp? Or did he simply have a mercantile habit that enabled him to socialise with people who visited the camp?

Would the account Massaud gave, when he spoke into the phonograph, have passed the censor if it had been written, as in a letter? Since it was not even allowed to write the word *hunger*, I am quite sure it would not. As what kind of a document can (or must) one consider a text that evaded censorship as a recording, but then got published as a written and (however poorly) translated text more than a decade later, and which probably is merely a faint echo of the recording, which, again, is probably merely a fragment of an account – since it was restricted to the length of a wax cylinder?

Postscript

Framing the recordings not as voices but as *echoes* – of accounts of the self, and of the war at times – I use the concept of echo as a means to grapple with extraction, attenuation, limitation, distance and the distortion or outright effacement that is the result of mediation, the delay (or belatedness of listening), the gaps in meaning and intelligibility. Here the restraints imposed on the speaker are a result of the linguist's will not to punish the speaker but to *extract* language from semantics, so as to limit the potential distraction that a narrative of an ordeal (being hungry, wounded, homesick, betrayed, insulted) would entail. This need not mean that the speaker was restricted in the choice of narratives he could tell, or the songs he chose to sing. Instead, the language barrier, and often (not always) the belated understanding of what was said, prevented this kind of censorship, or indeed, allowed an evasion of censorship. The speakers' accounts were restricted to the length of a wax cylinder (only in one case so far did I find a tale that continues on three cylinders), which is a technical limitation. Yet, the constriction of meaning lies in a prescribed practice of (extractive) listening.

Conceptualising the recorded voices and their translation as echoes, I seek to understand the status of voices recorded under the restraints of linguistic practice, the situation in the camps, so as to position these subaltern articulations in their mediated, distorted form as part of the colonial archive. These are neither subjective utterances (although the speech acts themselves may have been exactly this), nor can they be heard as the political voices of POWs from colonised countries who saw the horror of the Great War. Yet, they are *echoes* of these positions and still provide us with a lever to multiply and deconstruct Eurocentric narratives of WWI.

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34 Blaise Diagne's comment can be found in *L'Afrique Française* 28 (1918) 26, for further details see also Fogarty (2008, p.1).

35 The photography in *Völkerzirkus* is in profile and can therefore not have been the basis of Loeschen's painting in *Deutschlands Gegner*.

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A RIOT OF OUR OWN: A REFLECTION ON AGENCY
Carol Tulloch

Abstract

The article is a reflection on the exhibition A Riot of Our Own, an archival narrative on the Rock Against Racism Movement (RAR) that ran between 1976 and 1981. This was told through the exhibition-making collaboration between Syd Shelton, Ruth Gregory and Carol Tulloch. The exhibition drew solely on the RAR personal archive of Shelton and Gregory who were RAR (London) committee members, key contributors to the graphic design of RAR and Shelton took photographs of the movement's events and contextual material. The exhibition was first shown in 2008 at the CHELSEA Space Gallery, London, and went on tour to venues in London and Croatia. The paper traces the tenacious pursuit of anti-racist agency of RAR that has not lost its historical relevancy in the twenty-first century.

What is discussed here is the black and white dynamic of difference as unity against the intolerance of difference that marked Britain during this period; why and how the exhibition A Riot of Our Own was produced in response to an open invitation from CHELSEA Space; the critical, curatorial and auto/biographical frameworks that informed this instance of exhibition-making. As a reflective article by the co-curator and collaborator of the exhibition, the writing of this article is an opportunity to look back on how the exhibition-making process produced new forces – the need to exercise agency as a connecting thread between the impetus of experimentation, the concept of 'the edge' and exhibition-making as a liminal space. The article contributes to the developing area of study in histories of exhibitions and 'design activism'.

Biographical note

Carol Tulloch is Professor of Dress, Diaspora and Transnationalism at the University of the Arts London, where she is based at the Chelsea College of Art and Design and is a member of the Transnational Arts, Identity and Nation Research Centre (TrAIN). She is also the TrAIN/V&A Fellow at the V&A Museum. Carol trained as design historian at the Royal College of Art/Victoria and Albert Museum. As a curator and writer Carol has explored a range of issues on dress and black identities, style narratives, making, cross cultural and transnational relations, cultural heritage, auto/biography and personal archives.

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A RIOT OF OUR OWN: A REFLECTION ON AGENCY

Carol Tulloch, Chelsea College of Art and Design, University of the Arts

TIME – BEATING TIME	THIS COUNTRY MIGHT BE RATHER SWAMPED BY PEOPLE WITH A DIFFERENT CULTURE MARGARET THATCHER	ROCK AGAINST RACISM ... WAS A JAIL BREAK	'THE TWO-TONE LABEL' 'THE MIDLANDS' SHORT-WINDED TAMLA-MOTOWN
OUTSIDE CONVENTIONAL POLITICS	SPIRIT OF RESISTANCE	RAR ... REGGAE SOUL ROCK AND ROLL JAZZ FUNK AND PUNK : OUR MUSIC	VICTORIA PARK 290-ACRE EAST END HYDE PARK
COMMON HUMANITY	WE WERE GOING TO STRIKE BACK KUNG-FU RUB-A-DUB SURREALIST STYLE	SOMETHING WAS IN THE AIR	'THE REAL ANARCHY OF THE UK' – THE RAR CLUBS
RANK-AND-FILE MOVEMENT OF THE ORDINARY	COMMITTED LEFTIES	SERIOUS MUSIC-POLITICS-BLACK-WHITE MIX-UP	RAR ... A CAMPAIGN TO CHANGE ATTITUDES WITHIN POPULAR CULTURE
MILITANT TRADITIONS	CONFRONTATION ON THE STREETS	DIY CLOTHES	THERE IS, IN THE UK A HIGH LEVEL OF CREATIVE INTERACTION BETWEEN BLACK AND WHITE TRADITIONS
A CELEBRATION OF A DIFFERENT KIND OF PRIDE AND SOLIDARITY	BOARDING-UP SHOP FRONTS	A GREAT WAVE OF NEW ENERGY	THERE IS NO US WITHOUT THEM
THE INVISIBLE	EAST LONDON COMRADE	A REAL FLUIDITY BETWEEN MUSIC, STYLE AND VISUALS	THERE IS A FIGHT GOING ON FOR THE SOUL OF OUR COUNTRY
THE GENERAL LEVEL OF RACIAL VIOLENCE IN THE EAST END	THE FRONT ... THE POLICE ... THE LEFT	WANTED: GARAGE POLITICS	BEATING TIME DAVID WIDGERY 1986

Beating Time: A Concrete Poem, 2008. Edited by Carol Tulloch, design by Syd Shelton.
This concrete poem is constructed of quotes taken from the book *Beating Time* by David Widgery, published in 1986. This was Widgery's documentation of the Rock Against Racism (RAR) Movement, its history and political philosophy. Widgery was a founding member of RAR and a prominent writer for the movement. The poem was first shown at the exhibition *A Riot of Our Own* at CHELSEA Space, London 2 July to 2 August 2008. It was shown on a monitor, with each quote viewed as a single image.

Introduction

RAR is a campaign. A political campaign.
Its aims are:

1. To fight the influence of racism/fascism in Popular culture, especially music.

2. To build an anti-racist/fascist movement WITHIN Pop culture and use it to fight racism and fascism EVERYWHERE.

RAR is run by an Adhoc Committee of young people, rock-pop fans, whose job it is to promote the aims of the campaign. To set up RAR gigs where anti-racism is the message; to encourage bands and musicians to reject Establishment pressure and perform on a positive anti-racist platform; to produce anti-racist propaganda in the form of T-shirts, leaflets, posters, badges, stickers, the Fanzine – and to spread it around; to break the commercial stranglehold on bands, provide them with gigs AND pay them; to put the RAR into ROCK. **RAR is a campaign. A political campaign. – Join Us.**

(*Temporary Hoarding*, 1977, no.2)

Between 2007 and 2008 I engaged in the curatorial collaboration *A Riot of Our Own* with Syd Shelton and Ruth Gregory about the Rock Against Racism (RAR) Movement, which ran between 1976 and 1981.

Ruth and Syd[1] were RAR (London) committee members[2], graphic designers of posters, ephemera and RAR's paper *Temporary Hoarding*. Syd intuitively took photographs of RAR's activities that have resulted in the largest collection of images on the movement. The exhibition was shown at the CHELSEA Space Gallery, London, between 2 July and 2 August 2008. *A Riot of Our Own* was the culmination of the lived experiences of the three collaborators that have revolved around difference, racism, belonging and culture. A culmination that revisits a moment of British activist history of only five years yet had tentacles that stretched back to British slavery, colonialism and imperialism and its contribution to what it means to be part of Britain in the 21st century.

RAR brought black and white people together to confront racist ideologies, notably that of the far-right

1   For the remainder of the article, I will use the Christian names of Syd Shelton and Ruth Gregory to reflect the familiar, collaborative nature of the project.

2   The RAR (London) Committee included: Clarence Baker, Chris Bolton, Pete Bruno, Andy Dark, Rick Fawcett, Robert Galvin, Darlajane Gilroy, Ruth Gregory, Jane Harrison, Roger Huddle, Bob Humm, Tom Robinson, Red Saunders, Syd Shelton, Sharon Spike, Kate Webb, David Widgery and Jo Wreford.
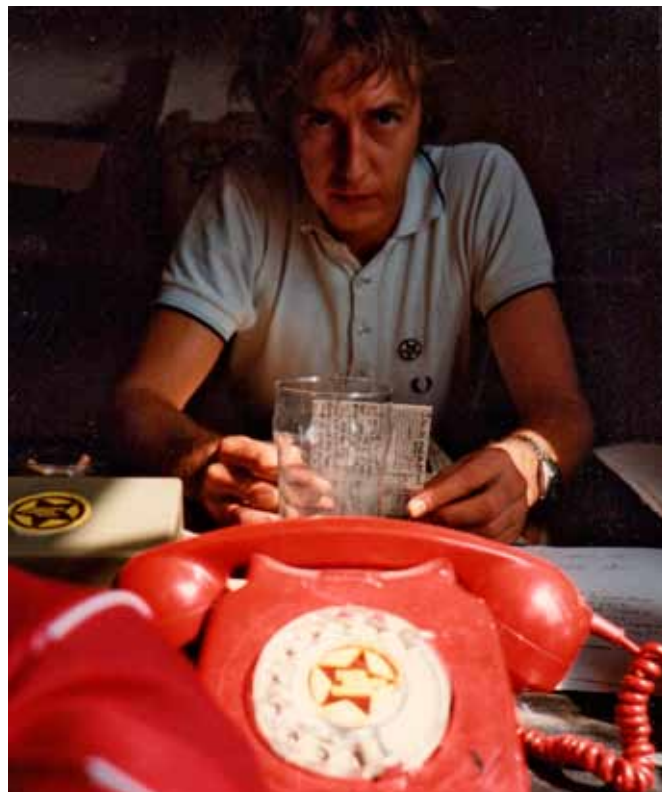
Figure 1.2.2: Syd Shelton 1978, Rock Against Racism (RAR) office, Finsbury Park, London. ©Photograph by Kate Webb.

Figure 1.2.3: *Temporary Hoarding* No. 5 Spring, 1978, Ruth Gregory (left) and Darla Jane Gilroy. © Syd Shelton and Ruth Gregory

Figure 1.2.4: Rock Against Racism logo designed by David King, 1976.

organisation the National Front (NF)[3], through music and demonstrations, rallies and design in the streets, parks, town halls and pavilions across Britain.

RAR was in-your-face activism, illustrative of what a collective creative engagement between designers, writers, actors, musicians, performers and supporters can achieve. The movement recognised that the chronic rise of racism in the 1970s was a legacy of British slavery, colonialism and imperialism, the tentacles of which still had a hold on African, Asian and Caribbean migrants and immigrants to Britain, and their descendants born in the country post-World

3   In 1971, the National Front changed its name to the National Party. This was seen by its critics as a bid for them to be seen as more 'respectable' and to 'appeal to moderate sections of public opinion' (Jones, 1971, p.9). The group's original name was still used by its opposers, as in RAR and the Anti-Apartheid Movement, see Edgar (1977).

Figure 1.2.5: Chelsea Space Gallery, London.© Donald Smith/ CHELSEA Space.

Figure 1.2.6: RAR Carnival Southall, London, 1979. ©Photogaph by Syd Shelton

Figure 1.2.7: Jubilee Street, Stepney, London, 1977. © Photograph by Syd Shelton

War II. RAR committee member David Widgery's activist thinking on the spectres of British colonialism and imperialism on 1970s Britain was that:

> We whites must realise, before it is too late … That they are here because we were there. That there is no Britain without blacks and that we could not keep our slaves out of our sight forever. That there is no such thing as pure English nationality or pure Scots, or Welsh but a mongrel mix of invaders and predators and settlers and émigrés and exiles and migrants. That there is no us without them.
>
> (Widgery, 1986, p.122)

The racist murders of, for example, Altab Ali, Gurdip Singh Chagger, Kenneth Singh and Blair Peach alongside perpetual racial attacks of black people, regardless of gender, as well as overseas concerns such as the atrocities of apartheid in South Africa, fuelled this form of anti-racist thinking and activity. RAR was a definitive past/future juncture for black and white people at this time in Britain when, Stuart Hall argues, the 'fundamentally dialogic' tenants of multi-culturalism enabled translation (Hall and Scott, 2012, pp.300-2). RAR'S dogged activism attracted racist attacks against the London base. Kate Webb, who ran the RAR London office full-time from 1978 to 1981, remembers 'we got a lot of nasty stuff through the mail, and a steady drip of hate letters from the NF' (Webb, 2014). This 'nasty stuff' included razor blades. Webb also recalls that it was the address 'Rock Against Racism Box M, c/o 6 Cotton Gardens London E2' that was fire bombed. This mailing address was also used by the Socialist Workers Party, so it was difficult to be sure who the target was (Webb, 2014). In light of these attacks RAR members adopted pseudonyms. For example, Webb became Irate Kate, Ruth was known as Ruth Shaked, and Syd had a couple of names Syd Cortina and THP3, based on the camera film he used to take photographs.

This article relates how a curatorial-telling of RAR can illustrate the power of agency from human, material and visual perspectives. It is a reflective text by me, the instigator of the exhibition idea, co-curator and collaborator, in order to convey the edge of reason that a curatorial-telling of activism can produce, that is, a space where different personal experiences, yet similar socio-political perspectives, connect. This text reconsiders the relevance of exhibition-making experimentation to chart the legacy of RAR through the RAR personal archive of Syd and Ruth. I use the term exhibition-making, which I see as an aspect of curating, but the term quantifies for me the collaborative nature of the project and the free reign

we were given over every aspect of the exhibition *A Riot of Our Own*: the narrative, context, design, text and publication—to *make* our own exhibition.

What follows is a complex account of this curatorial representation of RAR, an account that needs to acknowledge: the documentation of a movement and the history of an exhibition that acknowledged RAR's historical and political significance at a particular moment of British activism against, often violent, racism; the lived experiences and biographical connections that emerged because of the movement and its curatorial-telling; an exhibition that offers a new telling of RAR that acknowledges the auto/biographical tenets of the project; and why the need to engage in curatorial reflection, particularly when auto/biographical elements have impacted on the curatorial process. My use of the term auto/biographical draws on Linda Anderson's definition:

> autobiographical and biographical narratives are related and to suggest how the boundary between them is fluid. This can be manifested in the way autobiographies may contain biographical information about the lives of others, or be read for the biographical information they contain about the subject. Biographies also may include personal revelations about their authors or a personal narrative of their own quest for information or their relation to the biographical subject.
>
> (Anderson, 2011, p.140).

I have written '*A Riot of Our Own:* A reflection on agency' with a curatorial voice, that is, I am applying the curatorial process of assembling elements from connected realms to produce a new narrative, which is effectively my collage of RAR and its legacy. This article is constructed of three sections. Part I outlines the exhibition-making process of *A Riot of Our Own* at CHELSEA Space. Part II clarifies the need for curatorial reflection, to look back on how the exhibition-making process of this exhibition produced new forces— the *need* to exercise agency as a connecting thread between the impetus of experimentation, the concept of 'the edge' and exhibition-making as a liminal space. Part III relates the need to acknowledge what Mark Sealy calls 'the missing chapters' (Sealy, 2012) of anti-racist activism and how this has been recognised through the responses to the exhibition.

Part I: Exhibition-making
A Riot of Our Own exhibition at CHELSEA Space, London, 2 July to 3 August 2008
The exhibition *A Riot of Our Own* was a collaboration between Syd, Ruth and me, a collaboration that I call a curatorial interview. Throughout the exhibition-making process I asked them questions that encouraged Ruth and Syd to reassess the meaning of objects to them and RAR, for example, the contact sheets for Syd or Ruth's personal diaries, to making a new piece of work based on archival material such as Ruth's political badges. Through this curatorial interview, I wanted to pit Ruth and Syd's personal memories of that period of their lives against the 'storage memory' (von Bismarck, 2002, p.458) of their RAR archive, which was reflected in the intertextuality of the objects shown in *A Riot of Our Own*. I pushed this aspect of the exhibition-making process further in the published interviews I conducted with Syd and Ruth in the publication *A Riot of Our Own* (Tulloch, 2008).[4]

The exhibition consisted of photography, graphic design material, ephemera, personal items and published texts that had been kept, rather than collected, by Syd and Ruth. At the time of the project, these were held at Ruth and Syd's studio, Graphicsi, in Hackney, London.[5] Syd took the lead on the design of the exhibition in discussion with me. He wanted a clean approach to allow the objects to 'do the talking' (Shelton, 2014a). An example of this was the unframed photographs and posters. This was done, Syd remembers, to produce an immediate, intimate connection with the image (Shelton, 2014d).

I am fortunate to be able to include here images of the complete exhibition installation, to 'authenticate' the exhibition content and narrative. Such documentary material is recognised as crucial evidence in the

4   For the publication A Riot of Our Own (2008) I devised a series of questions for Syd and Ruth. The first part of the interview focused on their individualised contributions to RAR. The questions in the second half of the interview were exactly the same for both in order to gauge how they thought about RAR in 2008. These were: What is your definition of the RAR movement? What contribution did graphic design make to the communication of the ideologies of RAR? What has been the role of graphic design in the 'self-archiving' process used to create this exhibition? Was it a conscious act to create the RAR archive? Working closely with the archive to produce the exhibition, did it challenge your memory of RAR? With regards to your sense of self, what has it meant to co-curate A Riot of Our Own? What do you hope to communicate to the viewer through the exhibition? Unsurprisingly their answers were different but connected.
5   Syd Shelton and Ruth Gregory's design partnership was dissolved in 2012. Syd still runs the Graphicsi studio, which has moved to Hove, East Sussex.

Figure 1.2.8: Layout plans of the exhibition *A Riot of Our Own* by Syd Shelton. © Syd Shelton.

reflection of exhibitions (Horsley, 2014b, p.172). Interestingly, looking back at the archival material around the exhibition-making of *A Riot of Our Own*, the exhibition plans bears false witness. They are true to Syd's desire for a 'clean approach', but objects are missing from these initial blue prints. For example, the 'TH RAR' lid for one of the RAR archival boxes. TH refers to the RAR publication *Temporary Hoarding*. There was disagreement over whether this item should be included. I wanted it in the exhibition as it represented active archival storage by Ruth and Syd. Whilst they saw it as having no relevance to RAR's activist or design profile. Donald Smith, director of CHELSEA Space, agreed with my argument and made the directorial decision to include the lid. What follows is a 'virtual tour' of *A Riot of Our Own* as it was displayed at CHELSEA Space in 2008.

The Lower Gallery of CHELSEA Space was the introduction to *A Riot of Our Own*. It housed contextual photographic material taken by Syd that informed RAR's political philosophy, such as the *Anti Anti-Mugging March* in Lewisham in 1977, alongside contact sheets of RAR gigs. Visitors could also view the Beating Time concrete poem in this space. This was displayed next to the 'TH RAR', archival box lid. The Lower Space featured two introductory panels to the exhibition, one was my statement on the contextual frame for the exhibition, the other was an explanation of what

RAR was and that comprised a quote from Temporary Hoarding No.2 (and is the opening quote of this article).

Following on from the Lower gallery is The Ramp area that was dedicated to framed ephemera and original artwork. The Ramp began with a black and white flag made by Ruth on which to display the badges she wore as part of her anti-racist activism. The flag was inspired by Paul Gilroy's seminal text *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack* (1987), a critical evaluation of post-World War II black presence in Britain, the antagonistic reactions to that presence, and methods used to redress contentions. Within the text, Gilroy counts RAR as a pivotal moment in recognition of a need for action against the intolerance of difference (1987a, pp.115-35). In 1987, I interviewed Gilroy about this publication and he summarised what RAR meant:

> There were things about that period that were very positive. Things could have been learnt, in particular nationalism. RAR wasn't meant to be British, punks say there was no England anymore, we are not patriots. There was something about the spontaneity, about the use of culture. Their kind of understanding of putting pop and politics together, something that could be used today. The GLC [Greater London Council] could have looked at what made RAR successful … one minute we had thousands of people marching the

Figure 1.2.9: Lower Space of CHELSEA Space, 2008. ©Photograph by Carol Tulloch.

Figure 1.2.10: RAR Archival Box Lid and *Beating Time* Screen, Lower Space, CHELSEA Space, 2008. © Donald Smith/CHELSEA Space.

'A Riot of Our Own' is an archival narrative on the Rock Against Racism (RAR) movement, 1976-1981. It is told through the personal archive of Ruth Gregory and Syd Shelton, who were RAR (London) committee members. Syd and Ruth's intuitive act of keeping, rather than collecting, this material is 'a form of self-historicisation'. Some belong to Syd, like the photographs taken by him, others such as the badges and diaries are Ruth's. Other material is jointly owned, as in the RAR paper 'Temporary Hoarding'. These are kept at their studio that was established in 1979 because of RAR and, as Ruth recalls, 'we needed the freedom to experiment'.

The exhibition has been inspired by the concept of 'self-archiving' — an exploration of one's own history through a re-acquaintance with, and re-assemblage of, the objects held in a personal archive. Here, it has been transformed into a series of visual quotes and personal statements about RAR, and the social tempo in Britain during the life of the movement.

Today, there are many versions of what RAR was and its legacy. The graphic design and photographic material shown here provides another aspect of that historical moment. Most of the items were produced by Syd, Ruth and other RAR members, therefore this archive is the residue of a collective engagement with the offensive of anti-racism and anti-fascism through creativity — from the design studio, to carnivals, to gigs, on tour, to demonstrations and back to the design studio.

Carol Tulloch

Figure 1.2.11: Introductory panel text to the exhibition *A Riot of Our Own*. 2008. © Carol Tulloch and Syd Shelton.

"RAR is a campaign. A political campaign. Its aims are:
1. To fight the influence of racism/fascism in Popular culture, especially music.
2. To build an anti-racist/fascist movement WITHIN Pop culture and use it to fight racism and fascism EVERYWHERE.

RAR is run by an Adhoc Committee of young people, rock-pop fans, whose job it is to promote the aims of the campaign. To set up RAR gigs where anti-racism is the message; to encourage bands and musicians to reject Establishment pressure and perform on a positive anti-racist platform; to produce anti-racist propaganda in the form of T-shirts, leaflets, posters, badges, stickers, the Fanzine—and to spread it around; to break the commercial stranglehold on bands, provide them with gigs AND pay them; to put the RAR into ROCK" .

Temporary Hoarding No.2

"RAR started in 1976 as a reaction to the rising racial abuse commonplace at bus stops, in shops, pubs and on the dance floor. David Widgery described it as "a jail break". It was something different—a consciously inclusive movement full of largely non-aligned lefties, who were as passionate about politics as they were about music and visual culture. Local RAR groups developed across the country. In 1979 RAR held a National Conference. The National Front was about to field 360 candidates in local elections and the British Movement was still attacking people and gigs. RAR's 'Militant Entertainment Tour', with a rhinoceros as its logo, did a rhino charge through Britain. This culminated in 22 gigs with major and local support bands. These events pushed our anti-fascist and anti-racist message out there, and empowered people in the process, which was what RAR was all about" .

Ruth gregory

"RAR was a collection of political activists, artists, graphic designers, photographers, actors, writers, fashion designers, musicians and fans who came together to pool their energies and talents in the fight against the growth of racism and the National Front. In many ways we had more in common with the Dadaist Cabaret Voltaire than a political party. The collaboration between UK reggae and punk bands, RAR members took on the orthodoxy through five carnivals and some 500 gigs throughout Britain. During those five years the National Front went from a serious electoral threat into political oblivion. There is no doubt RAR played a significant part in that demise" .

Syd Shelton

Figure 1.2.12: 'What was RAR?' A Riot of Our Own exhibition panel, 2008. © Ruth Gregory and Syd Shelton.

Figure 1.2.13: Ramp Display of *A Riot of Our Own*, CHELSEA Space, 2008. © Donald Smith/CHELSEA Space.

length and breadth of the land talking about how racism should be destroyed from this society if we are going to have any future at all, the next minute it is all forgotten. The Government changed, the Tories came in, yet for a lot of us, black and white, it was a very formative experience. There is a model there … moving people to participate in something, not enticing them to become members with cards etc., something Red Wedge wasn't able to do … I am talking about a form of politics which isn't tied to a party, something more serious than that.

(Gilroy, 1987b)

The remainder of The Ramp featured a RAR Roundel, the star of which was designed by David King in 1976, graphic material in different stages of completion such as, stickers, flyers, logo artwork for the 'Letter's Page' of *Temporary Hoarding* and a remnant of a poster for the *Edinburgh Carnival Against the Nazis* in 1978; Ruth's 1978 and 1979 diaries and a letter from Irish Republican prisoner Felim O'Hagan dated '19/3/1981'.

Posters for differing carnivals and gigs were displayed on a wall at the top of The Ramp and signalled the entrance to the Gallery. These large format works reflect some of the bombastic graphic design created in

Figure 1.2.14: Ruth Gregory's Diaries for 1978 and 1979. © Photograph by Carol Tulloch.

Figure 1.2.15: RAR Posters and photographs of RAR events displayed in the Ramp and Upper Gallery, CHELSEA Space, 2008. © Photograph by Syd Shelton.

Figure 1.2.16: Contextual images that informed the activism of RAR. From top left: Manchester; Lower Falls, Belfast 1979; Falls Road, Belfast 1979; Bagga of Matumbi, London, 1979. © Photograph by Carol Tulloch.

Figure 1.2.17: A series of RAR events between 1977 and 1981. Upper Space, CHELSEA Space, 2008.
© Photograph by Syd Shelton.

Figure 1.2.18: Portraits by Syd Shelton. *A Riot of Our Own,* CHELSEA Space, 2008. © Photograph by Syd Shelton.
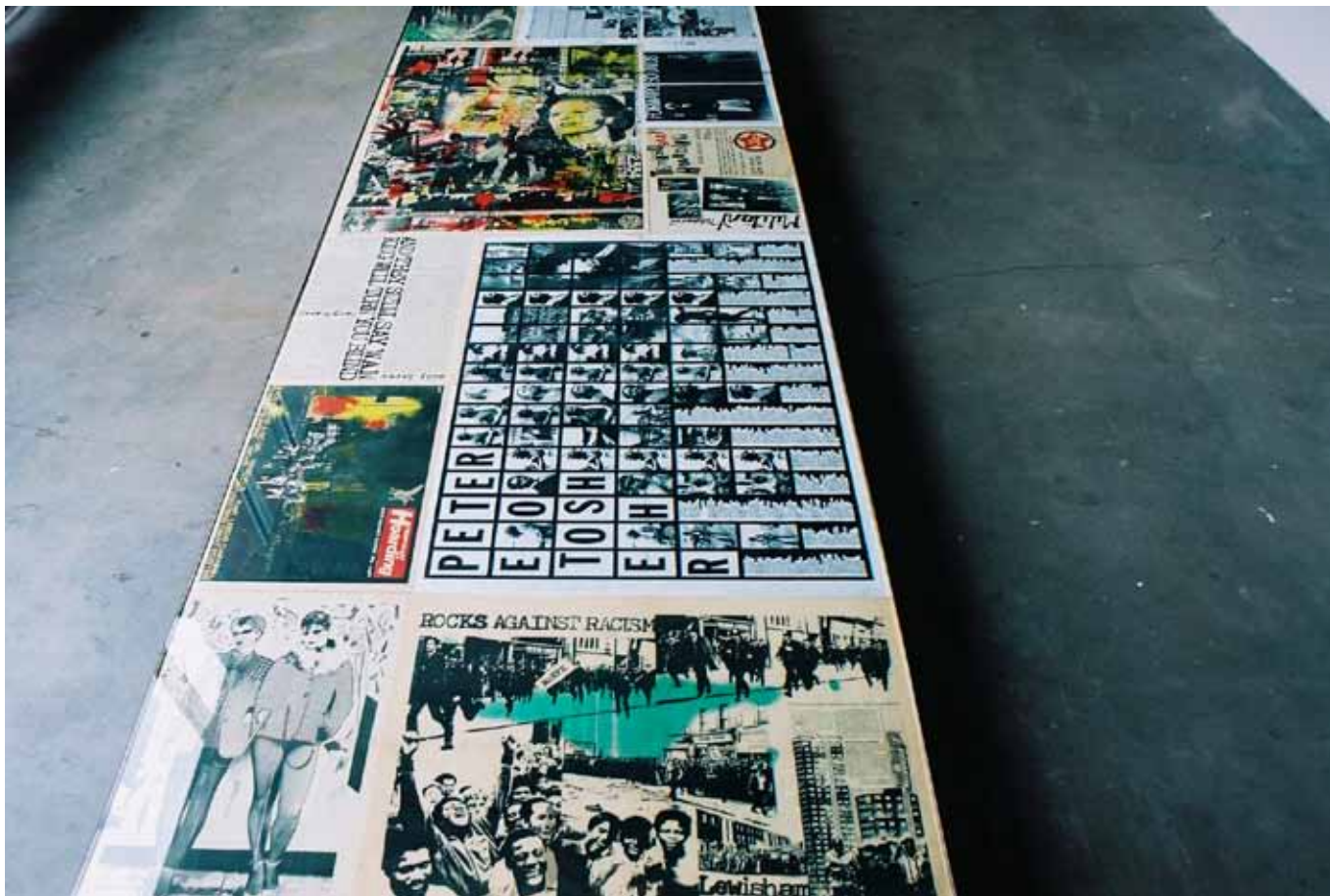
Figure 1.2.19: The *TH Table*. A montage of front and internal pages of *Temporary Hoarding,* RAR's paper, 2008. © Photograph by Syd Shelton.

studios, echoed by the other material on The Ramp. The posters bridge the world of the studio with the RAR carnivals and demonstrations, gigs and performances as different forms of effective activism, or 'activisms' as Ethel Brooks and Dorothy Hodgson prefer (2007),[6] embodied and graphic, which were produced and/or performed in the face of racism.

On display in the Upper Gallery were the majority of the photographs taken by Syd of gigs, performers and the audience, demonstrations and street photographs of individuals and groups.

The centre of the gallery was dominated by what we called the 'TH Table'. An oblong, low, glass-covered table that displayed a selection of pages from *Temporary Hoarding* to create an unapologetic graphic montage of RAR. Its design was inspired by an educational studio visit I organised for Chelsea College of Arts students on the *MA Visual Arts: Theory and Practice of Transnational Art Course*. This was to introduce the students to

6   Ethel Brooks and Dorothy Hodgson suggest the consideration of the term 'activisms' to recognise the 'multiplicty of acts and actions in women's lives that are animated by the need to create change – social, political, artistic, cultural' (2007, p.10). This thinking is also relevant to the RAR of activities by women and men across the country, Europe and the USA.

Figure 1.2.20: Private View of *A Riot of Our Own,* CHELSEA Space, 2008. © Donald Smith/CHELSEA Space.

The Specials Fans
Coventry 1981

Ranking Roger, The Beat
Coventry 1981

John Segs Jennings, The Ruts bass player
Bradford 1979

Malcolm Owen and John Segs Jennings of the The Ruts
Bradford 1979

Tony James of Generation X playing with Sham 69
Central London Polytechnic 1978

Tom Robinson, RAR Carnival 1, Victoria Park, London, April 1978.
"There was a certain sense of solidarity among groups like
X-Ray Spex, Steel Pulse and my own band TRB, who'd all been
playing RAR gigs since the early days, before any of us were
famous". TR 2008

Manchester 1978

Lower Falls
Belfast 1979

Falls Road
Belfast 1979

Bagga, vocalist with Matumbi, Hackney
London 1978

Paul Simenon, The Clash
RAR Carnival 1 Victoria Park,
30 April London 1978

Mick Jones, The Clash
Southall Kids are Innocent gig , The Rainbow
London 1979

Paul Simenon, The Clash
Southall Kids are Innocent gig , The Rainbow
London 1979

Jo Strummer, The Clash
Southall Kids are Innocent gig, The Rainbow
London 1979

Feargal Sharkey, The Undertones
Warrington 1981

Southgate
London 1980

Brinsley Ford, Aswad
Southall Kids are Innocent gig, The Rainbow
London 1979

Dennis Brown, Berry Street Studios
London 1979

Neville Staple and Terry Hall, The Specials
Carnival Against the Nazis
Leeds 1981

Majestic Sounds
Leeds 1979

Limited edition archival prints
All the photographs in the exhibition are archival Giclée prints printed on Hahnemuhle acid
free photo rag paper. They are available to purchase in a signed and numbered limited
edition of 75 @ unframed, at £250 each.
T. 0207 739 5060 E. sydshelton@graphicsci.com

All photographs © Syd Shelton 2008

T shirts A limited edition of 50. of each t-shirts in 3 different designs,
available in medium and XL. £25 each.

Design 1 Punk girls

Design 2 Temporary Hoarding, 'Rocks Against Racism'

Design 3 Joe Strummer, The Clash 1979

CHELSEA space
16 John Islip Street, London SW1P 4JU.
Director: Donald Smith, d.s.smith@chelsea.arts.ac.uk
www.chelseaspace.org

Figure 1.2.22: *A Riot of Our Own* exhibition leaflet, CHELSEA Space, 2008. © Syd Shelton and Carol Tulloch.

alternative, earlier forms of art and design practice, to illustrate my curatorial practice and gauge their response to the RAR archive. During conversations about the graphics, Syd laid works on the studio floor, which could be viewed from different angles by the group, and were encountered by walking around the object. We found this low-level viewing an effective way of seeing the work. Our decision to have the TH Table only 30cms off the floor reduced visual interference that encouraged concentrated study of *Temporary Hoarding*.

Syd wrote the text panel for the Upper Gallery. It elaborated on the importance of taking photographs as part of his politics of the 1970s and 1980s as being a 'graphic argument' that enabled him to be a subjective witness of the period that could hopefully contribute to social change. This practice began in 1972 with his photographic documentation of the social, cultural and political dynamics expressed by urban Australian Aboriginal communities and the working class on the streets of Sydney.[7] Syd also commented on the meeting of the 'old technology' of the 1970s and 1980s that was used to produce RAR's graphic material and the contemporary systems of scanning and digital printing that reproduced his photographs of an earlier period into large format artworks.

The three exhibition panels were the only contextual texts in the gallery. A free leaflet was produced that featured an image of each exhibit, in order of

appearance, with an accompanying caption. What is missing from this is the 'TH Lid', as explained above. This system was devised to enable visitors to engage with the objects closely and to read the additional information when it was right for them, whether in the gallery or after the visit to the exhibition.[8]

It all began with an open invitation
In 2007, Donald Smith, director of CHELSEA Space, extended an open invitation to me to curate an exhibition on anything I wanted to explore. Smith stressed that this was an opportunity to do something that I would not be able to undertake at the Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A), where I have been a research fellow since 2003. By 2007, it had been three years since I last curated an exhibition, *Black British Style* at the V&A, which I co-curated with Shaun Cole. *Black British Style* focussed solely on black people, from different parts of the African diaspora, who lived in Britain and how, since 1947, they used their styled bodies to articulate their negotiation of difference and *being* in Britain. On reflection of the *Black British Style* exhibition (see Tulloch, 2005b), I wanted to extend my research investigations into inter- and cross-cultural connections, not only as a sphere of conflict due to difference, but difference as unity between black and white people. This partially stems from personal experience.

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7   See Syd Shelton's first solo exhibition *Working Class Heroes*, Sydney Film-makers Cooperative, 1975.

8   At the private view of *A Riot of Our Own* I noticed that many people, having viewed the exhibition, sat on the internal window benches of CHELSEA Space and read the exhibition leaflet there.
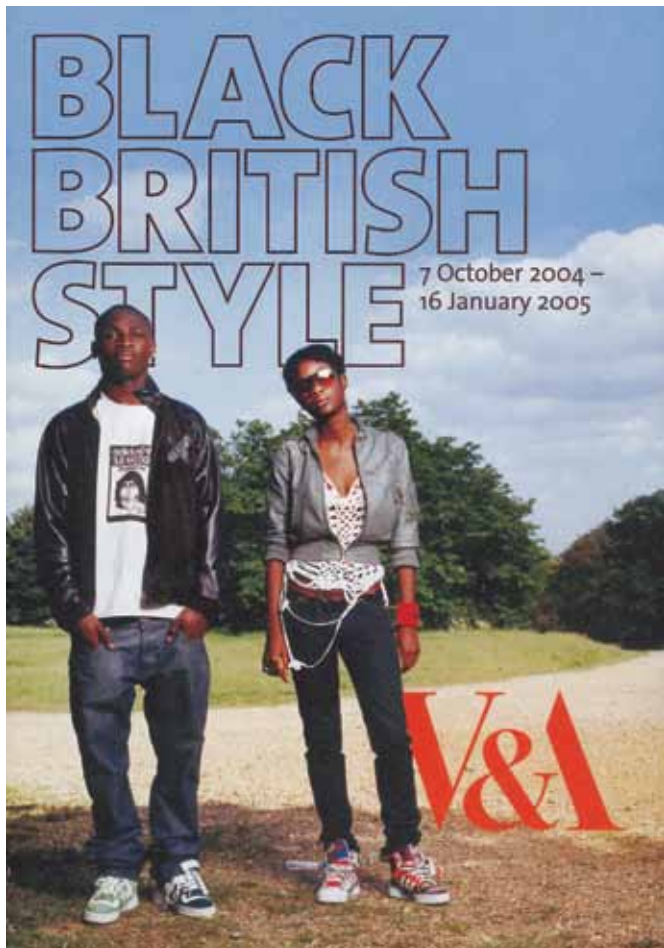
Figure 1.2.23: *Black British Style* exhibition poster, V&A Museum. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Photograph by Carol Tulloch.

I am a Black British woman born in Doncaster, South Yorkshire, England. My parents migrated from Jamaica to England in the 1950s, and were therefore colonial subjects. My father was a coal miner at Armthorpe Colliery, Doncaster. My mother worked at Crompton Parkinson Limited in the same town. They both experienced and witnessed racism from this period onwards. My parents had a number of close Caribbean friends, and as an antidote to the 'Colour Bar System',[9] they socialised at weekends, they organised parties, visited each other in different towns and cities. Yet, they both experienced cultural and social connections with other cultural groups. My father was a member of Doncaster's Polish Club, my mother had 'white work-mates' who came to our home.

In my own lived experience, I have witnessed the sting of racism *and* the energy of unity through difference. As children, white friends had the run of our house on an equal footing with our black friends. At

9   The Colour Bar system was experienced across 'colour lines' by, for example, Asian, Caribbean and Irish people. It was not a government-imposed incentive, but an invidious means of keeping black people out of various forms of social and cultural worlds from employment, churches and night clubs.

my father's funeral in March 1971, there were a large number of white mourners. Later that year my mother and I attended an introductory evening to the grammar school I was to attend in September. We were the only black people in the large group of new pupils and their parents. My mother wanted to sit in the front row of the assembly hall so she could hear everything clearly. No one sat next to my mother and me, even though the hall was so full that people stood along the sides of the hall.[10]

RAR therefore mirrored my own experience of being born black in Britain. Brian Roberts reassures the researcher who wants to look at subjects connected with their own lives that

the research question derives from or is connected with the biographical experience of the researcher …

(Roberts, 2007, p.23).

Underneath the general reflection on research experience is the deeper question for the researcher concerning what he or she 'values' in life and what is central to self and well-being—and how the various personal obligations, aspirations, and social relations can be harmonised.

(Roberts, 2007, p.133).

It is perhaps pertinent to state at this point that Syd is my husband. We are a black-and-white couple who have anti-racism, working class backgrounds and Yorkshire as our birthplace in common. Syd always kept his photographic archive at his studio, which was separate from our home. Not until the exhibition *A Riot of Our Own* did he believe that they were of any cultural or historical value.[11] This thinking coincides with Ian Goodyear's observation that following the end of RAR in 1981 it had 'a lengthy period in relative obscurity' and that it is only recently that 'RAR's leading role in the anti-racist mobilisations of the 1970s has become more widely recognised' (Goodyear, 2009, p.1).

It was not until 2004, while I was working on the *Black British Style* exhibition that I began to see the

10   The evening consisted of an introduction by the headmaster and a tour of the school within the forms the new pupils were assigned to. In my new class would be Christine Markham. She remarked at the beginning of term in 1971 that she noticed how no one had sat next to my mum and me that evening, and was determined to redress this once we met at school. We are still friends today.
11   Following their use in Widgery's book *Beating Time* and a cropped image of Ranking Roger, of the Two-Tone band *The Beat*, featured on the front cover of Dick Hebdige's *Cut 'n' Mix*, Syd's RAR photographs had been kept in a filing cabinet since the mid-1980s.

Figure 1.2.24: RAR Carnival Against the Nazis, Leeds, 1981. ©Photograph by Syd Shelton.

range of Syd's photographs. I had used the odd image in the past, alongside some copies of *Temporary Hoarding*, but I had never seen the full catalogue, as Syd had not compiled this for himself. While working on the *Black British Style* exhibition, Syd sent me, by email and with no prompting from me, a photograph of an audience responding exuberantly to a performance by the Two-Tone band, *The Specials*, at the Leeds *Carnival Against the Nazis* event in 1981 to see whether I would be interested in it for *Black British Style*.

It is a heartening depiction of 'black youth' – a loaded term of the 1970s and 1980s, which translated at that time into the stereotyped connotation of 'menace'. Here were three black lads just *being* teenagers, completely immersed in the exhilaration of a performance and the energy around them. This was a transformative moment for my critical research practice at this time. The photograph was used in the 'New order' section of the *Black British Style* exhibition. It was placed next to the display of the tonic suit and pork pie hat that belonged to Jerry Dammers, the founder of the Two-Tone musical movement and the band *The Specials*.

Following on from this, I encouraged Syd to look at this period of his photographs anew. As a result of this, between 2005 and 2006 I approached photography galleries in London and Newcastle with some of Syd's photographs. As mentioned earlier these were

images of performers and the audience of RAR gigs and carnivals, as well as the contextual street images of 'everyday life' in England and Northern Ireland that informed RAR's political stance. Aspects that I wanted to show together. The response from the galleries was that these different areas of reference on RAR's activities would not work together in an exhibition, and were interested only in specific sections of Syd's RAR portfolio. Therefore, it became a research *need* for me to produce an exhibition on this photographic complexity.

CHELSEA Space is part of Chelsea College of Arts. The online explanation of the gallery's identity cements my acceptance of Smith's invitation:

> CHELSEA Space is a public exhibiting space where invited art and design professionals are encouraged to work on experimental curatorial projects that may not otherwise be realised.

> The programme is international and interdisciplinary covering art, design and popular culture. The emphasis is on curatorial experimentation, the exposure of process and ideas, and re-readings of artworks and archives and their re-presentation for contemporary audiences. CHELSEA Space is a platform for discussion and questions rather than definitive answers.

CHELSEA space's most dominant architectural feature is its large plate glass window. For this reason the exhibiting space will never be a 'white cube' but instead operates more as a vitrine or an animated screen. Even the installation of a show becomes a viewed event and visitors to exhibitions, seen from outside, become part of the show. The ethos at CHELSEA Space is welcoming – a meeting place where informal social networks can develop.

(Chelsea SPACE, n.d.)

This ethos has been meticulously adhered to over the fifty-five exhibitions that, at the time of writing, have taken place at the gallery. In Smith and CHELSEA Space, I witnessed what the African-American artist Fred Wilson has maintained: '[R]isk-taking tends to take place at small, more marginalised institutions.' (cited in Marstine, 2012, p.38).

Notably, it is Smith's commitment to the possibilities of working with archives, and in the case of *A Riot of Our Own* personal archives, how they can be interpreted and re-interpreted through curatorial processes, as well as the cultural need to develop and maintain archives.[12] I felt at the time that due to Smith's thinking for CHELSEA Space, he offered a safe place to explore a curatorial voice that I had not been able to express elsewhere. My usual experience had been for the identity of an institution to be foremost and my concern not to 'trip up' in those spaces.[13] CHELSEA Space enabled experimentation with the different kinds of dialogue between black and white people in Britain of the 1970s and 1980s, and thereby the complex issues of those dialogues – the overarching politics – and the central role of the archival object to convey the entangled significance of social-cultural and historical relevance and personal meaning.

This confidence in Smith was cemented at our

first meeting where I proposed the exhibition idea in response to his open invitation. Syd and I took to CHELSEA Space the RAR photographic portfolio (of only some 20 images) with which we had approached galleries previously. We let Smith look at the images, without any commentary from us, to allow them 'to speak', this was a conscious decision by Syd and me. Smith made no comments either as he went through the work. When he reached the end of the portfolio, he simply said he had been to a number of the events Syd had recorded, and that his was a subject matter perfect for CHELSEA Space. Following this confirmation, I decided that the additional archival material of RAR should also be included in the exhibition.

RAR: from activism to archive

The curatorial interview process for *A Riot of Our Own* began 7 January 2008 when I made my first official studio visit to see the RAR Archive held by Syd and Ruth. In 1996, the fashion historian Christopher Breward gave me the best piece of advice about researching archives: 'let the archive speak to you'. I went partly armed with this mantra, and partly feeling confident I knew the material. As mentioned above, I had used items from their archive in the past. But as I asked Syd and Ruth to talk me through their involvement with RAR, they responded by talking and simultaneously showing me material, going to different parts of the studio delving into the plan chest, disappearing into the dark room, climbing up to the mezzanine floor, and rifling through filing cabinets, they bombarded me with a wealth of material. As they laid out the material in front of me, I quickly realised I did not know this RAR archive at all.

In 1979, Syd and Ruth established their first graphic design studio, *Hot Pink Heart/Red Wedge Graphics* in Hackney. Prior to this, the RAR graphic design material was produced at Feb-Edge Litho, also known as SW (Litho), in the same borough. Feb-Edge Litho was owned by the Socialist Workers Party (SWP). From here Ruth, Syd and other RAR (London) committee members, produced graphic designs of the movement's associated material: posters and stickers, badges, illustrations and *Temporary Hoarding*. This took place in the evenings and often into the night to ensure the completion of the artwork. During the day, Feb-Edge had their own design commitments to meet, and it was where Syd, Ruth and Roger Huddle, another RAR committee member, worked full-time as graphic designers.[14] In the evening the RAR designers had

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12 On 16 March 2011, Donald Smith and I gave a joint talk on the relevance of archives to our respective curatorial practice. This was part of the Graduate Encounters lecture series organised by Dr. Hayley Newman at Chelsea College of Arts. We initially called the talk 'The raw and the cooked'. This was a reference to the idea that I would show intimate personal objects belonging to my family that had inspired large scale projects or had ended up as artefacts in museum shows (the Raw), whilst Donald showed ephemera from the CHELSEA space archive that had been left after an exhibition had closed and de-installed (the cooked). (For the blog of this event see: http://www.chelseaspace.org/blog/archives/753)

13 This was how curator and writer Omar Kholeif explained the need for curators to produce the right exhibition for an institution. He believes curators need experimental spaces where one need not worry about making mistakes (Kholeif, 2014).

14 Syd, Ruth and Roger Huddle produced graphic designs for publications such as *Private Eye, The Guitar, Film and Television Technician, The Catholic Tablet and Women's Voice* (Shelton, 2014c).

Figure 1.2.25: Feb-Edge Litho printing copies of *Temporary Hoarding* in the Late 1970s. © Photograph by Syd Shelton.

access to the space and equipment such as process cameras, the headliner and the photographic dark room.

For Ruth, the establishment of *Hot Pink Heart/Red Wedge Graphics* was significant to the communication of RAR's ideologies: 'we were hungry to develop a graphic language of our own as a means to engage with, and convey ideas. At the time graphic design was predominantly seen as decoration to the written word. We needed the freedom to experiment, and it seemed a natural progression to set up our own studio.' (Gregory, 2008). [15] Both studio spaces marked the graphic identity of RAR that fed into the activist energy of the movement in personal and material forms that resulted in a cyclical network of activism: from the design studio, to carnivals, to gigs, on tour, to demonstrations and back to the design studio.

In light of the above, I refer to the objects kept by Syd and Ruth as a personal archive rather than a collection. They did not actively collect the items that constitute the archive. As mentioned above, many of the works were produced by Syd, Ruth and other RAR members as part of their political activism, and are

thereby visual and graphic markers of a certain point in their lives. Yet Ruth and Syd's intuitive act of keeping this material is, as the exhibition *A Riot of Our Own* tried to illustrate, 'a form of self-historicisation' (von Bismarck, 2002, p.458). Some of the objects belong specifically to one or the other – the photographs taken by Syd, the badges worn and diaries written by Ruth; others are jointly owned, such as the posters and *Temporary Hoarding*. Bearing this in mind, when one remembers that the word 'personal' pertains to the individual and also to the reciprocal action and/or relations between individuals, then for Syd and Ruth to pool their material together at their studio marked their integral partnership as designers, and as RAR activists, is undoubtedly personal.

The material kept by Syd and Ruth was overwhelming. For example, I did not expect to see original artwork. A case in point is the black and white illustration of two punk girls, their backs against a wall, not through fear but as a sturdy backdrop from which to project their feisty, barefaced exposure of 'kinkiness' which punk egged on. Ruth produced the work in 1979 for 'Page 3' of the Number 8, March/April, issue of *Temporary Hoarding*. It was in part a critical comment on the topless young women featured on Page 3 of *The Sun*. Ruth showed me the tear sheet of the printed

15   Feb-Edge Printers supported Syd and Ruth's new venture *Hot Pink Heart/Red Wedge Graphics* by providing them with freelance work from their catalogue of clients.

version of the illustration had been laminated. I said rhetorically: 'God, it would be amazing to have the original artwork.' Ruth casually went to the studio plan chest and produced it.

Syd and Ruth were themselves surprised how much material they had kept. And they were amazed at how excited I was about the range of items, such as a hurried, hand-drafted 'pen rough' proposal for the design of a RAR membership card. But why would this be of interest to exhibition visitors? Such evidence of creative immediacy (when shown alongside the published RAR graphics of posters and badges, photographs of gigs, demonstrations and backstage gatherings within an exhibition context), the visual relations between monochrome and vivid colour, and the undulating scale of giant posters and

minute fragments of artwork, illustrate how 'archives attached to a studio, therefore have connection with the "artistic activities" of the studio – a place of work and transformation' (Schaffner and Winzen, 1998, p.25). Undoubtedly this archive had what Sarat Maharaj (2012) calls 'the intellectual and physical touch' that emanate from the material: stains on photographic contact sheets, creases caused by Syd and Ruth folding posters for storage, missing pieces of type and straggling fragments of letraset. These 'touches' did not impair the authenticity of the archival material, rather they situated the items as part of the documentary record of a working studio in which these works were created. Indeed, these were the marks of existence.

Another strength of this RAR archive is the evocative marks of presence and the enduring trace of energetic participation made by individuals who contributed to RAR events. They are personal quotes of actually being there: black and white photographs of crowds at outdoor RAR carnivals resemble a textile design: an imprint of cohesive collectivity and activism – by imprint I mean its *Oxford English Dictionary* definition as 'a character impressed upon something, an attribute communicated by, and constituting evidence of some agency', the agency of RAR.

Figure 1.2.26: 'Punk Girls' camera-ready artwork by Ruth Gregory for *Temporary Hoarding* No. 8, March/April 1979. Ruth Gregory made the image into a T-shirt that was on sale during the *A Riot of Our Own* exhibition at CHELSEA Space. The T-shirt was customised and worn by Donna Marris. © Photograph by Carol Tulloch.
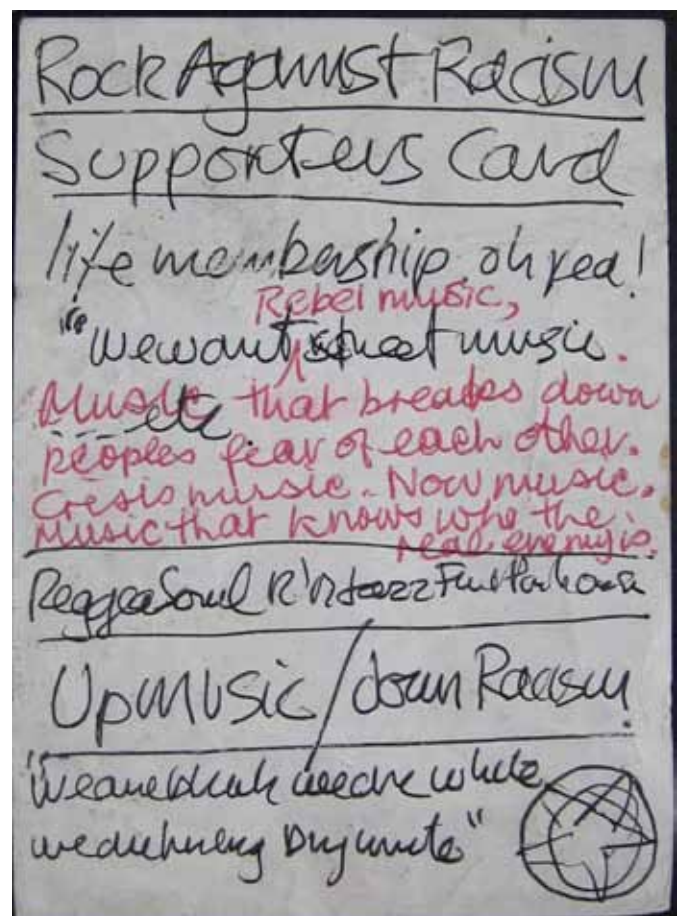

Figure 1.2.27: Rough design proposal for a RAR Membership Card. Date unknown. © Ruth Gregory and Syd Shelton.

Individuals made unique imprints that left marks on the space where they performed: John 'Segs' Jennings of *The Ruts* during a performance on 'The Militant Entertainment Tour' in 1979, his clothed body creating an imprint in the dry foam that covered a Bradford stage; the do-it-yourself customised clothes with handwritten text or added panels; the burlesque quality of fishnet tights in their rightful place on stage worn by a member of the audience at 'The Militant Entertainment Tour', West Runton Pavilion, Norfolk in 1979; the strength of subcultural character of what appears to be a Ben Sherman shirt against the common sense wearing of a key around a young black man's neck at 'Carnival Against the Nazis', Leeds 1981; Mick Jones and Paul Simonon, backstage at a London gig in 1977, swathed in a medley of cultural references that include Vivienne Westwood shirts designed with a nod to Jackson Pollock framed with studs, a Haile Selassie cloth badge, rough and ready Red Guard arm band, hair gel, dust and graffiti.

I mentioned earlier the letter from the Irish Republican Prisoner O'Hagan held at H-Block 4, Long Kesh, Northern Ireland. This object was a pivotal archival 'find' for me at that first curatorial interview in 2008. It was the signifier of the power of this RAR archive to marvel. Syd and Ruth handed the letter to
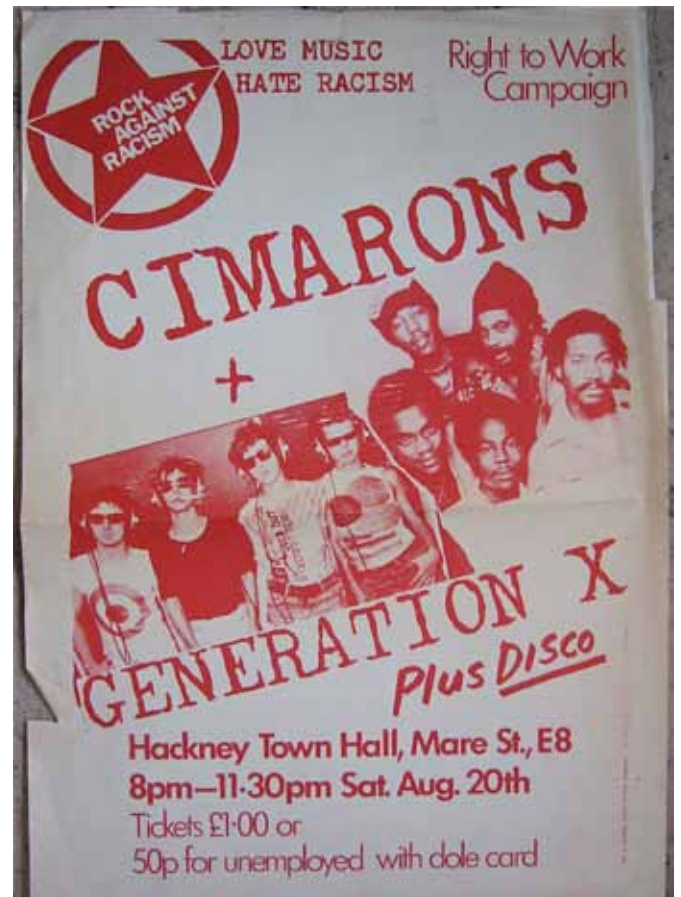
Figure 1.2.28: Rock Against Racism and Right to Work Campaign Benefit Gig, Hackney Town Hall, London, 1977. © Ruth Gregory and Syd Shelton.

Figure 1.2.29: RAR/Anti-Nazi League Carnival 1, Victoria Park, 30 April 1978. © Photograph by Syd Shelton.

Figure 1.2.30: John 'Segs' Jennings of *The Ruts*, Bradford, 1979. © Photograph by Syd Shelton.

Figure 1.2.31: Militant Entertainment Tour, West Runton Pavilion, Cromer, Norfolk, 1979. © Photograph by Syd Shelton.

Figure 1.2.32: Militant Entertainment Tour, West Runton Pavilion, Cromer, Norfolk, 1979. © Photograph by Syd Shelton.

Figure 1.2.33: Mick Jones and Paul Simonon of *The Clash*, London, 1977. © Photograph by Syd Shelton.

Figure 1.2.34: Letter by Irish Republican prisoner Felim O'Hagan. Handwritten in pencil on a 70mm square cigarette paper. Sent to RAR on 19 March 1981. © Ruth Gregory and Syd Shelton.

me in a crumpled A4 plastic leaf that had been folded several times around the object to protect it. At first glance, it appeared to be just a tiny piece of paper with neat lines. On closer inspection, the neat lines were composed of minute words written in capital letters, in pencil, on both sides of a 70mm cigarette paper. The letter, dated '19/3/81', was produced by Felim O'Hagan, and sent to 'THE SECRETARY, ROCK AGAINST RACISM, 27 CLERKENWELL CLOSE, LONDON E.C.1.' It opens with the apology: 'EXCUSE THE UNORTHODOX WRITING PAPER BUT I'M SURE YOU'LL APPRECIATE THAT THE LIKES OF THIS LETTER HAVE LITTLE CHANCE OF PASSING THE CENSOR'.

O'Hagan outlined the 1976 protest started by Republican prisoners in H-Block, who had been classed political prisoners, rather than criminals, by the British Government. He refers to it, as it would later become widely known as: 'THE BLANKET PROTEST' – a refusal to wear prison clothes or undertake prison work. Disturbingly, O'Hagan closes the letter with a plea of help for Bobby Sands and Frank Hughes, who had been engaged in hunger strikes for eighteen and four days, respectively: 'THE STARK REALITY IS THAT UNLESS JUSTICE PREVAILS THEY WILL BE DEAD WITHIN A FEW SHORT WEEKS. PLEASE DON'T LET THEM DIE'.

The arresting quality of the object is its fragility. The visual impact of this micrographia – the thousands of regimented miniscule words arranged into a formation of precise rows that impart texture and the arrangement of similar constituent parts on

the cigarette paper – makes it resemble a precious embroidered sampler. Thus, the letter's size and beauty tempers its seemingly subversive content. According to Susan Stewart, the miniature can be a metaphor of containment ([1993] 2005, p.71). In reference to the content of this minute letter that outlines committed protest action from behind prison walls, is also a metaphor of confinement.

How were the final objects chosen from this rich material? On 14 April 2008 I edited the RAR archive. Syd and Ruth brought the archive to me at Chelsea College of Arts. I decided to do the initial edit without them as I felt an objective, yet 'embodied eye' (Sandino, 2012, p.95) of a curator with the experience to allow the visual and material to lead on the complex issues of difference and racism, and the counter-narratives of anti-racism. Essentially, I wanted to react intuitively to the archive in order to create the exhibition narrative. The plan was to create an initial selection of objects for discussions with Syd and Ruth when they returned at the end of the day, as the final decision on the object list had to be one of consensus.

In my workbook for the project, I made notes on how I responded to viewing the archive and collating it into possible ideas. For example, when I worked on Syd's photographic collection, I organised it into the sections: 'strong, not sure, talk me through this, repeats, skins [skinheads], dubious, dates, Ireland photos' (Tulloch, 2008). I then applied the 'strong, not sure, talk me through this' system to the other designed elements of the archive. Curiously, I found Ruth's diaries difficult to deal with. Ruth was present here in her handwritten notes of personal comments, RAR appointments and family birthdays. To wade through this material, I felt, would be too intrusive. The diaries are part of her past that she should remain in charge of. I wrote in my workbook: 'Uncomfortable going through Ruth's personal papers, did not look properly. Decided Ruth should choose diary exhibit pages' (Tulloch, 2008). Ruth felt that I should chose the pages for display, but I persuaded her to do this.

Another point I made in the journal concerend an issue I needed to raise with Syd, that of the contact sheets for his photographs, which were missing from the archival material he brought to Chelsea College of Arts. His response was that these were not significant to the visual history of RAR. After some discussion, I persuaded him to hand them over. In the process of gathering the contact sheets together they had a poignant impact on Syd; the memories of his personal life and political activism meshed and were pitted against the 'storage memory' of Syd's photographic archive of RAR. As part of the interview with Syd in the
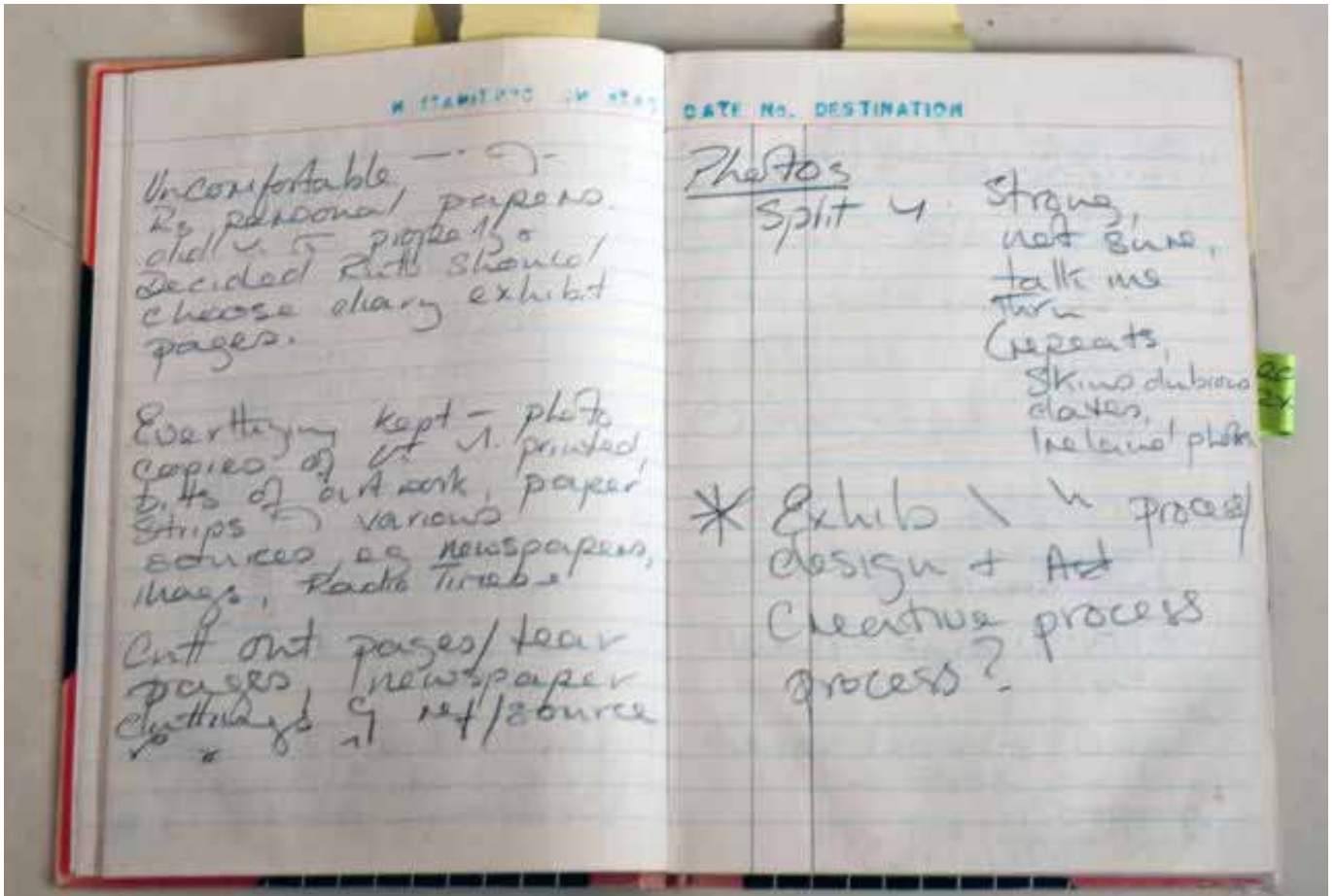
Figure 1.2.35: Carol Tulloch's workbook for *A Riot of Our Own* project. Some of the text is written in shorthand. © Carol Tulloch.

publication *A Riot of our Own*, I asked him the question: 'Being reacquainted with the photographic contact sheets had a particular impact on you. Could you discuss this further?' (Tulloch, 2008). Syd answered with the following:

> The original contact sheets are witness to how I selected which images to print. But they have assumed a new meaning, charged with 30 years of personal and political history. Many of the pictures chosen for the exhibition I did not see as significant in the 1970s, and have never been printed because, obviously, their historical resonance could not be known. For example, the significance of the clothes people wore and their body language could not have been estimated at the time; there was no time for distance, things were happening so fast.

> It has been like photographic archaeology. The discovery of forgotten images on contact sheets that shed light on a forgotten moment, has been very exciting. It is this mixture of visual decisions made all those years ago that has provided me with a range of curatorial choices now, which gives this photographic archive its dynamic.

> Looking at the original 'contacts' of the period reminds me how economical I used to be with film. I could only afford to buy a few rolls at time.

> The contact sheets are further autobiographical proof of the different worlds I inhabited, as images of punks at West Runton Pavilion, Cromer, Norfolk sit next to snaps of my mother and baby daughter. It is a concern to me that with the move to digital photography, photographers edit as they go, discarding many images. I imagine that at least half of the pictures in the exhibition would have been deleted at the time they were taken had they been digital.

> (Shelton, 2008).

A riot of our own: An auto/biographical curatorial voice

My curatorial decision to focus on only one archive was to enable the curatorial telling of the complex history of RAR as an achievable one. The exhibition could not be a definitive portrait of RAR when one considers, for example, that on 30 April 1978, around 100,000 people attended one of RAR's major anti-racist events, the *RAR/Anti-Nazi League Carnival against*

Figure 1.2.36: Darcus How speaking at the *Anti Anti-Mugging March*, Lewisham, 13 August 1977. © Photograph by Syd Shelton.

the Nazis. This consisted of a demonstration from Trafalgar Square to Victoria Park that featured fifteen lorries with bands performing on them. How does one represent the range of participants of that? Add to this, the central organising committee, based in London, consisted of a changing line-up, plus the regional RAR organisations, the performers, RAR activists-supporters in the UK, Europe and the USA, this was a movement that was made up of thousands of individuals.[16] Taking the curatorial interview approach, which focussed only on Syd and Ruth, who played a central part in defining the graphic identity and political stance of RAR, lent this act of curatorial-telling an autobiographical authority.

In order to develop this aspect of the exhibition, I wanted to reacquaint the owners of this RAR archive with a part of their own history. As noted by Louisa Buck, 'by retracing the meaning of our past steps, we can cover new ground in the future' (Buck, 1994, p.11). Therefore the exhibition-making process for

16   RAR organisations emerged across the United Kingdom. For example in 1979 the No.9, June/July, edition of *Temporary Hoarding* listed RAR regional offices in Birmingham, Brighton, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Launeston, Leicester, Manchester, Nottingham, Newcastle, Paisley, Stevenage and Tyneside. RAR was also active internationally. In No.10 of *Temporary Hoarding*, it listed RAR offices overseas in the USA, Holland, Germany, Norway, Belgium and Sweden.

A Riot of Our Own was developed along the lines of 'self-archiving' – an exploration of one's own history through a re-acquaintance with, and re-assemblage of the objects held in a personal archive; the opening up of archival narrative modes as they set functional and storage memory in relation to one another – thereby 'transforming the archive' (von Bismarck, 2002, p.456) into an exhibition of visual quotes as authoritative statements on the activist potency of RAR and simultaneously reflecting the social tempo in Britain between 1976 and 1981.

The retelling of RAR is a comment on the troubled past of Britain's inhabitants, of Britain's historical identity. The choice of pertinent references aids the significance of that telling. A case in point is the photograph taken by Syd of Darcus Howe speaking at the August 1977 Lewisham *Anti Anti-Mugging March* against the National Front. As indicated above this was placed in the 'Introduction' to the exhibition *A Riot of Our Own* to signify the intensity of opposition through a counter demonstration to the National Front's 'Anti-mugging March', which had demonised black youths as muggers. This had been fuelled by a police campaign to arrest young black people on the charge of a conspiracy to commit mugging. Howe is standing on a toilet block at Clifton Rise, flanked by a number of black and white fellow protestors. Coincidentally Don

McCullin, a photographic hero of Syd's, has published a similar photograph he took of Howe speaking at the same demonstration, at the same spot, but taken from a higher vantage point in his book *In England* (2007). Here is double visual evidence of the interest in pivotal anti-racist action that took place in Lewisham in 1977.

The concept of quotation is significant here. The exhibition *A Riot of Our Own* was a version of the history of RAR or 'versioning', according to Dick Hebdige (1987, p.12), where the use of quotation to create new versions produces fresh thinking on a subject, and provides 'room for improvisation' (Mackey, 1993, p.267), to be experimental:

> That's what a quotation in a book or on a record is. It's an invocation of someone else's voice to help you want to say. In order to *e*-voke you have to be able to *in*-voke... That's the beauty of quotation. The original version takes on a new life and a new meaning in a fresh context... They're just different *kinds* of quotation.
>
> (Hebdige, 1987, p.14)

In the case of the graphic quotations about RAR used in *A Riot of Our own* – the flyers, posters, banners, roundels, badges, stickers and *Temporary Hoarding* paper – these were the embodied actions of RAR contributor-participants. From the designer-makers of the range of RAR material, to the people who wore RAR badges, and the people who bought *Temporary Hoarding,* to those who carried and saw banners such as 'Gays Against the Nazis' at the *RAR/Anti-Nazi League Carnival in 1978* (Bragg, 2006, p.197). These were enmeshed forms of self-expression in opposition to the National Front. RAR's numerous forms of activisms was indicative of Paul Ricoeur's observation that each contributor-participant to such activisms "'[is] entangled in stories", the action of each person (and of that person's history) is entangled not only with the physical course of things but with the social course of human activity' (Ricoeur, 1995, p.105). Consequently, this material is an example of embodied designed objects as activism. Such a critical framework enabled me to re-evaluate the agency of RAR, which I hoped was conveyed to visitors, as they engaged with the historical resonance, energy and personal impact of RAR.

This thinking is supported by the recent rise in the study of 'design activism' (Fry, 2011; Julier, 2013).[17] Guy Julier has identified the 1970s as a notable decade for the consideration of the relationship between political movements and their use of design, as well as that '[d]esign activism is overtly material in that it grapples with the everyday stuff of life; it is also resolutely driven by ideas and understandings. It is a making of politics' (2013, p.146). A form of making illustrated by RAR. What *A Riot of Our Own* reiterated about the movement was the black and white connections, dialogues and contentions fuelling it, were channelled through the creative talent and imagination that made RAR's activism so dynamic.

Additionally, there have been a number of exhibitions on the visual and material aspects of activism such as *Art Turning Left: How Values Changed Making 1789-2013* at Tate Liverpool (8 November 2013 – 2 February 2014), the V&A exhibition *Disobedient Objects* (26 July 2014 – 1 February 2015) and *Witness: Art and Civil Rights in the Sixties* shown at the Brooklyn Museum, New York (7 March – 13 July 2014). The latter show is particularly interesting as it recounts the activist contributions made by artists of different cultural and social groups, 'black' and 'white', to the 1960s African-American civil rights movement.[18]

My curatorial decision, then, to let the overtly political anti-racist stance of this personal RAR archive 'speak' in the exhibition, through a strong presence of Syd and Ruth, was to reiterate the auto/biographical curatorial voice I wanted the exhibition to have. Through a curatorial-telling of RAR by the living activists, and through design and photographic experiences of Ruth and Syd, a biography of RAR, and by extension its myriad contributor/activists (some named, others not) were represented. This thinking for the exhibition was partly inspired by the artist Rose Garrard's exhibition and book *Archiving My Own History: Documentation of Works 1969-1994*. Garrard showed work from that period framed by published reviews of those works. Louisa Buck observed in relation to this project that 'the artist's voice appears as just … one alternative rather than the definitive voice' and that 'Garrard does not see history as sacred … but something to be tapped into, spliced with personal experience and, whenever necessary, reclaimed and re-written' (1994, p.9).

This aspect of *A Riot of Our Own* connects with the idea of curating as 'a form of self-portrait … in which an exhibition's meaning is derived from the relationship between artistic positions as presented by the curator' (O'Neill, 2012, p.99). Jeff Horsley extends the curator-exhibition-making as self-portrait under his rubric of the 'fashion autobiography' exhibition: a work in which

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17 See also the Design History Society Annual Conference, *Design Activism and Social Change*, 7-10 September 2011, Barcelona, Spain, convened by Guy Julier: http://www.historiadeldisseny.org/congres.

18 For more details on this particular exhibition, see: http://www.brooklynmuseum.org/exhibitions/witness_civil_rights.

an individual relates their life-history through clothing-associated narratives (2014a, p.180). In the case of *A Riot of Our Own*, multiple self-portraits were being presented that reflected different versions of a shared lived experience. I was part of that auto/biographical aspect of *A Riot of Our Own*. As Liz Stanley and Deborah Ryan have pointed out, the research a researcher undertakes becomes part of their own autobiography, and in turn the autobiography of the researcher can impact on the research (Stanley, 1992, p.17; Ryan, 1999, p.161). Therefore the need to reflect on this moment of my curatorial practice is to mark the thinking around *A Riot of Our Own* and its impact on the collaboration between the exhibition-makers.

Part II: Reflection on a moment of curatorial exploration

The temporary curatorial process is always intense, and like its end product, is fugitive (Horsley, 2014b, p.171). For me, much of the curating takes place in my head, reacting intuitively to create the intertextual narrative of the material. In the case of the exhibition *A Riot of Our Own,* the curatorial approach was a way of finding alternative ways of approaching a troubled past and the actions against that past – then and now – through material and visual culture. But what drove the decisions? Reflection on curatorial practice is a necessary part of the process of that practice. I see this as a 'moment of pause' (Melanie Townsend cited in Thomas, 2002, p.viii) , a way of catching up with oneself. The act of looking back, re-evaluating decisions, pulling together the collage that is exhibition-making in order to say something new about this process for interested parties and oneself.

The need to answer the above question was an impetus to produce a reflective text in response to the invitation to contribute to this themed issue of *Disturbing Pasts: Memories, Controversies and Creativity*. I have found this method of curatorial re-evaluation useful, on the one hand, to gauge how the curatorial experience has impacted on the development of my own practice of exhibition-making and the critical thinking that informs it; and on the other hand the reflective process gives value to the subject curated – RAR, anti-racist activism, the power of the personal archive, and agency within all these contexts – in order to give the movement and its contributors cultural and historical value. By embarking on a reflection of *A Riot of Our Own*, I want to contribute to the developing area of curatorial study, the detailed documentation of past exhibitions. This practice underpins curatorial publications such as *The Exhibitionist* (Hoffmann, 2010), *The Journal of Curatorial Studies* (Drobnick and Fisher,

2012), *The Culture of Curating and the Curating of Culture(s)* (O'Neill, 2012) and *Exhibiting Fashion: Before and After 1971* (Clark et al., 2014).

This need to reflect on curatorial practice is a recognised method of published evaluation for curators. In *The Edge of Everything: Reflections on Curatorial Practice* Caroline Thomas redressed the lack of 'acknowledgement of the subjective nature of exhibition-making' to get a sense of 'the spaces in-between the processes (the edges) that inform curators and what they do' (2002, pp.ix-x). The publication is made up of reflective essays by eleven curators. From these accounts Thomas came to the conclusion that:

> Curators have become an active force, selecting, and inserting themselves within the realities in which they choose to engage … curators are fuelled by, among other things: idiosyncracies, passions, intuition, energies, curiosity, childhood experiences, heritage, education, and political, social and spiritual beliefs. By affirming the personal dimensions of curating, and the complex web of occurrences that encompass it, the essays yield an understanding of the practice that is in keeping with one of the primary concerns of contemporary art: to challenge the belief that art and life exist in separate realms.
>
> (2002, pp.x-xi)[19]

Constant change, new directions, 'new possibilities' and how they come about for the curator is at the heart of this investigation for Thomas (2002, p.xi). Reflection by curators is the means to think this through and share with others. Melanie Townsend encourages curators to reflect critically on their curatorial practice to circumvent 'the all-too-often superficial and scholarly musings on why we do what we do' (cited in Thomas, 2002, p.viii).

In *The Exhibitionist: Journal of Exhibition Making* the act of reflection has an established presence in the

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19 I found the reflective essay 'On weakness, or "You will become a friend of mud"' by Anthony Kiendl particularly interesting. At the time of writing, Kiendl was the director of Visual Arts and the Walter Philips Gallery at the Banff Centre, Alberta, Canada. In 2013 he became the Chief Executive Officer of the MacKenzie Art Gallery, Saskatchewan, also in Canada. The text recounts his childhood experiences of visiting his family dentist and doctor, and viewing the art they chose to show in their respective waiting rooms. These had a profound impact on his curatorial interest, of what he calls 'the immanence of the weak … a "witnessing" or remembrance of weakness … acknowledgement of the weak … a responsibility to the weak, the provision of empathy and curative assistance … the phrase recognizes art as a recuperative act' (2002, p.9).

section 'Rear mirror'. The editors explain that 'close readings of exhibitions by those who make exhibitions only make us more accountable for the work we show and our motivations for showing it' (Hoffmann and McDowell, 2011, p.2). The writing in 'Rear mirror' is produced with a curatorial voice that has resulted in making the reflective writing on curatorial practice an art form in itself, a form of articulating the experiential, exploratory and expressive nature of curating.

To return to Roberts, his position on reflexivity is also useful here. He considers reflexivity to be a key part of the 'researcher experience', what he calls the '"monitoring" of action in research – what does and can take place in the active research life of the researcher in relation to the material collected and the research context' (Roberts, 2007, p.3). For Roberts, reflexivity is an '"assessment" of the research experience and process, of what "worked" in terms of procedure or interpretation, as well as "intimate" revelations of inner thoughts and feelings' (pp.36-7). A process that is equally relevant to the curatorial process.

As mentioned previously, I engage in this reflexive process constantly either informally through the workbooks I keep alongside my curatorial projects, or through published texts. For example, my reflexive account of my role as curator of the Archives and Museum of Black Heritage (AMBH) (2001-2) in 'Picture this: The 'black' curator' (Tulloch, 2005a) provided me with the most charged assessment on my practice to date. Here I identified my future curatorial thinking: that curating is agency. The essay was an opportunity for me to reflect on what had driven the exhibitions I curated at the Black Cultural Archives Gallery in Brixton, South London. AMBH was seen as a 'black organisation' that looked at black history and culture in Britain. This institutional definition placed AMBH as part of the cultural diversity and social inclusion agenda of New Labour policies that swept across the country. This was not the prime driver of my curatorial research, rather: 'My curatorial practice was primed … by the idea of crossing thresholds into new spaces – be they "black" or "white" – to stimulate responses and develop relationships. The agency for me was in that' (Tulloch, 2005a, p.181). Since the publication of 'Picture this: The 'black' curator', my definition of curating as agency has extended beyond the curator's own practice to lend agency to the objects and includes individual contributors to the exhibition's narrative, as explored in *A Riot of Our Own*.

My reflection on *A Riot of Our Own* has enabled me to identify new areas of curatorial relevance: the agency of experimentation; the concept of 'the edge', where exhibition-making can be a liminal space; and themes that have arisen from the RAR/*A Riot of Our Own* tangram.

The agency of experimentation
In trying to articulate the place of experimentation in *A Riot of Our Own*, I found the thinking behind experimental writing, notably that employed by black poets and novelists (Mackey, 1993; Lavender, 2002) useful, in the ways they have used the concept of collage, in the construction of their writing to tackle the issue of difference. Experimental writing provides '[u]nfettered improvisation … accidental composition and hyper-rational design, free invention and obsessively faithful duplication, extreme conceptualism and extreme materiality' **(**Bray et al., 2012, p.1) which feeds into

> raising fundamental questions about the very nature and being of verbal art itself … Experimental literature *unrepresses* these fundamental questions, and in doing so it lays everything open to challenge, reconceptualization and reconfiguration. Experimentation makes alternatives visible and conceivable, and some of these alternatives become the foundations for future developments, whole new ways of writing [and curating], some of which eventually filter into the mainstream itself. Experiment is one of the engines of literary change and renewal; it is literature's way of reinventing itself.
>
> (Bray et al., 2012, p.1)

For Bill Lavender the experimental 'pushes at the boundary, that attempts to cover new ground, that transgresses stylistically, semantically, socially and politically' (2002, p.xi). These are all techniques and concerns that fuelled RAR, partly expressed in their experimental 'cut and paste' graphic design practice which was inspired by the constructivist and surrealist art movements, the artist John Heartfield and the graphics associated with the French student rising of May 1968 (Shelton, 2014b). A graphic ideology that, consciously and subconciously, contributed to the critical and visual narrative of the exhibition *A Riot of Our Own* which, in turn, provided RAR with a new form of visual verbalisation.

Through reflective thinking on this aspect of the exhibition, I have re-evaluated my past curatorial practice. I have always maintained that my curatorial voice was not an experimental one. Experimentation was not the drive of my work on black identities, culture and history. The expansion of knowledge on, and the reiteration of, black presence were primary.

I now realise that regardless of the space in which I have curated exhibitions on black lives – in national museums, independent black organisations or an art gallery – they *have* been experimental through the choice of objects and their placement to formulate a particular curatorial discourse on this subject, what Judith Clark calls 'empathy between objects' (2014). These objects and their placement were making political statements about how the agency of black people, their 'technologies of the self' (Foucault, 1988, p.18), acts as a comment on their sense of belonging,[20] and how crucial the recognition of them (and other groups) is to be part of Britain's history, part of its national identity.

The edge and beyond

'The edge' has been identified as a liminal space in studies on curatorial reflection and experimental literature. Thomas explains that it is 'the spaces in-between the processes (the edges) that inform curators and what they do' (2002, p.x). Mackey contends that in experiemental writing amongst black writers 'the edge is where differences intersect, where we witness and take part in a traffic of partialities, where half-truths or partial wisdoms converse, contend, interlock … To bring separation back into the picture is to observe that the edge is a cutting edge.' (1993, p.260). For Mackey the acknowledgement of separation and unity enables one to understand the dynamics of the edge, that 'one is profoundly and inescapably cut off and cut into by differences' (1993, p.260).

This edge is what Homi Bhabha refers to as 'the realm of the *beyond*' (1994, p.1). A concept that encourages a 'focus on those moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of cultural differences. These between spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood – singular or communal – that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration and contestation, *in the act* of defining the *idea* of society itself' (1994, pp.1-2). Bhabha could well be refering to the aims and objectives of RAR. Similarly, his thinking (p.3) on the possibilities of social differences is that '[p]olitical empowerment … are the signs of the emergence of community envisaged as a project – at once a vision

and construction – that takes you "beyond" yourself in order to return, in a spirit of revision and reconstruction to the political *conditions* of the present.' Bhabha further reassures that '*going beyond*' is 'to live somehow beyond the border of our times' (p.4).

RAR's black and white activists went beyond the racial tenents and established channels of mediation of the 1970s and 1980s to create new mediums of protest that articulated the possibilities of their time to produce a different kind of dialogue between black and white people, a dialogue that insisted on the recognition of the social presence of and cultural value of difference. The edge, then, was a liberating space that was present in, and defined by, the exhibition *A Riot of Our Own*.

In light of this thinking, and as part of this reflective process, I devised the chart *Curating Rock Against Racism: New Directions*.
It pinpoints themes that emerged during the exhibition process as being significant to the RAR/*A Riot of Our Own* tangram. This exercise consolidated for me the benefits of looking at the creative practices of anti-racist activism of the past to generate suggestions for future representations on such a subject.

By reflecting on the exhibition-making of *A Riot of Our Own* that itself reflected on an activist moment of British anti-racism, I have highlighted the intense layers and differing forms of disturbing pasts. Through this act of reflection, one can see how RAR operated on many levels: national-local, past-present, personal-collective. The exhibition *A Riot of Our Own* and this article have added to that layering, to include the individualised contributions to disturbing pasts through, and because of, RAR.

Part III: RAR insert here

I originally called this article 'Insert here: Curating difference'.[21] The impetus behind this title was the need for recognition of work produced around subjects that have low cultural value in order to redress that position. For me, RAR was one example. 'Insert here' is not to suggest simply slotting something in, rather, in the spirit of the *Oxford English Dictionary* definition, as a substantive, to insert as an expression of existence, an addition in the 'revised' or final versions of a text. *A Riot of Our Own* argued for the relevance of the visual and material culture of RAR to future documentation of the histories of design activism and black presence in Britain, of the dynamic agency of black and white

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20   I discussed these issues in 'Take a researcher like me: Dress, black identities and the autobiographical/I' at the one day event *Belonging in Britain. New Narratives/Old Stories: 'Race', Heritage and Cultural Identity*, organised by Dr. Fiona Hackney at Falmouth University, 2 June 2007. For further details, see http://www.falmouth.ac.uk/content/belonging-britain-new-narrativesold-stories-race-heritage-and-cultural-identity.

21   'Insert Here: Curating Difference' was the title of the paper I presented at the conference *Disturbing Pasts: Memories, Controversies and Creativity: Memories, Controversies and Creativity*, 20-22 November 2012, the Museum of Ethnology, Vienna.

Diagram labels (clockwise from top):
Embodied object as activism
Personal archives
'Photography as graphic argument'
The auto/biographical curatorial narrative
Experimentation as curatorial agency
Alternative curatorial eye
'The edge' as a curatorial framework
Past/future juncture
'No us without them'
Exhibition-making as a liminal space
1970s A moment of visible entanglement between black and white
Reflection as a curatorial trope

RAR
A RIOT OF OUR OWN

entanglements, and that personal archives and their associated auto/biographies have an academic place. To date, the following has been realised:

- In 2009, Syd and I were invited to talk about RAR and the exhibition *A Riot of Our Own* as part of the six-part lecture series *Re/Postitionierung-Critical Whiteness/Perspectives of Color*, which took place between January and June at Neue Gesellschaft fur Bildende Kunst (NGBK) in Berlin. This talk was published in German and English in *Re/Positionierung* (Tulloch and Shelton, 2009).

- In 2010, *A Riot of Our Own* was invited to be the feature exhibition of the *East End Film Festival* on view at the Vibe Gallery, London, 22-30 April.

Figure 1.2.38: *A Riot of Our Own* exhibition, The Vibe Gallery, London. It was the feature exhibition of the *East End Film Festival*, 22-30 April 2010. © Photograph by Carol Tulloch.

- Eighty of Syd's RAR photographs were added to the Autograph ABP's Archive and Research Centre in 2012. The centre 'represents the UK's first permanent public print collection and digital resource dedicated to the preservation and promotion of culturally diverse photography' (Autograph, n.d.).
- Through Autograph's *Photograph of the Week* series, Syd's photograph of Bagga (Bevin Fagan) was featured in *The Guardian Weekend* 'Big Picture' photography series on 3 March 2012. Bagga was the lead singer of the British Reggae group Matumbi.
- The poster *Southall Kids are Innocent*, designed by Ruth and Syd, is included in *British Posters: Advertising, Art and Activism* (Flood, 2012, p.91). The poster also formed part of *Southall Story*, at The Hayward Gallery, London, 7 April - 11 May 2010.
- In 2012, the exhibitioin *A Riot of Our Own* was invited to be shown at Galerija Makina, Pula, Croatia 11-23 September. This was part of the *'We are Here 3' International Festival of Visual Arts* organised by the Museum of Contemporary Art of Istria. Due to the lack of insurance support for the archival objects, only 41 of Syd's photographs were shown here. The exhibition was renamed *A Riot of Our Own: Photographs by Syd Shelton 1976-*1981. The production of the photographs was supported by Hewlett Packard, who printed and mounted the photographs through sponsorship-in-kind using D.I.T. printers, Zagreb. Syd donated all these prints to the Museum of Contemporary Art of Istria.
- In 2013, the photography department of the Victoria and Albert Museum purchased three of Syd's RAR photographs: Bagga, 1979, Darcus Howe, *Anti Anti-mugging March*, Lewisham 1977 and RAR Carnival Against the Nazis, Leeds, 1981. This was as part of their *Staying Power* project researched in collaboration with the Black Cultural Archives, London.

I began writing this article in 2013, which is poignant. It was the year of Margaret Thatcher's death. She was Britain's first woman prime minister who came to office in 1979 as leader of the Conservative Party. In the wake of her death remarks were made that, according to Conservative Party member Anne Widdecombe, Thatcher saved 'ungovernable' Britain and 'made us proud' to be British again (Radio 4, 2013). Yet, RAR was trying to do this, albeit from a different perspective to the Conservatives. RAR wanted a Britain based on recognition and need for connection with a range of cultural groups, to harness their cultural talents and thinking to define a new Britain. This was

Figure 1.2.39: *A Riot of Our Own: Photographs by Syd Shelton 1976-*1981, Galerija Makina, Pula, Croatia, part of the *We are Here 3* International Festival of Visual Arts, 11-23 September 2013. © Photograph by Syd Shelton.

not about merely 'accepting difference' (Cottrell Boyce, 2013, p.7) but that this should just be. This was, perhaps, a very big ask during the heightened prominence of the far right in 1970s and '80s Britain, but something had to be done to confront the cruelty, the indignity of racism. Racism still exists. Violence in the name of abhorrence towards difference still occurs in Britain. Yet, as the exhibition *A Riot of Our Own* reminded us, between 1976 and 1981 RAR said that this cannot be tolerated. In the defiant language of RAR: 'It had a go'.

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THE EXHIBITION *NAMIBIA-GERMANY: A SHARED/DIVIDED HISTORY.* RESISTANCE, VIOLENCE, MEMORY

Clara Himmelheber

Abstract

The year 2004 was the centenary of the outbreak of a colonial war in former German South West Africa in which thousands of Africans were killed by the colonial power. Although of crucial importance for Namibia, the war had not entered public memory in Germany. The exhibition aimed at presenting colonial history, as well as the contemporary relationships between the two countries, showing a 'shared' and a 'divided' history. The exhibition created a public debate, which certainly supported the initiative of the German Minister of Economic Co-operation and Development to deliver an apology at the commemoration in August 2004 in Namibia. The article is a post-reflection of one of the co-curators on the exhibition putting it into a larger context and reviewing it concurrently.

Biographical note

Clara Himmelheber is head of African Collections at the Rautenstrauch-Joest Museum – Cultures of the World in Cologne. She is also a lecturer at the Institute of Anthropology, University of Cologne, teaching 'Museum Anthropology'. In 2004 she was co-curator of the exhibition *Namibia – Germany: A Shared / Divided History: Resistance, Violence, Memory* with exhibition venues in Cologne and Berlin.

An earlier version of this material was presented on the occasion of the project conference 'Disturbing Pasts: Memories, Controversies and Creativity' (20 -22 November 2012, Museum of Ethnology/Weltmuseum Wien, Vienna). To view the film footage on the Open Arts Archive, www.openartsarchive.org, follow this link: http://www.openartsarchive.org/oaa/content/disturbing-pasts-memories-controversies-and-creativity-conference-8

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THE EXHIBITION *NAMIBIA-GERMANY: A SHARED/DIVIDED HISTORY.* RESISTANCE, VIOLENCE, MEMORY

Clara Himmelheber, Rautenstrauch-Joest Museum – Cultures of the World, Cologne

1904 was a tragic year in Namibian history: in that year, a colonial war between the African population and the imperial power of Germany broke out. Between 35 and 80% of the Herero-speaking population and up to 50% of the Nama-speaking population were killed. In historiography, this war is defined as genocide (Zimmerer, 2003, pp.52-3). A hundred years later, in 2004, the Rautenstrauch-Joest Museum in Cologne staged an exhibition entitled *Namibia – Germany: A Shared / Divided History. Resistance – Violence – Memory*[1] to remind the public of the atrocities, which, although of great meaning to Namibians, had not yet become part of public memory in Germany.[2] This article is a post-reflection of one of the co-curators on the exhibition putting it into a larger context and reviewing it concurrently.

The exhibition was a joint venture between the Rautenstrauch-Joest Museum and the Anthropological Institute of the University of Cologne. It was prepared in close cooperation with Namibian and German historians and in consultation with interview partners and colleagues from museums and archives in Namibia.[3] Discussions started already in 1999 and continued

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* Some passages of this article have been taken from the exhibition texts.

1   *Namibia – Deutschland: Eine geteilte Geschichte. Widerstand – Gewalt – Erinnerung.* The exhibition was shown in the Rautenstrauch-Joest Museum from 7 March until 3 October 2004; and in the Deutsches Historisches Museum Berlin from 25 November 2004 until 24 April 2005.

2   Whereas the Holocaust has been an integral part of German political and historical discourse since the 1960s, the genocide of the Herero- and Nama-speaking population in then German South West Africa (today Namibia) has only recently and very selectively moved into the public consciousness, e.g. on the occasion of the commemoration of the colonial war in 2004 or with the repatriation of human remains to Namibia in 2011 and 2014 (Förster, 2013; No Amnesty on Genocide!, 2014)

3   Michael Bollig, Larissa Förster, Jan-Bart Gewald, Wolfram Hartmann, Dag Henrichsen, Clara Himmelheber, Gesine Krüger, Zedekia Ngavirue, Klaus Schneider, Ute Stahl, Joachim Zeller, Jürgen Zimmerer.

Figures 1.3.1 and 1.3.2: Views of the exhibition © Rheinisches Bildarchiv, Cologne.

up to the opening including several research trips to Namibia.

What was the outcome of the discussions held during the preparations of the exhibition? Two main issues developed: First, each topic was viewed differently by Namibians of German descent, and those of Herero- and Nama descent; secondly, neither side was satisfied with the time period originally intended to be covered by the exhibition. Namibians of African descent felt it would depict them as victims, not as actors, if the exhibition did not go beyond the end of the war; German-speaking Namibians wanted to emphasise the ongoing relationship of Germans and Namibians up to the present day, as well as the role of the roughly 30,000 German-speaking Namibians today – less than 1.5% of the Namibian population (Mesenhöller, 2004, p.11). These two issues became extremely relevant to the planning of the exhibition: first, the exhibition developed into two parts, a historical one and another one focusing on present-day Namibia. Second, in order to take into account the different, sometimes opposing views of German-speaking Namibians and Herero- and Nama-speaking Namibians, two running metal bands were used throughout the exhibition.[4]

On the left side of the hall, on the metal band were objects representing the perspectives of German colonialists and settlers. The band on the right-hand side visualised the topics from the African perspective. The objects in the central part of the hall showed objects which were used by both groups, but which were often interpreted differently by the various actors.

A mental walk through the exhibition will illustrate these ideas: to introduce the visitors to the idea of different perspectives, a picture was placed at the entrance which could be viewed from two sides, showing on one side Kolmanskoppe, the early 20th-century city of diamond diggers, as a symbol of the colonial past, and on the other side the independence celebrations of 1990 representing Namibia today. The two-sided picture was followed by five objects, placed in the centre of the room: a church bell cast in Germany in 1736 and found in the Namibian desert in the 1940s, a Herero tomb taken from Namibia to the missionary museum in Wuppertal, Germany, the scrapbook 'Deutsche Kolonien' (German colonies) from 1936 as part of the colonial revisionist debate during the time of the Nazi regime, a bag given to the head of State and Party of the GDR, Erich Honecker, by a delegation of the so called DDR-Kids in 1982

on the occasion of his 70th birthday,[5] a street sign from the so-called colonial quarter in Cologne, in which up to the 1990s streets were named after colonial figures such as Lüderitz, who aquired the first German possessions in South West Africa, and finally a Windhoeker Karnevalsorden from 2002. All these objects incorporated Namibian and German relations in their biographies and are, in a way, 'entangled objects' (Thomas, 1991).

After this introduction, the historical part of the exhibition began. It consisted of two sections: German-Namibian contacts in the 19th century and the war of 1904. The section on German-Namibian contacts in the 19th century showed topics such as missionary activities, trading and colonial politics, focusing on aspects which in the end eventually led to the war. In the section on trade, objects traded from Namibia to Germany such as ivory (in the form of a snooker ball) or ostrich feathers, in the form of a fan were shown on one side. On the other side, objects which had been shipped to Namibia were exhibited – such as guns, alcoholic beverages and a lighter, which a German trader had given a Herero in exchange for a cow.

The main part of the historical section was reserved for the 'War'. The colonial war in then German South West Africa began on 12 January 1904 with the Herero attack on German farms, military staging posts and rail links. It had been preceded by growing tensions between the Herero and Germans, the cause of which was disadvantage and loss of land by Africans. After a whole series of skirmishes, the Herero suffered overwhelming defeat at Waterberg on 11/12 August 1904. Those who survived were driven into the *sandveld* of Omaheke where thousands of them died of thirst. In October 1904, the Nama rose against the German colonial authorities. The guerilla war, which they subsequently waged, was not put down until 1908. As a result of the war, the Africans who had survived lost their land and livestock. Expropriated and largely deprived of any rights, they were henceforth subjected to a rigid system of controls by their German colonial masters. In this section titled 'Resistance, War, Genocide' the bands turned into walls.

The topic was visualised amongst other things with four central showcases one of them displaying a cartridge and a potsherd symbolising two different views of the war. The cartridge had been found by a German tourist on the site of the 1904 battle between

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4   For an overview of the self-perception of German-speaking Namibians see Schmidt-Lauber (2004).

5   From 1979 (during the time of the Namibia liberation war) up to 400 Namibian children were sent to the GDR where they grew up until they were abruptly sent back to Namibia in 1990 after Namibain independence and German reunification.

Figure 1.3.3: Section on German-Namibian contacts in the 19th century © Rheinisches Bildarchiv, Cologne.

Figure 1.3.4: Section on the war of 1904 © Rheinisches Bildarchiv, Cologne.

Germans and Herero. Such 'war souvenirs' symbolising Germany's victory are much appreciated by tourists even today. The potsherd was given to one of the curators by a Herero who explained that it had formed part of a cooking pot belonging to German soldiers who had been forced into flight by Herero soldiers. This in a way visualises the Namibian interpretation of the war: Namibian historians often interpret the war of 1904 as a war of anti-colonial resistance or as the first anti-colonial war of liberation followed by the armed freedom fight of the SWAPO against the south African occupying power in 1966 (Förster et al, 2004, p.19). The two objects can be seen as intercultural documents, which in O'Hanlon's sense 'can be calibrated to illuminate all the cultures in which they are implicated, and the relationships between them' (2001, p.218). In general, this section focused on topics such as war and resistance, violence during the war, concentration camps and genocide, and concluded by looking briefly towards the developments following the war such as the reservation policy.

According to the original plan, the exhibition would have ended here, but as a result of the discussions with the Namibian contributors, a second, larger part followed, concentrating on Namibia as a whole and on Namibian-German relations of today, still deeply rooted in the colonial past. The first section 'Windhoek – Urban Life' intended to present the lifestyles of two urban middle-class families, which gradually grew closer together. It was visualised with the help of a living-room cupboard showing on one side objects more likely to be found in an African middle-class family, and on the other side, objects more likely to be found in a German-Namibian family of the same social level. The differences between the objects on both sides have become so minimal that it is difficult to identify at first glance who their users were.

The section dedicated to 'Living in Rural Areas' presented a totally different Namibia. The bulk of the country still bears the scars of Apartheid. Segregation is still visible in the division of the country into commercial and communal farmland. Commercial farmland comprises 75% of the fertile agricultural land and is mostly owned by white farmers, whereas the communal land is mostly inhabited by black farmers. There is little exchange between the two even though labourers from communal households have often worked on the farms of white Namibians for generations. This discrepancy was characterised by presenting two rural households, visualising the differences and common features through everyday objects. These two sections, urban and rural life, were vital for an understanding of the subtitle of the exhibition, which was 'Geteilte Geschichte'. The

Figure 1.3.5: Section 'Windhoek – Urban Life' © Rheinisches Bildarchiv, Cologne.

meaning of the word 'geteilt' in German is twofold: it means both <u>shared</u> (as in the living room) and <u>divided</u> (as in the rural areas).[6]

After dealing with urban and rural life, the next section concentrated on family issues – by the way, the most popular part of the exhibition. 'German Fathers: German-Namibian Families' displayed the biographies of five Namibian citizens with both German and African ancestry. In this section the person and his/her parents or grandparents were introduced, each with a photo and a personal object representing the individual – these objects were chosen by the represented persons themselves.

In the 19th century, at least some marriages of Namibian women with German men were recorded. The marriage of the missionary Franz Heinrich Kleinschmidt to his Namibian wife Johanna Kleinschmidt, parents to Ludwig Kleinschmidt is just such a case (Roller, 2004, pp.194-211). The law on 'mixed marriages' ('Mischehenverbot') of 1905 prohibited marriages between Germans and Namibians (Hartmann, 2004, p.182). This led to the following stories: the grandparents of Nora Schimming-Chase, former Namibian ambassador to Germany, were forced to divorce and the families lost contact. It was at the exhibition that Mrs. Schimming-Chase first saw a picture of her German grandfather Otto Schimming. Nora Schimming-Chase was born in Windhoek in 1940 and studied political science and English in Berlin. From the 1970s through to the 1990s she held leading positions in SWANU (South West Africa National Union) and in the WCC (World Council of Churches). In 1989, she returned to Namibia and in 1990 worked in the first independent Namibian government as deputy state secretary in the ministry of foreign affairs. As the ambassador for Namibia, she again lived in Germany from 1992 to 1996. Her grandmother Metha Ngatjikare came from the dynasty of the Herero chiefs of the Mbanderu, her grandfather Ferdinand Otto Schimming was a soldier in the German colonial army. It is unknown how they first met. They got married and had two sons: Otto Ferdinand and Rudolf. As a result of the law on 'mixed marriages', their marriage was annulled. After the divorce, their two sons lived for a time with their father until they were collected by their Herero relatives. Ferdinand Otto Schimming later married a German woman. The contact to Metha Ngatjikare as the two first-born sons was broken off. Ferdinand Otto Schimming died in Swakopmund at the

Figure 1.3.6: 'German Fathers: German-Namibian Families'© Rheinisches Bildarchiv, Cologne.

beginning of the 1960s, Meeta Ngatjikare lived on the reservation and died in 1960 at the age of 98.

A couple which resisted the law on 'mixed marriages' were Wilhelm and Hilde Bayer from Rehobot, Wilhelm Bayer came from a wealthy Stuttgart family. He arrived in Namibia in 1911. While building a dam, which he was constructing for Stauch the 'diamond king', he met his later wife Hilde Diergaardt, who came from a Rehoboth kaptein's family. They were married in 1925. The young couple moved to Rehoboth. Wilhelm soon withdrew from the German community, as his wife was not welcome there. During the Second World War, Mrs Bayer looked after her five children alone as her husband was imprisoned in an internment camp in South Africa for six years. Mr Bayer died in 1956 and was buried in Rehoboth. Many people from Rehoboth attended his funeral but there was only one German. Mrs Bayer died in Rehoboth in 1984. Their daughter, Annalie Olivier, née Bayer, was born in Rehoboth in 1928. The events in Germany associated with National Socialism made it impossible for her to attend as planned a higher secondary school in Germany. In 1983, she founded the first Old People's Home for non-whites and a kindergarten in Namibia. In addition, she takes an active interest in the history

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6   In fact, the sometimes puzzling character of Namibian history seems to be best described by the German word 'geteilt' (see Conrad and Randeria, 2002).

of the 'Rehobother Baster'. In contrast to many other Namibians with German and black ancestry, Mrs Olivier has a good relationship to the German branch of her family. She has visited her German aunt several times in Stuttgart. Her daughter is married to a German and lives on the island of Rügen. Mrs Olivier chose a photo to depict herself with the very teapot and in the same pose in which her mother had been photographed 50 years earlier – the picture shown in the exhibition to depict her mother. Wilhelm Bayer had taken the photograph of his later wife at the Stauch family home. Later, he took it with him to the internment camp where he kept it in the breast pocket of his shirt directly above his heart.

Contrary to that emotional love story of the Bayer family, another interview partner, Mr Javee Gotfriedt Kangumine, only knew that his German grandfather's name had been Arnhold, but there was neither a photo nor an object to represent him. Javee Gotfriedt Kangumine was born in 1949, the son of a respected Herero family. He lived as a cattle breeder and petrol station owner in Otumborombonga, a settlement in the Eastern part of the communal area. In his herd, there were still offspring of the cattle which his grandmother once received from his German grandfather. As with numerous other inhabitants of Otumborombonga with German ancestry, his relationship to his German grandfather was ambivalent: on the one hand, he emphasised his German descent when he characterised himself as hard-working and punctual. On the other hand, he told people that many white men rejected the children they had with African women and that Herero women hid these children because they were ashamed of their light skin. During the preparation of the exhibition, not much was known about Mr Arnhold, Mr Kangumine's grandfather. He had been stationed with his company at Namutoni and presumably had had relationships with several African women. One of these was Javee Kangumine's grandmother, who bore him a daughter. A son called David Arnhold who inherited his father's farm at Grootfontein was born from another relationship. Javee Gotfriedt Kangumine reports that his German grandfather, asked his grandmother's parents whether their daughter could go with him to Fort Namutoni to his company. Later when, as a consequence of defeat in the First World War, Germany had to cede Namibia to South Africa, he took her back to her parents. He left the following note: 'My wife is pregnant. If the baby is a girl it should be called Franziska, if it is a boy it should be called Arnhold … I am going back'.[7] The woman had a girl called Franziska, later to be the mother of Javee Gotfriedt Kangumine.

The cases presented in this section were in no way unique, but actually quite typical of the period. A large number of Herero- and Nama-families of today have at least one German ancestor.[8] Since the country became independent, there has been a vital interest in re-uniting families particularly on the part of the Herero, whereas the German-speaking families have often been reluctant, to say the least, to get into contact with their 'new' family members.

The exhibition's next section 'Sharing Memories' referred back to the war of 1904, demonstrating how the war is remembered nowadays by different ethnic groups, as well as by the Namibian state. The metal tapes were discontinued in this section to make room for five showcases, giving an idea of the commemoration ceremonies of different ethnic groups – focussing on a multicultural Namibian society.

In the concluding section of the exhibition, 'Sharing the Future', ten Namibians and Germans – some of them had already appeared in earlier parts of the exhibition – commented on their ideas of the future of Namibian-German relations. The intention was to show different voices irrespective of their ethnic background, in order to strengthen the idea of a future Namibian society where the ethnic background is no longer relevant – the official position promoted by the Namibian government today.

What sort of feedback did the exhibition receive from the visitors? Did the exhibition have any kind of impact or influence on relations between Germans and Namibians? The exhibition was – according to the standards of the Rautenstrauch-Joest Museum – extremely successful; some 80.000 visitors came to see it in Cologne and Berlin. It was covered extensively by German and Namibian media (over 90 articles in national and international print media, 25 reviews on radio and 14 on television). The echo in Namibia was equally positive: both Namibian Radio and Television reviewed the exhibition positively and there was full-page coverage of it in Namibian newspapers (Santer, 2004, p.20; Singer, 2004, p.18). The comments in the guest book proved that the exhibition touched many people. The Rautenstrauch-Joest Museum had rarely received so many personal and emotional notes for an exhibition. Some commentators called the curators 'Gutmenschen', do-gooders. In some comments it was criticised that the focus of the exhibition on German colonial history would neglect the fact that other colonial powers were 'as bad' as Germany, others comments even took a colonial revisionist point of

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7   Personal conversation with Javee Gotfried Kangumine.

8   Personal conversation with Joachim Zeller in April 2013. Joachim Zeller is a German historian working on German colonialism with a focus on the Namibian genocide.

Figure 1.3.7: Section 'Sharing the Future' © Rheinisches Bildarchiv, Cologne.

view stating that colonial times had been a good time. But the vast majority of the visitors were grateful for the detailed information which had been offered on an often neglected chapter of German history. History teachers admitted that they had known very little about this period of German history. Tourists stated that they had previously viewed Namibia as a lovely country without any history. The majority of the visitors were shocked by the atrocities committed by the imperial colonial forces and acknowledged Germany's long-lasting responsibility.

The visitors' positive feedback compensated for the problems the curators had had while working on the exhibition with representatives of different interest groups, both in Namibia and in Germany, on the use of the term 'genocide'. Members of the German right wing denied the fact that Namibians had been killed on a large scale and called for 'a more positive interpretation of colonialism'. German-speaking Namibians several times mentioned their apprehension of being depicted as racists and Nazis by German scholars. Representatives of the Church were afraid that missionary activities during the war could be seen ambiguously, and the German government feared restoration claims. The Namibian government

did not want the Herero to be the centre of attention, whereas the Herero themselves feared ending up on the periphery. The fact that all of these interest groups were not able to come to terms was one of the main reasons why the original plan, to show the exhibition in Namibia, was not realised.

However, after its opening, the exhibition caused a public debate which certainly supported the initiative of the German Minister of Economic Co-operation and Development to deliver an apology to the Herero- and Nama-speaking people at the commemoration of the centenary of the outbreak of the war in August 2004 in Namibia (Hintze, 2004, p.4). Whereas Heidemarie Wieczorek-Zeul did not call the war directly a genocide, she apologised for the 'atrocities committed at that time, [that] would today be termed genocide' ('Die damaligen Greueltaten waren das, was heute als Völkermord bezeichnet würde') (quoted in Förster, 2004, p.9).[9]

Apart from public discussions, there were also a few incidents of a more private nature. During the exhibition, the lighter shown in the section on trade was stolen. It was an heirloom belonging to

9   Until today, the German government has not given an official or formal apology for the genocide.

Mr Ndjombo, an elderly Herero gentleman whose grandfather had exchanged it for a cow with a German trader in the 19th century. When the director of the museum went to Namibia in order to compensate Mr Ndjombo for his loss, Mr Ndjombo donated another lighter to the museum, which he had also inherited from his grandfather. An elderly German, who read about this in the newspaper, decided to travel to Namibia and refund Mr Ndjombo with a cow, thereby evening out the historical deal.

Towards the end of the exhibition, the curators received a letter from a Mr Albrecht Arnhold informing them that he was a descendant of Mr Kangumine's German grandfather. Mr Arnhold (himself over 70 years) travelled to Namibia with his wife, and the two branches of the family celebrated a reunion. These incidents proved that some of the visitors were ready to contribute personally to a reconciliation between former oppressor and oppressed.

In conclusion, this article aimed at showing how the co-operation with Namibian institutions and individuals of different political, cultural and social backgrounds influenced the concept, as well as the architecture of the exhibition. It also demonstrated how objects were used in the exhibition as important intercultural testimonials to visualise the entangled histories. Last but not least, it aimed at showing that the exhibition not only led to discussions and public debate in Germany, but also to new and promising contacts between Germans and Namibians on the basis of their 'shared history'.[10]

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BREAK! ON THE UNPLEASANT, THE MARGINAL, THE TABOO AND THE CONTROVERSIAL IN NORWEGIAN MUSEUM EXHIBITIONS

Liv Ramskjaer

Abstract

This paper explores the programme entitled Break, which was launched within a grouping of Norwegian museums in 2003. Break emerged in the context of a more critical approach to museum practice and their ways of dealing with controversial pasts in the wake of the new museology. A central goal for Break has been to promote a shift from the presentation of conventionally treated narratives in order to focus on areas that are marginal, hidden, contested and regarded as unpleasant. The programme has aimed to strengthen museums as active social institutions that are able to engage successfully with current issues and to stimulate serious reflection among visitors. While the concern to avoid making waves or drawing negative publicity often hinders museums from tackling controversial issues, Break is distinctive in that the initiative came not from within the institutional setting of the museum but among certain authorities in Norway that served as its leading agents. In this short reflection on Break, I explore two key questions: How has Break encouraged new approaches to difficult and, in particular, marginalised histories; and what representations have ensued from it that may help to continue problematising museum collections in Norway and stimulating critical engagement.

Biographical note

Liv Ramskjaer is Secretary General of the Norwegian Museums Association. This article was written during her recently completed tenure as Senior Adviser in the museums division of Arts Council Norway. The author has contributed to historical studies on technology, business and industry. Her recent research, on the production and consumption of plastics in Norway, focuses on the early years of the country's plastic boat industry.

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BREAK! ON THE UNPLEASANT, THE MARGINAL, THE TABOO AND THE CONTROVERSIAL IN NORWEGIAN MUSEUM EXHIBITIONS

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The scheme *Break* ('Brudd' in Norwegian) was launched in 2003. *Break* sought to challenge museums to ask critical questions and to treat taboo topics and difficult stories pertaining to Norwegian society. The programme was launched in 2003 by ABM-utvikling (the Norwegian counterpart to the United Kingdom's Museums, Libraries and Archives Council – the MLA – which merged with the Arts Council Norway in 2011), with nine participating museums and one county administration (Holmesland et al., 2006, pp.6-17). Its central goal has been to promote a shift from the presentation of conventionally treated narratives toward areas that are marginal, hidden, contested and unpleasant. It has aimed to strengthen museums as active social institutions that engage with current issues and stimulate serious reflection among visitors. Norwegian museums are perhaps the least

Figure 1.4.1: In 2006, the experience of the early *Break* projects was summed up in this publication.
Photo: Arts Council Norway

Figure 1.4.2: One of the key white papers to the Storting (Norwegian National Assembly) setting out a path for the development of museum practice.
Photo: Arts Council Norway.

among public institutions to seek to make waves or draw negative publicity. *Break* sought to address that attitude by guiding the country's museums along a path of exploration, broaching the stories they have felt were too difficult to tackle. It has come to represent a fundamental break therefore from approaches to exhibitions in which historical 'fact' is assumed rather than properly examined; as a break from that routine, it has intruded, sometimes rudely, on an erstwhile climate of self-evident museological 'truth'. Whatever the case, *Break* initiated an important debate on the role of Norway's museums and, in what follows, I offer a set of personal reflections on it from the perspective of a policy maker based (at the time of writing) within the museums division of Arts Council Norway.

What made *Break* so special?

Break was part of a deeper current of re-evaluating the role of museums and the exhibitionary complex in light of 'difficult' topics, and the need to signal new approaches to how museums should handle the invisible, unpleasant, marginal, and taboo. In 1996, Robert Macdonald asked the question 'controversy

– can museums handle it?', responding with a firm 'yes, if museums are to advance their missions as centres for learning' (Cameron, 2003, p.1). In turn, the internationally significant research project *Exhibitions as Contested Sites: The Role of Museums in Contemporary Society* came to investigate the potential role of museums around contentious subjects, and to elaborate a relevant theoretical framework, in a lively debate that continued through several volumes of the *Open Museum Journal* published in the early 2000s (see especially volumes 2, 6 and 8).

What distinguished *Break* against this background was that it was not museums but government authorities that spearheaded the initiative. Its approach to museum practice emerged during the 1999 conference *When Tradition is Standing in the Way (Når tradisjonene står i veien)*, which was followed by the Report to the Storting (Government white paper) *Sources for Knowledge and Experiences,* pointing out the need to take Norway beyond any tendency to self-interested promotion of its cultural heritage (St.meld, 1999-2000). In 2001, the official body for Norwegian Museums Development (NMU),[1] followed up on the work it had begun in redefining the purpose of museums in step with broader social and political change in Norway. More recently, the white paper *Cultural Policy Towards 2014* has encouraged museums to become more open and flexible, to consider more carefully the social values implicit in their programming (St.meld, 2002-2003). The governmental institution ABM-utvikling/MLA was given the responsibility to encourage museums to begin work on less conventionally explored issues and collections, in order to challenge working practices and find new conceptual frameworks with greater relevance to contemporary society.

Among the result were a lively internal debate among custodians of museum, library and archival collections and the focus of the 2003 Oslo conference *The Power of Collections (Kildenes makt)*. The central questions that have emerged are about the use and visibility of public collections for furthering social progress and democracy; the consequences of institutional silence, consensus, concealment/suppression, and 'forgetfulness' for political, cultural and historical understandings of modern subjectivity; how to ensure the representation of excluded and marginalised groups; and how to re-examine the relationships between institutional authority and historical truth. In particular, museums and other

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1   The Norwegian counterpart and predecessor to the United Kingdom's Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA; established in 2003 and dissolved in 2011).

Figure 1.4.3: Revitalisation needed? Encouraging controversial museum exhibitions was a central goal of the *Break* scheme. Photo: Bjørn Djupvik.

cultural institutions have been challenged to reflect on how they treat issues of human rights, especially those concerning minority groups, and to explore the question of what aspects of the past museums should try to preserve and present.

Overall, *Break* sought new ways of thinking and working in Norwegian museums, and unsurprisingly it generated significant resistance. Various complaints were levelled about the use of time and resources, and anxieties about falling short of public expectations, with concerns focused on audience reception – 'what will local people say?' – and institutional purpose – 'this isn't what museums are for' – as well as anxiety about losing credibility, summed up by a reactionary complaint about the initiative's apparent overabundance of 'political correctness'.

If there was every reason here not to become involved with *Break*, nevertheless a significant number of museums volunteered. Mainly cultural history museums, with the exception of some special collections and a museum of natural history, their chosen themes related to war and conflict, the infringement of personal rights by institutions, and the rights of marginalised groups and minority ethnicities. The projects focused principally on two areas. Where they dealt with difficult, concealed and controversial narratives, participating institutions explored the ethics and impact of Norwegian museums, in a process of confronting unacceptable institutional bias. This was coupled with a problematising of exhibition content, and the goal of stimulating criticism and reflection, which took the form of interpretative strategies that focus on asking questions without stipulating easy answers, and promoting thereby the need to broach topical issues from unusual angles. On the whole, the *Break* initiative combined an informative presentation of difficult stories with a self-critical mode

Figure 1.4.4: 'God and Mammon' was the topic of one of the *Break* exhibitions of Vest-Agder-museet. Photo: Arve Lindvig, Vest-Agder-Museet.

of interpretation. Museum visitors have been enticed and challenged by displays that encourage reflection not only on their content but a wider consideration of how museums should approach histories that remain contested.

This activity emerged through a lively forum of meetings where participants discussed both major exhibitions/works of documentation and more modest displays. Building such a supportive network of peers has been of particular value as a means to cope with the sometimes negative, even aggressive reactions that several of the museums experienced from visitors and which led to some of the projects undergoing revisions by their organisers. The circumstances and outcomes of these may be grasped through a brief comparison, as in the remaining part of this paper, of three of the institutional sites that offered their individual response to *Break*.

The Vidkun Quisling exhibition at Telemark Museum (May 2007)

The exhibition that met with the most negative media coverage was the *Vidkun Quisling* exhibition at the Telemark Museum. Quisling came to be seen as a traitor after taking power in Norway in May 1940 and has remained one of the most controversial characters in Norwegian history. He was executed in October 1945 and his actions during the Second World War caused widespread speculation and debate in the years that followed. Since Quisling was born and spent his

childhood and youth in different parts of Telemark, the main aim of the exhibition was to inform young people (aged 14-20) about him, establishing a space for reflection on their own assumptions, in such a way as to allow them to explore genocide and abuses of human rights in the world today.

In order to do so, the museum needed to display a more nuanced image of Quisling than the standard demonisation usually given. The exhibition had been long in preparation, with the idea originally discussed as early as 1999. Around that time the museum faced several internal obstacles, including a sense that it lacked staff expertise on the topic; it was also experiencing organisational pressures, such as mergers with other museums. More serious was that certain members of the board strongly opposed the plans.

But it was the discussions and interest among the local community and in the media that brought the plans forward. In 2004, the museum established a pre-project working group with highly qualified members, including respected historians, philosophers and psychiatrists (Walle, 2012, p.84). Plans for the exhibition drew sustained interest before it was finally realised in 2007.

The exhibition plan was loudly discussed in local and national media before the opening. The local newspaper conducted a poll in 2005, which showed that 57 % of the local residents supported the exhibition. People below 30 years of age (73 %) were found to be especially supportive, while 41 % of people

older than 60 were also favourable to the idea (Mohr, 2006, pp. 62–65). Nonetheless, an abiding criticism was that a man like Quisling should not be honoured with an exhibition in a museum; it became clear that many people looked to the museum as a site for demonstrating national pride. It was suggested that that while Quisling could be legitimately documented in print, interest in his life would be better left alone by museums. Some politicians also feared the exhibition could have a negative effect on the reputation of Telemark.

The terms of debate on the run up to the Quisling exhibition suggested strong assumptions about the role of museums as venues for glorification of the past – patriotic or otherwise – which steer clear of difficult themes. After the opening of the exhibition, most critics became silent, and the exhibition got quite positive comments in the media. It was not experienced as controversial as had been feared and the expected reactions did not materialise. The item causing the strongest reactions from general public turned out to be the display of the rocking horse that Quisling had played with as a child. How could this horrible man have been the owner of such a beautiful toy?

Bad boys? Falstad 'rescued' by Bergen

Falstad is a Memorial and Human Rights Centre in Levanger, central Norway, 80 kilometres North of the city of Trondheim. The Falstad Building was erected in 1921 as a special school for delinquent boys. In 1941, the building was turned into a prison camp by the Germans. SS-Strafgefangenenlager Falstad was the second largest prison camp in Norway, with about 5,000 people from 13 nations imprisoned there in the period 1941-45, and it often served as a station en route to concentration camps in Germany. After the liberation of Norway, Falstad prison camp became a forced labour camp, and more than 3,000 members of the Norwegian Nazi Party served their sentences there. The camp was closed down in 1949. Later on, the building again became a special school – returning full circle to its original use (Jørstad, 2006, pp.52–56).

In 2003, the Falstad Centre chose to develop an exhibition about the building's history as a school, but the plan led to a heated public debate in the newspapers and protests in the autumn of that year, especially from war veterans, showed up the depth of emotion surrounding a physical reminder of war. The main argument against the plan was that Falstad should focus solely on the period of its use as a prison camp, and that a presentation of its time as a school period would diminish the seriousness of its associations with Nazism. Some protestors even spoke of whitewashing the history of fascism. Ultimately, Falstad abandoned its plans for an exhibition of its function as a school. The project manager went on leave to write his doctoral thesis on the conflict (Seim, 2009). Falstad and Bergen School Museum later established a collaborative

Figure 1.4.5: Entrance gate to the prison camp at Falstad. It was deemed somehow less controversial to hold an exhibition about a prison camp a few years after one about schoolboys. Photo: The Falstad Centre.

Figure 1.4.6: Image from the exhibition 'Against Nature' which was overall a huge success in Norway. Photo: Per E. Aas, Natural History Museum, University of Oslo, Norway.

agreement and by joining forces, the *Bad Boys* exhibition was realised through an extremely productive relationship between the two institutions.

The media storm resulting from the Falstad project is the most distinct in *Break* but reactions to this and the Quisling exhibition examples make some crucial issues evident: Can the opinions of a limited group of people be allowed to influence the scope of museum interpretations and documentation? What of a democratic process of deciding which stories to tell? Who has ownership over the means to make voices of the past be heard?

Among the conventions that *Break* challenged were those about museum displays as capable of offering 'neutral' positions, while promoting the aesthetic contemplation of high-quality artefacts. Several international studies underscore that the public prefer museums to seek neutrality in the interpretation of knowledge. Consider, for instance, the shock caused by the decision to display the *Enola Gay* at the Smithsonian Museum in the mid-1990s, as part of a presentation on the history of the aircraft's role in dropping the atomic bomb (see Gieryn, 1998, pp.197-228, Zolberg, 1996, pp.69-82). There was the case of a media frenzy surrounding the National Museum of Australia's treatment of histories of Australian Aborigines. Dawn

Casey, director of the National Museum, commented that 'perhaps the most useful effect of the storm was to throw Australia's current culture wars into sharp relief' (2003, p.1).[2]

Interestingly, *Break* showed that it was impossible to predict which topics would cause storms of comment and discussion. Some of the topics the museums expected to be controversial caused no waves at all, while topics they predicted to be uncontroversial resulted in heated debates. The huge debate that followed the exhibition of the boys' detention centre at Falstad was far from expected, while the one that highlighted the same site's use as a prison camp seemed to pass unnoticed.

Gay animals

Break triggered no greater mixture of success and notoriety than the exhibition *Against Nature*, the first ever dedicated to the subject of homosexuality in animals. Opening in autumn 2006 at the Natural History Museum of the University of Oslo, it focused

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2   Several museum directors chose or were forced to leave their positions in the aftermath of controversial exhibitions. It is a topic that runs through several of the earlier mentioned volumes of the *Open Museum Journal* (Casey, 2003; Ellison, 2003).

on a selection from more than 1,500 animal species. While a Pentecost pastor suggested the curators of the exhibition should 'burn in hell', others claimed that it helped people to see homosexuality as less man-made (Robech Lillebø, 2006), or that it was like a 'fresh breath of controversy'.

In the introduction to the exhibition the public could read:

> Sadly, most museums have no traditions for airing difficult, unspoken, and possibly controversial questions. Homosexuality is certainly such a question. We feel confident that a greater understanding of how extensive and common this behaviour is among animals will help to de-mystify homosexuality among people. At least, we hoped to reject the all too well-known argument that homosexual behaviour is a 'crime against nature'.[3]

If measured by the degree of media attention, and from the interest and responses of visitors, then this exhibition is the *Break* initiative's greatest success. The museum adapted *Against Nature* into a travelling exhibition that also reached audiences abroad (Søli et al., 2006, pp.56–61). It was moving to read in the museum's guestbook those comments from young people who wrote about it having helped them to accept their sexuality.

Conclusion

The outcomes of *Break* were evaluated in 2010 through independent consultation, focusing on several key questions, namely: Has the *Break* scheme had a more general influence on its participating institutions, beyond piecemeal exhibitions and projects? Are its central aims embedded in the institutional landscape; has the contribution made by *Break* been sustainable? The results showed up the significant barriers that stand in the way to deeper and more lasting change in

museum programming and management. Institutional custom and practice, generation gaps in staffing and existing workload pressures were all outlined, in addition to a more worrying sense of a lack of attention to the diverse publics that museums might serve.

Certainly, museums found it a challenge to meet the ambitions of *Break*. The museums that participated seriously in the initiative were those motivated by the need to position themselves with relevance to contemporary society. Where there were successful responses, they came through concrete projects such as the focus on minority groups at the Glomdalsmuseet, with its documentation, exhibition and educational programmes dedicated to the Roma people (Lahn, 2006). For other participating institutions, it has been the impetus to strike up new discussions that has emboldened the desire to re-engage the past. Governmental support has been crucial for many organisations, and the five remaining museums in the project still feel they need it. The Vest-Agder-museet has allowed curator Kathrin Pabst to undertake a Ph.D. based on her experiences from several of the *Break*-inspired projects. Her research focuses on the ethical dilemmas associated with using personal stories in exhibition projects, in which she analyses seven Norwegian exhibitions alongside others staged abroad (Pabst, 2011, pp.28-52).

The exhibition *Sanatorium Kids* at Norsk Teknisk Museum (National Medical Museum/Norwegian Museum of Science and Technology) is another success story and one which made a difference for a group of people who otherwise may not have had a public voice. The project began as an exercise in documenting the history of the sanatorium building at Grefsen in Oslo but, in so doing, museum staff found controversial stories and from them produced a small exhibition that shed light on the fate of abused children, which received huge public interest. This led to a public enquiry and compensation for victims. While curators in this case showed little fear of entering untrammelled territory, the *Break* concept still struggles to be taken up more readily by the majority of Norwegian organisations. This has meant that the initiative is pushed to the margins, and even those museums that did feel able to participate have struggled.

In sum, only two museums (Nordsjøfartsmuseet – Museum Vest and Lepramuseet – Bergen City Museum) joined *Break* throughout, while others participated in just some stage of it. Although most new *Break* projects are limited in size, they are planned thoroughly before being launched. An important lesson is that a small number of sceptics were allowed to have too great an

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3 It has been long established that homosexuality is widespread in the animal world. In the summer of 2012, the Natural History Museum in London released information on the research notes of Dr. George Levick from the famous 1910-13 British Antarctic Expedition led by Robert Scott. Studying the penguins at Cape Adare he included a description of 'hooligan' behavior among the birds, which he considered to be instances of sexual coercion. The observations were included in Greek to disguise and limit the general access to the knowledge of these obviously quite controversial findings. Levick's sense of shock is palpable in his comment that: 'There seems to be no crime too low for these penguins'. For more information on Scott's observations, see http://www.nhm.ac.uk/about-us/news/2012/june/penguin-sex-habits-study-rediscovered-at-museum110510.html.

Figure 1.4.7: The Latjo Drom exhibition at Glomdalsmuseet. Photo: Emir Curt, Anno Museum – Glomdalsmuseet.

Figure 1.4.8: «My Body – My Truth» is one of the exhibitions discussed by Kathrin Pabst (2011).
Photo: Arve Lindvig, Vest-Agder-museet.

Figure 1.4.9: Image displayed in the exhibition *Sanatorium Kids*, showing children from Grefsen Sanatorium, Oslo. Photo: Norwegian Museum of Science and Technology.

influence on the initial raft of projects. In terms of the themes of displays, it seems that World War II stories are still the most sensitive. From the more recent projects focusing on forgotten stories, the experience is that storytelling per se is not nearly as difficult as the application of a genuinely critical approach to history.

A question posed by Per Rekdal is pertinent here: Why does it appear easier to write about the controversial in a book – or to make a film – than to stage an exhibition? (Rekdal, 2006). Addressing this question, and asking why Norwegian museums are not more engaged with the country's difficult pasts (or indeed with what was once the 'new' museology), would take this topic onto even more challenging ground.

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MAKING MEANING FROM A FRAGMENTED PAST: 1897 AND THE CREATIVE PROCESS

Peju Layiwola

Abstract

One of the most traumatic experiences that occurred in Africa at the turn of the 19th century is the Benin/British encounter of 1897. The plundering of thousands of works of art from the palace of the king of Benin by the British, now spread across several museums in the West, continues to be an issue that keeps recurring. Ever since that episode, 1897 has become a theme, which is explored by various artists in Nigeria in a variety of genres. This paper attempts to discuss some of the artistic engagement with this theme and how artists have sought to recapture the past in a variety of media.

Biographical note

Peju Layiwola is a visual artist and art historian with an active studio practice, as well as a strong commitment to research. She has had several art exhibitions locally and internationally. Her most recent travelling exhibition and edited book, entitled *Benin1897.com: Art and the Restitution Question,* is an artistic exploration of the Benin/British encounter of 1897. She has published several articles on the visual culture of Nigeria. Presently, she is associate professor and head of the Department of Creative Arts at the University of Lagos, Nigeria where she teaches art history.

An earlier version of this material was presented on the occasion of the project conference 'Disturbing Pasts: Memories, Controversies and Creativity' (20 -22 November 2012, Museum of Ethnology/Weltmuseum Wien, Vienna). To view the film footage on the Open Arts Archive, www.openartsarchive.org, follow this link: http://www.openartsarchive.org/oaa/content/disturbing-pasts-memories-controversies-and-creativity-conference-1

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MAKING MEANING FROM A FRAGMENTED PAST: 1897 AND THE CREATIVE PROCESS.

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In February 1897, British imperialist forces invaded and sacked the ancient empire of Benin, capturing the monarch, Oba Ovonramwen, who had been on the throne that had existed for over one thousand years. British forces comprising over 1,200 men accompanied by several thousands of auxiliary troops and locals used Maxim guns to mow down hundreds of Benin soldiers. British soldiers set the villages leading to Benin on fire and carted away thousands of priceless artefacts that constituted the archives of the kingdom, sending the king into exile in Calabar where he finally died in 1914. The looted works were taken to London where they were auctioned. The works now adorn the exhibition halls and storage rooms of several museums in Europe and America. The event of the British 'Punitive' Expedition to Benin constitutes what Olorunyomi describes as a 'schism that seems more orchestrated than real, but which has, nevertheless, major repercussions till to this day (in Layiwola and Olorunyomi, 2010, p.xix). That is to say, this schism has thrust upon humanity a major challenge. How do present-day Nigerians, who see themselves at the receiving end of an imperial legacy, make meaning of this disturbing past? What strategies have been employed to cope with the impact of the British expedition to Benin and the attendant loss of a large part of Africa's patrimony? This paper outlines recent artistic responses to this contested past. This paper focuses on the trajectory of contemporary artists who have recently found innovative and politically informed ways to address this formative episode of British-Nigerian colonial contact.

Exhibiting and reclaiming the Benin treasures

106 years later, the debate over ownership of Benin cultural artefacts still continues. Several contemporary events have necessitated the recurrence of the discourse over Benin's contested cultural patrimony in both local and foreign places in recent years. One major event was the travelling exhibition of Benin works, *Benin Kings and Rituals: Court Art from Nigeria*, which opened in Vienna in 2007. This exhibition,

described as 'the most extensive Benin exhibition ever' (Wilfried Seipel in Plankensteiner, 2007, p.11), had over 300 Benin works taken from several museums across the globe on display, opening in Vienna and later moving to Berlin. It was shown in France and finally closed in Chicago in 2008. Following this show, the outcry for repatriation of cultural artefacts to their countries of origin became louder and persistent. While viewing the works during the opening in Vienna, a son of the reigning king of Benin, Omoregbe Erediauwa, broke down saying:

> O my God, these people emptied our treasury. You cannot really imagine the scale of plundering that took place in Benin until you see these works physically. These are only 300 of the entire stock of 4,000 looted works. They really cleaned us out.[1]

Apart from the outright looting of works from Benin, a number of artefacts were destroyed in the fire that was set up on the third day of the siege laid by British soldiers in the Oba's (king's) palace. The loss of lives and property that followed the torching of towns and villages as the expeditionary forces made their way to Benin left a trail of fragmented lives and families in the wake of the 1897 event. Ogbechie clearly articulates this in the narrative of his personal family histories: 'The king's ouster disrupted the entire region under Edo control and its local economy collapsed. My grandfather lost everything' (2010, pp.76–77).

The fragmentation of social and political lives of the people caused by the expedition, the climax of which was the exile of Oba Ovonramwen to Calabar, is revealed in the manner in which the art objects were dispersed. In 2007, the upper part of a two-part bronze plaque, which had been removed to London, was united with its lower part, which had been in Vienna since 1897, for the first time at the Vienna exhibition.[2] The travelling exhibition titled *Benin Kings and Rituals: Court Arts from Nigeria* was shown in Vienna, Berlin, Paris and Chicago. When it was announced that the works were to be shown in Chicago, the African community based in the city held a series of protests in front of the Art Institute of Chicago, one of the venues of the exhibition.

Beyond these exhibitions of Benin art, recent events on the international scene elicit comments, reactions and protests on account of the looted works. One of

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1   Erediauwa Omoregbe broke down in the last hall while viewing the Benin works on display at the Museum of Ethnology, Vienna, in 2007.

2   For further details, see 'Relief plaque: Body of a Portuguese master of the circled cross in two parts' in Plankensteiner (2007).

such events was the widely announced Sotheby's sale in 2010. A 16th-century Benin Oba mask was to be auctioned for about £4.5million.[3] The assumed owner is a descendant of Lieutenant Colonel Sir Henry Gallwey, Deputy Commissioner and Vice Consul in the Oil Rivers Protectorate, who took part in the infamous British expedition. Protests organised by civil society groups and Nigerian intellectuals against this sale spread from the streets of London to social network sites. A few days later, the consignee pulled down the work from the auction. This is not to say that the sale may not have continued underground, but it is sufficient to note that it is no longer business as usual to profiteer from the loot; a loot which was forcibly removed during a bloody contest between Benin defenders and British soldiers.

The most recent addition to the debate is the controversial donation of over 32 Benin bronzes and ivories made by yet another descendant of the infamous expedition, Robert Owen Lehman, to the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, in 2012. The Nigerian Government, through the Director of the National Commission for Museums and Monuments reacted promptly and stated firmly:

> We wish to also call on the management of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, US to as a matter of self-respect return the 32 works to Nigeria, the rightful owners forthwith.
>
> (Yusuf Abdallah Usman cited in Opoku, 2012).

However, the Benin treasures are but one of many examples of looted art works from Nigeria. Artefacts have also been looted from the Nok area of Northern Nigeria. Like a cancerous sore, the 1897 historical episode keeps recurring and continually elicits responses from advocates of repatriation of cultural artefacts in Nigeria and across the globe. It has therefore not only become a reference point in the discourse of imperialism in Africa with several incidences of pillaging in other parts of the continent, but also forms a specifically disturbing legacy of British-Benin imperial encounter which the West can no longer negate, but has to come to terms with.

Despite the wide public protests mentioned above and official requests for repatriation made by the Nigerian state and the royal family in Benin, European and American museums and governments still refuse to return any of the looted artefacts. Kwame Opoku, one of the most outspoken advocates for the restitution of looted artefacts from Africa, particularly laments

the various flimsy arguments that emanate in the West against the request for restitution made by the owners of these cultural properties.

Today, this episode of British-Benin imperial encounter leaves behind photographs of a distraught king, Oba Ovonramwen, several unattended requests for restitution from both the Nigerian state and members of the royal family of Benin and a trail of nebulous theories justifying the handling of Benin's patrimony in Europe and the US.

Artistic engagements with a disturbing past

Many Nigerian artists both in the Diaspora and in the homelands have responded to the 1897 saga. They have joined the clamour for the return of these cultural artefacts in multifarious creative forms. The following discussion brings together some of the most recent examples of these artistic responses.

Although not specific to Benin, Yinka Shonibare, a UK-based, Nigerian-born artist sets the pace for a more general, critical perspective on the plundering of Africa's patrimony in his installation piece *Scramble for Africa* (2003). This work poignantly captures the European quest for the natural and artistic treasures of Africa during the official partitioning of Africa between European powers at the Berlin Conference in 1884-85. In his installation, fourteen headless mannequins clad in Shonibare's signature style of wax print cloth sit at a table, with a map of Africa before them, as they 'stake their claims' to African territories. This way, Shonibare draws attention to the decisive moment of Europe's imperial project. At the Berlin Conference, the ground was set for European and, particularly, British territorial expansion – a bid that played out in Benin about a decade later.

In a similar vein, the Ghana-born, Nigerian-based experimental artist, El Anatsui, made a series of wooden panels depicting the Benin Conference in the 1980s. The electrically powered machines he uses for incising and cutting into the wood is reminiscent of eroded socio-cultural values of the people and the destructive nature of colonialism in Africa.

More specifically to Benin, a panoply of novels, theatre plays and films exists in relation to 1897. In 1966, Ogieriaikhi Enwinma wrote a book titled *Oba Ovoramwen and Oba Ewuare*. In 1971, the playwright, Ola Rotimi wrote and produced *Ovonramwen N' Ogbaisi*, a play, which became very popular in Nigeria and was adopted as a literature text for the West African Senior School Certificate Examination. As part of the centenary commemoration of the British expedition to Benin, Ahmed Yerima wrote, produced and directed a play, *The Trials of Oba Ovonramwen* (1997).

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3   Other works for offering in the same auction were a carved altar tusk, two ivory armlets, a rare bronze armlet cast with Portuguese figures and a bronze sculpture.

Elsewhere, I have discussed Edo visual artists' engagement with the 1897 theme focusing on works of artists of the old traditions of metal work and woodcarving (Layiwola, 2007). Moreover, I included paintings and sculptures by contemporary Edo artists during the centenary commemoration of the Benin Expedition in 1997. The study was conducted against the backdrop of the artists' understanding and articulation of Edo mythology and belief systems. This paper, however, focuses on the trajectory of contemporary artists who have recently engaged with this theme in a manner different from those discussed earlier. Rather than produce works that reference only indigenous traditions and philosophies, these artists cast their ideas against contemporary readings of events occurring locally and globally. They show a more robust understanding of political issues and view history as multi-layered and complex. Through their works, the artists challenge official representations of the past and re-examine the meaning of the events leading up to and following the 1897 capture of Benin. In this essay, I examine five experimental works of my own, *1897.com*, *Oba ghato okpere*, *Chequered History, Theatre of War* and *What Next?*, which derive from my travelling solo exhibition *Benin1897.com: Art and the Restitution Question* (2010). In addition, the musical

video *1897* by Nigeria-born, Belgium-based musician Monday Midnite, and two selected cartoons by Ganiyu Jimoh are analysed. All of these works provide greater political awareness of the British-Benin encounter both within the Nigerian public space and on global platforms such as the internet.

Benin1897.com: Art and the Restitution Question, a travelling exhibition, was shown in Lagos from 8 April to 30 May 2010, and later in Ibadan from 20 August to 10 October 2010. In its four months of showing time in Nigeria, it generated a lot of discussions and provided insights into how a historical work can open up various streams of thoughts. The exhibition opened with a symposium attended by lawyers, culture workers, government officials, artists and academics. The accompanying publication of the same title had interesting reviews and it became a teaching text in several universities and tertiary institutions. The title's pun from cyber language on the '.com', the commercial domain name, became a metaphor for the overwhelming economic interest of the British in the sacking of Benin. Rather than follow the official history, which plays up the ambush of a British party on an alleged mission to appeal to the king of Benin to keep with the terms of an agreement over trade, the exhibition fully expresses the often suppressed

Figure 1.5.1: Peju Layiwola, *1897.com,* 2009. Installation: Terracotta, Inlaid copper, Twine, Cowrie shells, Cow Horns, Wood, Acrylic paint, Brass foil. Photo: Barbara Plankensteiner.

intent of the British to plunder Benin a year before the massacre. *Benin1897.com: Art and the Restitution Question,* is the first exhibition of its kind in Nigeria dedicated to memorialising the event of the sack of Benin and was inspired by my visit to the Benin art exhibition *Benin – Kings and Rituals: Court Arts from Nigeria* in Vienna and Chicago in 2007 and 2008, respectively. It became necessary to respond to some of the issues the larger travelling exhibition at these numerous venues threw up, in the light of copyright, ownership of Benin patrimony and the continued possession of these works in foreign museums. In one of the essays in the accompanying catalogue for the exhibition, Freida High, an American art historian, describes the exhibition as 'a metamonument, a monument that refers to itself and others' (2010, p.15). This exhibition tells a story – a story of war, of losses, of death, pillage and intrigue. Yet, in doing so it also partakes in a healing process and attempts to assuage the pain and sorrow associated with the sack of Benin on its memorialisation of history.

1897.com (2009), the title piece of the exhibition, comprises 1,000 terracotta heads as a reference to the 3,000 to 4,000 objects plundered from the Benin palace (Figure 1.5.1). In the historical writings, there is no precise number associated with the looted works. There has been a clamour for an inventory of works looted from the Benin palace. This installation recalls the manner in which the ancestral heads, plaques and other object types were laid out on top of the shrines and in the bedchamber of the king from where they were stolen by British soldiers. In the same fashion, the 1,000 terracotta heads were spread across similar platforms. Although the works stolen were mostly made of bronze and ivory, terracotta was the chosen media for this work. A few of the heads were covered with layers of copper and brass metal. The colour of the fired, red clay is reminiscent of palace shrines on which these heads were placed. The catalogue comments that '[t]hey who once enjoyed the splendour of the palace are now trapped behind glass walls in foreign lands' and refers to the new display of Benin artefacts in foreign museums, away from the freer spaces in the palace were they served religious functions (Olorunyomi, 2010, p.xix). They are largely representations of memorial heads – comprising an Oba and a queen mother head, as well as a simple plaque form.

Figure 1.5.2: Peju Layiwola, *Oba Ghato Okpere (Long live the King),* 2009. Installation: Gourds, fishing Line and acrylic paint. Photo: Barbara Plankensteiner.

Apart from the numerous works, which were plundered, a number of works were destroyed in a fire that engulfed the palace of the king. Some of the classical Benin ivories still bear the burn marks of the fire. A number of terracotta pieces in *1897.com* were patinated with oxides to create a burnt effect on the memorial heads. Cow tusks are representative of the ivories stolen from the Benin palace. Thus, they become a metaphor for expressing the pillage that transpired in 1897. While the Benin treasures lie in foreign lands, the artist, in the case of *1897.com*, is left to pick amongst the detritus of the dunghill of slaughterhouses while valuable works remain in foreign museums.

Today, many Benin artists do not have the opportunity of viewing the works done by their predecessors in Western museums. They resort to looking at photographs in books and catalogues, sometimes to replicate them in a bid to reconnect with the past, as well as to earn a living. When the banished king Oba Ovonramwen died in Calabar in 1914, his son Oba Eweka I ascended the throne in Benin. The new king sought to restore the memorial shrines, which had been desecrated by the British soldiers. He commissioned new heads from the guild of casters. The installation piece, *Oba Ghato Okpere (Long Live the King)* (Figure 1.5.2), made in 2009 and shown in the exhibition, is a postmodern approach to memorialising the kings of Benin. It is made from 113 gourds etched with names of past kings (Oba) and mythical leaders/sky kings (Ogiso) of Benin. The gourds represent the years that have elapsed since 1897. Each king is identified by motifs associated with his reign such as the 1978 commemorative fabric of Oba Akenzua II, made by my mother, Princess Elizabeth Olowu. Seventeen calabashes are left without designs to represent the period of interregnum when the throne was left vacant with the banishment of Oba Ovonramwen to Calabar. This period was characterised by turmoil and intrigue. The British reduced the political influence of the King and almost obliterated the institution of Benin monarchy. *Oba Ghato Okpere* became one of the most attractive of the entire set of works on display. Despite its reference to a disruption of the political system in Benin, its meaning was almost subsumed by its aesthetic appeal, as the audience used it as a backdrop for their personal photographs. Facebook sites were awash with images of the installations and people used it as screensavers on their phones and computers.

Theatre of War (2009) (Figure 1.5.3) is a graphic illustration of the various intrigues and dramatic episodes that characterised the attack on Benin up to the time of the British trial of the king and his men, held several months after the expedition. It is

Figure 1.5.3: Peju Layiwola, *Theatre of War*, 2009. Terracotta and copper wires, 200cm by 210cm.
Photo: Barbara Plankensteiner.

an assemblage of terracotta plates with inscriptions revealing the various commands of attack and the day-to-day accounts of battle by British soldiers. These terracotta tablets reveal details of ammunition expended in the battle to conquer and take charge of a people's land and possessions. The commands on the plaques adapt text from the 1898 House of Commons Parliamentary Papers, titled 'Papers relating to the massacre of British officials near Benin, and the consequent punitive expedition'. The *Theatre of War* tablets read:

> Proceed to Benin, Proceed at once, Send gunboat to Benin, Send forces with knowledge of native warfare, all houses destroyed to the ground, homes set ablaze, Ugiami village razed, Enemies grounded, Benin defeated, Queen rejoices …

Theatre of War (2009) points out the contradictions in the official narratives of the British/Benin encounter. Dispatches to the home office reporting the ambush, claimed that the Phillips party was 'unarmed' and 'peaceful', sometimes reported also as 'unescorted'. Yet eyewitness account observes that, 'when they heard shots fired in front; they tried to get their revolvers out of their boxes, but could not find the boxes' (Captain Boisragon and District Commissioner, Locke, paraphrased in House of Commons Parliamentary Papers, 1898, p.18).

The British party comprising 9 Britons and 250 African carriers had ammunitions in their boxes in response to an earlier command by Vice Consul Phillips that officers could carry revolvers 'but that they were

not to show them' (House of Commons Parliamentary Papers, 1898, p.20). *Theatre of War* launches history and at the same time critiques the action of the British soldiers sitting in the midst of their loot in the courtyard of the palace. Some of the plaques read: 'Photo session, Officers Look up, Say cheese. SNAP.'. Furthermore, the work reveals an early reference to manipulation of various ethnic groups in the region. Hausa fighters were hired as hit men and compensated with biscuit and rice while Itsekiri men were hired as spies (House of Commons Parliamentary Papers, 1897, Africa. No.6, quoting Acting Commissioner Gallwey to Foreign Office, p.21).

As the war was underway against the Benin defenders, members of the expeditionary forces could not conceal their interest in the rich natural resources in the region. One of the members, simply described as Fletcher, took out time to obtain samples of rare plants and noted the rich resources of palm oil, kola nut and rubber trees in the region. All these actions are inscribed on the terracotta tiles and strung together with copper wires. The work concludes on a sad note of defeat. It shows the eventual collapse of the Benin defenders: the hanging of the loyalist to the king. The inscriptions state: 'June 27 Ologbosere tried, found guilty, June 28 executed, Iguobasimi surrenders, trial continues, search for Overami continues …' In my interpretation of this final inscription, Oba Ovonramwen was never captured.

Following closely to this work is the triptych titled *Chequered History* (2009) (Figure 1.5.4). This work, made in polyester resin, combines segments of textures and

Figure 1.5.4: Peju Layiwola, *Chequered History*, 2009. Polyester and glass, 230cm by 100cm. Photo credit: Peju Layiwola

symbols found on several Benin plaques and masks in the British Museum. An earlier version of this work was made in 2003. The work refers to the fragmented histories and experiences deriving from the British encounter. Africa, like a chequered/draught board, became a playfield for colonial powers.

At the time the *Benin1897.com; Art and the Restitution Question* exhibition was being conceived, another artist, Osaigbovo Agbonzee, who goes by the stage name Monday Midnite, was working on the musical version commemorating the events of 1897. Through the internet, we both connected and eagerly shared our visions. Midnite's rap music video (4min 19sec), titled *1897* was released in 2009. Midnite produced two versions of the *1897* sound track. The second version he dedicated to a lost friend. His video visibly shows his disgust for the pillaging of Benin works through the lyrics and imagery used for the footage. Monday Midnite appears in a white T-shirt with the popularly published photograph of Oba Ovonramwen aboard the ship that took him on exile to Calabar. This photograph was taken by an Ijaw artist, photographer J. Adagogo Green, in 1897. Written boldly on the top of the photo is the inscription 1897. The video opens with the artist rapping along the streets of London. Some of the shots are taken against the background of Buckingham palace. Midnite's intention is to carry the protest to the doorsteps of the Queen. He sings:

> Please take my plea to the palace of the queen, she needs to take a hint and do the right thing, make amends for the evil you did. (lyrics cited in Layiwola and Olorunyomi, 2010, p.11)[4]

In calling up iconic images of British power and authority, he uses the image of Queen Elizabeth II and her son, Princes Charles, and grandsons, William and Harry. Here, he conflates historical periods and continually takes swipes at the British royals who, he affirms, approved of the events of 1897 and were beneficiaries of the pillage. This closing of generational gaps emphasises the fact that the past is in continuous dialogue with the present. Midnite includes other British personalities such as the former Prime Ministers, John Major and Gordon Brown. Photographs of Ralph Moor and Captain James Philips, members of the expeditionary force and chief protagonists in the pillaging, are also featured in his clips. Other buildings captured in the video are the Parliament building and the British Museum, which holds the largest collection of looted Benin works.

Midnite's words speak against British propagandist's description of Benin as 'the city of blood' (Bacon, 1897, p.11), a reference to the practice of human sacrifice and subsequent screaming headlines in British tabloids of the day, which was one of the excuses put forward for the sacking of Benin. Regardless of Sir Reginald Bacon description of Benin as the city of blood, Midnite turns the table around in accusing the British of spilling more blood than was shed in Benin for ritual purposes:

> I was born in the city of bronze; the Brits came and turned it into the city of blood, subjugated and brutalized my people … The evil they perpetuated, orchestrated ,,, the shooting, the burning the looting
> (cited in Layiwola and Olorunyomi, 2010, p.11)

He claims to abhor killings of any kind and compares two unconnected historical episodes of violence, referring to both as terrorist attacks. Midnite affirms that the 1897 attack was worse than the terrorist attack in London on 7 July 2005. As in the *Theatre of War*, Midnite enumerates the number of ammunitions and shows the strength of force that overran Benin. Some of the Benin icons he uses are the Queen Idia Mask in the British Museum and the bronze statue of Oba Akenzua I. His remix of the music video is an equally intense a critique of the British action. Very similar to the older version, he goes further to include footage of a few more influential British personalities: David Cameron and Nick Clegg. Midnite continues to include unrelated issues as footage in his video. His reference to the 2012 royal wedding between Prince William and Kate Middleton goes to show that regardless of the occasion, he extends his criticism to descendants of the British royal family, as well as British politicians in power. In addition to the photograph of the British Museum, he includes images from the exhibition catalogue of the exhibition held in Vienna. The image of Oba Akenzua I on the front cover of the Vienna catalogue is also used to direct our gaze to museums housing some of the controversial works of art. Midnite's voice is unmistakable as he solicits for the return of the Benin artefacts:

> Bring back the treasures you stole from Benin
> Let the souls of my ancestors rest in peace
> Cos they're hanging just sitting in limbo
> Hard for them to extricate and let it go
> I appeal to the conscience of the common Brits
> (cited in Layiwola and Olorunyomi, 2010, p.11)

No less caustic are the cartoons of Ganiyu Akinloye Jimoh (Figures 1.5.5 and 1.5.6), an artist who comes from Ejigbo in Osun State, Nigeria, and studied Graphic

Design and Art History at the University of Lagos. Jimoh claims he was inspired by the verbal satires of the Nigerian musician, Fela Anikulapo Kuti, in the making of his cartoons. He was also greatly inspired by the *Benin1897.com* exhibition and sought to extend the idea in the form of digitally enhanced cartoons. Two cartoons from the artist's oeuvre specifically dedicated to the 1897 event are discussed here.

The first cartoon illustrated here, *Double Standard* (2010), offers a more animated depiction of Benin classical sculptures. Here, the bronze head of an Oba and an Idia mask, representing male and female gender respectively, assume human forms and are kept in shackles in a similar way in which Oba Ovonramwen was during his capture. The atmosphere appears charged with emotions. The sculptures appear in a rather mournful state, with tears running down the face of Queen Idia. Both figures are tied together and held down by a weight, which bears the inscription 'Imperial commerce'. In the background is inscribed: 'Africans illegally in Europe must leave. African objects illegally in Europe must stay' and refers to the double standards in British policy. Both captions draw allusions to the huge income generated from the sale of Benin artefacts in auction houses, as well as Western museums, particularly the British Museum, which sold duplicates of Benin plaques to the Nigerian Government in the 1950s.

Riot (2011), the second cartoon, represents the Benin artefacts themselves requesting freedom from foreign museums, which Monday Midnite, in his rap video, considers as prison houses. Jimoh transforms the altarpiece depicting Oba Akenzua I (now in the Museum of Ethnology in Berlin, and also used to illustrate the catalogue for the exhibition in Vienna)

into the central figure of a protest. But rather than Oba standing with two attendants as in the original work, the two figures have been turned into images of protests. Jimoh successfully creates a scenario of protest led by the Benin artefacts. All three figures hold placards with various inscriptions calling for their release from confinement. One signposts read: '114 years in exile: Enough is enough', 'Prison protest: African antiquities on rampage', 'No to illegal captivity'. Another signpost reads, 'The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing'. The phrase derives from Irish statesman, author, orator, political theorist and philosopher, Edmund Burke (1729–1797). He is mainly remembered for his support of the cause of the American Revolutionaries, and for his later opposition to the French Revolution. Jimoh's reference to this phrase indicts successive Nigerian governments, who have over time shown a lukewarm attitude to repatriation of cultural artefacts. He also draws inspiration from the words of American civil rights activist, Martin Luther King Junior (1929–68). His epochal speech 'I have a dream', delivered in 1963, launched him as one of the greatest orators in world history. Jimoh's words, like King's are multilayered. While King advocates for a free America where people of all creed and religious background will co-exist in

Figure 1.5.5: Ganiyu Jimoh, *Double Standard,* 2010. 12.7cm by 17.8cm. Courtesy of Ganiyu Jimoh.

Figure 1.5.6: Ganiyu Jimoh, *Riot,* 2011. 12.7cm by 17.8cm. Courtesy of Ganiyu Jimoh.

peace, Jimoh expands on his message using freedom as a metaphor for the repatriation of Benin cultural artefacts.

On the platform where all three figures stand, Jimoh provides a list of museums, which have holdings of Benin artefacts. This list, albeit not exhaustive, represents the views of universal museums. The declaration on the value and importance of universal museums was signed in December 2002 by eighteen Western museums. This declaration has come under strong criticism by a renowned advocate of restitution, Kwame Opoku. Opoku who observes that the fact that these so-called universal museums, who claim to keep in trust for mankind the art treasures of the world, are all located in the west. This invariably, excludes a large number of Africans from viewing the works made by their ancestors.

He further asserts:

A declaration seeking to confer Immunity could have come from a constituted political authority with legislative or quasi[-]legislative authority such as the UNESCO or the United Nations. But the major museums have been in defiance of the UN and UNESCO[,] which have in resolution after resolution insisted on the need to return cultural artefacts to their countries of origin and have supported Greece in its claims for the Parthenon/Elgin Marbles.

(Opoku, 2010)

Jimoh's cartoon is a critique of these Western concepts that emphasise self-interest at the detriment of other views, particularly those from Africa. Art has therefore become a potential vehicle for expressing the feelings of several artists from Nigeria (about colonial conquest in Africa) via the specific example of the looting of Benin. The artists' messages of deprivation and exploitation are portrayed in different ways. Through the use of public sculptures, paintings, performance art, cartoons, installations and new media, the 1897 plundering of Benin remains an evergreen theme.

Conclusion

In 2010, *What Next?* (Figure 1.5.7), an installation of all the moulds used in casting the 1,000 heads in *1897.com*, was displayed on grounds outside the usual gallery space and allowed to simply disintegrate under the forces of the weather. This installation sought to symbolise a return to mother earth – a sign of rebirth and rejuvenation. *What Next?* and *1897.com*, which are both negative and positive views of the ancestral heads, signified the fact that there are two sides in telling the same story. History, therefore, may not always be a true reflection of historical facts. So far, the historical accounts of the British-Benin encounter have been largely dominated by official documents written by the British and passed on as authentic truth. Today, this British perspective is being challenged by alternative voices. This is what plays out in the works of the Nigerian artists discussed in this article. The open-ended nature of *What Next?* represents the unfinished story of a past in the present which, in the years to come, is going to be told and retold with renewed vigour.

Figure 1.5.7: Peju Layiwola, *What Next?*, **2009.** Plaster of Paris. Photo: Peju Layiwola.

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MALLABY'S CAR: COLONIAL SUBJECTS, IMPERIAL ACTORS, AND THE REPRESENTATION OF HUMAN SUFFERING IN POST-COLONIAL EXHIBITIONS

Susan Legêne

Abstract

The iconic photograph of Mallaby's car shows the wreckage of the vehicle of British brigadier A.S. Mallaby, which was destroyed in Surabaya in Indonesia on 30 October 1945 during the Indonesian uprising against the restoration of Dutch colonial rule. The streets show military vehicles, in control of the situation; however the billboard with 'Once and forever – The Indonesia Republic' indicate that the nationalists did not give up their political aspirations. The photograph is iconic in the fragile balance it depicts; a balance between violence and negotiations with many stakeholders, symbolised in the balancing car, with its front wheels, hood and left front door up and open. This photograph triggered my investigation into the impact of decolonisation on the representation of colonial subjects and 'imperial actors' in museums in Indonesia and the Netherlands. The image of the car appears in a recorded interview with the two sons of Mallaby, who in minute detail recount the events that resulted in their father's death. The car points at a history of decolonisation that thoroughly changed the strong or weak citizenship entitlements of everyone involved. What role could they play, at the time, and how is this diverging agency now represented in historical or ethnographic displays? This theme is explored with close reference to the scholarly models provided by Asma Abbas in Liberalism and Human Suffering (2010), specifically the notion of re-presentation as 'making present again'. I argue that distinct national frames, within which common histories of colonialism and decolonisation today are represented, create notions of 'historical citizenship' that discipline the victims of decolonisation, and refrain from challenging the legacies of the ethnographic categorisation in colonial museum displays.

Biographical note

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Many people around the world remember or know, as second or third generation descendants, the suffering from war, violence, separation, deportation, migration in the post-Second World War decades of decolonisation. Within and beyond Europe, the transformation of the European colonial empires after 1945 also meant an ultimate test for the strength and weakness of the various citizenship entitlements, both of former imperial citizens and of former colonial subjects (Balibar, 2004, p.76). We have hardly yet grasped the suffering at stake in this transformation process, and what losing, gaining and regaining certain citizenship entitlements meant to those involved. This paper will extend this theme into the 21st century. It asks how the human suffering that came with decolonisation was entangled with the issue of citizenship and is represented in museums today. I argue that current museum practice is rooted in colonial histories of representation, which have a problematic relationship to national state formation.[1]

The focus on museums starts from the view shared among many historians that in colonial times museums have been 'tools of empire'. Following this metaphor,

museums – and the same goes for world exhibitions and archives – presented and exchanged the images that supported within the European nation states the development of a hierarchical culture of 'thinking like an Empire' (Burbank and Cooper, 2010), which was crucial to the development of imperialism. Exhibition and collection policies played a role in the construction of empire and political practices of inclusion and exclusion, both within the colonies and all over Europe (Cohn, 1996; Cooper, 2005; Legêne, 2007; Leonhard and von Hirschhausen, 2011; MacKenzie, 2011).[2] A revealing example is the 1938 Jubilee exhibition in the Colonial Museum in Amsterdam, which celebrated the 40 years of (imperial) rule of the Dutch Queen Wilhelmina (Figure 1.6.1). The display presented mannequins of the peoples in Indonesia who since 1898 had been 'integrated' into the colonial empire. Each figure represented the specific ethnic features and essential attributes of his or her people. The single objects referred to the fixed collection categories kept in the museum stores, like weapons, textiles, tools, religious objects, jewelry and even human remains (Legêne, 2007; Sysling, 2013).

Following the metaphor of museums as a tool of empire, what happened to museums after decolonisation in the transfiguration of state structures from empire to national states? Did the former tools of empire now turn into tools of the national state or did they find new roles beyond the state? And how did this transformation of state structures impact their exhibition policies and the hierarchical categorisation of their collections implied in ethnography and physical

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2   Eilean Hooper-Greenhill in her seminal book on *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge* (1992, p.21): 'how colonisation enabled the emergence of a particular range of subject positions, or a particular set of technologies, that together partly accounted for the transformation of existing practices of the collection of material things within a specific geo-historical site.' Current research stresses the interaction between colonisation and collecting, with collection formation as a formative part of colonisation and the development of imperial power relations.

anthropology (Clifford, 1988)? After decolonisation, imperial narratives on colonialism were 'nationalised',[3] but collections were kept in colonial hierarchies. In each country, both in the 'old' nations of the former colonisers in Europe and in the new nations of the former colonised outside of Europe, common histories of imperialism became distinct histories of state formation and nation building.[4] However, this has barely effected the interpretation of cultural artefacts that had been collected and classified in colonial times. Instead, new images emerged in relation to static ethnographic displays: images in dioramas and in exhibitions of photographs that visualise a historical citizenship connected to the national state instead of the colonial Empire. A better understanding is needed of how these new displays in the various parts of the former Empire relate to each other. Visual strategies, including dioramas, black-and-white photographs, and paintings that provide context to objects and mannequins are rooted in an exclusive understanding of human suffering as a legacy of colonialism, which implicitly defines who historically belongs to which of the postcolonial states concerned. The example of exhibitions on the independence struggle of Indonesia (1945-1949) in Indonesia and the Netherlands will be discussed here in order to look for their meaning in understanding historical citizenship. Photographs and dioramas seem to play a major role in turning 'types' into 'people', and people into historical citizens.

It was the 2007 documentary film *Soerabaja/ Surabaya* by the Dutch film maker Peter Hoogendijk, that triggered interest in and focus on ethnographic collections, human suffering and the nationalisation of Europe's shared imperial past in current exhibitions on colonialism. The film is about Hoogendijk's mother, Thera André, who was a teenager in Surabaya when on 19 September 1945, one month and two days after the unilateral declaration of independence, young Indonesian nationalists (Pemuda) collided with Dutch civilians in the 'flag incident' at the Oranje Hotel in the harbour city of Surabaya on the island of Java, Indonesia. The Dutch had raised the national Red-White-Blue flag at the Oranje Hotel in order to celebrate the defeat of Japan and what they regarded as the return to a pre-war colonial order. The flag, however, was brought down by the Indonesians, who tore the blue stripe and

raised it in top again as the Indonesian Merah-Putih (Red White) national flag (Figure 1.6.2).

This incident was the start of a heavy fighting that led to the so-called Battle of Surabaya. In the process of negotiating a ceasefire with the Indonesian nationalists, on 30 October 1945, the unprotected car of the highest commander of the Allied forces in Surabaya, Brigadier Mallaby of the 49th infantry brigade of the 23rd Indian Division, became trapped in a crowd, and Mallaby was killed. In the following Battle of Surabaya, which started on 10 November and ended early December 1945, at least 6,000 people died – most of them Indonesians, but also hundreds of Indian soldiers of the 23rd Indian Division. Dutch citizens were hunted by the nationalists and many also died. Others, like Thera André who at the time hardly realised what was happening around her, were rescued through evacuation. Another 200,000 inhabitants of Surabaya fled the city. The Battle of Surabaya was a disastrous episode in a complicated global history in which the end of the Second World War and decolonisation struggle merged. Involved in the events were Indonesians and Indo-Dutch people of mixed descent, Japanese, Indians and Nepalese, Dutch, English and probably various other nationalities. Today in Indonesia, 10 November is a public holiday to commemorate the heroes of the Revolution; in the Netherlands though the events are barely known, a similar position pertaining in the UK, India or Japan.[5]

In addition to the history as researched and visualised by Hoogendijk who collected the historical images and undertook the interviews with Dutch, Indo-Dutch and Indonesian participants and eye witnesses including his mother the DVD-version of *Soerabaja/Surabaya* also ran the uncut interview with the two sons of Brigadier Aubertin W.S. Mallaby, Sir Christopher Mallaby and his brother Anthony. They were six and nine year old children when their father died. While speaking about the events of how their father was killed, Anthony Mallaby tells Hoogendijk: 'Getting caught up in somebody else's quarrel is of course the very worst thing that can happen to you.' Asked whether he could explain this 'somebody else's quarrel', Mallaby replies with some emphasis that it was a quarrel 'between the Dutch and the Indonesians, not *our* quarrel, nor between the Indian army and the Indonesians'. The fighting turned into 'a dreadful waste of human resources and human lives', he states, obviously also implicating the death of his own father.[6]

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3   A case in point is the opening statement by Hooper-Greenhill (1992, p.1), which, surprisingly, reads: 'What is a museum? Museums are no longer built in the image of that nationalistic temple of culture, the British Museum'.

4   See also McKeown's discussion of the intrinsic relationship between globalisation and the emergence of national borders and its implication for citizenship entitlements of migrants (2004).

5   On the Battle of Surabaya, see Frederick (1989); Tønnesson (1995, p.121 and pp.141-2).

6   Interview fragment Hoogendijk, *Soerabaja/Surabaya* 2007: 27,29 – 30,17 minutes. More discussion concerning this interview in Legêne and Eickhoff (2014).

These events of history, the memories of the participants, and the documentary film made by Hoogenberg, present various 'stages' of Disturbing Pasts as discussed in this volume. Mallaby's sons, Indonesian nationalists, Indo-Dutch youngsters and others who have been interviewed, were involved in the events from fundamentally different positions and with a different agency. As in Anthony Mallaby's quotation, they seem to frame their memories of the uprising in Surabaya within the history of 'their' current nation states, although both Thera André and some Indonesians and Indo-Dutch also express their sympathy with the position of the others, and share a certain sorrow with respect to the different forms of loss involved in the violence, separation, forced migration and resettlement. Their experiences will be addressed in the following section where I align them with Asma Abbas's argument in *Liberalism and Human Suffering; Materialist Reflections on Politics, Ethics and Aesthetics* (2010). Following her analysis, the representation of victims and suffering in decolonisation time (as made evident in *Soerabaja/ Surabaya*) might be regarded as a central issue in memory politics with respect to the end of empire and decolonisation, and, as I shall suggest, highly relevant to understand such representations in exhibitions.

Human suffering

Abbas develops her argument based on Nietzsche and Marx, and in discussion with contemporary feminists, postcolonial scholars and liberal ethical thinkers. She explains that liberalism's representation of human suffering implies an opposition between autonomous actors and passive victims, who are alienated from their own suffering and cannot speak for themselves (2010, p.134 and pp.138-9). In the case of the Battle of Surabaya we could think of many such victims: those who died in the streets, who were enlisted in the British Indian or Japanese armies, who were liberated from Japanese internment camps and caught in civil war, and many others. Abbas understands re-presentation as 'making present again'. And she continues: '*If representations make present, then the process involves sensing and making sensible*' which can be acting on behalf of, making a presentation of, acting/performing as if (2010, p.51, italics in original). These three meanings refer to 'roles': to agency and empathy – somebody speaks for someone else, something expresses what is at stake, someone acts as if being someone else. This process is clear in the documentary film. Mallaby's sons narrate in minute detail their reconstruction of the events during the last day of their father's life. The

Indonesians actors fiercely re-enact the uprising in an annual commemoration. Hoogenberg carefully asks his mother whether he has hurt her by this confrontation with historical events she had not fully grasped at the time, by invoking and intervening in her memories. His project in making the documentary film on Surabaya in 1945 is about 'sensing and making sensible' (Abbas, 2010, p.51) the human suffering in the transformation times of decolonisation. However, the filmmaker cannot turn it into a shared history; he cannot resolve the implicit separation, which is at stake among those involved, for this separation is based in the different citizenship entitlements before and after decolonisation. Thus Hoogendijk's mother is Dutch, Mallaby's sons are British, almost nothing is known about heirs to the British Indian soldiers, Europe is distant and aloof from the annual festive commemoration of the events in Surabaya and Japanese subjects do not register as part of Hoogendijk's filmed historical narrative.

Abbas's analysis focuses on texts and classic theatre plays; she does not address such visual representations in documentary films, museums or exhibitions. However, her notion of re-presentation as 'making present again' is pertinent to the understanding of those visual and visualizing practices. Making present again implies a dynamic relationship: speaking on behalf of, finding a form, performing or 'voicing' (Abbas, 2010, p.74, p.89 and passim).[7] Victims do not act themselves (they did not put themselves on display in imperial museums, did not write imperial histories): what is regarded as human suffering, is, at its core, a process of inclusion and exclusion, which acknowledges certain suffering. Liberalism addresses this process in moral, legal, social historical terms, but ignores suffering outside of this frame of 'liberalism'. Abbas (2010, pp.67-8) connects this frame of liberalism to notions of citizenship and concludes that 'those whose sufferings do not fit into the regime of liberal mnemotechnics […] cannot enter liberal politics' or, as argued here, cannot in retrospect enter the museum. Their suffering cannot be made sensible, gets no voice, is silent. In line with Gayatri Spivak's discussion of the silences in historical sources (1988), Abbas suggests that such silences might perhaps 'germinate in conscious responses to, or as an unintended consequence of suffering being diagnosed, interpreted, evaluated, sanctioned, and prescribed' (2010, p.89). Such universalising diagnoses (which refer to a diagnosis as

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7   This observation is put forth with reference to liberal thinkers like Susan Sontag (2003), Judith Shklar (1998) or Martha Nussbaum (1998).

either man-made or as natural disasters),[8] she claims, not only do not allow victims to speak nor do speak for them, but also 'drown' the political conversation of who must '*account for*' the specific human suffering in specific historical situations (2010, p.90, italics in original).

Abbas's argument is philosophical rather than historical, which leaves us somewhat helpless with respect to the notion of accountancy for human suffering – how, other than through historical discourse, can one address issues of accountability with respect to historical developments? However, her starting point is that human suffering is at the core of transformative politics (2010, p.14), and this suggests that her analysis is relevant to historically specific transition moments; moments like decolonisation and in our case more specifically, like the events in Surabaya in 1945. How and by whom has agency and human suffering in times of decolonisation been represented at the time, and what are its implications today?

The 1938 Jubilee display, that I noted above, with the display of colonial subjects celebrating their subjection to the Dutch Queen Wilhelmina (Figure 1.6.1), shows how, during the heyday of Dutch imperialism, the Colonial Museum in Amsterdam 'represented' – or more precisely, *silenced* – colonialism's human suffering by aesthetically presenting the arts and crafts, the beliefs and knowledge, the traditions and customs of the people. At the time, the display contributed to the alienation and invisibility of human suffering with respect to forced labour or physical abuse, war and political conflict, everyday racism or discrimination. As such it seems to confirm Abbas' analysis with respect to alienation and exclusion of citizenship. And although today the successor of the Colonial Museum, the Tropenmuseum, in retrospect tries to make colonial human suffering 'available to the senses and to experience' by deconstructing the hierarchical collection categories of empire, it struggles with the problem concerning about whom it speaks and to whom (van Dartel, 2009).

This problem has been openly addressed since 2003 at the Tropenmuseum in a new semi-permanent exhibition on colonial society in the Netherlands East Indies, which intentionally addressed and inverted the 1938 Jubilee display. Reflecting on its history as a tool of empire, it deliberately placed mannequins of the colonisers centre stage, with the colonised

people only present in form and roles that express the imperial imagination of the colonisers. This exhibition strategy originated from the argument, at the time, that the museum cannot make the colonised speak for themselves, but only can sensitise their history. By representing the colonial elite's view on indigenous society, the museum explicitly intends to 'exhibit' the *silence* of those that were subjected to colonialism (Figure 1.6.3). This was what the museum has taken from postcolonial scholars including Stuart Hall (1997) and the critical approach to the museum as a tool of empire. Thus as an exhibition on Dutch colonialism, it addressed historical sensitivities and experiences in Dutch society with respect to the colonial past. Indonesian visitors and colleagues responded positively, but also stressed that the same concept and representations would not work in Indonesian society today. Even though the Netherlands and Indonesia 'share' a colonial past, the representation of that past, the memories it invokes and the histories it tells, is location specific. A display which invokes the memory of the Dutch colonial history in a monumental memory site in Amsterdam, tells another story then for instance the history of Indonesian state formation on display in the former Dutch East Indian (VOC) Fortress of Vredenburg in Yogyakarta, which is now a World Heritage Site in Indonesia. The stories differ even though the exhibition devices like dioramas and life size mannequins and the objects collected in colonial times in those different locations may be the same.[9] The history of the Dutch empire thus is not only addressed from different national perspectives, it has turned into multiple national histories. This 'nationalisation' of the colonial past has become even stronger since in the Netherlands, *historical* discourse on the colonial past hardly includes histories of postcolonial and *contemporary* Indonesia, and for Indonesia the other way around.

This indicates that with respect to colonialism and its forms of knowledge as gathered in ethnographic collections (Cohn, 1996) museums might be in a deadlock. How can ethnographic knowledge be displayed as anything other than as ethnographic knowledge (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2007, p.2 and pp.18–9) with all the connotations of human suffering

8   Abbas refers here to the natural disaster of the earthquake in 'Lisbon' (Voltaire) and the man-made disaster of 'Auschwitz' as the 'bookends of the Enlightenment', as discussed in Susan Neiman (2004) *Evil in Modern Thought: An Alternative History in Philosophy,* Princeton, Princeton University Press.

9   This argument links the historical events of decolonisation to Hooper-Greenhills more structuralist discussion (with reference to Foucault) of early mnemotechnic skills related to memory loci and (images of) things (1992, pp.91-2), the relationship between knowledge and objects and her argument 'that material things have no essential identity, that meaning is not so constant, and that the processes of "keeping and sorting"(...) have not remained the same' (1992, p.196).

implied? In the context of a developing imperialism, ethnography was not about suffering, it was not seen as a man-made disaster caused by colonial agency (Abbas, 2010, p.92), but as a step towards historical progress. This legacy of a progress that denies suffering creates a major dilemma in the Tropenmuseum and the many other ethnographic museums in Europe that once were the uncomplicated tools of empire, teaching the visitors to become imperial citizens themselves (MacKenzie, 2011). One way out of this deadlock might be to radically leave the ethnographic discourse and replace it by a historical discourse. Here, Mallaby's car mentioned in the title, enters the stage, or better: the photographic image of his burnt car (Figure 1.6.4).

Decolonisation

It is necessary to better understand the connection – the sameness and differences – between ethnographic objects collected and classified in colonial time, and photographs with an ethnographic and/or historical meaning. To this end we should avoid making an absolute distinction between objects and photographs; photographs are objects, and certainly in museums, many object (like the mannequins in the 1938 Jubilee Exhibition in the Colonial Museum) are representations of photographed images (Edwards and Hart, 2004; Westerkamp, 2015). Besides, both content wise, and with respect to their collection histories, photograph collections make evident how museums channelled the transnational histories of colonialism connected to their collections, into national historiographical frames (see also Legêne and Eickhoff, 2014). Two photographs will serve as examples here in order to elaborate on this point. The first is an image of a small group of soldiers from the Netherlands-Indies colonial army who returned after the lost battle against the Japanese invasion for South Sumatra, on 1 March 1942 (Figure 1.6.5).[10] The second is the iconic image of a destroyed saloon car in the streets of Surabaya (scan from postcard for sale in Hotel Majapahit, the former Oranje Hotel), the car in which Mallaby had been killed on 30 October 1945. Both photographs represent many layers of human suffering rooted in decolonisation times, starting with the Second World War.

The photograph of the group of colonial army soldiers, made only four years after the exhibitionary celebration of Queen Wilhelmina's imperial rule, could stand for the 'last' picture in a long series of colonial images that made present to the coloniser the supposedly full devotion and loyalty of the colonised

people. It was taken, however, at a time when the perception of Empire by the colonisers themselves was in a fundamental transition, as a result of the outbreak of the Second World War. After 1940 the very purpose of Empire changed: in order to counter fascism, colonial subjects were no longer imagined as dependents of – as implied by the wax mannequins on display around an empty imperial throne four years earlier– but as supportive to their colonial centres in these times of national crisis.[11] The photograph of the defeated soldiers, orchestrated through the caption that stresses their dedication to fight against the Japanese, illustrates this shift. The perception of agency among colonial subjects further changed when, after 1942, ideas emerged in Europe about federative political bonds between the European nation-states and independent or autonomous former colonies. Allowing the concept of federative bonds, meant a fundamental change in the idea of Empire in Europe. However, a more radical change occurred in the perception of Empire by the nationalists and their followers in the colonies. To them, decolonisation became the only way out of Empire, with the nation state as the only political option to frame this ambition (Shipway, 2008, p.62 and p.235). Mallaby's destroyed saloon car, carefully depicted in front of a spic-and-span billboard with the slogan 'Indonesia Once and Forever' illustrates this fundamental change in the now *de facto* ex-colony.

The two photographs of the soldiers returning from the lost battle against the Japanese invasion and of Mallaby's car, depict historical events and actions, with dedicated actors confronted with situations of life and death, instead of musealised imagined static and lifeless 'subjects'. They also show how the nationalisation of the empire after decolonisation transferred sensitivities and sensibilities with respect to the human suffering that was implied in decolonisation, to specific national histories. In broad strokes: those who died in the streets of Surabaya now belong to Indonesian history, those who were evacuated and shipped to the Netherlands now are part of Dutch history, whereas Mallaby's history is entangled with Allied

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10   NIOD Photograph Collection 48731 – This is also the first opening image in the image photograph collection on the Second World War presented in Kok and Somers (2011).

11   This is also what the caption to the original photograph of the colonial soldiers confirms. The text at the reverse of the image reads that the soldiers are of various ethnic decent (Javanese, Menadonese, Amboinese, Indo-Dutch and Dutch) that they were very motivated to fight against the Japanese but were not able to withstand the invaders. The caption thus stresses the multicultural character of the colonial army and the preparedness of the soldiers to defend a status quo. We do not know what has happened with the soldiers. Their picture came in the Dutch Second World War archive (NIOD) via the Netherlands Information Bureau in New York. (NIOD Photograph Collection 48731).

warfare and the British Indian armies at the eve of the independence and partition of India and Pakistan, and the Japanese are mostly absent. This split of historical accounts on the end of empire into separate national narratives brings into focus the issue of citizenship again.

Decolonisation turned histories of colonial subjecthood into narratives of historical citizenship. Former colonial subjects have entered the museums of their new states in historical displays that confirm their agency. In Indonesia this is often achieved with dioramas, including those in Yogyakarta that tell the story of the second Dutch Military Aggression against the Republic of Indonesia in 1948, and depicting, for instance the capture of Soekarno by Dutch special forces in 1948 (Captain and Jones, 2010) (Figure 1.6.6). Reminiscent of the static and fixed ethnographic exhibition practice, such dioramas visualise a state-historical narrative, with historical actors that represent individual activities in times of change. Because of this *historical* narrative, these dioramas differ fundamentally from the timeless ethnographic representation of the cultural diversity among the peoples of Indonesia as it still is on display in ethnographic museums both in Indonesia and the Netherlands. The two exhibition practices exist next to each other: historical displays next to ethnographic exhibitions. The one represents the struggle of decolonisation, to the other decolonisation appears irrelevant, based as it is on the timeless ethnography that was part of colonialism and denied the colonised any agency.

In the historical displays new mechanisms of exclusion and invisibility emerged. Whereas the Indonesian dioramas on decolonisation history do not represent the people like Thera André or the Moluccan soldiers of the former Royal Dutch Indies Army, who voluntarily or by force left the ex-colony in the process of decolonisation, these histories did in fact enter Dutch museums in new historical displays. These were based on donations to those museums by these immigrants to the Netherlands of their precious ethnography and the photograph albums of their lives in the colonies. With these objects and images of a colonial past in the Netherlands Indies, the postcolonial immigrants inserted their overseas history into a contemporary Dutch history based in Europe. In Indonesia, except for references to the Dutch East India Company, the past of those (groups of) people who did not become citizens of the new Indonesian state, but left in the process of decolonisation, is not represented in museums. Their emigration is not addressed in recent historical dioramas in Indonesia, whereas in colonial times European and Asian-Dutch populations

in particular were never 'collected' for ethnographic displays in the Netherlands Indies either. As a result, the history of these groups is only represented in the Netherlands, where it is framed as a history of immigration into Dutch history (Figure 1.6.7). This offers a telling example of a shift in historical framing in times of transition: from an implicit overseas history of the empire to an explicit history in a national past. This shift in the framing of memories on decolonisation, which Hoogendijk also discusses with his mother and which is connected to large-scale migration and change of citizenship entitlements, represents another aspect of human suffering. It is about a historical citizenship that cannot easily be diagnosed as a man-made disaster, because its legitimacy once rested upon an idea of modernisation and historical progress.

It is striking that recently, suffering through man-made disaster in transitional times has been put on display by means of photographs of victims, for instance in military confrontations in colonial and decolonisation struggle, both in Indonesia and in the Netherlands. An example is the exhibition at the Indies Remembrance Centre in Bronbeek near Arnhem, the Netherlands. This exhibition tells the story of the postcolonial immigrants who had to leave Indonesia and came to the Netherlands (Figure 1.6.8). Some photographs deal with the decolonisation struggle. In contrast to the iconic photograph of Mallaby's balancing burnt out saloon car in an empty street with military vehicles, these photographs in the Indies Remembrance Centre explicitly show rows of Indonesian rural village (*desa*) people who have been executed by the soldiers under Dutch command. So, what do these displays of the violence of decolonisation 'do' in terms of understanding decolonisation? The photographs are presented as hard facts that may break the silence in Dutch politics and historiography with respect to unlawful violence committed by various parties in the era of decolonisation. As such, they have the potential to trigger debates on law, justice, reparation. However, I am not sure how to interpret the role photographs are made to play in this debate within the context of the colonial archive at large. Is displaying the dead bodies of those *desa* people who have been killed, and thus effectively made the 'last' passive victims of empire, a way to acknowledge them as the historical citizens of the postcolonial nation state? Is showing their pictures a way to inscribe them – and all those subjected people whose artifacts and human remains were collected in ethnographic museums – into the history of empire as active citizens, just as the soldiers who fought with the Japanese (Figure 1.6.3) finally became individuals instead of the ethnic types as displayed in Figure 1.6.1? The

exhibition suggests that the *desa* people share a history with the immigrants who came to the Netherlands during the same events.[12] This suggestion has a major historiographic impact.

Photographs, understood in transnational frames beyond the national background of the institutions in which they are kept, may enable us to see continuities and changes in the context of representation more clearly and more fully understand how the nationalizing of the imperial past after decolonisation has created new mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion, which silence human suffering in the process of state formation in order to naturalise the international order of national states. They may help to open up the legacies of ethnography by a new historical understanding of the transition processes in colonial

and decolonisation times and it relationship to the historical meaning of the ethnographic collections in our museums. And they may help to lift the 'burden' of the violence implied in decolonisation from the shoulders of its victims.

Colonial relationships, as contained in ethnographic collections and colonial photographs, refer to human suffering of people who were denied access to liberal politics. This elaboration on exhibition practices with respect to Indonesia and the Netherlands suggests that representations of the colonial past in museums today could raise awareness of another diagnosis of human suffering, as an extension of the diagnostic categories of natural and man-made suffering: that is a suffering caused by the many explicit and implicit distinctions made in contemporary society between historical citizens as the nationals of one and the same, or of different nation states (MacKeown, 2008).

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12   Cf. Abbas (2010, p.92): 'One is bound to find remarkable continuities, and grounds for radical solidarities, between the experiences and political desires of those marginalized and betrayed along any avenue of global capitalism.'

Figure 1.6.1 The symbolic throne of Queen Wilhelmina surrounded by peoples of the Netherlands East Indies, exhibited at the Jubilee Exhibition in the Colonial Museum in 1938. The mannequins represent, from the left to the right: a Dayak man, a man from Bali, a warrior from Nias, a Dayak warrior (Eastern Kalimantan), another man from Nias, a Toraja warrior, a Balinese woman, a Toraja woman. At the left in front of the throne sits a woman (possibly from Toraja) and at the right a Batak man. At the background left a woman from Lampong, the woman at the right side is unidentified, possibly she is a Dayak (Western Kalimantan). Tropenmuseum, Amsterdam. Collection nr. 10000091
See also: http://www.tropenmuseum.com/smartsite.shtml?ch=TMU&id=7523
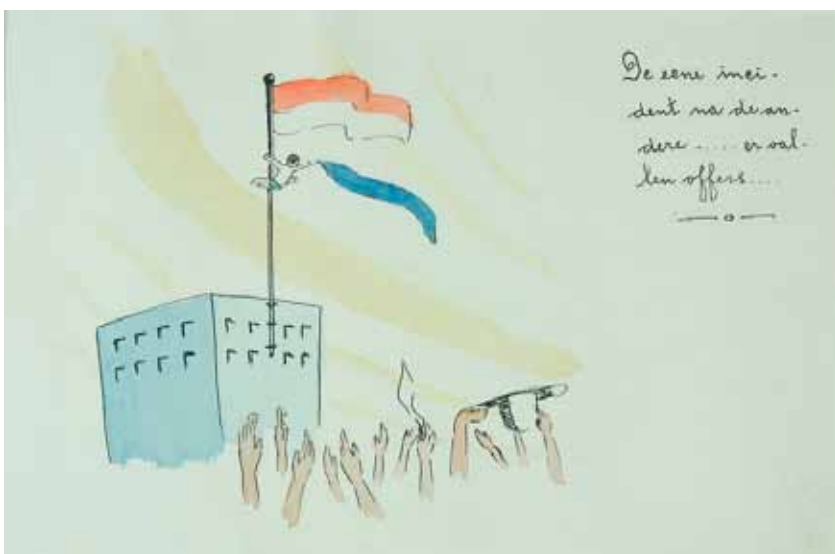

Figure 1.6.2 Drawing of a 'Flag incident' as also happened in Surabaya on 19.9.1945. Young Indonesian nationalists turn the Dutch national flag into the Indonesian Merah-Putih (Red White) national flag. The caption to the drawing reads: 'One incident after the other … people fall victim'. Tropenmuseum, Amsterdam. Collection nr. 5653-6

Figure 1.6.3 Overview of a part of the 'Colonial Theatre' at the semi-permanent exhibition on the Netherlands East Indies at Tropenmuseum, which mirrors the 1938 Jubilee Exhibition at its predecessor, the Colonial Museum. In this display, mannequins refer to colonial historical archetypes, like from the left to the right: the artist (in this case Charles Sayers), the Governor General (here B.C. de Jonge), the colonial housewife (a fictional character composed from various memoirs), the tobacco planters/founders of the Colonial Institute (in this case, J.Th. Cremer). The mannequin at the centre of the photograph is 'Toean Anwar', the main protagonist in a short novel by a Dutch colonial author. Not visible are a colonial soldier (again a main protagonist in a short novel) and a nurse, wife of a missionary (and again a fictional character composed from various memoirs). Photograph: Tropenmuseum Amsterdam, Irene de Groot 2003.
Also see: http://www.tropenmuseum.com/smartsite.shtml?ch=TMU&id=7523

Figure 1.6.4 The destroyed Lincoln sedan in the streets of Surabaya. In this car the British brigadier A.S. Mallaby was killed on 30 October 1945. At the other side of the street are the 'Gedung Cerutu (sigar building) and the 'Internatio' building, at the Willemsplein (now Jalan Taman Jayengrono). Source: Peter Hoogendijk – see also Imperial War Museum IWM SE-5865 November 1945. See also the trailer of Hoogendijks documentary at: http://www.dammasfilms.nl/?c=122&id=46

Figure 1.6.5 Soldiers return from a battle in South Sumatra at the first day of the Japanese invasion, 1.3.1942. The caption at the reverse side of the photograph reads that that the soldiers are of various ethnic decent (Javanese, Menadonese, Amboinese, Indo-Dutch and Dutch) that they were very motivated to fight against the Japanese but were not able to withstand the invaders. The caption thus stresses the multicultural character of the colonial army and the preparedness of the soldiers to defend a status quo. We do not know what has happened with the soldiers. The picture is now in the Dutch Second World War archive (NIOD) in Amsterdam. Collection: NIOD 48731.

Figure 1.6.6 Soekarno arrested by the Dutch special forces in Yogyakarta, 19.12.1948 Diorama in Museum Monumen Yogya Kembali (Museum and Monument to commemorate the struggle in and the recapture of Yogyakarta). Between February 1946 and August 1950 Yogyakarta was the capital of the Republic of Indonesia. (Photograph by the author, 2009)

Figure 1.6.7 Collage with photographs of arrival scenes at the Indies Remembrance Centre at Bronbeek near Arnhem, the Netherlands, which opened in 2007. (Photograph by the author, 2011) See also: http://www. indischherinneringscentrum.nl/ and www.hetverhaalvanindie. com

Figure 1.6.8 Photographs and historical film footage are used as well to address violence and human suffering in colonial and decolonisation times, at the Indies Remembrance Centre at Bronbeek near Arnhem, the Netherlands, which opened in 2007. (Photograph by the author, 2011) See also: http://www.indischherinneringscentrum. nl/ and www.hetverhaalvanindie.com

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COMMENTS ON THE ART AND RESEARCH PROJECT 'THE DIVISION OF THE EARTH – TABLEAUX ON THE LEGAL SYNOPSES OF THE BERLIN AFRICA CONFERENCE'

Dierk Schmidt, Malte Jaguttis

Abstract:
Is pictorial language able to convey a juridical abstraction? This co-authored text addresses that question in the context of the geo-political division of Africa after the Berlin Africa Conference (Congo Conference), as a means to conceptualise colonial rule in 1884/85 – and its manifold grave consequences – as a historical by-product of Europe's political and aesthetic modernity. Is there any value in representing the image of genocide, (while acknowledging the 'impossibility' of its representation)? With these issues in mind, lawyer Malte Jaguttis and artist Dierk Schmidt offer a commentary based on their project, 'The division of the earth – Tableaux on the legal synopses of the Berlin Africa Conference'.

Biographical notes
Dierk Schmidt (born 1965) is a Berlin-based artist and author. He is guest advisor and conducts workshops at various universities, among others the Leuphana University of Lüneburg, the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts Scools and the Berlin Weißensee School of Art. His solo exhibitions have included: *Ich weiß was ... was du nicht weißt ... – When opinion becomes an occasion for calculation*, Kunstraum objectif […], Antwerpen, 2003; *SIEV-X – On a Case of Intensified Refugee Politics, or Géricault and the Question Concerning the Construction of History*, Städel Museum, Frankfurt/Main, 2009; and *IMAGE LEAKS – On the Image Politics of Resources*, Frankfurt Kunstverein, Frankfurt/Main, 2011. Among his group exhibitions are: *Violence is at the Margin of All Things*, Generali Foundation, Vienna, 2002; *Com volem ser governats?*, Macba, Barcelona, 2004; Trienal du Luand, Luanda, 2007; documenta 12, Kassel, 2007; and *Animism*, at the Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin, 2012. His most recent publication is: *The Division of the Earth – Tableaux on the Legal Synopses of the Berlin Africa Conference* (co-edited by Lotte Arndt, Clemens Krümmel, Dierk Schmidt, Hemma Schmutz, Diethelm Stoller, Ulf Wuggenig), Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, Cologne 2010.

Malte Jaguttis studied law and history and holds a doctorate degree in law from the University of Hamburg, Germany. Between 2003 and 2007, he was a research assistant at the Institute for International Affairs in Hamburg. Jaguttis has published in the fields of Public International Law and German Constitutional Law, with research interests that span legal theory and history, fundamental rights and urban governance. He has been admitted as a lawyer in Germany since 2009, where he specialises in Public, European and International Law.

An earlier version of this material was presented on the occasion of the project conference 'Disturbing Pasts: Memories, Controversies and Creativity' (20 -22 November 2012, Museum of Ethnology/Weltmuseum Wien, Vienna). To view the film footage on the Open Arts Archive, www.openartsarchive.org, follow this link: http://www.openartsarchive.org/oaa/content/disturbing-pasts-memories-controversies-and-creativity-conference-9

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COMMENTS ON THE ART AND RESEARCH PROJECT 'THE DIVISION OF THE EARTH – TABLEAUX ON THE LEGAL SYNOPSES OF THE BERLIN AFRICA CONFERENCE'

Dierk Schmidt, Malte Jaguttis

I

The project 'The division of the earth' began eight years ago with research on the Berlin Africa Conference held in 1884/85, often called 'Congo Conference'. This historical event served as a starting point to deepen the artistic-critical approach already pursued in earlier research-based works examining historical and present-day processes of political representation. The Berlin Africa Conference is until now barely present in the collective memory of its host country. It was, however, a pivotal moment in the history of modern colonialism. That opened the opportunity to tread new paths of reflection by connecting aesthetic and political issues. In face of the epochal ruthlessness with which an entire continent was made the object of the territorial ambitions of the participating European States and the USA, 'The division of the earth' was initiated to trigger debates beyond the fields of art and politics, setting both in relation to each other. If, with the legal framework of the Berlin Africa Conference, colonial rule was enforced via the normative abstraction, should not abstraction in painting be the logical genre of such an examination? And could its use mark an attempt to represent the structural violence involved?

From this perspective, it would be insufficient to treat the Berlin Africa Conference and its aftermath as a completed, historically and geopolitically relatively remote set of problems. 'The division of the earth' argues that many of these problems can be related to the political situation in our own context. Germans have for a long time been virtually ignoring or marginalising their colonial history as discussions on the more recent crimes of the mid-20th century were prevailing. Only in the recent years and in particular under the auspices of the claims for reparation voiced by former Herero and Nama populations in Namibia, this specific history has recently become tangible again.

After decades of silence on the crimes committed under German colonial rule over 'South-West

Africa', Germany officially responded to the affected communities in 2004. Under the pressure of a claim for reparations that had been filed at a U.S. court by the Herero People's Reparations Corporation (HPRC) in 2001, the German Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development apologised for what would *today* be regarded as genocide. However, in her speech, Minister Heidemarie Wieczorek-Zeul carefully avoided laying a foundation for reparation payments. Germany's political response was clearly a decision with a European dimension, since a legally relevant statement about colonialism could also set a precedent for other former European colonial powers.

With a focus on the discussion about possible parallels between abstraction in painting and international law, the project pursued several questions: Which socio-political abstractions did colonialism in German South-West Africa apply for its normative concept of an appropriation of land, later defended against an 'uprising' population by means of a genocidal war? How do these abstractions continue to have an impact? Through which forms of abstraction can an artistic examination of this highly complex historical configuration serve more than just a re-tracing or even an affirmative function? What relevance can the criticism of past decades inspired by postcolonial studies have for contemporary artistic practices? Can all this be depicted by means of any aesthetic method? If so, who does it benefit? Which processes, which situations evade depiction altogether?

When approaching this set of questions, one of the first choices was to try to give such abstract problems a palpable, physical materialisation. Not interested in easy analogies and formalisms, the existing accessibility of the artistic genre of history painting was to be used as a vehicle for present research questions. Painting was not to become a representative of those oft-disavowed claims of objectivity held by history painting in the past – the outpour of this attitude fills the museums and, moreover, has become associated with the representative interests behind it. 'The division of the earth' was interested in the legacy of painterly abstraction and the expressive *and* differentiating possibilities it may still offer in a contemporary discussion about abstraction and representation. Its ability to convey complex meaning seemed to be a valuable aesthetic bridge to address the other type of abstraction at work: The laws that were developed at the Berlin Africa Conference and then acted out over decades of colonial rule in Africa. A set of abstract rules was created and tentatively based on these legal rules of abstraction and on the language of political cartography – until these rules, being deliberately

combined and layered, demonstrated their inherent tendency to create, legitimise and enact violence.

In addition to specific colour codes, perspectives, dimensions and symbolisms that were derived from a close reading of the Acts of the Conference, juridical definitions were also translated into an abstract symbolism. For example, the key colonial legal concept of 'terra nullius', i.e. the claim that the appropriated lands were to be regarded as 'no man's land' and therefore 'available to occupation' for colonial use was applied as a specific template covering the surface of each painting, in which certain picture areas were layered 'from above' with a relief-like mass of silicone. 'Regulations materialised' in the true sense of the word resulted in the utilised mass of silicone on the picture surface. This led to brittleness and damages in the resulting silicone figures that increased with the number of layers – and thus also the layers of different juridical definitions.

2

'The division of the earth' is arguing on both a pictorial and textual level. In addition to a picture series, the project includes the communication of university seminars, contributions by several researchers and a collection of source material to address aesthetic, political, art-historical and current legal aspects of postcolonial debates. Within these perspectives, the potentials of the politics of remembrance, reparation, and correction, which in the postcolonial present raise objections against the continuing effects of historical violence, are of pivotal importance.

Competing interpretations of international law reveal that the legal frame for a discussion about colonialism is closely connected to a postcolonial international order of States which itself derived from colonial thought and practice. Legal response to the action filed by the Herero is therefore manifold: It ranges from writers declaring that a judicial response to the genocide would be impossible, to interpretations that acknowledge the relevance of historical breaches or ambivalences of law in today's legal order. Is there a way to discuss the Eurocentric foundation and imperial origin of international law not merely as a historical or political but also as a legal question?

'The division' project in particular exposes itself to the limits of different perspectives. Proceedings for reparation have to deal with the inherent contradiction that they fall back on precisely that law that was meant to legitimise the colonial strategy of a deprivation of rights. By focusing on the aspects of legal discourse and reconciliation, it asks if international law – due to an 'enabling violation' by colonial atrocities (Spivak,

2007, p.176) – is able to reflect and discuss its own colonial impetus or if it is rather still legitimising a colonial strategy of deprivation as a 'perfect crime' (Lyotard, 2002, p.8). The series of tableaux refers to the legal categories of the Berlin Africa Conference, e.g., the assertions of 'terra nullius' and 'occupation' and the definition of 'statehood' by the participating States. On the level of international law, this is where we encounter the translation of racist thought into linguistic terms by selecting who speaks as a legal subject (and conference participant) and who is spoken about as a mere object of law.

In this context, the search for ways to question a self-descriptive colonial order appears to be a touchstone for the possibility (or impossibility) to reflect colonial history together with the (colonial) history of international law.

3

The picture series of 'The division of the earth' consists of fourteen tableaux.[1] The following choice of three of them may illustrate the artistic language developed in the course of 'The division' project.

(a) Tableau 5, Article 34+35
'Chapter VI, Declaration relative to the essential conditions to be observed in order that new occupations on the coasts of the African continent may be held to be effective.

Article 34: Any Power which henceforth takes possession of a tract of land on the coasts of the African continent outside of its present possessions, or which, being hitherto without such possessions, shall acquire them, as well as the Power which assumes a Protectorate there, shall accompany the respective act with a notification thereof, addressed to the other Signatory Powers of the present Act, in order to enable them, if need be, to make good any claims of their own.

Article 35: The Signatory Powers of the present Act recognize the obligation to insure the establishment of authority in the regions occupied by them on the coasts of the African continent sufficient to protect existing rights, and, as the case may be, freedom of trade and of transit under the conditions agreed upon.'

(General Act, 1973, pp.288ff.)

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1   All images in this article: Copyright VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn, Courtesy the artist and Gallery Walbröl, photo Andreas Pletz.
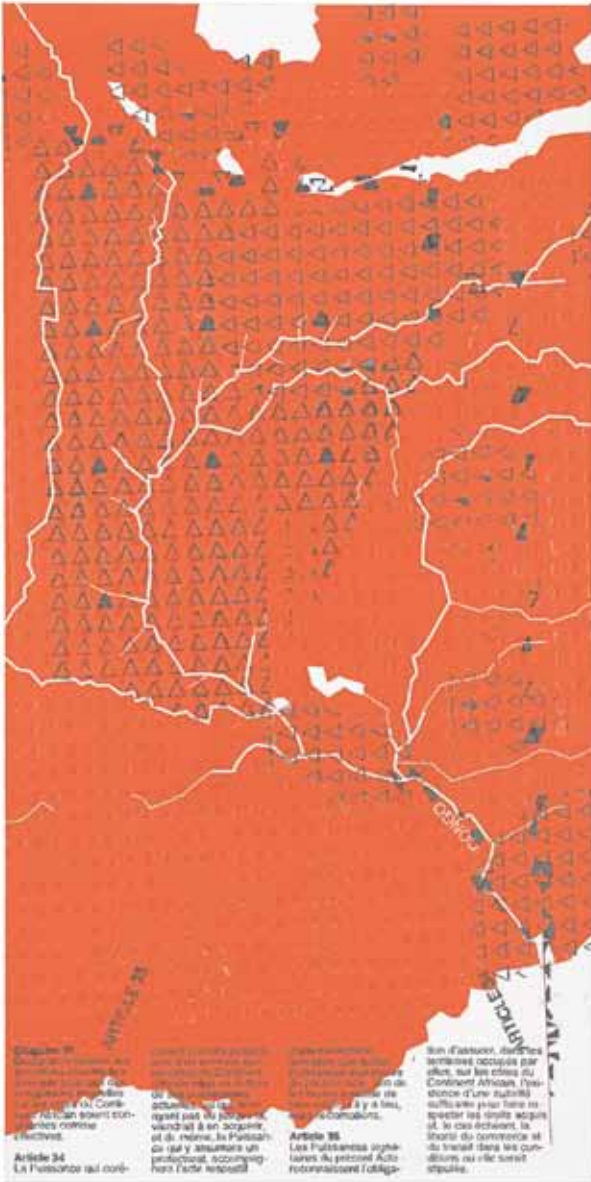
Figure 2.1.2: Tableau 5, detail of 2.1.1

Figure 2.1.1: Tableau 5, ARTICLE 34 + 35

- Chapter VI, Article 34 of the General Act of the Berlin Africa Conference, the 'notification obligation', is shown on the right above the diagonal in the form of a territorial border formation. The cross-section of Article 34 and 35 corresponds with the 'ideal taking possession' according to the General Act. Article 34 determines the future borders in agreement with the signatory States (the related filled triangles are forming a line) of the conference, but, however, not with representatives of the indigenous populations.

- Chapter VI, Article 35, 'effective occupation', is displayed on the left above the diagonal: it lies as a grey formation on the surface of terra nullius as a transparent layer of oval forms. The claim to power abstractly formulated in Article 35 materialises in the silicone mass.

The economic principle behind the legal assertion of 'effective occupation' ensures maximal spatial expansion (contoured/empty form) by using a minimum of State efforts only (filled forms). Article 34 and 35 are shown on the Congo Bassin, the only territory 'distributed' at the Berlin Africa Conference itself and not acquired by means of 'effective occupation' in subsequent State practice.

Hoornkrans, 4 août 1892

le magistrat britannique a Walfish Bay

Cher monsieur
(...)
J'ai entendu que les gouvernements britannique et allemand ont organisé une réunion pour décider lequel des deux ferait des traités de protection avec les chefs d'un tel ou tel pays africain, et que vous, les Britanniques, avez cédé ce pays-ci à l'Allemagne. Mais vous avez stipulé que les chefs ne seront forcés à rien. Si un dirigeant veut bien accepter la protection 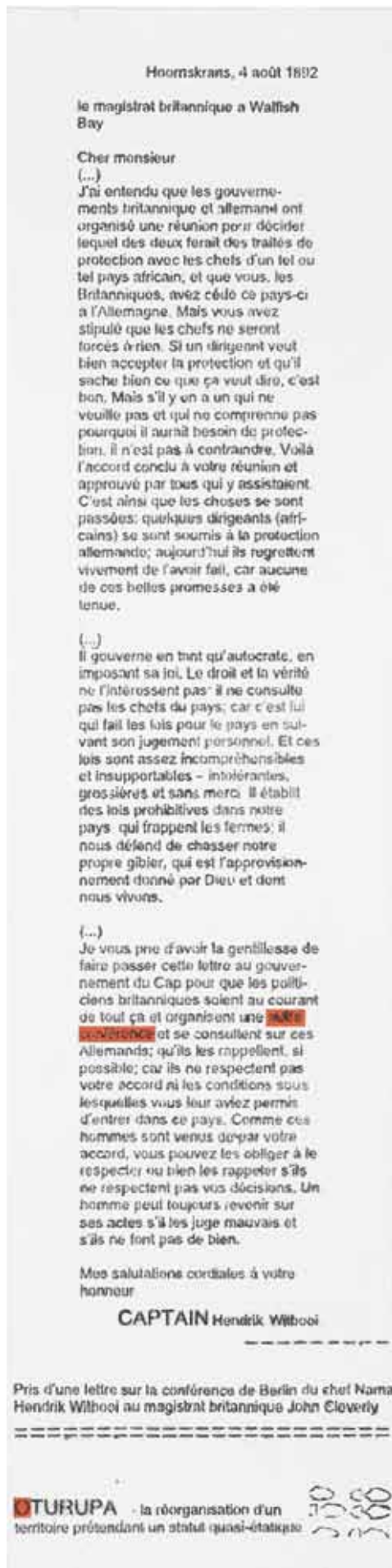et qu'il sache bien ce que ça veut dire, c'est bon. Mais s'il y en a un qui ne veuille pas et qui ne comprenne pas pourquoi il aurait besoin de protection, il n'est pas à contraindre. Voilà l'accord conclu à votre réunion et approuvé par tous qui y assistaient. C'est ainsi que les choses se sont passées: quelques dirigeants (africains) se sont soumis à la protection allemande; aujourd'hui ils regrettent vivement de l'avoir fait, car aucune de ces belles promesses a été tenue.

(...)
Il gouverne en tant qu'autocrate, en imposant sa loi. Le droit et la vérité ne l'intéressent pas: il ne consulte pas les chefs du pays; car c'est lui qui fait les lois pour le pays en suivant son jugement personnel. Et ces lois sont assez incompréhensibles et insupportables – intolérantes, grossières et sans merci. Il établit des lois prohibitives dans notre pays qui frappent les fermes; il nous défend de chasser notre propre gibier, qui est l'approvisionnement donné par Dieu et dont nous vivons.

(...)
Je vous prie d'avoir la gentillesse de faire passer cette lettre au gouvernement du Cap pour que les politiciens britanniques soient au courant de tout ça et organisent une autre conférence et se consultent sur ces Allemands; qu'ils les rappellent, si possible; car ils ne respectent pas votre accord ni les conditions sous lesquelles vous leur aviez permis d'entrer dans ce pays. Comme ces hommes sont venus de par votre accord, vous pouvez les obliger à le respecter ou bien les rappeler s'ils ne respectent pas vos décisions. Un homme peut toujours revenir sur ses actes s'il les juge mauvais et s'ils ne font pas de bien.

Mes salutations cordiales à votre honneur

CAPTAIN Hendrik Witbooi

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Pris d'une lettre sur la conférence de Berlin du chef Nama Hendrik Witbooi au magistrat britannique John Cleverly
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TURUPA - la réorganisation d'un territoire prétendant un statut quasi-étatique

Figure 2.1.3: Tableau 9, 'CHER MONSIEUR …' (LETTRE DE WITBOOI)

(b) Tableau 9, "Cher Monsieur..." (Lettre de Witbooi)

'Hoornkrans, 4 August 1892, The British Magistrate in Walvis Bay

Dear Sir,

[...]

I have heard that the British and the German Governments held a large meeting to decide who should make Protection treaties with the chiefs of which country in Africa; and that you the British let the Germans have this land. But you stipulated at the meeting that no chief shall be forced. If a leader is willing, and understands what it means to accept Protection, well and good; but if another is not willing to, and does not understand why he should need Protection, he cannot be coerced. That was the agreement reached at your meeting, which was endorsed by all those present. And so it happened: some (African) rulers surrendered to German Protection and are today bitterly sorry for they have not seen any of the beautiful promises kept. [...] He rules autocratically, enforcing his government laws. Right and truth do not interest him; he does not consult the country's chiefs; for he himself makes the laws for our country, following only his own judgment. And these laws are quite insupportable, incomprehensible, and unbearable— intolerant, pitiless, uncouth. He establishes prohibiting laws in our country and on our farms; he forbids us to hunt our own game, which is the Godgiven supply from which we live.

[...]

I beg you kindly to be so good and forward this letter to the Cape Government, so British politicians may hear about this, and hold **another conference** and deliberate about these Germans, to recall them if possible, from our country; for they do not abide by the Agreement and conditions under which you allowed them to enter this country. A man can always change what he has made if it is not good in his eyes, and if it does no good.

With cordial greeting to Your Honour
CAPTAIN Hendrik Witbooi'

From a letter concerning the Berlin Africa Conference, written by the Nama chief Hendrik Witbooi to the British Magistrate John Cleverly (The Hendrik Witbooi Papers, 1995, pp.97ff).

- In his letter, Witbooi describes the results of the Berlin-Africa-Conference and objects to the

infringement of protection treaties by Germany. Referring to the Berlin Conference, he requests an 'autre conférence' in order to discuss the consequences.

- The footsteps (see the bottom of the Tableaux) stand for a gesture of resistance, of a 'non-State' or a violently disenfranchised position – they may be seen as if they were 'vote with the feet'. The footstep figure sequences are introduced in the tableaux by using the colour white instead of orange – the latter indicates 'ruled' space. As opposed to the triangles, which simultaneously lie on the orange pictures without specific direction, the footstep sequence has a successive and targeted direction. The figure of the step sequence is derived from the *oturupa* ('Truppenspielerbewegung'), an annual meeting of the Herero in Okahandja/Namibia. In this context, the movement of the *oturupa* becomes an expression of 'sovereignty', an autonomous organisational form that positions itself vis-à-vis genocidal extermination.

(c) Tableau 12, Plainte de la HPRC
- Horizontal reading direction, starting from the left: It let's us think of an *oturupa*. While stepping into the Court (from the left), the footprints of the Claimants (the HPRC – Herero People's Reparations Corporation) become filled with silicone and, if only for a moment, their action re-establishes the legal personality of the Herero in international relations. In this act the Defendants with their colonial names, placed on the right get reconstructed, meanwhile there are shown in the attempt to remain outside the space of the legal action, at least with their heels.

The international character of the action produces a broad public space. The Federal Republic of Germany rejects service of the writ, referring to its 'State immunity' under international law on the right side.

- 10/02/1904: Disenfranchisement and von Trotha's extermination order (the 'German' foot makes the 'Herero' foot transparent) – Afterwards: Expropriation of land (one foot steps on another foot) – 08/18/1907: forced labour (one foot controls a number of disenfranchised feet). Below that: equality of sovereigns in the 'Schutz- und Freundschaftsvertrag', dated 10/21/1895.

In his contribution to the Division project, 'Reasons to claim for Reparations from Germany in front of a U.S. Court', the Namibian researcher Cons Karamata concludes:

Figure 2.1.4: Tableau 12, PLAINTE DE LA HPRC

Figure 2.1.5: (detail of 2.1.4).

'The genocide committed by the German Empire against the Herero people destroyed the group's social fibre. It reduced the Herero numerically from 80,000 to only 18,000 persons. The Germans confiscated our cattle, the backbone of our economy and took over our land, our means of production. The genocide reduced us from a self-sufficient, independent people to mere labourers and refugees.'

(Karamata in Schmidt, 2010, p.50)

-The tableaux were exhibited for the first time 13 June 2007, on the same day there was a (inconclusive) hearing in the Deutsche Bundestag on reparations for colonial crimes.

'The division of the earth' has been shown and discussed in various stages at Kunstverein Salzburg, 2005; documenta 12, 2007; Kunstraum of the University of Luneburg, 2007/08; the recent comprehensive book publication: Dierk Schmidt, *The Division of the Earth*, EAN 9783865608024.

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LATE PHOTOGRAPHY, MILITARY LANDSCAPES AND THE POLITICS OF MEMORY

Simon Faulkner

Abstract

This essay considers the photographic genre of 'late photography' that has emerged roughly over the last two decades. Late photographs picture material remains left in the aftermath of events that often involve forms of violence. These photographs are usually high in detail, but formally simple, framing aftermath sites in ways that suggest the reservation of judgement and commentary upon the things they picture. This gives the impression that such photographs are intended to distance the spectator from the political meanings of the events or situations to which they refer. The discussion presented in the essay suggests that it is this apparent distancing from the political that opens up possibilities for the imaginative rethinking of how the past might function in relation to the politics of the present. The essay explores these concerns through the discussion of photographs by Simon Norfolk, Angus Boulton, Gilad Ophir and Roi Kuper, in relation to two historical and political contexts: the Cold War, considered briefly in relation to Boulton's work and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, considered more extensively in relation to the work of Norfolk, Ophir, and Kuper.

Biographical note
Simon Faulkner is the programme leader in art history at Manchester Metropolitan University. His current research is focussed on relationships between visual representation and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This research has involved collaborative work with visual practitioners, for example, *Between States*, a book developed with the Israeli artist David Reeb, will be published in late 2014. He is also a co-investigator on 'Picturing the Social', an ESRC-funded research project on social media images.

An earlier version of this material was presented on the occasion of the project conference 'Disturbing Pasts: Memories, Controversies and Creativity' (20 -22 November 2012, Museum of Ethnology/Weltmuseum Wien, Vienna).

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LATE PHOTOGRAPHY, MILITARY LANDSCAPES AND THE POLITICS OF MEMORY

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Late photography

The last two decades, or so has seen the emergence of a genre of photography that pictures the effects of historical events and processes on landscape and the built environment. Termed 'late photography' by David Campany (2003, 2006 and 2007, p.27), this type of photograph often addresses the traces of violent or catastrophic events, such as disasters, terrorism, and warfare, as well as picturing moribund military sites. Examples of this kind of photograph are Richard Misrach's images of the Bravo 20 U.S. Navy bombing range in Nevada, taken in the second half of the 1980s (Misrach, 1990), Paul Seawright, Brian McKee, and Simon Norfolk's pictures of Afghanistan after the Allied invasion in 2001 (Seawright, 2003; Poller, 2006; Norfolk, 2002), and Donovan Wylie's photographs of the disused Maze Prison near Belfast, taken between 2002 and 2003 (Wylie, 2004). Such images are doubly removed from the events and processes to which they inevitably refer. In Campany's words, late photographs are 'not so much the trace of an event as the *trace of* the trace of an event.' (Campany, 2003, p.124) These pictures of the detritus left behind by conflict refer to absence as much as presence and, because of this, are inextricably linked to issues of memory.

Dubravka Ugrešić has observed that memory 'is a fishnet with a very small catch and with the water gone' (Ugrešić, 1996a, p.55). Late photography pictures the kinds of remnant that constitute this 'small catch' of memory. Such photographs bring us face-to-face with the *otherness* of the past as something that cannot be grasped in its full complexity. Late photographs can therefore function as metaphors for our relationship to the past. A particularly strong example of this is Anthony Haughey's photograph *Destroyed Files, Bosnia Herzegovina*, taken in 1999 (Haughey, 2006, p.33). All that remains of the files in the photograph is ash and rusted lever-arch mechanisms strewn across an area of rough ground. We are faced with the impossibility of ever knowing what the burnt files contained. Haughey's photograph therefore presents us with an example of how late photography pictures the destruction

of the products of human culture that embody collective memories. The photograph also suggests the war against memory that accompanied the ethnic cleansing that was a key aspect of the conflict in former Yugoslavia. Thought about in these terms, the picture might be related to Ugrešić's notion of the 'confiscation of memory' articulated in reaction to the policies of strategic forgetting pursued by the nationalist states that replaced the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Ugrešić, 1996b). The late photograph can therefore alert us to the fragility and threatened condition of memory, functioning both as a vector of memory and something that brings the possibility of remembrance into question.

Linked to the relationship between the late photograph and memory is the matter-of-fact approach this kind of photography takes to aftermath sites. Buildings and other objects are often depicted from the front and positioned in the centre of the image. Objects and surrounding landscapes are rendered in extreme detail often using large format cameras. An emphasis is placed upon the picturing of material structures and topographical minutiae. These strategies (though not the pictorial scale of many late photographs) have precedents in photographs of architectural structures by Walker Evans, Bernard and Hiller Becher, and in the 'New Topographics' photography produced by Lewis Baltz and Robert Adams in the 1970s. Words used by John Szarkowski to describe Evan's approach could be applied to late photography, 'puritanically economical, precisely measured, frontal, unemotional, dryly textured … [and] insistently factual' (cited in Highnam, 1981, p.6). Like these photographic approaches, late photography also shuns the picturing of people and, with this, the connotations of action and narrative that the presence of people suggests. These are consequently emphatically still images. To use Peter Wollen's contrast between film as 'fire' and photography as 'ice' (2003), late photographs are some of the most 'frozen' of contemporary photographs (Campany, 2003, p.124; Wollen, 1997, p.30). The formal simplicity combined with the absence of people in such photographs affirms the sense of witnessing sites after events have occurred, as if the pictured location has been removed from the flow of history and relocated in a timeless realm of memory. Vilém Flusser has pointed out that photography in general allows one to '"take" something from the stream of history' (2006, p.6), yet with late photography this is a double effect: the stillness of the aftermath site is combined with the still image.

The formal simplicity adopted by practitioners of late photography also suggests that they have tried to avoid

encoding their images with overt connotations. To avoid connotation through formal strategies is impossible. As W.J.T. Mitchell observes: 'Connotation goes all the way down to the roots of the photograph, to the motives for its production, to the selection of its subject matter, to the choice of angles and lighting' (1994, p.284). Formal simplicity has its own connotations: the very connotations that Szarkowski ascribes to Evans' work, such as a lack of emotion and an insistent factual orientation. Formal choices necessarily create meanings. Nevertheless, late photographs often seem far removed from the kind of documentary photography associated with Cartier-Bresson's notion of the 'decisive' storytelling moment and kind of war pictures that Roland Barthes described as being loaded with 'over-explicit instructions for reading' ([1969] 1999, p.32). This is not to suggest that a complete division can always be drawn between late photography and photojournalistic images. Photographs of the remains of violent events without figures are used in the press. As John Taylor observes: 'The gory aftermath is not at all an unusual subject for press photography' (1998, p.88). When compared to such images, late photography does not seem to be so different from press photography. However the key comparison between late photography and photojournalism involves a contrast between photographs of aftermath sites and photographs involving a frozen instance in a sequence of human action; instances framed in such a way that they tell a story, or provide key information about a social, or political situation. In contrast to such images, late photography appears to be marked by an avoidance of instruction; it seems to 'present' and 'record' rather than 'comment'. All photographs are open to interpretation, but as Campany observes, because of this avoidance of instruction, late photography constitutes 'the radically open image par excellence' (2003, p.126).

Simon Norfolk's photograph of the remains of Israeli buses blown up by suicide bombers at the back of the bus garage at Kiryat Ata is a good example of this kind of openness.[1] The photograph pictures the remains of three destroyed buses that have been lined up next to each other. Norfolk set up his camera just to the right of the nearest bus so that its front is almost head-on to the viewer and so that the full length of the second bus can be seen. Because the second bus is just a skeleton, the third bus can be seen through its remains. This third bus has no roof, while the roof of the nearest bus has been blasted out of shape by an explosion. What

1   This photograph can be found on Norfolk's website in the series 'Israel/Palestine: Mnemosyne': htttp://www.simonnorfolk.com (accessed 17.8.2014)

are we to make of Norfolk's act of photographing these remains? Is he presenting the bombed buses in sympathy with Israeli victims of Palestinian terror, or is it more likely that he intended the photograph to signify a general opposition to political violence in the context of Israel/Palestine? The only clear answer we can give to these questions is that the photograph alone provides no indication of the intentions of the photographer in terms of moral and political meaning. Clearly, the image has considerable metaphoric potential, but the difference between it and many press photographs is that there seems to be much less of an attempt to use the framing of the image to pre-define what it should be metaphorically *seen as*.

One effect of Norfolk's photograph is that the blown up buses appear removed from the rhetorical contest in which different political agents have used actual destroyed buses, or representations of such destruction as symbols of Israeli vulnerability to terrorism, on the one hand, and Palestinian resistance to the occupation, on the other. For example, in 2004 the Jerusalem Municipality placed the remains of a bombed Egged bus against the West Bank Wall at Abu Dis to demonstrate the security function of this structure, while Hamas demonstrations in Nablus in 2000 and Gaza City in 2003 involved the burning of mock Israeli buses as simulations of suicide attacks. The civilian bus has therefore become a political symbol through its incorporation into demonstrations that are in turn visualised by the media. Campany has suggested that late photography runs the risk of generating melancholy and numbness amongst its viewers. Thus he observes that the late photograph 'can also foster an indifference and political withdrawal that masquerades as concern. Mourning by association becomes merely an aestheticized response' (Campany, 2003, p.132). Similarly the Israeli photographer Miki Kratsman has argued that the formal characteristics of this kind of photograph do not lend themselves to political engagement, stating, 'sometimes you show and you hide in the same frame, there you do not have to take any responsibility, or political position on your work' (Kratsman, 2008). Late photography can therefore be a means of avoiding political commitment. Yet it is the very courting of ambiguity and the 'distanced perspective' (Kemp, 1989, p.103) of a particular kind of picturesque aesthetic that might also enable the late photograph to effect a productive opening up of meaning. An apparent withdrawal from events into their aftermath and into a photographic form that does not appear to comment upon, or try to understand these events does not necessarily constitute a withdrawal from politics. By avoiding the story-telling function

of press photographs, Norfolk's image might create possibilities for meaning beyond the binaries of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The deadpan look of this photograph and its context within the world of art-photography perhaps limits its potential to generate political meanings, but at the same time, these factors also limit the possibility of its co-optation into existing political rhetoric.

Is there a way in which such a photograph could contribute to the production of an imaginative no-person's-land between the polarised political positions related to Israeli-Palestinian conflict? A place from which it is possible to understand the self-image of the suicide bomber as someone resisting the Israeli occupation, as well as Israeli desires for security in relation to terrorist attacks, while at the same time refusing the full political logic of both positions. The suggestion here is that the openness of the late photograph allows for an unfixing of meaning in terms of relationships between established ideological positions and visual motifs. This relative unfixing of relationships between motifs and meanings makes the late photograph seem unviable as a means of representing social conditions and political processes, yet it also makes it full of metaphoric potential. The refusal of explicit political meaning therefore goes hand in hand with openness towards meaning; the two cannot be separated and thus the meaningful potential of the late photograph may not be realised. Yet as Jacques Rancière suggests in relation to Sophie Ristelheuber's 2004 series of photographs of IDF roadblocks in the West Bank (Ristelheuber, 2005), photographs like Norfolk's still hold the possibility of enabling the viewer to distance themselves from the 'shop worn' effects of animosity, indignation, and despair that define established relationships between visual images and political understandings in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and 'instead explor[e] … the political resources of a more discrete effect – curiosity.' As a result, such photographs might generate 'breathing room' and 'loosen the bonds that enclose … possibility within the machine that makes the "state of things" seem evident, [and] unquestionable.' (Carnevale and Kelsey, 2007, p.261) Referring back to Kratsman's point, it is therefore between the showing and hiding, or more precisely, between the presenting yet not declaring of late photography, that a kind of 'breathing room' might be developed. The results of such image production are unpredictable, but the extreme ambiguity and perhaps unreliability of late photography is precisely the characteristic that is important here. From Rancière's perspective the artist with a political intention should not try to overtly politicise, inform, involve, or emancipate the spectator, but open up a space within which spectators can function as people making their own meanings from new aesthetic experiences (Carnevale and Kelsey, 2007, p.258). In an interview from 2006, Norfolk discussed the relationship between his work and photojournalism, stating:

> I didn't get fed up with the *subjects* of photojournalism – I got fed up with the *clichés* of photojournalism, with its inability to talk about anything complicated. Photojournalism is a great tool for telling very simple stories: *Here's a good guy. Here's a bad guy.* But the stuff I was dealing with was getting more and more complicated – it felt like I was trying to play Rachmaninoff in boxing gloves.
>
> (BLDGBLOG, 2006)

In opposition to such clichés, Norfolk sought to develop a form of war-photography that finds a 'more complicated way to draw people in' (BLDGBLOG, 2006). Norfolk's photographs appear to be far from complex, instead, like most late photographs, they are formally reductive. Yet, it is the formal simplicity of these photographs that might allow for something 'more complex' to happen through the encounter between them and the spectator. Through their straightforward presentation of the details of aftermath sites, late photographs seem to resist commentary and at the same time give a kind of licence to the viewer to engage in imaginative interpretation. The openness of late photography might place too much responsibility upon the spectator. It is always possible that such photographs might be appropriated to affirm existing political orders, or that they might encourage the kind of numbness to politics that Campany suggests is one of their consequences. But this openness also allows the spectator to potentially appropriate the aesthetic resources provided by the late photograph in ways that are not conservative or numbing. There is no guarantee of this, but there is also nothing about the late photograph that necessarily, or fundamentally rules this out.

This discussion of the spectator leads back to the subject of memory, for it is the relationship between the remnants of the past recorded in late photographs and the spectator's active interpretation of them in the present, that is the key to the meaningful potential of late photography. The rest of this essay will explore this subject further, initially through the work of the British artist Angus Boulton and then through the photography of the Israeli artists Roi Kuper and Gilad Ophir. The starting point for this discussion is a

statement by Norfolk in which he comments on the motif of the ruin within European art history, stating that 'the ruins in these artworks were not examples of dreamy-headed pictorialism but profound philosophical and political metaphors for the foolishness of pride; for awe of the Sublime; and, most importantly to me, for the vanity of Empire' (2006, p.6). This is not an especially new observation. It is commonly understood that the romantic cult of ruins was not only defined by concerns with the attractiveness of decay and irregular form, but also with what Christopher Woodward calls the 'Ozymandias complex' in relation to which, ruins functioned as a kind of *vanitas*, or 'exemplary frailty' that pointed to the inevitable decline and fall of the powerful (Woodward, 2001; Edensor, 2005a, pp.11-12). Norfolk's comment works along these lines, suggesting that the ruins pictured in late photographs are not just traces of the past, but instances where the past intrudes on the present in a meaningful way. If we consider this in terms of Walter Benjamin's ideas about non-historicist approaches to the past, we can think about late photography as a means through which 'the past [can] bring the present into a critical state' (Benjamin, 1999, p.471). The appropriation of late photographic images by the spectator might therefore involve the establishment of a critical relationship between the past and the present, turning the pictured remains of past events into metaphors for the challenges and political problems of the current period. Such appropriations are founded on the intention of the photographer to engage in a kind of memory-work by selecting particular subject matter. However, what the spectator does with the resulting images necessarily departs to some degree from the intentions of the artist.

Military landscapes

Between 1998 and 2006, Angus Boulton took two series of photographs at former Soviet military sites around Berlin, grouping these photographs under the headings 'Warrior' and '41 Gymnasia' (Boulton, 2007). The interior and exterior shots of the 'Warrior' series depict military structures in states of decay.

Fig 2.2.1. Angus Boulton, *Kindergarten, Krampnitz*, 17.10.2000. Photograph, 51cm x 61cm. Reproduced with the permission of the artist.

A photograph of a kindergarten at Krampnitz in Brandenberg depicts a peeling propaganda mural showing loyal Soviet youth and a portrait of Lenin that has almost entirely peeled away (Fig 2.2.1). Soviet ideology has literally flaked from the wall. Other photographs in the series present scenes in which wallpaper has become detached from walls, detritus covers floors, and the weather has penetrated interior spaces. Sites of former military power are now spaces of absence in which bombastic political and military rhetoric is compromised by the general impression of decay. The gymnasia photographs depict similar scenes of degradation and damage. These images attest to the fall of Soviet military power and by implication to the triumph of the West in the Cold War contest. Yet, following Norfolk's suggestion that pictures of ruins can be allegories of the folly of empire, these photographs can also function as metaphors that bring into question the political and military orders of the present. The question such photographs might raise is: if this powerful military order fell into ruin, then why not those of the contemporary period? The potential message of Boulton's work is that there is nothing permanent about even the most apparently permanent forms, whether hardened concrete bunkers, or epochal geopolitical systems. All of these are subject to the vicissitudes of time. Boulton's images can therefore function as metaphors for the contingency of all military orders.

For decades, the political imperatives of the Cold War were generally unquestionable and defined the broad political context of life in Europe and elsewhere. Since then, we have lived through a different era defined by the 'War on Terror' and its aftermath. Like the Cold War, this new geopolitical framework depends on fear and enmity, and a kind of permanent state of emergency. Bringing this new order into a comparative relationship with the Cold War might allow for the development of a critique of the political and military agendas the citizens of liberal democracies are being asked to support. This would involve memory-work that rescues the Cold War past in an effort to produce alternative understandings of the present, bringing the past and present together in a new constellation. In line with late photography in general, Boulton's photographs do not entail overt political messages, instead, they make the physical traces of the past visible in such a way that the spectator might re-imagine their relationship to the present through the past. This reading of Boulton's images obviously does not take us to their essential meaning, rather it demonstrates the metaphoric potential of these particular examples of late photography.

Similar observations can be made about the project undertaken by Roi Kuper and Gilad Ophir between 1996 and 2000 in which they photographed disused military sites in Israel and the Occupied Territories under the heading *Necropolis* (the city of the dead). This project was intended as a means of commenting upon the high status of the army within Israeli society (Kuper and Ophir, 1998, p.2). Since the foundation of the Israeli state in 1948, the military has been conceived as the institution that, above all others, would forge the national community (Sternhell, 1998, p.327). Thus, David Ben-Gurion declared in 1948: 'Today the ministry of culture is the ministry of defence' (Shapira, 1997, p.653). It was on this basis that the army was set up as something sacrosanct: as a duty, a right of passage, and a source of much of Israel's political leadership (Luttwak and Horowitz, 1975, p.184). On this subject, Israeli leftist Roni Ben Efrat has stated: 'The army has always been Israel's most important institution … it occupies an enormous chunk of the Israeli psyche. No cow has been more sacred. Above all political debate, it has brewed a strange mixture of national values, seasoning callous brutality with doses of moral righteousness' (Ben Efrat, 1999, p.20). Israeli society is structured by an intimacy of the civil and the military. Military service is compulsory, and contributes significantly to personal identity and social status. It is this familiar enmeshment of civilian and military life that the photographs of the *Necropolis* project were meant to make strange, taking locations that have been ordinary elements of Israeli social experience while undertaking military service and recasting them as something uncanny.

A photograph taken by Kuper at a deserted army base, near the settlement of Ma'ale Adumim in the West Bank, shows a bunker in a state of disrepair (Fig 2.2.2). The paint on this structure is flaking, the ground is strewn with rubble and detritus in a way unimaginable within a working military order, a mass of barbed wire and bent corrugated iron blocks the entrance to the building that is dark and uninhabited. Other photographs by Ophir depict an abandoned airfield littered with discarded items, an army camp overgrown with vegetation, and collapsed military buildings (Ophir, 2001). In these images, ruination disrupts the normative ordering of the military world in a way similar to the break down of ordered materiality discussed by Tim Edensor in his work on industrial ruins (2005a). In his words, ruination generates 'alternative aesthetics' that 'have no sanctions on how they might be used or interpreted' (2005b, p.317). When pictured in late photography, these ruins are re-presented through a particular photographic mode, making them images that allow a different kind of open interpretation.

Fig 2.2.2 Roi Kuper, *from the series: Necropolis*, 1999. b/w print, 120cm x 120cm. Reproduced with the permission of the artist.

Fig 2.2.3 Gilad Ophir, *from the series: Necropolis*, 1999. b/w photograph (shot on b/w film), 120cm x 150cm. Reproduced with the permission of the artist.

By picturing the abandoned locations of the army, the *Necropolis* photographs were meant to show the military as something ephemeral and fragile. In Ophir's terms, sites that had once been the loci of military power could be viewed as 'vacant' and 'emptied out' (Ophir, 1999). (Fig 2.2.3) The photographs can therefore be understood to have a similar effect to Danny Kerman's 1979 cartoon in which an Israeli peers inside the Roaring Lion of Tel Hai to find that this symbol of national military prowess is hollow and vacant (Zerubavel, 1995). The black and white film used for the photographs enhances this emptying out and de-familiarising effect, while also emphasising the status of the locations pictured as the remains of past activity. In this way, military order is not only represented as disrupted, but as something of the past.

This visualisation of the military in terms of the fragments of past activity needs to be contextualised within the specific era of its production. The *Necropolis* project might be understood in terms of the general emergence of critical attitudes towards the military on the part of some Israelis after the relative military failures of the October 1973 War and especially since the invasion of Lebanon in 1982 (Maoz, 2006, p.230), but its direct context was the Oslo period, after the signing of the 'Declaration of Principles' between Israel and the PLO in 1993. For Kuper and Ophir (Kuper, 2007a), the *Necropolis* project was envisaged as something that found its meaning in relation to Shimon Peres' notion of 'The New Middle East', articulated in his 1993 book of the same name (Peres, 1993). This was the era of the 'peace process' that was meant to lead to the settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and consequently to demilitarisation. The *Necropolis* photographs were therefore intended to picture the remains of the military past to suggest an expected demilitarised future. The strangeness of the remains of the past in these pictures also referred to the unfamiliarity of a future in which the military was revealed as a hollow solution to the political problems facing Israeli society. However, if we consider the project from the retrospective vantage of the aftermath of subsequent outbreaks of military violence - the second *Intifada*, the 2006 war in Lebanon, and the attacks on Gaza since 2008 – it becomes apparent that the metaphoric potential of the *Necropolis* photographs can be re-appropriated in terms of a different understanding of the recent history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This history would be one defined by continuities of conflict and military violence.

To think about the relationship between the *Necropolis* project and this continuing history of violence it is necessary to divide the photographs

Fig 2.2.4 Gilad Ophir, *from the series: Necropolis,* 1997. b/w photograph (shot on b/w film), 120cm x 150cm. Reproduced with the permission of the artist.

Fig 2.2.5 Gilad Ophir, *from the series: Necropolis,* 1997. b/w photograph (shot on b/w film), 120cm x 150cm. Reproduced with the permission of the artist.

into two groups. The photographs in the first group depict sites of disorder created by neglect and disuse. These are the photographs that most obviously suggest an emptying out effect, implying the precariousness of military power in the way already discussed. The photographs in the second group picture the effects of what might be described as a kind of latent violence. These photographs depict captured Jordanian vehicles used for target practice in the Negev (Fig 2.2.4), a military training area in the Golan Heights (Fig 2.2.5), and a former Syrian army camp used for target practice, also in the Golan. All these structures have been penetrated, or cratered with small arms fire. The vehicles and the villas have suffered gradual destruction, while the concrete surfaces of the Golan training area have been repeatedly damaged and refaced (Kuper, 2007a). Rather than evoking the fragility of the military,

these images suggest its continuing basis in violence. Here we have pictures of latent violence from the past that suggest violence against the Palestinians in the present and the likelihood of continuing conflict in the future. In particular the photographs of the training area in the Golan have potential connotations that refer to the military present as well as the military past. Unlike most of the sites pictured in the *Necropolis* project, this training area was still in use at the time it was photographed and is similar to other training sites used to prepare particular IDF battalions for 'urban warfare' of the type that occurred in the Jenin refugee camp and elsewhere during Operation Defensive Shield in 2002 (Reinhart, 2002, p.114) and later in Gaza. The latent violence that has marked these mock buildings is echoed in what can be defined as applied violence. Bullet holes and craters in buildings are recurrent signs within the photographic record of warfare and of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in particular. Viewing the photographs of the training area in the Golan might therefore involve an intervisual dialogue with other images of past and current conflict that suggest continuities in terms of Israeli military practices that suggest the ever-present possibility of the outbreak of violence as opposed to peace. The past therefore projects into the present and potentially into the future in a way similar to that suggested in relation to Boulton's photographs.

This discussion of relationships between past, present, and future in terms of the photography of Kuper and Ophir can be expanded by looking at a later series of pictures Kuper took of the Keziot detention camp run by the IDF in the Negev. This camp, nicknamed Ansar III by Palestinian inmates after two notorious Israeli army jails in Gaza and Southern Lebanon,[2] was established during the first *Intifada*. Between 1987 and 1993, about 70,000 Palestinians were held in Administrative Detention at the camp under very poor conditions. Palestinians were forced to live in tents within fenced compounds and thus exposed to extremes of temperature. As the Israeli human rights organisation B'Tselem observed in 1992, Ansar III was visually 'shocking' to visitors due to the 'large size of the camp' and 'its makeshift appearance' (B'Tselem, 1992). By the time Kuper and Ophir visited Ansar III in the late 1990s as part of the *Necropolis* project, the camp was long closed. But even then, it was a disturbing sight. As Kuper has observed, it was a 'terrible place' (Kuper, 2007a). In 2003, Kuper returned to Ansar III and took a series of colour photographs, concentrating on the detention areas.

In April 2002, parts of the camp had been reopened. Although now surrounded by concrete walls, the reopened compounds reused the original canvas tents and other equipment, contributing to their run-down infrastructure (International Federation for Human Rights, 1993). Because these compounds were currently guarded, Kuper had to take his pictures of the derelict areas of the camp quickly, without using a tripod (Kuper, 2007b). This means that the *Ansar* photographs differ in particular ways from Donovan Wylie's photographs of the Maze prison taken over an extended period of twelve months and involving fourteen separate visits to the site (Wylie, 2004, p.7). Wylie was able to produce a systematic documentation of the Maze, mapping out its architectural and topographical order through multiple photographs of different aspects of the site. Kuper took a limited number of photographs of Ansar III in a short period of time, resulting in a relatively unsystematic record of the camp. Despite the speed with which they were taken, the *Ansar* photographs share characteristics with other examples of late photography. Some of the photographs adopt a frontal approach (Fig 2.2.6), while others, taken from a watchtower, give a topographical overview of the site (Fig 2.2.7). These photographs present the viewer with a bare visual record of the detention camp. However, they also include large sections of blue sky that give the photographs an attractiveness not present in the black and white *Necropolis* pictures. In these photographs the beauty of the sky contrasts disturbingly with the ramshackle camp below.

For Israeli spectators these photographs perhaps have a greater potential for disturbance than the *Necropolis* pictures. The *Ansar* photographs depict the remains of architecture built to suppress Palestinian resistance to the occupation, while also suggesting analogies with other historical events. In the late 1990s, Ophir found himself unable to photograph the actual detention areas because of the visual analogy they presented with the sites of the Nazi concentration camp system. As a child of Holocaust survivors, this aspect of Ansar III was a disturbing reminder of traumatic family experiences (Ophir, 2007).[3] Kuper has also described visiting Ansar III as an experience that was like having 'the images of the Holocaust in front of your eyes' (Kuper, 2007a). Moreover, because Kuper photographed Ansar III when it was in a process of transition from its mothballed status, readings of the photographs are necessarily defined by relationships between the past – signified by the remains of the

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2   Inmates also dubbed Ketziot 'the Camp of Slow Death' (Torres, 1988).

3   Kuper did take a number of black and white photographs, but these have not been exhibited or published as part of the Necropolis project.

Fig 2.2.6. Roi Kuper, *from the series: Ansar*, 2003. Colour print, 120cm x 120cm. Reproduced with the permission of the artist.

Fig 2.2.7. Roi Kuper, *from the series: Ansar*, 2003. Colour print, 120cm x 120cm. Reproduced with the permission of the artist.

first phase of the camp's history – the moment of the photographic act in 2003, and the present period in which the camp has been made fully operational again. Consequently these photographs might be thought about in relation to Robert Smithson's notion of 'ruins in reverse', a phrase he used to describe the process through which new buildings are constructed, part of which involves a transitional stage in which these new structures appear to be like ruins (Smithson, [1967] 1996, p.72). However the case of the *Ansar* photographs is more complicated. Here the spectator is presented with images of a site that has been allowed to partially fall into ruin, but that will soon experience a reversal of this process. It is because of this transitional moment between past and future use that Kuper was able to produce these rare pictures, without which there would be almost no visual record of Ansar III. This is why Ariella Azoulay used smaller prints of two of the photographs as 'documents' in her 2007 exhibition 'Act of State', which constituted a photographic history of the occupation.[4] These photographs of Ansar III in a moribund state can now function as reminders of what is currently happening out in the desert, as much as they work as vehicles for memory.

As the opening discussion of late photography argued, there is nothing secure, or final about the interpretation of the *Ansar* photographs suggested in this essay, nor should there be. With such open images it is all a matter of active reading. Late photography might encourage curiosity and imagination in contrast to established ways of thinking, picturing, and seeing. Yet such photographs might also be recuperated into established formations of memory and identity. The *Necropolis* photographs, for example, might be found to be compatible with memorialisation practices that canonise Israeli military history. The late photograph might also be rendered irrelevant by its indirectness. This point is affirmed by Kuper's experience at the award ceremony for the Israeli Ministry of Education and Culture Prize for Arts in 2004. When he received this prize from the conservative Likud Minister Limor Livnat, one of the *Ansar* photographs was projected onto a screen behind the stage. Artists in the audience laughed, but Livnat seemed oblivious and ignorant of what she was seeing (Kuper 2007a and 2007b). Having made this observation, it needs to be reaffirmed that, for all their ambiguity, the *Ansar* pictures and their predecessors in the *Necropolis* project present photographic representations of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that avoid familiar images of stone throwing

youths, bombings, checkpoints, and the West Bank Wall. These standard motifs are enmeshed with the 'architectures of enmity' (Gregory, 2004, pp.17-29) that make it difficult to envisage a solution to the conflict. Images of occupation, victim-hood, and resistance, presented through more conventional photojournalistic, or documentary modes can be important forms of advocacy that contribute to projects seeking justice, but they can equally feed a binary structure that degrades empathy, or fixes the combatants into stereotypical roles of victim and perpetrator. The witnessing of the *Ansar* photographs is muted. Yet, these images suggest a need to reflect on the hidden crimes of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and their replication in the present. They also open up possibilities for the metaphoric linkage of historical episodes that are usually treated as being completely separate, at least within an Israeli context. Spectral images of the Nazi camps might therefore haunt the spectatorship of Kuper's photographs. Most of all these images, like those of the *Necropolis* project, demand that the spectator shoulders the burden of interpretation: that the spectator finds possible relationships between these pictures and political imperatives for themselves. As already noted, this reliance on the spectator is perhaps problematic and requires further exploration as new forms of late photography are developed. Yet, the value of these photographs is that they involve the generation of aesthetic resources that open up possibilities for reimagining relationships between past and present. What is more, the late photographic mode does not have to be reserved to the picturing of the aftermath of an event. In relation to this one can consider a series of photographs of the former Gush Katif settlements in the Gaza Strip taken in 2005 by Miki Kratsman and Eldad Rafaeli, photographers primarily known in Israel as photojournalists.[5] Influenced by the *Necropolis* project, Kratsman and Rafaeli took black and white pictures of unpopulated areas of the settlements (Rafaeli, 2007). These photographs were intentionally related to current events. Kratsman and Rafaeli visited the settlements prior to the imminent Israeli 'disengagement' from Gaza in August 2005 and photographed areas of housing that were unoccupied and in a state of disrepair (Fig 2.2.8). Their aim was to contest the focus in the Israeli media on the withdrawal as a great compromise and loss for the nation. In this instance the aesthetic resources of the late photographic approach were mobilised as a means of commenting on events that had not occurred yet.

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4   Act of State: 1967-2007 [An historical exhibition], curator: Ariella Azoulay, Minshar Art Gallery, Tel Aviv, 7 June - 11 July, 2007.

5   This series of photographs were displayed under the heading 'Territory' in the exhibition Disengagement at the Tel Aviv Museum of Art in April 2006.

Fig. 2.2.8 Miki Kratsman, *Territory*, 2005. b/w photograph, 90cm x 90cm. Reproduced with the permission of the artist.

The 'small moraines' of memory

In his novel *The English Patient*, Michael Ondaatje (1993, p.92) describes the passage of the Allies through Italy during the Second World War, observing that the movement of the battlefront across the landscape left behind the 'remnants of war societies … small moraines left by a vast glacier.' This metaphor describes well the effects of military activities on physical landscapes, both at times of peace and war. Armies are large organizations, that create a variety of social and environmental effects, marking the landscape in particular ways, often for decades. Civilian buildings can be damaged and destroyed, natural landscape formations can be eroded, or put out of bounds by mines and other unexploded munitions, military architecture can be left in place along with all sorts of other material remains. In the aftermath of military conflict, or after the military machine has moved on from a particular site, these 'small moraines' of military history exist in a kind of temporal limbo. They are of the past, yet they are in the present. As Boulton observes, these traces of the military past in the landscape are 'overloaded with metaphors' (2006, p.38). Military remnants are obviously not literally metaphoric. Rather metaphors are what people can make of them. The point is that the material remains of military pasts are replete with the potential for meaning. Late photographs constitute

pictorial interpretations of military landscapes that can enable the actualisation this reserve of meaning by the spectator. For all the pictorial detail in which they often render the materiality of the world, late photographs are not premised upon a notion of photographic empiricism. Instead late photographs involve the transformation of military landscapes into what might be termed landscapes of the mind. As such late photographs are not simply documents, or objects of a disinterested aesthetic contemplation. Instead they exist somewhere between these poles. These photographs connect us to historical events and processes. But we encounter these events and processes through their aftermath. This creates a viewing position that is structured by a relationship between connection and distance.

The bullet scars on the concrete structures of the IDF training area in the Golan, photographed by Kuper and Ophir, can connect the spectator to the action of military training and through this to the action of actual combat. Yet there can be no immediacy to the sense of connection to military history formed through looking at these photographs. This lack of immediacy might be thought about in relation to Slavoj Žižek's suggestion that sometimes it is good to resist the desire to act immediately, or demand immediate action in relation to intractable political situations. Žižek observes (2008, p.6): 'There are situations when the only truly "practical" thing to do is to resist the temptation to engage immediately and to "wait and see" by means of patient, critical analysis.' Late photography presents pictorial opportunities for this kind of slowing down and stepping back from political situations that are defined by an overabundance of immediate and often disastrous reactions. Here slowing down is not just a matter of the time it might take to contemplate the detail presented by late photographs, but also the possibility to imaginatively locate oneself as a spectator in the limbo-like stasis of their *lateness*.

Physical landscape is often contested. It is fought over, occupied and divided up according to military power and political desires. These sovereign contests over landscape not only result in the political reorganisation of space, but also leave physical remains. These remains are sometimes invested with meaning through their transformation into memorials, or through their pictorial representation. Most nation-states have generated sites and emblems of memory in which military remains are taken to hold crucial meanings about the national past. Military sites are inserted into patriotic narratives and transformed into cultural technologies for the production of loyal national subjects. As such, these sites become part of

the contest over the past that is part-and-parcel of the political struggles of the present. As Dubravka Ugrešić observes (1996b, p.34): 'The political battle is a battle for the territory of collective memory.' This means that it is not only physical landscape that is contested, but also the relationship between landscape and memory. The value of the work of late photographers like Boulton, Kuper and Ophir is that they picture unnoticed, or forgotten military sites in ways that make it relatively difficult for the resulting images to be appropriated for heroic narratives of national and imperial endeavor. By picturing the decaying remains of military pasts, these photographs have the potential to 'speak' to spectators of the fragility of military and political structures. Yet, as has been discussed in this essay, other late photographs can potentially problematise heroic national narratives by reminding the spectator of the ongoing violence of military and political orders. Such photographs open up the traces of this violence for interpretation in ways that might depart from standard attempts to legitimise the use of force by the state. Thought about in this way, late photographs can be understood as images that have the potential to both contest and generate memory as part of the political struggle over what the past means for the present and consequently for what is yet to come.

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FORCED DISPLACEMENT, SUFFERING AND THE AESTHETICS OF LOSS

Maruška Svašek

Abstract

This article investigates how artists have addressed shocking experiences of displacement in different political contexts. Drawing on the notion of 'the aesthetics of loss' (Köstlin, 2010), it examines and compares the different aims, desires and strategies that have shaped the histories and social lives of paintings, memorial statues, installations and other artefacts. The analysis identifies a mode of artistic engagement with the sense of a 'loss of homeland' that has been commonly felt amongst Sudeten German expellees, namely the production and framing of visual images as markers of collective trauma. These aesthetics of loss are contrasted with the approach taken by the Dutch artist Sophie Ernst in her project entitled HOME. Working with displaced people from Pakistan, India, Palestine, Israel and Iraq, she created a mnemonic space to stimulate a more individualistic, exploratory engagement with the loss of home, which aimed, in part, to elicit interpersonal empathy. To simply oppose these two modes of aesthetic engagement, however, would ignore the ways in which artefacts are drawn into different discursive, affective and spatial formations. This article argues for the need to expose such dynamic processes of framing and reframing by focusing on the processual aspects of aestheticisation with attention to the perspective of loss.

Biographical note

Maruška Svašek's main research interests are art, material mediation, migration and the emotions. In her most recent work, she brings these strands together by exploring the mobility and agency of humans, artefacts and images in an era of intensifying globalisation and transnational connectivity. Her publications include *Emotions and Human Mobility: Ethnographies of Movement* (Routledge 2012), *Moving Subjects, Moving Objects: Transnationalism, Cultural Production and Emotions* (Berghahn 2012), *Anthropology, Art and Cultural Production* (Pluto 2007), *Postsocialism: Politics and Emotions in Central and Eastern Europe* (Berghahn 2006) and, (with Kay Milton), *Mixed Emotions: Anthropological Studies of Feeling* (Berg 2005). She is co-editor with Birgit Meyer of the Berghahn book series 'Material Mediations: People and Things in a World of Movement'.

An earlier version of this material was presented on the occasion of the project conference 'Disturbing Pasts: Memories, Controversies and Creativity' (20 -22 November 2012, Museum of Ethnology/Weltmuseum Wien, Vienna). To view the film footage on the Open Arts Archive, www.openartsarchive.org, follow this link: http://www.openartsarchive.org/oaa/content/disturbing-pasts-memories-controversies-and-creativity-conference-21

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FORCED DISPLACEMENT, SUFFERING AND THE AESTHETICS OF LOSS

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In the late 1990s, I conducted research into the expulsion of millions of ethnic Germans from Czechoslovakia after the Second World War.[1] Their forced migration from the Sudetenland was supported by the international Potsdam agreement, which sought to justify the removal of ethnic Germans from all over Central and Eastern Europe. It was thought to be the proper political solution to avoid further instability in the region, given that Germans were regarded as collectively guilty of crimes committed by the Nazi regime. In Czechoslovakia, the exodus was legalised by the Beneš decrees, a series of stipulations that removed Sudeten German citizenship rights and authorised their loss of property (Maeder, 2011; Staněk 1991; Svašek 2005).

Particularly for those who experienced or witnessed acts of violence during this mass eviction, the event was traumatising. In 1946 and 1947, thousands of Sudeten Germans were killed by angry Czech citizens and Russian troops and never made it to the border. Many women were raped, and numerous Sudeten Germans hanged themselves, fearing aggressive reprisals. In his book about the expulsion from the Egerland region, the physician Wolf-Dieter Hamperl (himself one of those who was expelled), noted that '[m]any expellees who experienced such excesses can even now, after fifty years, not talk or think about their experiences because the shock was too great' (1996, p.228, my translation). Obviously, acts of anti-German aggression after the Second World War must be placed in the context of the perpetrators' own war experiences and that they happened at a time when facts about the excesses of Nazi crimes, in particular the immense suffering of those sent to concentration camps, became public knowledge. Historians have offered different perspectives on the expulsion, such as justifying anti-German violence as an acceptable consequence of war (Lůza 1964), condemning it as a state directed policy of ethnic cleansing (de Zayas 1994), or taking a more balanced approach (Staněk 1991; 1996).

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[1]   The most recent estimated figures are that around 2.7 million ethnic Germans were expelled and that between 19,000 and 30,000 died at the time of the expulsion, including 6,000 victims of acts of violence and around 5,000 suicides (Glassheim, 2000, p.463; Czech-German Joint Commission of Historians, 1996).

This article investigates how artists of different backgrounds have addressed shocking experiences of displacement in different political contexts – including the Sudeten German expulsion – through the production of a variety of paintings, memorial statues, installations and other artefacts. Drawing on the notion of 'the aesthetics of loss' (Köstlin, 2010), and the perspective of 'aestheticisation' (Svašek, 2007), I examine and compare the different aims, desires and strategies that have shaped the histories and social lives of such objects. Taking a processual approach to material culture (see also Svašek, 2007 and 2012), I regard artefacts as objects that gain particular meanings, appeal and emotional agency in specific social and political settings. I will address the following questions. How do artistic responses to violence and loss of homeland articulate specific concerns about the past, present and future? In what ways are these concerns expressed through practices of memorialisation within wider structures of authority, be they museums, art worlds, (trans)national organisations or political structures? How exactly are these concerns expressed by those who produce, use and frame visual imagery?

The first part of the analysis focuses on artefacts produced by and for Sudeten German expellees. The second part explores a series of art installations made by a Dutch artist in response to the displacement of people from South Asia and the Middle East.

Processing and representing shocking experiences

When thinking about the ways in which people deal with emotionally disturbing pasts, it is important to make a distinction between encounters with dangerous circumstances that are quite common and more easily processed, and intensely shocking experiences that have longer-term impact. A normal response to danger (for example, when a person crosses a road without looking and suddenly has to avoid an oncoming vehicle), consists of physical arousal of the sympathetic nervous system and an automatic attempt to avoid the perilous situation. This flight or fight response produces a state of concentrated attention during which feelings of hunger, pain or fatigue are no longer sensed, and immediate action is taken with the aim of reaching safety. Once out of danger, often after an initial period of shock, people can more easily recall and talk about the event, integrating it with their life stories.

In the case of trauma, whether caused by natural disasters or human atrocities, victims are rendered helpless at the moment of the occurrence and cannot show normal responses to danger. Medical

and psychiatric models of trauma have focused on the resulting abnormal clinical conditions that affect the traumatised bodies of individual victims, including hyperarousal, intrusion and constriction (Herman, 1994; Leys, 2002; Caruth, 1996). Hyperarousal and intrusion are manifested through persistent expectations of danger and unusual forms of memory, such as uncontrollable flashbacks and repeated nightmares. In some cases, intrusion also leads to compulsive re-enactments of the traumatic event. Constriction refers to the after-effect of the numbing response of surrender to perpetrators, triggering involuntary emotional detachment and the repression of memory (Herman, 1994).

A significant number of social scientists have argued that medical models of trauma tend to ignore or de-emphasise the social and political causes of bodily distress. Kleinman and Kleinman (1991) coined the term 'social suffering' to critique the de-humanising medicalisation of trauma and to highlight the social and political processes producing traumatisation. Other scholars, including Capelletto (2003), Daniel (1994), O'Nell (2000), Kidron (2004) and White (2000), have analysed the political dimensions of trauma in different settings of inequality and war. Volkan (1997) has introduced the notion of 'chosen trauma' to explore how, after traumatising episodes, groups of victims (sometimes including those indirectly affected and others identifying with the cause) have been engaged in trauma politics, forming survivor groups that search for acknowledgement and compensation. This perspective aims to move beyond an understanding of trauma victims as passive subjects or disempowered patients, a trend also reflected in the use of the term trauma *survivors*.

When investigating the social dynamics of traumatic displacement, the personal, political and institutional responses clearly need to be explored together. Numerous questions emerge, not least: To what extent can survivor groups adequately represent the suffering of individuals? How do the specific political aims of particular groups shape artistic manifestations of distress?[2]

Representing trauma: reframing people, places and things

Group identification through chosen trauma often entails the active reframing of places and things as signifiers of past (and ongoing) suffering. As part of

this process, material artefacts and other elements in the landscape are in many cases presented as historical evidence and are integrated elements in affective sites of commemoration. Materialisations of past suffering have included places of past horror and destruction (for example prison cells in South Africa, or Nazi concentration camps), clothing and other properties (shoes and hair in Auschwitz), documents and other texts (Anne Frank's diary in Amsterdam's Anne Frank House Museum), used weapons and ammunition (plastic bullets from the time of the Troubles in the Museum of Free Derry, Northern Ireland) and instruments of oppression and torture (chains and shackles used in the transatlantic slave trade, in the Bristol Industrial Museum). In addition to the presentation of historical artefacts, new objects and spaces have also been created with the aim of commemorating victims of violence. As numerous scholars have argued, such past-oriented memorial activities are strongly anchored in the present. James Young, for example, showed convincingly in his comparative study of Holocaust memorials in Germany, Poland, Israel and America that individual monuments do not only 'create and reinforce particular memories of the Holocaust period' but are also part and parcel of ongoing politics, as the stories of suffering 're-enter political life shaped by monuments' (Young, 1993, p.14).

When those who are commemorated have died in international warfare, memorial sites tend both to remember the deceased as individuals and to portray them as a group of heroes who gave their lives collectively for the nation. Turned into national museums, historical places of past violence thus aim to produce a variety of emotions, including gratefulness, admiration and patriotism. A good example is the Museum of Pearl Harbor, where special tours are designed to give US visitors 'the opportunity to pay respects to the fallen sailors and brave heroes of December 7, 1941'.[3] To enhance a sense of authenticity, surviving USS Arizona crewmen directly communicate with visitors and narrate personal stories of the attack. Visitors are also exposed to three-dimensional copies of artefacts still on board the sunken vessels (Starr, 2014). The reframing of specific people and things in a museum space can thus have the aim of instilling a sense of historical reality for visitors; in the Museum of Pearl Harbor it enables an encounter with the suffering, yet ultimately triumphant, nation.

2   Various recent books have explored the portrayal of trauma and traumatic events in contemporary media, for example focusing on visual artists (Guerin and Hallas, 2007), writers and filmmakers (Kaplan, 2005).

3   Tour operators emphasise the need for visitors to emotionally identify with those who died, 'feeling first hand the emotions of the Pearl Harbor attacks is something that all visitors to Hawaii should experience'. (https://www.pearlharboroahu.com).

In cases of forced migration, memorial sites often include material objects taken from the country of origin as well as photographic and other depictions of familiar places and people in it. In the Sudeten German case, artefacts that aim to commemorate experiences of homeland include photographs and paintings of idyllic pre-war scenes, folkloristic items and other things taken during the flight, as well as iconic artefacts that directly symbolise the process of actual relocation, such as trunks, suitcases and handcarts. In addition, the products include depictions of people in distress. Presented in spaces that are (at least temporarily) controlled by diasporic expellees, these artefacts have not only strengthened feelings of connectedness to a lost homeland but have been used to construct and politicise a sense of collective trauma.

Lost homes: Objects of nostalgia, grief and anger

Many visual representations of the old Sudetenland circulating in expellee networks depict people's former homes. As visual references to pre-expulsion life and ownership of property, they are powerful signifiers that can be drawn into different discourses. The objects can also express and trigger a variety of feelings, from mild nostalgia, to re-lived fear and politicised anger.

Figure 2.3.1 shows a painting that ended up in the collection of the Sudetendeutsches Museum in Munich in 2013. The work was commissioned in Bavaria in 1972, and depicts the former family house of Josef Matz. The image is painted after a photograph that Matz took with him during the expulsion twenty-six years earlier, and it became a gift on his seventy-fifth birthday.

The gift signifies his continued attachment to the old family house, and highlights Matz's Sudeten German roots. In the second half of the twentieth century, this type of painting became quite common. It was produced for expellees in response to a strong demand for material reminders of the lost Sudetenland which were scarce, due to the fact that the expellees had been forced to leave most of their property behind. Professional painters offered the service in *Heimatbriefe* and *Heimatbote*, journals and newsletters that were produced by expellees for the purpose of trying to stay in touch (Fendl, 2013). Evidently, since expellees elderly enough to remember the old Sudetenland are dying out, some of their offspring, such as Matz's, have decided to donate the works to museums. In their

Fig 2.3.1: Blechschmidt, untitled, oil painting of a house in the Sudetenland, 28cm x 39.5cm. Courtesy of the Sudetendeutsches Museum, Munich.

Fig 2.3.2: Gustav Zindel, untitled, painting of a village scene in the Sudetenland, 1952. Courtesy of the Sudetendeutsches Museum, Munich.

transition to larger collections, the items partially lose their more personal meaning and are reframed as examples of a specific genre, signifying both 'Sudeten German culture' and 'collective displacement'.

Köstlin (2010, p.9) has used the term 'aesthetics of loss' to explore how inner, invisible experiences of continuing distress have been visualised and externalised by Sudeten German expellees as objectified truth, thus producing material, visible 'evidence' of injustice. The perspective can be used to think further about the effects of homeland depictions displayed in the diaspora. To those who remember the expulsion, the paintings have created a visual presence, evoking memories and feelings of pain, pride and resentment, even when no actual words have been spoken. The art works have also been appropriated as part of a discourse of injustice by a larger group of people who identify with the Sudeten German cause, including groups of offspring and some politicians, especially in Bavaria. As signifiers of 'loss', they visually reinforce an outspoken political rhetoric of 'stolen homeland' and 'ethnic cleansing', calling for *Heimatrecht* (see below).

In another painting, the lost homeland is visualised as a nostalgic space of childhood innocence. Painted in 1952 by Gustav Zindel,[4] it depicts a village scene of children playing peacefully in a quiet street, as in a zone of timeless happiness (Figure 2.3.2). Such paintings were also common. On the walls of people's homes in new places of settlement, they evoked their longing for an idyllic, unproblematic past, ignoring other historical occurrences, such as pre-expulsion Nazi rule and the moment of the expulsion. The perspective of the aesthetics of loss highlights the selectivity of this process of remembering and forgetting, resulting in the construction of a mythical place of imagination and belonging.

4   Zindel stayed in Czechoslovakia at the time of the expulsion and died there in the late 1950s. Several categories of Sudeten Germans were allowed by the post-war Czechoslovak government to remain in the country, including Social Democrats who had opposed Nazism, people in mixed Czech-German marriages and workers who were vital to particular industries. Many felt a sense of nostalgia for pre-expulsion times, as they were now strongly outnumbered by ethnic Czechs who occupied the empty houses, left behind by the expellees. Following Zindel's death his family relocated to Germany.

Paintings and prints of scenes in the Sudetenland, as well as old maps and photographs, have also circulated through *Heimatbriefe* and *Heimatbücher*. The book *Wie's früher war im Egerland* ('How it used to be in Egerland'), published in 1986, is a typical example of interspersed visual-textual nostalgia, creating a sense of a diasporic community that is linked by shared memories and emotions. In the foreword (to Raak, 1986), Bavarian State Secretary (and expellee) Dr Preißler states that the book creates 'a world that we, Egerländer, draw on when, without earth or soil, we build our mental homeland in the future.'[5] The book, which today can be bought online,[6] contains stories, poems and memories of life in Egerland (a former region in the Sudetenland) that are illustrated with drawings and woodcut prints. A story about the musician Anton Zartner, for example, is accompanied by a woodcut of a dancing couple in folk costume. The story ends with a description of how it happened that after Zartner's death in 1921 his violin was displayed by his grandchildren in a beautiful old inn where it hung in 1946, at the time of the expulsion. 'Since then it got lost, just like our *Heimat* itself, the beautiful Egerland' (Heidler, 1986, p.71). In the book, the image of the disappeared violin is thus reframed as marker of the 'collective' pain of displacement.

Memorials to injustice: The stolen Sudetenland

During the first decades after the expulsion, many Sudeten Germans hoped to return to the Sudetenland. As part of institutionalised expellee politics, led by the Sudetendeutsche Landmannschaft, discourses of loss were politicised through public calls for *Heimatrecht*, the right for the return of 'stolen' property. Stories and witness statements of violence, murder, rape and torture strengthened an embodied, internalised presence of a 'stolen Sudetenland'. They also fed a strong notion of 'collective victimhood', a process of identification whereby people did not necessarily need to tell their own personal stories of loss or suffering to claim victimhood.

Soon after the expulsion, visual evidence of anti-Sudeten German aggression and claims to injustice began to circulate in the form of photographs and film fragments. Artistic interpretations followed, for example

two small sculptures produced in 1986 by Gerfried Schellenberger, entitled 'Massacre' (Figure 2.3.3) and 'Heavy Load' (Figure 2.3.4). The first shows a group of people massacred by two armed guards. The second has strong religious connotations, portraying a Jesus-like figure carrying the cross, associating the suffering of the Sudeten Germans to Christian notions of a suffering son of God. This idea of sacred victimhood was emphasised when photographs of the statues were reproduced in a book entitled *Sudetendeutscher Totentanz. Ein Martyrium unseres 20. Jahrhunderts* (The Sudeten German Dance of Death. A Case of Martyrdom in our 20th Century) (Schellberger, 1991).

Especially in Bavaria, where most Sudeten German expellees settled, numerous memorials have been unveiled since the 1950s, creating ritual sites to commemorate Sudeten German victims of crimes committed during the expulsion, and the loss of the

Fig 2.3.3. Gerfried Schellberger, *Massacre*, 1986. Clay, 21cm x 47cm x 27 cm. Courtesy of the Sudetendeutsches Museum, Munich.

Figure 2.3.4. Gerfried Schellberger, *Heavy Load*, 1986. Clay, 30cm x 27cm x 18cm. Courtesy of the Sudetendeutsches Museum, Munich.

5   'Aus diesen Seiten ersteht eine Welt, von der wir Egerländer heute noch zehren, when wir ohne Grund und Boden unsere geistige Heimat in die Zukunft bauen (…) Dieses Buch dient der Regeneration der Seele in einer Zeit, die von uns einen langen geschichtlichen Atem fordert'.
6   A vast selection of Sudeten German commodities is available for sale on the internet, such as from the publisher Preußler, see http://preussler-verlag.de/downloads/buchprospekt.pdf (accessed 17.8.2014).

Sudetenland (Weger, 2010). Of others constructed during the Cold War close to the former Iron Curtain, is the work designed in 1980 by the artist Hans Krappel. This monument for Sudeten Germans who had been expelled from the area of Znaim (today the Czech city of Znojmo) was placed not far from the city, on West German territory. The central figure in stone shows a mother, embracing her children in a protective gesture. A staircase leads to a platform, facing the Czechoslovak-West German border, high enough to see the old homeland. A bronze plaque indicates the location of 94 communities in the area, and the text reads: 'Homeland rights are human rights.' The monument, which still stands at the same spot in 2014, encourages a specific way of seeing that shapes the viewing experience as a moment of moral reflection on human rights. The intended message is clearly that the forced displacement of the Sudeten German was a crime against humanity.

Some memorials refer to the relocation of the expellees or their integration in new countries of settlement. In the German town of Furth im Wald, for example, *Denkmal der heimatvertriebenden Sudetendeutschen* (Monument for the homeland-expelled Sudeten Germans) contains references both to the lost homeland and to a camp where some expellees were housed after their arrival. The camp remained in use until 1958. The monument has a block-like structure and on its front is a bronze map of the Czech Republic, with the Sudetenland marked as separate territory (see Figure 2.3.5).

Fig 2.3.5. Monument for the homeland-expelled Sudeten Germans. Bronze, Furth im Wald. Courtesy of Kultur Museum, Furth im Wald.

Fig 2.3.6. Monument for the homeland-expelled Sudeten Germans. Furth im Wald. Courtesy of Kultur Museum, Furth im Wald.

On top stands a three dimensional bronze model of the camp that was used to house the expellees (*Grenzdurchgangslager Furth im Wald*), and beside it are the words 'Erste Station in der Freiheit für 750.000 Vertriebene' (First location in freedom for 750,000 expellees) (see Figure 2.3.6).

The monument was unveiled in December 2006 and inaugurated by the city priest (Stadtpfarrer) Richard Meier, who also prayed for the well-being of the expellees and their families during the event. His speech, as well as the monument, acknowledged the continued significance of the Sudetenland to many of them, but also emphasised their post-expulsion settlement in the new environment.

Organisational dynamics: Museums and institutions

The expellees who can still actively remember life in the old homeland have become a rapidly declining group in the twenty-first century. The situation was radically different after the expulsion when, from the 1950s onwards, large groups of expellees from all over the Sudetenland began to establish *Heimat* groups, *Heimatstuben* and *Heimat* museums, most of all in Germany and Austria. These networks of institutions and museums, some of them supported by local governments, facilitated social interaction and stimulated the production and circulation of artefacts that symbolised the 'loss of homeland'. In the past 60 years, many thousands of artefacts have been presented in hundreds of permanent Sudeten German displays, temporary shows and travelling exhibitions, visualising a sense of shared identity (Völkering, 2010).

The reassertion of Sudeten German cultural identity exposes a politics of memory that is informed by a layered process of identification. Artefacts are reframed not only as objects of 'shared victimhood' through practices of chosen trauma, but are also presented as 'Sudeten German heritage', evoking pride of a Sudeten German *Heimatkultur* that its advocates feel the need to nourish and preserve.[7] This appropriation

of artefacts in new spatial and discursive contexts calls for a processual perspective on aesthetic practice. In my previous work, I used the perspective of 'aestheticisation' to explore how artefacts and images in transit (i.e. appearing in new times and places), gain new meanings, values and emotional efficacy, for example making transitions from 'art' to 'pornography', from 'kitsch' to 'craft', or from 'art' to 'propaganda' (Svašek, 2007). Reproduced or exhibited in different media and venues, Sudeten German cultural productions, such as images of family homes or people in folk costumes, have also been 'aestheticised' in new ways. The oil painting discussed earlier (Figure 2.3.1), for example, was given to the Sudetendeutsche museum in Munich in 2013, thus becoming part of a wider story of Sudeten German cultural history.

Fig 2.3.7: Embroidered Pillowcase. Courtesy of Sudeten German Museum, Munich.

The Museum also holds other types of material objects, such as an embroidered pillowcase that warns expellees 'not to forget their Homeland'. Evidently, such a text potentially strengthens viewers' feelings of injustice about the Sudeten German displacement, presenting it as a moral obligation 'not to forget' (see Franzen, 2010 and Eisler, 2011).[8]

Other works, now also part of museum collections, directly feed into a discourse of traumatic displacement. Not long after the expulsion, postcards depicting Sudeten Germans about to leave their villages or towns were quite popular (see Fendl, 2010, p.56). In July 1950, for example, *Heimatbote für die Bezirke Tachau-Pfraumberg und Bischofteinitz* (Homeland News for the Regions Tachau-Pfraumberg and Bischofteinitz) published a postcard painted by Heinrich Fitzthum. The painting on the card showed a group of people before their deportation, some waiting as Czech officials

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7   While the very notion of Heimat has changed, connections to earlier discourses of Heimat should not be ignored (http://www.bohemistik.de/gedichte.html). The state of Bavaria has claimed the responsibility to conserve and further develop Sudentengerman 'Kultur': 'Bayern hat 1954 die Schirmherrschaft über die Sudetendeutsche Volksgruppe und 1978 die Patenschaft über die Landsmannschaft der Ostpreußen übernommen. Bayern fühlt sich aber den Anliegen aller deutscher Heimatvertriebenen, Flüchtlinge und Spätaussiedler verpflichtet und unterstützt sie im Sinne des § 96 BVFG bei Bewahrung, Pflege und Weiterentwicklung ihrer Kultur'. Further detail may be found at: http://www.sozialministerium.bayern.de/vertriebene/kulturerbe/index.php.

8   Textual and visual discourses of Heimat should therefore be analysed in tandem, as has been pointed out by Milič (2012) in hisanalysis of newsletters produced by Italians expelled after the Second World War from Croatia.

Fig 2.3.8: Richard Assmann, painting reproduced on a Postcard, 1950s. Courtesy of Sudeten German Museum, Munich.

checked their luggage, others sitting on their trunks, their faces expressing despair. Figure 2.3.8 shows a similar scene, painted by Richard Assmann in the 1950s. Reproduced on and circulating as postcards amongst the expellees, these images strengthened notions of collective trauma.

Köstlin (2010) has compared the visual memorialisation of Sudeten German suffering to the pictorialisation (*Veranschaulichung*) of transcendence in religious fields of practice. In both cases, an invisible, sacred transcendental realm (of 'the divine' in the former case, and of 'Sudeten German collectivity' in the latter) is made accessible, and sensorially real, through material mediation.[9]

The notion of a shared Sudeten German history and heritage has also been supported through other political means. The regional state of Bavaria has been particularly supportive of expellee cultural politics since it took on the guardianship (*Patenschaft*) for Sudeten German expellees in 1954.[10] In accordance with 'cultural paragraph 96' of the 1953 Federal Expellee Law, Bavarian policies have financially supported the creation and maintenance of Sudeten German libraries, archives and museums, aiming to preserve 'objects of cultural significance' (Maeder, 2011, p.217). Thus aestheticised as items of historical importance that are cherished by the state of Bavaria, the connection of the artefacts to personal or collective experiences of Sudeten German loss has been underplayed. As recently as May 2014, Bavaria's Minister of Social Affairs Emilia Müller announced the Bavarian regional government's decision to help finance the construction of a new Sudeten German museum in Munich, which is to be opened in 2018.[11] The display will incorporate a more self-critical historical section, including exhibits that show the active political involvement of Sudeten Germans during the oppressive Third Reich. This will

9 As I have argued elsewhere, religious and political discourses of the sacred have also overlapped in expellee cultural productions, for example, in homeland poems that imagine the Sudetenland as a gift of God, or in depictions of Sudeten German churches and graveyards as spaces of personal religious significance.

10 As the majority of the expellees resettled in Bavaria, integrating economically and intermarrying with local Germans, this is not surprising (Maier and Tullio, 1995; Ziegler, 1995, p.138).

11 For more information on the construction of the Sudeten German museum, see http://www.bdv-bayern. de/de/Pressemitteilungen/2014/Mai/Planungen-zum-Sudetendeutschen-Museum (accessed 10.6.2014).

form part of a wider historical narrative of 'Life in the Bohemian countries, nationalisation, National Socialism, war, expulsion, integration (with all the difficulties), and a new dialogue between the Sudeten Germans and the Czechs' (Fendl, 2014).

Other critical engagements and cross-border activities

During my research between 1992 and 1994, I encountered numerous expellees who admitted that the Sudeten German politics of trauma was often embarrassingly one-sided, paying no attention to the suffering of Czech, Slovak, Jewish and Romani populations in the context of the Second World War. Rather than dwell on the loss of their homeland, these expellees engaged anew with their place of birth through occasional visits and cooperation with Czechs who had settled in former Sudeten German property. Some were also involved in reconciliatory cross-border links between municipalities[12] and in church initiatives. Through these activities they created new, positive memories and emotional experiences.[13]

The new cross-border politics of trauma have been characterised by exchanges of public references to, or apologies for, the causing of suffering to those on the other side – a cause for outrage amongst German and Czech extremist nationalist groups. Such exchanges have also inspired several artists in the Czech Republic to create critical works on the theme of the expulsion. One such is the photographer Lukáš Houdek who produced the series The Art of Killing in 2013, which reconstructed concrete historical instances of anti-Sudeten German aggression acted out by Barbie Dolls. In an interview with Radio Prague, he reflected on the one-sidedness of much Czech historiography, and explained

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12   Evidence of which is given here: http://saaz.info/index.php/about/saazer-weg/ (accessed 3.9.2014).
13   Many supported the activities of the Ackerman Gemeinde, a Catholic organisation established by Sudeten German expellees in Germany in 1946. Acknowledging (especially after 1989) that in the context of the Second World War, groups of Sudeten Germans were directly or indirectly responsible for the suffering of Czechoslovak citizens, the organization's website expresses its involvement in 'practical peace work in the service of reconciliation – especially with the peoples of East Central Europe'. As such, '[h]istorical consciousness, cultural and social responsibility characterise [the organisation's] actions today'. In the context of European Union policy, it claims to be 'committed to maintaining an atmosphere arising from the spirit of Christianity and European unification.' For more information, see, http://www.ackermann-gemeind.bistum-wuerzburg.de and http://saaz.info/index.php/about/saazer-weg/ Accessed (4.8.2014).

I searched in archives for materials and some historical studies and also spoke to people who saw cases or had family members killed in this way. I tried to reconstruct the situations as they happened (...). I don't try to judge the expulsions or the murders, because people were of course angry after the war and it's very hard to judge it now. But what I don't like, and what I would like to show, is just to show the cases, to say that they really existed. I want the public to say, yes, this happened, and maybe we should talk about it

(Willoughby, 2013)

HOME: Beyond mass-killings and violence

I had in mind this background of research on Sudeten German histories when participating in a public debate at the Yorkshire Sculpture Park Museum on World Refugee Day in 2012. I was invited to talk about emotional dimensions of belonging and non-belonging amongst migrants and refugees. The event included a viewing of HOME, an exhibition by the Dutch artist Sophie Ernst which comprised a series of installations, resulting from her collaboration with displaced people in Pakistan, Palestine and Israel. Although Ernst herself is not directly affected by the loss of a homeland (much like the Czech artist Houdek), the series and its accompanying book publication, *Home: Architecture of Memory*, have provided a fascinating exploration of questions of displacement. The book has allowed further space for reflection, presenting fragments of the conversations accompanied with reflective essays by various scholars who discuss themes of suffering, memory, imagination and emotional attachment.

In order to elucidate Ernst's intentions and explore the psychosocial workings of her project, Köstlin's perspective of the 'aesthetics of loss' must be stretched to include visualisations of past suffering that do not claim the objective historical truth of collective trauma. Rather, her project stimulated a subtle process of personal remembering and imagination, shying away from political discourses of 'unjust violence'. As I will describe, she addressed the issue of loss by providing an exploratory mnemonic space for her collaborators. The resulting series of gallery installations consisted of film projections onto models of houses that stimulated viewers to reflect on the theme of displacement. Ernst tried to speak to what she saw as a common human ability to identify with the pain of others. Unlike most Sudeten German expellees, she refrained from a discourse of human rights and did not discuss the possible need for pubic apologies, which made her work radically different from expellee articulations of loss.

Ernst was born in Germany in 1972 and grew up in the Netherlands. Completing an art degree at the *Rijksakademie voor Beeldende Kunst* in Amsterdam in 2000, she worked from 2003 to 2007 as Assistant Professor at the Beaconhouse National University in Lahore, Pakistan. There, she became interested in questions of displacement against the backdrop of violent conflict. During the Partition in 1947, over 10 million people crossed borders to escape hostility; Muslims fled from India to Pakistan and Hindus escaped from Pakistan to India, and the estimated number of victims of the violence is estimated at around one million. In his essay in *Home: Architecture of Memory*, US-based Pakistani artist and art historian Iftikhar Dadi (2012, pp.20-1), noted that,

> [t]he toll is enormous in many registers, from destruction of life and property to the very loss of belonging to a locale. These emotional costs are unacknowledged publicly (apart from a small number of 'unofficial' works by writers and intellectuals), and yet exert a major, largely destructive, force on political and social relations between India and Pakistan, as well as in various communities of the Middle East.

Hammad Nasar (Nasar, 2012, p.14), curator and co-founder of the London-based arts organisation Green Cardamom that produced the group exhibition Lines of Control: Partition as Productive Space,[14] suggested that the lack of a public memorial to commemorate victims of the partition 'signals a discomfort in rendering these memories in concrete form'. According to Murtaza Vali (2012, p.117), this is partly because there was

> no clear distinction between perpetrator and victim as both 'sides' raped and killed and were raped and killed; guilt and victimhood were hopelessly intertwined across newly formed borders.

Ongoing tensions and violence between Muslims and Hindus in Pakistan and India have also hampered the creation of a memorial site. What have dominated are widely circulating stories and images of horrific killings.

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14   The exhibition was co-curated in 2012 by Hammad Nasar, Iftikhar Dadi, Ellen Avril and Nada Raza. In its expanded show in the Johnson Museum at the Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art at Cornell University, it dealt not only with the 1947 partition of India, but also with other partitioned areas, including North and South Korea, Sudan and South Sudan, Israel and Palestine, Armenia and its diaspora, Ireland and Northern Ireland, and broached questions of indigenous sovereignty in the United States (Dadi and Nasar, 2012, p.7).

Ernst, by contrast, aimed to transcend discourses of 'the violent Partition', and focused instead on people's intimate memories of the houses they had left behind. She explained:

> A house is a concrete object; it makes you see the issue from another point of view, and you go beyond the clichés. You can't avoid them but they are no longer the endpoint.

Her juxtaposition of politicised imagery of horror on the one hand, and personal stories of home on the other, recalled for me the different Sudeten German discourses of 'loss of homeland' that I have been researching. As I have made clear, on the one hand, standardised public accounts of collective trauma isolated a 'Sudeten German tragedy' that was framed as source of suffering and object of expellee politics and identity. On the other, there were individual accounts of attachment that could not be reduced to stories of injustice. The tension between different accounts of past events, a central theme in theories of social memory, has also been addressed by the UK-based writer and literary critic Aamer Hussein (2012, p.55), who has argued that standardised discourses – 'codified fiction', in his terminology – tend to ignore alternative memories. In a recording made in London in 2011, transcribed for the publication *Home*, he argued that,

> [m]emory becomes fiction only because it is codified, or becomes a film and is codified and recorded forever. But once you have made that record, whether a mental construction or a written or visual one, you tend to return to the record rather than to the facts behind it.

In Hussein's view, producers of texts or (moving) imagery can escape the consequences of codification through openness to alternative interpretations of the past. Drawing tacitly on the work of various academics in the field of postcolonial studies, including James Clifford,[15] he argued that these more complex stories are based on 'a journey with more routes – ROUTES – than the journey one has followed'. Repetitive stories of a collective past, in other words, need to be destabilised through attention to experiential and interpretational diversity. Hussein notes:

> [t]hat is where history comes in. It is another version of the canonical narrative, it has more slip-pages, and those slippages are not are not just about leaving for one reason or another. It

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15   See for example, James Clifford (1997) who has explored postcolonial predicaments through an analytical framework based on the concepts of 'roots' and 'routes', and Stuart Hall (2002).

has to do with many complexities, with individual versions of history rather than standardised ones

(2012, p.58)

For this individual, there is a moral need for personal remembering beyond clichéd stories: '[a]mnesia is a sin' (2012, p. 58). Obviously, as pointed out in the first part of this article, severely traumatised people are often unable to deal with painful pasts, and should in many cases not be forced to remember violence, as this might cause them further harm. When dealing with people who have suffered, in other words, questions about research ethics must be asked seriously, not only by social scientists but also by artists. In HOME, Ernst seems to have taken such a sensitive approach, providing a supportive environment for her collaborators to remember their lost homes, allowing them to withdraw at any time. Her project made the process of individual recollection both possible and accessible, and by incorporating the resulting personal stories in publicly displayed installations, she opened them up a wider art audience.

HOME: A participatory multi-locational project

To produce HOME, Ernst took on a participatory approach, in step with much contemporary art practice since the nineteen-nineties.[16] In the case of HOME, a project created between 2006 and 2009, Ernst approached displaced people in Pakistan, India, Palestine and Israel who were willing to engage in conversations about the houses that they had left behind in their homelands. At the start of the project the artist organised sessions with Muslims residing in Pakistan who described their former homes in India. The conversations were open-ended and were often set up as dialogues between older and younger participants. In 2007, for example, the 84-year old India-born writer Intizar Husain was brought into conversation in Lahore with the 39-year old artist Rashid Rana, the Pakistan-born son of parents who had, like Husain, moved from India to Pakistan. At the start of the session, Intizar recalled how he had arrived in Pakistan in the last months of 1947, 'probably on the last train from Meerut [in India]'. He recalled,

> [a]t that point rioting had subsided, though the danger was surely felt on the train. Trains were still being attacked, but the intensity was not the

same. For me it was a spontaneous action, not a premeditated plan. Maybe it was a subconscious thing and was fated that way

(Ernst, 2012, p.52)

Following Ernst's instructions, Rana did not prompt Husain to further elaborate on the train attacks, but rather asked him to imagine the house he had left behind in India. Rashid used photographs on his laptop of houses to trigger the process of recollection, and requested details that stimulated Intizar to further engage in memory work. The latter reflected on the challenge of elicitation, especially when needing to describe objects of longing and loss.

> I can explain the map – the thing is I imagine the basti [town], but how would I articulate it? It's like reading a beautiful poem, and then you start verbalizing it in prose. So in actuality is was an ordinary basti, like any other basti in the Subcontinent. Yet now that I look back, I realize that in all this time, since my childhood and adolescence there until now, I have been longing for it constantly. The image in my mind – that basti has greatly transformed. Now that I recount the basti, my imagination might have added to it

(Ernst, 2012, p.53)

Ernst's project did not only focus on people who had fled from India to Pakistan, but she broadened her scope to include people who had fled in the opposite direction. Her artworks, in other words, did not deal with the suffering of a specific group, as was the case with the Sudeten German artworks discussed in this article, but focused more generally on experiences of displacement. This wider approach transformed the individual sessions into related works of art, presented as a single series of art installations, which stimulated identification across Hindu-Muslim divides. As Dadi (2012b, p.21) noted in a discussion of Ernst's work:

> wounded and resilient memory can also serve as a kind of psychic ground for sympathetically resituating the self in relation to the losses others have also experienced.

Over the years, Ernst decided to further extend her project to include participants from two more groups, the first group being Palestinians who had been displaced by Ashkenazi Jews, (the latter having left or escaped from Europe to the newly established state of Israel). The second group consisted of Mizrahi Jews who had fled from Iraq to Israel in the mid-20th century. Ernst's appropriation of fragments of their stories in similar-looking installations created a sense of shared predicament, and aestheticised the separate art

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16 The trend comprises of collaborative work that often aims to address social and political issues, from poverty to sexual inequality to trauma. For a critical overview, see Bishop, 2012.

works as examples of a common theme. She presented the process of remembering and forgetting home as an exploratory process of searching and interpretative reconstruction that was comparable, and purposely avoided a more detailed engagement with the historical specificities of each political conflict.

Drawing as mnemonic negotiation

The younger discussion partners of the conversations set up by Ernst were mostly relatives working in creative vocations, including artists, architects and photographers. She asked them to help sketch the features of the houses as their older family members described them. In some cases, there was no relative present. Figures 2.3.9 and 2.3.10 show the hands of the 70-year old, New York-based printmaker Zarina Hashimi. She used photographs to recreate the ground plan of her old home in Aligargh, a place in India that she had not visited for 50 years. Interestingly, one of the photographs did not only trigger memories, but
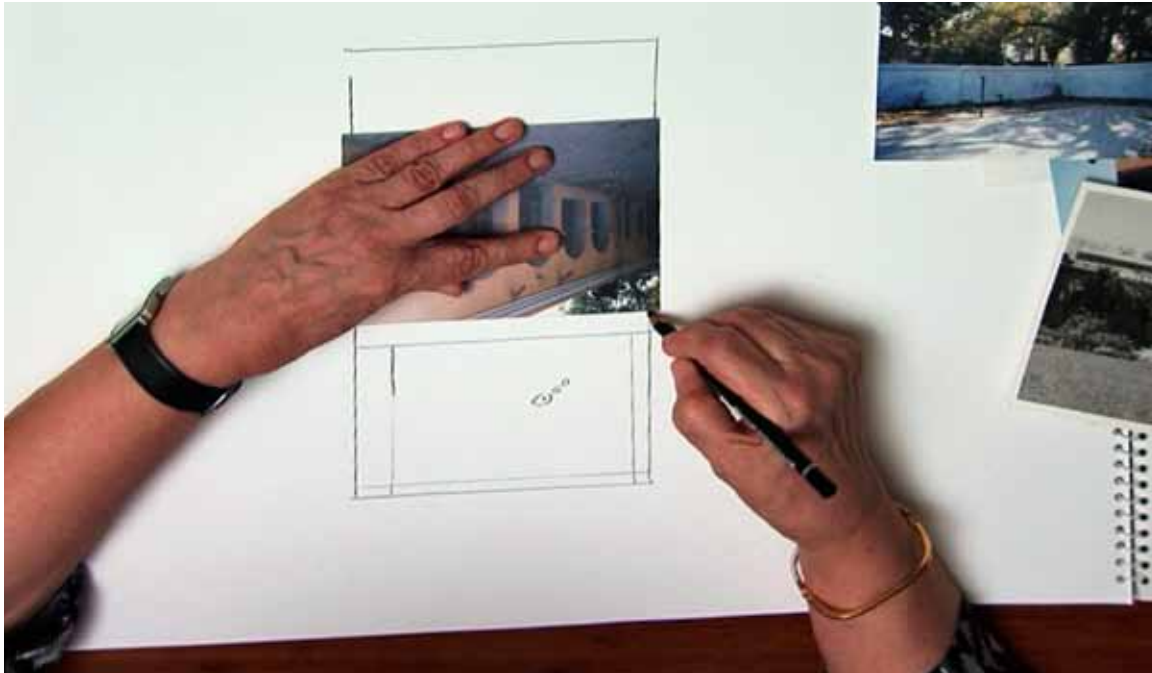
Fig 2.3.9. Sophie Ernst, *HOME*. Zarina uses a photograph of her old home in Aligarh, India to draw the plan of the house. Karachi, 2008, photograph by Amit Hussain. Project HOME, courtesy of Sophie Ernst.

Fig 2.3.10. Sophie Ernst, *HOME*. Zarina looks at photograph of her old home in Aligarh, India, as she recollects how her house used to look. Karachi, 2008, photograph by Amit Hussain. Project HOME, courtesy of Sophie Ernst.

was also used as an alternative ruler to draw the lines of the emerging plan (Figures 2.3.9 and 2.3.10).

On another occasion in the same year, at a location in Israel, Ernst initiated a conversation between two Palestinian sisters, the younger Vera Tamari and the older Tania Nasir. In this case, 63-year old, Jerusalem-born Vera, a visual artist and the Director of the Ethnographic and Art Museum at Birzeit University (located near Ramallah), did most of the drawing. She asked her 67-year old sister, the art historian and classical singer Tania, to describe their grandmother's house. Tania was born in Jaffa in 1941, and after the family had crossed the border into the West Bank in 1948, she had not visited it. Pointing at an old photograph taken of the veranda some time before their departure, she said:

> I think this picture is very nice because it shows part of the veranda [of the house]. The veranda was facing the garden. I do remember because I was born in 1941. In this picture, I was seven months old. Of course, I don't remember that [because I was too young]. I remember later visits. The last visit we made in 1947.

Like Intizar in the previous example, Tania reflected on the subjectivity and changeability of memories. She said:

> The thing with memories – someone tells you about it, so you *think* you remember it. But I still remember things in the house. I remember this veranda very well.

Tania's reflection also acknowledges that recollection is not a purely individual process in which objective facts are relived. Memory is malleable; it is a social process, through which past events are interpreted. In the case of the photograph of her as a baby, the picture projected an unremembered past to her, yet made it real as an image that could be recalled and reflected upon.

The following conversational fragment (quoted in Ernst, 2012, p.93) shows the interplay of verbal narration and visual articulation, as Tania and her sister Vera establish how the house looked.

> Vera: How did the entrance look?

> Tania: [Tania draws] Here there is a hill downwards, here was the house, for sure. The gate was made of iron and small, we entered – the path was paved, small – *I can't remember exactly how it was*. Here is the house – you went out and there is the garden.

Asking for more details, Vera forced her sister to first imagine, and then externalise the image in her drawing.

> Vera: Draw the trees. How were the trees spread through the garden?

> Tania: Here was the jasmine and roses and some other plants. And from here, there was a door to the veranda, which is this.

> Vera: This is the veranda. The floor looks like this – black and white caro.

> Tania: Sorry, you must draw it yourself.

As the sisters drew and redrew parts of the house, Tania entered a process of deeper remembering that was emotionally more intense. More features came to mind and the drawing became increasingly layered. She began to reflect on the predicament of displacement and her exploratory nostalgia turned into a more politicised anger. She noted:

> Tania: The crime was not only grabbing and stealing the land, they attacked the most intimate parts – our memories and our emotional connection to our country.
>   (quoted in Ernst, 2012, p.95)

At this point it is useful to make a distinction between remembered and re-experienced emotions. The notion of 'remembered emotions' refers to a process of detachment from earlier experiences, for example, saying: 'remember how angry I was' with a smile. Re-experienced emotions, by contrast, refer to a reliving of earlier emotions, whether fear, anger or joy (Svašek, 2005: 200). In Tania's case, her rising anger about the loss of homeland seemed to be a re-experienced anger, caused by what she saw as the injustice of her displacement.

As we have seen, in Ernst's project, visual articulation was an important part of the process of remembering. First, photographs sparked particular memories, and second, verbalised memory fragments were translated into tentative sketches. Third, the emerging lines on paper generated new associations and questions, and further memories and lines appeared.

From imagination to visual articulation

The following fragment comes from a conversation between 46-year old Senan Abdelquader, a Palestinian architect who worked in Jerusalem, and the 82-year old Sami Michael, an Iraqi-born Jewish writer and columnist who had to flee Bagdad because of his political activism, and had settled in Israel. The exchange was recorded in Haifa in 2008. In the following passage, a discussion

about imagination ('I imagine a street') is followed by references to 'seeing' ('I see to the right an overhang'), and actual the drawing of the visual image on paper ('give me the paper'). The exchange (quoted in Ernst, 2012, p.107) illustrates very well the collaborative nature of the project and the move from imagination and verbal negotiation to visual articulation.

> Senan: I want to know from you, when you imagine the house, how you remember entering the house.
>
> Sami: I imagine a street, very tight – a very tight alley three people couldn't go through together. I remember there was a window and people sitting there, like me and you, could talk. They called this house Im Jeddi, or Beit Michael.
>
> Senan: Ok, we've gone into the courtyard. More than one room, or one room?
>
> Sami: I see to the right an overhang, an open room for the courtyard. Like a sitting room for receiving people, for guests who would come from abroad. And this is furnished and has seating. There is one wall open to the courtyard. From there a door opens to face the rooms.
>
> Senan: The rooms are on the right or the left?
>
> Sami: give me the paper. This is an alley, this is the toilet, here, like this.

The combination of remembering and drawing functioned as a technique of focused imagination that transported both Senan and Sami to absent homes, 'non-places' that are only accessible through memory. As Ernst (2012, p.23) explained,

> [m]y work in a way is to collect memories of a place – a place which they don't own anymore except as an image in their minds. That place is, in fact, a non-place.

The conversation fragment shows that process of articulating the experience of Sami's home in distant, past Iraq created a new sense of connectedness between Senan and Sami. Both men lived in Israel, but their personal trajectories were embedded in very different political histories. Their conversation, however, enabled them to share and compare experiences of non-place, a process that produced empathetic feelings.

The installation: Bringing it all together

Ernst documented the conversations, making sound recordings and filming the sketching hands. On the basis of the resulting drawings, she then created three-dimensional architectural models out of white material (Figure 2.3.11). In the final installation, she projected

Fig 2.3.11. Camera set up during one of the interviews, courtesy of Sophie Ernst.

Fig 2.3.12 Sophie Ernst, *HOME*, 2009. Video installation, detail of model of Zarina's house. Photo: Felix Krebs, courtesy of Sophie Ernst.

the film footage of the drawing hands onto the models, as the sound of the conversations was being played (Figure 2.3.12 - 2.3.13).

Commenting on HOME, Dadi (2012a, p.158) noted that

> the journey from memory to physicality, aided by a fragment of video narrative, also acknowledges that the past cannot be lived in its fullness, and that the world one faces today necessitates both remembrance and forgetting.

Exhibited as a series of installation in the space of the gallery, the result created a reflective space that stimulated visitors to think about experiences of belonging and displacement. London-based Taha Mehmood, a media practitioner who was born in Hyderabad, has used the notion of contagion to understand the working of HOME.

> In HOME memories of an intimate space acquire a contagion-like quality,   where remembering comes in contact with retelling. Memories become magical objects. In HOME one clearly experiences this contagious flight of memory, as it keeps affecting all those that come in contact with it
>
> (Mehmood, 2012, p.26)

Fig 2.3.13. Sophie Ernst, *HOME*, 2009. Video installation, detail of model of Zarina's house with film projection of hands. Photo: Felix Krebs, courtesy of Sophie Ernst.

Evidently, not all gallery visitors are drawn to the installation. As one a gallery staff member told me during my visit at the Yorkshire Sculpture Park Museum in 2013, some people just rush in and out of the exhibition, not taking the time to understand what it is all about. But others, she said, spend a long time with each of the installations, looking intensely at the works and listening to the conversations. When I asked an elderly English visitor what she thought of the display, she said she was 'terribly moved'. 'I am not a refugee', she explained,

> and when I watch the telly and see groups of refugees, fleeing or in camps, I don't often think of them as individuals. Hearing these voices and seeing these hands in the exhibition makes me see them as actual persons. And I am also reminded of the house I lived in as a child. I realise I can't exactly remember how one of the rooms looked.

Iftikhar Dadi (2012a, p.13) has argued that artworks like HOME have an important political significance, giving a voice to individual displaced persons.

> Access to self-presentation is sometimes viewed as a mere placebo for political and economic justice, but it should be evident that articulation of voice and presence remains key to any adequate reckoning of the social conditions of many communities in South Asia and the Middle East that have resulted from catastrophic upheavals during the twentieth century.

As pointed out in the first half of this article, many Sudeten German expellees would certainly agree with this statement.

Conclusion

The main aim of this article was to find out how memories and unspeakable experiences of displacement are dealt with through artefacts and art. Following Köstlin, I identified a mode of engagement with 'loss of homeland' that has been common amongst Sudeten German expellees, namely the production and framing of visual images as markers of collective trauma. As we have seen, these aesthetics of loss reflected a one-sided discourse of historical objectivity and moral injustice, and most of all stimulated intra-group empathy and identification as a diasporic people who have collectively suffered. By contrast, in the project HOME, Ernst and her collaborators took a more individualistic, exploratory approach. In this case, the aesthetics of loss encouraged reflections on the dynamics of remembering and forgetting, and stimulated interpersonal identification and empathy

beyond specific displaced groups. It also critiqued the politicisation of suffering.

To simply oppose these two modes of aesthetic engagement would, however, ignore the dynamics of artefacts' social lives. As I have shown, once produced, particular material articulations of suffering were aestheticised and re-aestheticised in different ways in both cases. Over time, Sudeten German items were often reframed as objects of wider cultural significance, gaining new political meanings and emotional impact in the context of Bavarian regional politics, post-Cold War cross-border reconciliation and EU enlargement. Others gained new efficacy as they were passed on within families from one generation to the next. The HOME installations were also aestheticised in multiple ways by different members of the public. For some, they were reminders of their own predicaments of forced migration. To others, they came to stand for a more generalised nostalgia, or for an ideal of common humanity. For again others, they had no meaning or appeal at all. The processual focus of aestheticisation has highlighted these situational complexities, transitions and diversities.

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NUCLEAR WAR AS FALSE MEMORY
John Timberlake

Abstract

In this paper Timberlake outlines aspects of his creative practice as an artist, explaining his fascination for the 'fictions of nuclear war' – a war that never happened and so became the subject of 'false memory'. Highlighting discontinued historical trajectories, the author shows how the cultural legacy of Britain's nuclear test programme of the 1950s and '60s may be explored meaningfully in paintings and photography resulting from his archival research at the Imperial War Museum in London.

Biographical note

John Timberlake (born in Lancashire, 1967) is a London-based artist whose combinations of drawing, painting and photography reflect a longstanding engagement with landscape and history. He is an alumnus of Brighton Polytechnic and the Whitney Museum of American Art Independent Study Program, and holds a PhD from Goldsmiths College, University of London. Exhibitions include: *We Are History* (Beaconsfield, London); two international surveys in 2009, *Beyond the Picturesque* (Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst, Ghent), and *Pittoresk* (MARTa, Herford, Westfalen, Germany); *Breakthrough: Works from the Collection* at the Imperial War Museum (2009-2010); *After London*, a collaboration with art historian Dr Joy Sleeman (Slade/UCL) at Stephen Lawrence Gallery, University of Greenwich; and *Dark Sky,* curated by Professor Geoffrey Batchen and Christina Barton at Te Pataka Toi Adam Gallery, Wellington, New Zealand. Timberlake's book *Bussard Ramjet*, an illustrated fiction, was published by Artwords/Artis Den Bosch in 2009.

An earlier version of this material was presented on the occasion of the project conference 'Disturbing Pasts: Memories, Controversies and Creativity' (20 -22 November 2012, Museum of Ethnology/Weltmuseum Wien, Vienna). To view the film footage on the Open Arts Archive, www.openartsarchive.org, follow this link: http://www.openartsarchive.org/oaa/content/disturbing-pasts-memories-controversies-and-creativity-conference-16

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NUCLEAR WAR AS FALSE MEMORY

John Timberlake, Middlesex University

My series of staged photo works, collectively titled *Another Country*, made between 1999 and 2001, explores the idea of the nuclear war that never happened as a constructed false memory, as an iatrogenic disorder arising from the culture of the Cold War. I made the work – a series of handmade dioramas using model making paraphernalia and painted backdrops – between 1999 and 2001, drawing on imagery in the Imperial War Museum's Photographic Archive of British nuclear tests conducted in Australia and the Pacific. I was drawn to the labelling of a box file in which the photographs were kept: it simply read 'Atomic Warfare'. Of course, the photographs were not of warfare itself (involving the attack or assault of an enemy), nor of the US bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, but solely of British nuclear test explosions. I was therefore struck by how this labelling inserted the fiction of a nuclear war that had not happened amidst the other file boxes containing documentation of actual military conflict.

An iatrogenic disorder is one that arises as a negative, unwanted result from a medical treatment

Figure 2.4.1: *Another Country XV (2001)* C-Type Photograph, 86cm x 86cm Coll. Imperial War Museum, London, catalogue number ART 17027

or therapy. In psychotherapy, an iatrogenic disorder such as false memory syndrome allows the patient to see him/herself as victim. During the 1990s, a number of cases were studied involving apparent memories of physical or sexual abuse that may inadvertently have been suggested to the person undergoing therapy by an ill-trained or inexperienced therapist. As Mollon, has pointed out, the terms of the debate were contentious to say the least: '[The] purported syndrome has not been validated, is not listed in official diagnostic texts and no clinical case studies outlining its features have been published in any medical or scientific journal' (2000, p.5). Whilst scientific research on the issue was subsequently produced, Mollon's observation was that the debate's intensity – and the attack on Freud that it entailed – emerged, as it were, from somewhere other than clinical evidence.

However, as Mollon also points out, the heated character of the debate that erupted in the 1990s around false memory syndrome goes to the heart of the act of remembering itself, which, (according to Mollon) as current scientific understanding tends to argue, is not a process of accessing recorded data filed away in the brain, but rather a reconstructive process, hostage to the deceptive plasticity of memory in circumstances of suggestion, or pressure from either therapist or peers (2000, p.5). My concern here, however, is to seek an analogy between those iatrogenic disorders generated by 'bad therapy' and those arising from the extended period of cultural, political and social conditioning of the Cold War. My contention is that there is a useful analogy to be drawn here between iatrogenic disorders thinking through how and the self-inflicted experience of the arms race, international tensions and crises of the Cold War period allow the West to imagine itself as a victim or sufferer. In this way, the construction of 'false memory' of a martyred and destroyed Europe is constructed from the actual destruction of Japanese cities a generation earlier, and juxtaposed with the real but evaded risk of nuclear annihilation faced at the height of the Cold War.

For John Kihlstrom, a cognitive psychologist cited by Mollon, False Memory Syndrome is defined as:

> A condition in which the subject's identity and interpersonal relationships are centered around a memory of traumatic experience which is objectively false but in which the person strongly believes. Note that the syndrome is not characterised by false memories as such … Rather, the syndrome may be diagnosed when the memory is so deeply engrained that

Figure 2.4.2: *The view from E7th Street*, contact sheet of images taken on 9/11 by John Timberlake

it orientates the individual's entire personality and lifestyle, in turn disrupting all sorts of other adaptive behaviours … the person assiduously avoids confrontation with any evidence that might challenge the memory.

(Mollon, 2000, p.5)

As is well documented, the immediate response of the United States Command structure on the day of the 11 September 2001 attacks bore strong similarities to what would have been initiated in the event of attack by Soviet nuclear missiles during the Cold War. By the time of the 9/11 attacks, of course, the Cold War had been over for over a decade. However, in the US, the four airborne command aircraft, the so-called 'Doomsday planes', designed to oversee a nuclear missile retaliation, were dispatched, and the steel doors of various strategic command centres in the American Mid West, designed to withstand a nuclear attack by the USSR, were closed for the first time, along with various other measures, including the mobilisation and deployment of National Guard.

The conflation of the terrorist hijackings and subsequent mass murder of 9/11 with nuclear war was not limited to the immediate response on the day. On numerous occasions, the actual attacks of 11 September have become conflated with the false memory of the nuclear war that was *not* fought sometime between 1949 and 1991. Examples of this might include the titling of Peter Taylor's series of programmes for the BBC, *Al Quaeda: The Third World War*; David Levi Strauss's collection of essays *Between the Eyes,* wherein he likens the 9/11 fireballs at the World Trade Center to those of nuclear weapons; more anecdotally, having personally witnessed the attacks in New York on 9/11, I recall New York residents comparing the events to the Hiroshima bomb, even though a comparison of the respective death tolls for these events reveals huge differences.

The logic of strategic military planning, of course, involves considerable and repeated attempts to *imagine oneself under the type of assault one intends to inflict upon one's enemy*. Such visualisation of nuclear war scenarios reached a particular peak in the cinematic, televisual and literary culture of the North Atlantic during those periods of greatest tension. Now, decades later, it is in the context of recalling that culture and psychology that I wish to draw further analogies between the memory of the Cold War and iatrogenic disorders. Iatrogenic disorders often result in false accusations of abuse against not only the alleged perpetrator, but, significantly, supposed or alleged neglect by another guardian or parent. Studies of false memory syndrome highlight the manner in which a parent or guardian *not* alleged to have perpetrated the abuse can be made the central object of anger and resentment, for their alleged inaction, neglect or indifference to the analysand's suffering revealed through constructed memory.

My concerns as a landscape artist, and, more specifically, one interested in that area of speculative fiction known as alternative history, is the publication in 2005 by the Polish government of Soviet war maps, containing details of which European cities would be attacked in the event of a nuclear exchange with
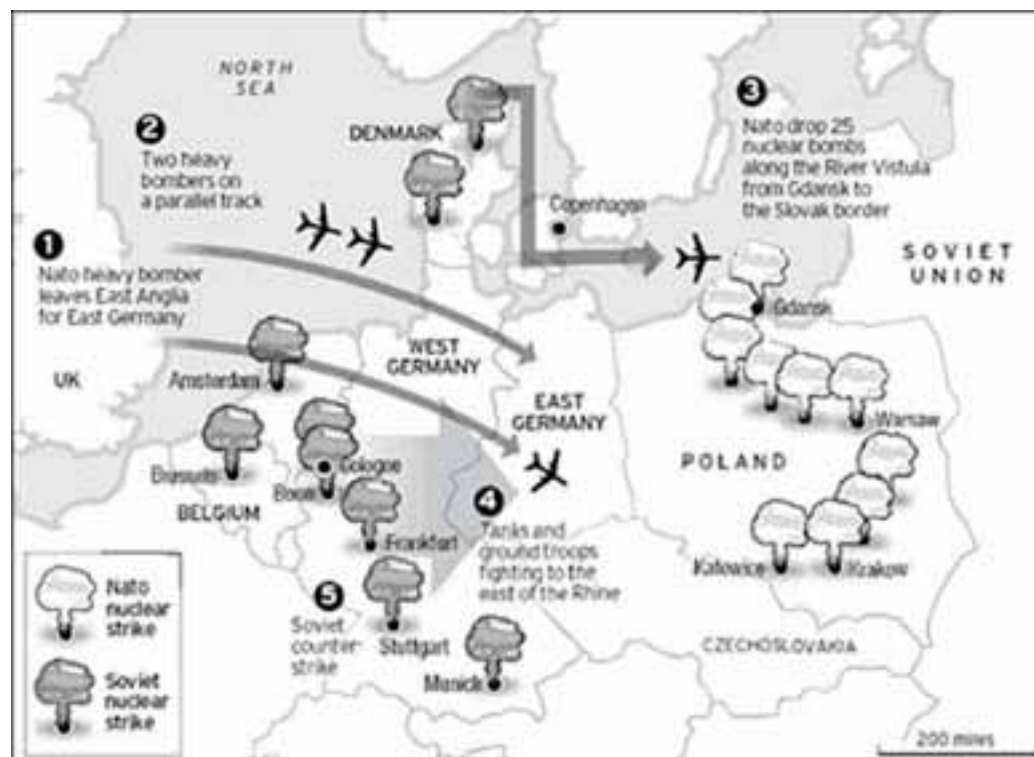

Figure 2.4.3: 'USSR WWIII Map' released by the Polish Government, published in *The Daily Telegraph*, 26 November 2005. Reproduced with kind permission of *The Daily Telegraph*.

NATO. The map was presented in the context of an outcry against Russia, Poland's former Warsaw Pact ally, and its preparedness to 'sacrifice' Poland, even though the maps made clear that the destruction would have been visited upon Polish territory by NATO bombers, not Russian ones, laying down a barrage of 25 nuclear explosions extending from Gdansk to the Polish-Slovak border, rather than on the then Soviet Union.

During the 1960s and '70s, British 'Vulcan' nuclear bomber crews were trained to fly with a patch covering one eye. The logic of this rationing of eyesight was simple: as such crew would be flying through that barrage along the Vistula, they faced a strong risk of being blinded by the flashes. The patch ensured that once they had lost the sight in one eye, the crew could uncover the saved eye, and continue flying. Between them, the pilot and co-pilot could thus afford to have three eyes blinded and still be able to reach their targets. Such a blinkering might seem historically poignant.

I want to suggest that, as with the 9/11 examples, there is a tendency here to position oneself as a victim that strongly recalls false memory syndrome.

Of course, the posturing behind the Polish outcry can be seen as a part of a wider repositioning by a conservative government, seeking to align itself with the US – which was spared any criticism – and blame the Cold War on Russia. This might seem to be analogous to what psychotherapists term 'reconstructive retrieval' (Brainerd and Reyna, 2005, p.383), wherein the subject begins with general concepts ('Russia has never been an ally of Poland, the West was never an enemy') and generates events by constructively processing that concept (Poland's nuclear annihilation through a presumed betrayal by Russia, not by NATO bombs). As the work of E.F. Loftus has shown (quoted in Brainerd and Reyna, 2005, p. 383), reconstructive retrieval would seem to be a consistent feature of patients of therapy recovered false memories.

In the immediate aftermath of 9/11, a further spectral fragment of the nuclear war that never happened re-emerged. In March 2002, two American magazines, the left-leaning *The Nation* and the more conservative *Newsweek* both reported that Soviet-made 'suitcase bombs' were possibly in circulation, and that in the immediate aftermath of 9/11, the US security services had been acting on credible evidence that such a bomb was somewhere in Manhattan. At the same time, fears were raised around the possibility of a nuclear device being concealed in one of the thousands of shipping containers being delivered to New York every day. This fear of a bomb carried in a cargo ship resurrected earlier anxieties entertained by the British government half a century earlier in the 1950s. Indeed, Britain's first nuclear test, *Hurricane* in 1952, involved a bomb detonated in the hold of a ship moored in

Figure 2.4.4: John Timberlake *Untitled sketch made from photomontage,* 2012. Graphite on paper, collection of the artist.

the Bunsen Channel, a stretch of water off North West Australia chosen for its similarities in depth and mud content to the River Thames and the Port of London. The British government feared such a bomb vaporising river water and spreading a radioactive mist over southern England. The fear that the British government entertained at this time arose not from a demonstration of such intent by its enemy (the Soviet Union, which at the time of the British commencement of its own bomb project had no such capability) but from a nuclear test conducted in 1946 by its ally the US.

Again, as in all the examples cited, there is the lingering sense that the nuclear war that did *not* occur sometime between 1949 and 1989 remains a touchstone, but also a possible threat projected onto, and emanating from the Other: nuclear war as a constructed recollection of a traumatic experience from which belief and motivation can be drawn, and via which any challenges to one's self-positioning can be assiduously avoided.

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'I MISS YOU, JEW!'
Rafał Betlejewski

Abstract

Focusing on Poland, the Gdańsk-born artist Rafał Beteljewski takes a performative approach in his text, which offers a brief meditation alongside the artist's provocative photographic works on Poland's 'absent' Jewish presence.

Biographical note

Rafał Betlejewski is a Polish artist and performer, born in Gdańsk, 1969. He is best known for his numerous public space projects concerning identity, social labels, the collective mind and memory. He is the author of art-social projects including, 'I Miss You, Jew!', 'And Would I Go? Warsaw Uprising'.

See: http://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rafał_Betlejewski

An earlier version of this material was presented on the occasion of the project conference 'Disturbing Pasts: Memories, Controversies and Creativity' (20 -22 November 2012, Museum of Ethnology/Weltmuseum Wien, Vienna). To view the film footage on the Open Arts Archive, www.openartsarchive.org, follow this link: http://www.openartsarchive.org/oaa/content/disturbing-pasts-memories-controversies-and-creativity-conference-2

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'I MISS YOU, JEW!'

Rafał Betlejewski

Reality is a state of mind.

To be more accurate – reality is a process of the mind.

Whether or not there are any physical objects out there outside my head it is hard to decide.

The mind has no access to it other than by creating representations.

Reflections.

Ideas.

Definitions.

Opinions.

Words.

My mind cannot hold the chair but it can hold the idea of a chair. Also one with six or ten legs.

The more playful the mind the richer the reality.

We can suspect there are many objects out there which do not yet have their representations and therefore they do not exist.

And there are many things, which exist only as ideas created in the mind with no resemblance to anything physical.

If you can't name it you can't see it and vice versa.

Reflected objects are the tools of the mind. The building blocks.

The mental objects are assembled together to create a structure.

A sentence.

A narrative.

An image.

A comprehensive picture of the world.

It consists of the probable and improbable.

The common and the myth.

The probable and the improbable are equally important and equally untrue but they are both accepted.

They are believed to exist and therefore they are considered as true.

Out of a million different possibilities certain ones are chosen.

And there is someone to believe in them.

The picture of reality is based on acts of faith.

They fit the picture, fulfill the structure.

Faith is the nature of the moral imperative constituting true and false.

'I MISS YOU, JEW!'
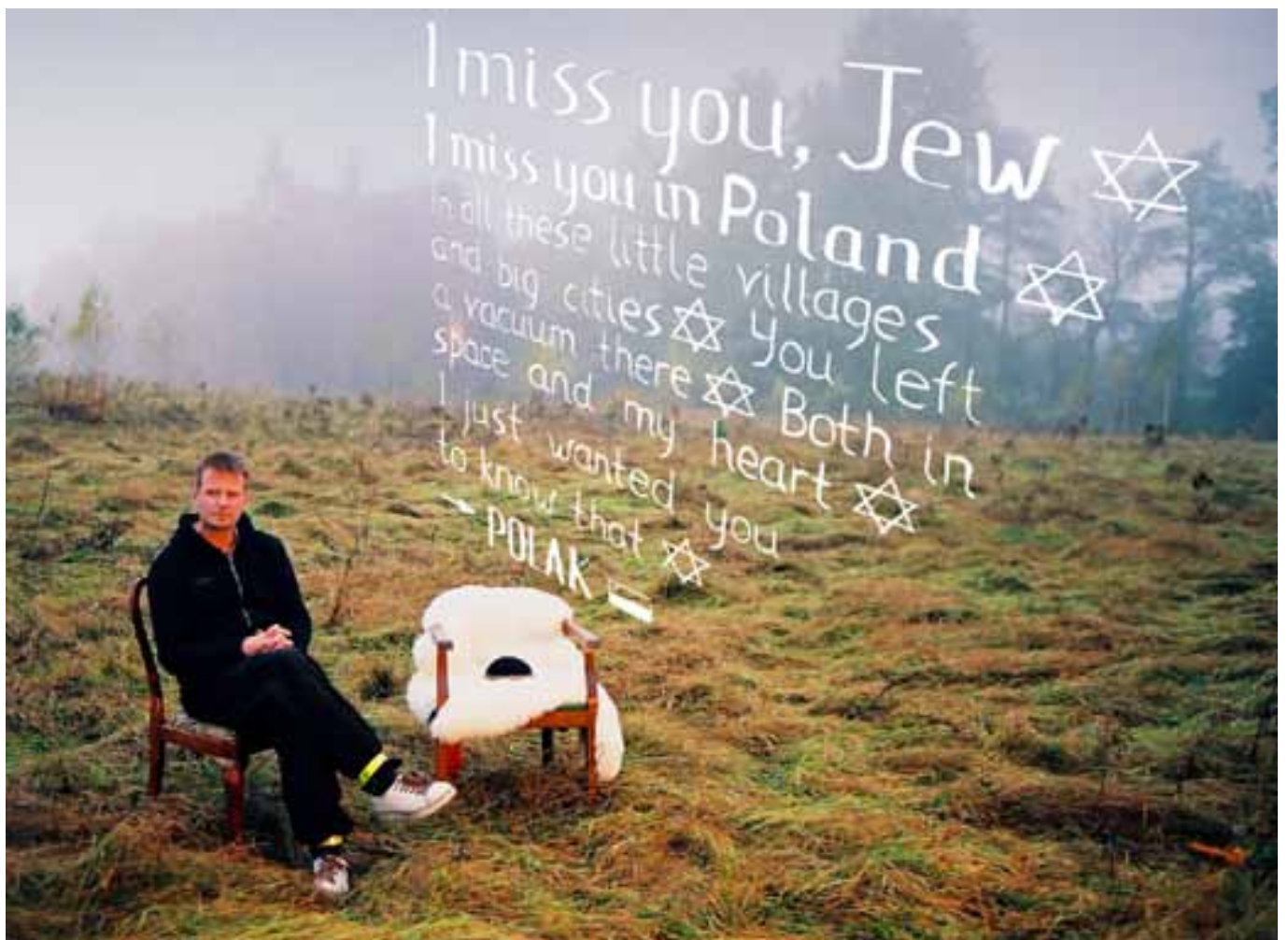
We believe something is true. Sometimes we believe it so deeply it seems to be knowledge.

It's a well-confirmed belief.

Faith has a particular quality: it's weak.

It can be lost in the face of experience. If faith was strong it would be obstructing imagination and reality would not be transformed.

Faith is weak so it must be confirmed.

We all have this feeling sometimes: when we close our eyes it all disappears.

It's not true, we are dreaming. When we wake up it will all be gone.

We get scared of this feeling. We don't want it. Some of us get scared more and feel obliged to defend reality from doubt.

These people make it their goal to make us certain.

We're not just a bunch of funny looking people speaking some strange language. No! That's the way it is supposed to be.

The best and easiest way to confirm beliefs is to believe what everybody else believes.

It's best to adopt the image of reality that is already there waiting for us.

And let's not fool ourselves – that's what we do.

We are presented with a detailed description of reality when we grow up and by the time we've grown there is little we can do about it.

We become members of certain groups – however vaguely they may be defined.

There's little choice – the group demands faith and it uses all kinds of immediate threats to impose it.

You are expected to respect – and that is to share the values of – your family, your kin, your school, your football team, your sex, your church, your country, your nation and so on, all the way to God, to your God.

It is your God because He was created to reconfirm your reality.

God is the ultimate argument for reality.

In recent years the role of God as the confirmation of reality is diminished, because we have developed a new idea: evidence and influence. We gain influence over the world, we can change it, and this change becomes the new fetish – proof of a higher force.

Everything we believe in, starting from the direction of gravity, our values, people we find important – this constitutes the status quo. The unchanged. The psychotic.

This is our line of defense. The status quo describes who we are and if it is lost we are lost. Keep it or die.

I am a man, my family name is Betlejewski, I am a vegetarian, I am a Christian, I am Polish, and my God is sweet Jesus the king of Poland, or I believe in science.

For some reason my football club is Barcelona in Spain, but I guess if I told them that they wouldn't treat me seriously.

It's not only about defense. It's also about attack.

These days we have countless ways to preach what we believe in. We have films, music, books, TV, internet, fashion, pop culture, advertising, politics, social issues, global schools, new churches, door to door etc.

One way or another everyone can be heard. Every story can be told.

But the competition is fierce. Suddenly everyone is talking.

The game is to block your ears and turn up your voice. Strengthen your defenses and be loud.

Be radical. And if that doesn't help, come up with some clever strategy to make others believe in your reality.

Simplify your message, narrow it down to a slogan and sell it.

And if this doesn't work, try to trick them. Pretend to be something else, disguise your ideas, use role models, play their game, whatever.

The goal is to get as many people to believe your story as you can.

Remember, the others want the same. They want their story to prevail and they want it to rule. That's the only way to make it real.

Justified by the amount of likes on Facebook.

By the amount of quotes in literature

By the amount of hits on google.

By popularity.

By price.

There are countless examples of abandoned 'identity scripts'. Who wants to be a samurai, a cowboy, a real man, a strong father, a polite woman, a housewife, a Catholic, a capitalist, etc.

They lay around waiting as waste to be recycled. Well described, not very fashionable.

They are what Duchamp called ready-mades.

The countless variety of identity scripts is being replaced by the unified script of the consumer.

Everything goes fine as long as you pay your taxes and keep the music down after 10pm.

Why does it all happen, why does it have to be like that?

Well, the most basic principle is movement.

Everything moves. We move. Energy waves move.

We are moving, we have to be moving, we will be moving, we can't stop.

And so there's another way to look at the struggle of narratives and identities: it's entertainment.

It's not about whose story is the most probable or morally justified, it's whose story is better told.

Aren't we all sick of these morally justified stories poorly told?

For God's sake, let's at least have fun!

It's probably high time to realize that life as a conscious effort makes no sense.

Lying on a beach through your whole life is probably time better spent then working in a bank. Or a museum, for that matter.

This is my reality, which I want you to share.

There are two interesting rules to fun and entertainment, which should be highly considered and valued:

1. Entertainment must be entertaining - and it takes a lot of skill to achieve that

2. It takes place on a stage in a defined space and has a time limit, after which we can all go home safely.

This is what I am trying to do in my country, taking performance art to a different level.

I am trying to play around with the religion of true and false.

The less religious we are – I believe – the less willing we are to reject, punish, kill, wage wars, close ourselves.

I believe we have a lot to do in redefining our status quo.

At the moment in Poland we are very protective of our story. We are terrified it may be false. We are very aggressively defending it and we are easily tricked by people who portray themselves as the guardians of the national myth.

SPATIAL DIALOGUES AND THE MEMORY OF ABSENT JEWS IN CONTEMPORARY POLISH ART: YAEL BARTANA, RAFAŁ BETLEJEWSKI AND JOANNA RAJKOWSKA

Uilleam Blacker

Abstract

The paper analyses how the work of three contemporary artists deal with the memory of Poland's pre-war Jewish population and the Holocaust. Joanna Rajkowska is one of Poland's leading contemporary artists and her artworks have been displayed in prominent public sites in Warsaw. Her most famous work is her palm tree in central Warsaw, Greetings from Jerusalem Avenue (2002, ongoing), which references, in its form and physical location on Aleje Jerozolimskie, or Jerusalem Avenue, both Jerusalem and Warsaw's vanished Jews. Rajkowska has also used important Jewish locations in Warsaw in other work, such as Oxygenator (2007). Yael Bartana is an Israeli artist, but represented Poland at the Venice Biennale in 2011. In her trilogy of films set in Poland, And Europe Will Be Stunned (2006-11), Bartana uses prominent locations in Warsaw in which to stage performances (the Palace of Culture, the National Stadium, site of the future Museum of Polish Jews) that provocatively posit a return of Jews to Poland. Betlejewski has authored several provocative and creative responses to the absence of Jews in contemporary Poland, such as his I miss you, Jew! project (2004), and his Burning barn performance (2010). The paper will examine the varying strategies through which these artists deal with the problem of the absence of Jews, the trauma of their violent disappearance, and attempt to re-inscribe the vanished Jews back into the landscape of contemporary Poland. The paper argues that all three artists use actual and imagined space in order to create a complex, often ambiguous dialogue between diverse traumatic pasts and the problems of the present. This text is published as a counterpart to the contribution to Disturbing Pasts from the artist Rafal Betlejewski.

Biographical note

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SPATIAL DIALOGUES AND THE MEMORY OF ABSENT JEWS IN CONTEMPORARY POLISH ART: YAEL BARTANA, RAFAŁ BETLEJEWSKI AND JOANNA RAJKOWSKA

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Karen Underhill has noted that to a large degree it is the 'absent Jew', an idealised, imaginary figure who has the potential to return a lost wholeness and provide absolution for historical misdeeds, who is the key figure in Polish memory discourse about the Holocaust and Poland's lost Jewish communities (Underhill, 2011, p.582). By the same token, this absent Jew, who represents the promise of cultural fulfilment and regeneration, is also the object of fear and hatred, and the source for the continuing presence of anti-Semitism in a country where Jews represent only a tiny fraction of the population (Underhill, p.588; Zubrzycki, 2013, p.104). Poland's Jews were annihilated under the Nazi occupation, and while there is no doubt as to who the perpetrators of this crime were, the role of Poles in relation to it was complex and ambiguous, and remains the subject of difficult historiographical and mnemonic discussions. There were many rescuers, but there were also those who denounced Jews or those who hid Jews, while many looked on with indifference. On the other hand, there were instances in which Poles directly participated in mass violence against their Jewish neighbours, such as the Jedwabne massacre of 1941, or the Kielce pogrom of 1946 (see Engelking, 2001; Engelking and Libionka, 2009; Engelking and Leociak 2009; Fiorecki, 2010; Gebert, 2008; Gross, 2001 and 2006; Grabowski, 2013; Irwin-Zarecka 1994; Zubrzycki 2006; Polonsky 2009).

The suffering of Jews in the Holocaust was minimised and distorted under communism in Poland. This elision, some have argued, suited the majority of Poles, pro-communist or otherwise, who were unwilling to confront the traumas of the recent past, and were still struggling to come to terms with what many of them perceived as 'their own' (i.e. Polish Catholic, and not Polish Jewish) massive wartime suffering and loss (Steinlauf, 1997, pp.62-74; Polonsky and Michlic, 2004, p.6). Indeed, as Genevieve Zubrzycki points out, the monoethnic narrative of national martyrdom was so effectively promoted by the postwar communist state precisely because it was compatible with Poland's long-standing historical tradition of glorifying Polish national victimhood and suffering, often, indeed, in competition with the similar narrative that also lay at the heart of the identity of Poland's large Jewish community (Zubrzycki, 2013, p.96). The trauma of witnessing the mass murder of the Polish Jewish population and the ambiguous legacy of the various, complex roles played by non-Jewish Poles in relation to this, left post-war Poland with what the literary critic Jan Błoński described as 'a bloody and awful mark', a 'burden' that 'we must carry within ourselves, although it is painful and unpleasant': the burden, in Błoński's understanding, was precisely the question of how Poles should deal with the marks left by the 'blood of the Other', by the death and subsequent absence of that other. This was a question that Poles were reluctant to confront (Błoński, 1994, pp.10, 18-9).

The difficult question of wartime and pre-war Polish-Jewish relations has, nevertheless, been confronted and turned to constructive uses in Poland. This rediscovery began in the 1970s with local efforts by the small remaining Jewish communities, but also by other religious and community groups, to preserve the crumbling remnants of Jewish sites in Polish towns and cities, such as cemeteries and synagogues. Grass roots efforts to restore cemeteries spread into wider initiatives that embraced commemorative practices such as building memorials, marking anniversaries, and educational and cultural programmes and events. These processes, spurred on by increasing interest (and pressure) from outside of Poland, grew during the 1980s, and became an open, state-supported trend in the post-communist period. By the post-communist period, a remarkable level of engagement with Poland's 'absent Jew' could be perceived; importantly for this paper, this process began precisely in the physical spaces where the traces of that absence were most tangible (Meng, 2011, p.155).

Cultural figures played a crucial role in the recovery of the memory of Poland's Jews. Writers, many of them Polish-Jewish, like Henryk Grynberg and Hanna Krall, began mapping the absence of Jews in the places they had formerly inhabited, and which seemed to have already forgotten them in the 1960s and 1970s, while others, like Nobel Prize winning poet Czesław Miłosz and novelist, poet and critic Jarosław Marek Rymkiewicz, wrote important texts that confronted Poles directly with difficult questions about their relationships with Jews and their roles under the German occupation. As early as 1943, Miłosz's haunting poem 'Campo dei Fiori' had confronted readers with the disturbing image of Poles enjoying themselves on

a carousel while the Warsaw ghetto burned, while much later Rymkiewicz, in his novel *Umschlagplatz* (1988), urged Poles to confront the silence and absence that characterised landscape left behind after the redevelopment of the destroyed ghetto: 'What meaning does it have, can it have, that we live around their death? That is the explanation for why I seek a map of this place.' (Rymkiewicz, 1988, p.16) It is through creating his own map, through confronting the space of the former ghetto, that Rymkiewicz attempts to locate and come to terms with the absence of Warsaw's Jews.

The absence of Jews has also been problematised in the works of some of Poland's most prominent artists. In 2013, Warsaw's Zachęta Gallery held a major exhibition as part of the city's commemorations of the 70th anniversary of the Ghetto Uprising that testified to the richness of Polish artists' engagement with the Holocaust over the last seven decades. Leading figures in contemporary Polish art such as Wilhelm Sasnal, Mirosław Bałka and Artur Żmijewski, whose works were represented in the exhibition, have made important, sometimes controversial statements about memory of the Holocaust and Polish-Jewish relations. Recent years have seen a particularly noticeable upsurge in artistic responses to these problems, even taking on a distinct and new direction in terms of artistic-commemorative practice, a trend that Erica Lehrer and Magdalena Waligorska have described as '[s]ocial and cultural "interventions" undertaken by artists, academics, youth groups, and other culture brokers, [which] began to create provocative spaces of dialogue and self-reflection, in staged installations or happenings in which individuals were asked to participate in active, social forms of remembering'. These new and innovative approaches have, as Lehrer and Waligorska note, crossed the boundary between the world of art and the public sphere, often involving participation, performance and occupying public space, moving precisely into the physical spaces where the absence of Poland's Jews can be most tangibly felt, and engaging with the publics who inhabit these spaces (Lehrer and Waligorska, 2013, p.2). This paper will examine the work of three artists who have worked in the Polish context in recent years, and who have been involved in the trend identified by Lehrer and Waligorska: Joanna Rajkowska, Rafał Betlejewski and Yael Bartana. All three have made high profile artistic statements on the memory of Poland's lost Jews and the Holocaust. All three also deal directly with the 'empty spaces' that are marked by Jewish absence, situating their work in public space either as public performances or as permanent public artworks.

Yael Bartana is an Israeli artist who has worked in Poland and on Polish-Jewish memory. Bartana may seem like a strange choice to begin a discussion of Polish art and attitudes to the Holocaust and Polish-Jewish relations, but she is a relevant choice, not least because her work challenges rigid definitions of culture and ethnicity in the Polish context, as does the fact that she chooses to cooperate with Polish partners and represented Poland at the Venice Biennale in 2011. One of her best-known works is her Polish Trilogy of short films, *And Europe Will be Stunned* (2007–11), which has been shown in leading museums and galleries around the world, and has had a significant impact in Poland, where it was made and first shown, attracting significant media and critical attention. The trilogy was the result of cooperation with Polish intellectuals from the left-wing circles surrounding the journal and political/cultural foundation *Krytyka polityczna* (Political Critique). The films, which posit the return of Poland's lost Jews to the country, were accompanied by the 'formation' of a public movement under the name 'Jewish Renaissance Movement in Poland' (see www.jrmip.org), which held an inaugural congress in Berlin in 2012, an event that was part talking shop to discuss political and cultural issues, but in the main constituted an extended artistic performance based on the ideas and aesthetics of the films.

The first part of Bartana's trilogy, *Mary koszmary* (Nightmares), features the left-wing activist, journalist, writer and founder of *Krytyka polityczna* Sławomir Sierakowski in the role of a political agitator making a speech to the dilapidated, empty national stadium in Warsaw, before it was renovated for the Euro 2012 football championships. The stadium, previously called the 10th Anniversary Stadium, was built in 1955 to celebrate ten years since the Soviet victory in the Second World War, partly using rubble from the destroyed Warsaw ghetto. In the speech, which he co-wrote with the writer and academic Kinga Dunin, Sierakowski implores Jews to return to Poland in order to stop the nation's 'nightmares', to heal its wounded memory, and build a common future. His audience is a small group of children dressed in communist pioneer-style uniforms. In the second film, *Mur i wieża* (Wall and Tower), a group of young Jews, apparently having heeded Sierakowski's call, arrives in Warsaw and builds a small settlement in the centre of the city. The film shows the building of the settlement in optimistic spirit, recalling socialist or Zionist propaganda films depicting workers or settlers in Israel. The group is seen learning the language of their new home, and reposing in a cheerful, hopeful atmosphere; yet the resulting

settlement is closed behind high walls and barbed wire underneath a watchtower. The site the settlers choose is in Muranów, the district of Warsaw that had been the city's Jewish district before the war, then became part of the ghetto, and was completely destroyed by the Nazis during the liquidation of the ghetto in 1943. The site also happens to be the location where large Museum of the History of Polish Jews was built and opened in 2013. The museum sits adjacent to the famous Ghetto Uprising monument designed by Natan Rapoport and built in 1948, although this does not appear in the film. The final film, *Zamach* (Assassination) depicts the 'state funeral' of Sierakowski, cast as a popular and inspiring political leader, after he has been assassinated. The funeral takes place at Warsaw's huge, socialist-realist Palace of Culture and Science, completed also in 1955 as a gift from Joseph Stalin to the Polish people. In a ceremony in a nearby square, against the backdrop of a large statue of Sierakowski, various figures pay tribute to his dream of Jews returning to Poland, and a large multicultural crowd marches under the banner of the Jewish Renaissance Movement in Poland. The list of speakers includes representatives of the Movement, whose banners can be seen displayed around the assembled crowd, but also, for example, the Israeli journalist Yaron London, who speaks against the idea of the return to Poland.

Figure 3.2.1: Yael Bartana, *Mary Koszmary* (*Nightmares*), 2007, film.

Figure 3.2.2: Yael Bartana, *Mur i wieża* (*Wall and tower*), 2009, film.

Figure 3.2.3: Yael Bartana, *Zamach* (*Assassination*), 2011, film.

Joanna Rajkowska, who is one of contemporary Poland's most prominent artists, also refers to Poland's lost Jews in two of her best-known projects. The first, entitled *Greetings from Jerusalem Avenue*, consists of a palm tree that was placed on a roundabout in central Warsaw in 2002, and, despite numerous adventures and moments of uncertainty, stands today as a permanent feature of the cityscape. The project was inspired both by the artist's travels to Israel and her reflections on the loss of Jews from Warsaw. The palm is placed on one of the city's main thoroughfares, the Aleje Jerozolimskie, or Jerusalem Avenue, so named after an 18th-century Jewish settlement near Warsaw to which the road led and which, significantly, was abolished after objections from Warsaw's non-Jewish Polish merchants 'leaving the name of the road leading to it as the only reminder' (Jakub Dąbrowski, cited by Chmielewska-Szlajfer, 2010, p.203). The second work is *Oxygenator* (2007–8), which entailed the redesigning of a small square in central Warsaw to include a pond with fish surrounded by grass, plants, chairs and mattresses. The pond emitted ozone into the air, which had the effect of filling the surrounding air with extra oxygen. The site, Grzybowski Square, was once part of a thriving Jewish community, and was then part of the ghetto during the war. It presently lies immediately adjacent to Próżna Street, a short, dilapidated side street that is one of the

very few remaining parts of Warsaw's pre-war Jewish district. Today the street is the focal point for Warsaw's annual Jewish festival, and is slowly undergoing renovation. Warsaw's Jewish Theatre and its only remaining pre-war synagogue, the Nożyk Synagogue, are located on the other side of the square. Also on the square is a church in which Jews were hidden during the war, but where the artist, in her commentary on the piece, describes having found anti-Semitic literature for sale (Rajkowska, 2010, p.77). The project was also realised partly in response to a plan to erect a monument to victims of ethnic cleansing of Poles by Ukrainian nationalists during the Second World War in Poland's former eastern territories, today western Ukraine, a history that, as Rajkowska points out, though tragic, has no direct connection to this specific place (Rajkowska, 2010, pp. 86-7). In the light of the fraught dynamics of traumatic memory and forgetting surrounding the square, the oxygen-generating pond was, in the artist's conception, a way of 'purifying' the air of a place so heavily marked with contested and difficult memory that it had become neglected and shunned by those encountering it on a day-to-day basis (Rajkowska, 2010, pp. 71-104).

The third case discussed here is the work of Rafał Betlejewski, an artist and performer who is known for his innovative and sometimes controversial

Figure 3.2.4: Joanna Rajkowska, *Pozdroowienia z Alej Jerozolimskich* (*Greetings from Jerusalem Avenue*), 2002, multimedia public art installation, photo courtesy of Joanna Rajkowska.

performance projects, many of which focus on memory politics, and two of which, probably his most famous, refer to Poland's lost Jews. The first, entitled *I miss you, Jew!*, begun in 2004, involved inscribing the words 'I miss you, Jew!' on walls and taking photographs of a yarmulke in an empty chair in various location

Figure 3.2.5: Joanna Rajkowska, *Dotleniacz* (*Oxygenator*), 2007, multimedia public art installation, image courtesy of Joanna Rajkowska.

associated with Poland's Jewish past. The project began with Betlejewski making one such inscription in central Warsaw, for which he was arrested, but then expanding the initiative by encouraging people around Poland and Europe to paint similar slogans in their own towns and submit photographs to a dedicated website. Users of the site are also encouraged to leave their own memories of Jewish Poland, Jewish neighbours, or reflections on the loss of these.

Betlejewski's most controversial project was a continuation, or perhaps culmination, of the *I miss you* initiative. It involved buying, transporting, reassembling and then burning an old barn in a village near Warsaw. The project took place in 2010 on the 69th anniversary of the Jedwabne massacre of 1941, during which the Jewish inhabitants of that small town were subjected to a vicious pogrom and then forced into a barn and burned alive by their Polish neighbours. The massacre was the subject of a major controversy in Poland during the early 2000s, following the publication of historian Jan Gross's book on the subject, which challenged Polish narratives of the German occupation that focus on Polish suffering in the first instance or

common victimhood with Jews and the rescue of the latter by Poles (Gross, 2001). The suggestion that Poles could have been so actively responsible for such horrific violence provoked outrage, but also sparked a deep and wide-ranging process of self-reflection in Polish society (Polonsky and Michlic, 2004). The performance was intended by the author to be a cathartic gesture of cleansing from anti-Semitic hatred and from the bitter past of Jewish-Polish relations. Indeed, Betlejewski filled the barn with scraps of paper on which Poles had written anti-Semitic thoughts.

The project attracted widespread attention in Poland and beyond, and was criticised by some as offensive for 'recreating' part of the Jedwabne massacre. Genevieve Zubrzycki has also suggested that the project attracted such disapprobation because, in contrast to the *I miss you* project, it focused on the perpetrator, bypassing the victim, and posited the expatiation of the sin of anti-Semitic violence (Zubrzycki, 2013, p.106). Erica Lehrer and Magdalena Waligorska have levelled similar criticism at Betlejewski, describing the project as essentially ignoring Jews and representing an 'objectionable appropriation' of the memory of the violent death

Figure 3.2.6: Rafał Betlejewski, *Tęsknię za Tobą, Żydzie* (*I miss you, Jew*), started in 2004, graffiti/internet project.

of the Jedwabne Jewish community. The performance was in fact disrupted by young protesters who objected precisely to what they saw as the tasteless appropriation of the tragedy for sensationalist self-promotion by the artist (see http://www.tesknie.com/index.php?id=674).

Encountering the absence of Poland's Jews, and the fears and hopes that this entails, is at the heart of all of the projects outlined above, and in each case, this absence is located physically in urban space (with the exception of the burning barn performance, which is also nevertheless dependent on its spatial specifics, as will be discussed below): in Rajkowska's words (referring to her own works), all three artists make their statements through 'a direct intervention into the fabric of the city' (Rajkowska, 2010, p.85). These interventions occur in places where the absence of Jews is most physically evident: Rajkowska's palm tree is a prominent spatial marker in the centre of Warsaw, referring to a lost Jewish settlement, while the *Oxygenator* evokes the former centre of a Jewish community, and later a part of the ghetto. In turn, Bartana's films occupy real, recognisable spaces within Warsaw, sites that are significant in terms of the city's Jewish past, but are also loaded with the equally complex and difficult memories of communist rule. The post-Jewish and post-communist sites are not, however, easily separable, and Bartana's work demonstrates this intertwining: the stadium evokes connections to the destruction of the ghetto that provided material for its construction, while the district of Muranów, with its typical socialist housing estates, was built directly on top of the rubble of the ghetto. Underlining the interconnectedness of these spaces and their meanings allows the artist to refer to the post-war silence over the fate of Poland's Jews, as the new, socialist Poland built itself, physically and discursively, in a way that would forget the difficult pasts inscribed in its urban spaces (see Janicka, 2012; Chomątowska, 2012). It is this oblivion that Betlejewski attempts to address in his projects aimed at encouraging popular engagement with the everyday urban spaces of contemporary Poland. By using the medium of graffiti, he subverts the common expressions of anti-Semitism that can be found all over walls in Polish cities and elicits the often unspoken desire to recover the Jewish past that is increasingly common in contemporary Poland.

The projects of these artists confirm what many theorists of memory, from Benjamin to Nora have noted: that space, and especially urban space, is a highly resonant medium of memory. Analyzing Warsaw, Michael Meng aptly cites Maurice Halbwachs, the founder of modern memory studies, in this regard:

'we can understand how we can recapture the past only by understanding how it is, in effect, preserved by our physical surroundings' (2011, p.15). It is in space, and particularly in the highly visible and intensely codified and inhabited spaces of cities, that collective subjects inscribe their memories in architecture and perform the rituals that keep memory visible and alive. These inscriptions and rituals take place in significant locations, often where the event that is remembered took place, as is the case with Rapoport's ghetto uprising memorial and the ceremonies that focus on it. Such public spaces are necessarily controlled by authority, by local and central administrations, and are thus subject to official memory policy: hence the difficulties that Rajkowska's unorthodox public commemorative projects faced in being accepted by city authorities, and which she describes in her commentaries on her works (Rajkowska, 2010, p.100-1).

Cities also, however, as Michel de Certeau has argued, provide ample opportunity for the inscription or uncovering of alternative, small, private, anti-authoritative memories (de Certeau, 1984, pp.104-6). Alternative visions of the past appear in commemorative happenings or temporary installations, or in texts, whether literary, theatrical or artistic, about the city. While these can intervene in public space, sometimes indirectly or temporarily, they generally cannot leave a lasting impression without the endorsement of the authorities. In communist Poland, this kind of alternative use of public space for illicit commemoration represented a drastically subversive gesture that could lead to severe punishment, and while this situation has changed completely since 1989, the consciousness of the subversive power of the appropriation of public space still persists, and is, I would argue, one of the factors at the base of the works analysed here.[1] It is, of course, important to note that these projects do not necessarily represent acts of opposition or rebellion: while each artwork has encountered controversy and opposition in some form, it is also true that in each case various degrees of cooperation with and support from local and national governmental agencies, or of various cultural and political establishment groups, have been crucial to the success of the projects. Clearly, the memory narratives and experiments discussed here are not necessarily at odds with mainstream political trends in Poland. Yet, at the same time, the legacy of the struggle for memory in

1   On the illegal commemoration of the Katyn massacres of Polish service personnel in 1940 by the NKVD, which was most consistently focused on Warsaw's Powązki cemetery, see, for example, Etkind et al. (2012).

public space does lend a particular tension and urgency to the gestures being made by these artists.

The idea of appropriating public space in dialogue or confrontation with authoritative discourse and dominant traditions is most relevant to the work of Rajkowska. The palm tree consciously subverts the norms of public commemoration as monumental sculpture. It is not made of stone or bronze, it does not represent an important individual, a hero or martyr of the nation, and it has no ready-inscribed meaning. There is no text on the tree to instruct the viewer on how it should be interpreted. The palm acts, as James Young has described in the context of German Holocaust commemoration, as a 'counter-monument', whose authors are 'ethically certain of their duty to remember, but aesthetically skeptical of the assumptions underpinning traditional memorial form' (Young, 1992, p.271). Referring to a German example of this phenomenon (Jochen and Esther Gerz's *Harburg Monument against Fascism*, erected in 1986) Young describes how the counter-monument works 'against the traditionally didactic fiction of monuments, against their tendency to displace the past they would have us contemplate – and finally, against the authoritarian propensity in all art that reduces viewers to passive spectators' (Young, 1992, p.274). Interpreters of Rajkowska's palm have made similar observations: in the words of Helena Chmielewska-Szlajfer, the palm 'contradicts' the very idea of the monument because 'its form is playfully artificial and the meanings it could embody are highly variable', hence its function as the focal point for the formation of various communities that invested their own meanings into the work, some of which had nothing to do with the past at all (Chmielewska-Szlajfer, 2010, p.207): the tree has been a focal point for various groups to raise their voices within the public space of Warsaw, such as gay rights campaigners or nurses campaigning for better working conditions. The palm has also been interpreted in the press as an expression of the wish of Poles to transcend the supposedly grey reality of everyday Warsaw and reach a better, sunnier place (Rajkowska, 2010, pp. 25-61). On a wider plane, the work also became a focal point for a time for media polemics between the two basic political outlooks that dominate Polish society, that of the left-leaning liberals to which the artist and the palm's supporters belong, and the right wing conservatives, who came to power in Warsaw shortly after the palm's installation and who initially opposed its continuing presence (Chmielewska-Szlajfer, 2010, p.204). While on the one hand the palm could be said to deliberately challenge the conservative worldview (it evoked lost otherness within the Polish

capital, and was taken up by liberal causes), it clearly sought to open, rather than close debate, and its ambiguity did allow it to be embraced by Varsovians of a conservative orientation: indeed, Rajkowska herself spoke approvingly of receiving support from people whose political orientation was quite distant from the leftist one (Chmielewska-Szlajfer, 2010, p.205).

The *Oxygenator* works in a similar way to *Greetings from Jerusalem Avenue*: in contrast to the familiar and fixed stone statue, monument or memorial in the centre of a city square, with its didactic message and fixed meaning, we find the whole square turned into an organic space that invites habitation and active use from those who encounter it, with no overt 'instructions' as to its meaning. As with the palm tree, the reference to the Jewish past of Warsaw can only be worked out through deeper reflection on the work and its relationship with its location, or through further research online, via media reports, or on the artist's website or in her publications. Many encountering these works will perceive them simply as unusual, quirky innovations in the cityscape with no deeper meaning than any other green space, and the works guarantee the right to do this. In a related point, Ewa Klękot has argued that the *Oxygenator* creates a non-overwhelming site that provides the possibility for reflection on the ex-ghetto as a space that is and has been actively inhabited by real people, who may well not have chosen this space as their home, but who, like everyone else, need inhabitable (green) spaces within their part of the city. The work is thus less a representation of any past event as it is a meditation on the experience of inhabiting spaces scarred by past violence. As Klękot puts it, the work is a 'monument that commemorates nothing, and yet asks questions about forgetting' (Klękot, 2009, p.46). In this aspect, but also in its status as a living, fluid, ever-changing space, the *Oxygenator* again recalls Young's description of the counter-monument, which, in his view, by being allowed to change and even disappear with time, '[i]n its conceptual self-destruction […] refers not only to its own physical impermanence, but also to the contingency of all meaning an memory' (Young, 1992, p.295). This function of the work is also dramatically, though not entirely intentionally, underlined by the fact that the *Oxygenator* was ultimately dismantled by the city council and never reconstructed (as had been initially promised). Paradoxically, by incorporating fluidity and containing its own deterioration and disappearance, the project warns against complacency and encourages us to think of memory as evolving, shifting, and, much like a public green space, in need of our constant attention.

The 'counter-monument' approach taken by Rajkowska is in direct contrast to the bombastic triumph and tragedy that dominates Polish monument building, particularly in Warsaw, and which despite its often anti-communist content often seems chained to an aesthetic reminiscent of socialist realism, with muscular bronze figures, barbed wire and jagged slabs of concrete designed to give didactic and unambiguous expressions of heroism and suffering. This can be seen, for example, in the Warsaw Uprising monument, designed at the very end of the communist era after years of unsuccessful campaigning from oppositionists against a regime reluctant to remember the event. The monument features large, masculine bronze insurgents bursting dynamically forth from the underground, shattering slabs of concrete around them. In similar style is the large Monument to the Fallen and Murdered in the East, which commemorates Polish victims of Soviet oppression. Built in 1995, the monument features a large railway cart loaded with bronze crosses signifying the Soviet deportations of Poles and the martyrdom of the Polish nation (though on close inspection some Jewish and Muslim symbols can also be found among the crosses), and a long 'railway line' whose sleepers bear names of sites where Poles were murdered. The monument is situated in close proximity to the site of the Umschlagplatz, from which the Jews of Warsaw's ghetto were deported to the death camps. As is the case with the aborted monument to Polish victims of Ukrainian nationalist insurgents on Grzybowski Square, this project, while describing a tragedy of immense scale, has little connection to the specific site that it occupies (see Janicka, 2012, pp.76-84).

Monuments like those described above do not invite dialogue, but rather overwhelm the viewer with pathos and literalism. As Young observes, they cover the complexities of past events (and, we could add, the complexity of specific physical spaces) with layers of nationalist mythology (Young, 1992). They determine the grievable past, to use Judith Butler's term, defining the identity of those to be mourned, and hand this to the viewer in a ready-made and immutable narrative (Butler, 2009). Rajkowska's projects, by contrast, occupy the locations of traditional commemorative forms, but rely rather on ambiguity and a suggestive silence that invites intellectual engagement with their specific spatial context and leaves space for interaction and dialogue. This emphasis on the suggestiveness of topographical context and dialogue are relevant also to Bartana's work. The aesthetics and symbolism of her trilogy of films evoke Soviet communism, Zionism, contemporary conflict in Israel and the history of the persecution of Poland's and Europe's Jews through their complex and ambiguous use of urban location. Where Rajkowska displaces the polarising dialectic of communism and anti-communism in the cityscape with a kind of counter-monumentalism, Bartana appropriates the visual, filmic, and spatial languages of propaganda and subverts them through a process of parody and defamiliarisation. For example, in the first film, exaggeratedly presented communist symbols, language and places – the pioneers, the propagandist speech, the stadium – are used unexpectedly to exhort Jews to return to Poland, a highly ironic and subversive gesture, given the fact that communist rule in Poland entailed obscuring the suffering of Jews in the Holocaust and anti-Semitic campaigns in the late 1960s that led to the expulsion of thousands of Jews from the country.

Throughout Bartana's trilogy we can never be sure of where the earnest, liberal rhetoric of tolerance, reconciliation and acceptance end and irony and grotesque begin. This ambiguity has made the trilogy open to widely differing interpretations: commentators have seen the films as a critique of contemporary Israel, or of Zionism in general, or, conversely, as a partial rehabilitation of Zionism; others have seen references to Stalin's funeral, the Gulag or the Soviet Jewish republic of Birobidzhan; others still see the films as a critique of xenophobic attitudes in contemporary Poland (see essays by Joanna Mytkowska, Boris Groys, Jacqueline Rose, Ariella Azoulay and Adi Ophir in Lingwood and Nairn, 2012, pp.130-51; Sclodnick, 2014). As with Rajkowska's works, Bartana's films invite dialogue and multiple interpretations, and indeed, dialogue is incorporated into the films themselves: the 'funeral ceremony' for Sierakowski involves speeches from various individuals with differing views about the utopian project of the Jewish return to Poland, including those critical of the idea, while the variant readings mentioned above are all included in the book that accompanies the trilogy, with no attempt made to synthesise or reconcile the different interpretations.

The meaning of Bartana's films depends to a significant extent on the viewer's knowledge of the spaces that are depicted, and important information about these spaces that would aid interpretation is not presented in any straightforward way. For the non-Polish viewer, the significance of the stadium or the Palace of Culture will not be obvious, and can only be understood through further research; indeed, some have interpreted the first film's setting, symbols, language and aesthetics as referring exclusively to Nazi propaganda, without noting the enormous communist baggage that will be most striking to a Polish (or other Eastern European) viewer (see Sclodnick, 2014, for

such a reading). Even for a Polish audience, however, the stadium's physical connections to the Holocaust (through the materials used in its construction), for example, are not necessarily widely known. In turn, the Zionist symbolism and references to contemporary Israel may well be clear to an Israeli or general Jewish audience, but would need to be engaged with further by non-Jewish Polish or other audiences to be fully understood. It should be noted here that this confluence of different references to situations far beyond Poland has been criticised by some Polish Jewish observers, who see the Polish context as being essentially obscured in the film, and the location as serving as nothing more than a tool through which the artist can criticise, first and foremost, her own country and its Zionist mythology (Lehrer and Waligorska, 2013, p.25). While Rajkowska's work openly invites interaction, and Bartana flirts with inclusion of the public in the 'public movement' arm of the project, it is Betlejewski's work that is perhaps the most reliant of the three on participation on the part of members of the public, who in effect create the project themselves by expressing their own curiosity about and knowledge of the spaces they inhabit. The graffiti inscriptions expressing longing for Poland's lost Jews enter into an unsolicited dialogue with the common anti-Semitic graffiti in Polish towns and cities, appropriating its form and challenging its content. This is a dialogue that can be surprising and confusing, and indeed Betlejewski's initial inscriptions were interpreted as anti-Semitic themselves, given their similarity to typical anti-Semitic vandalism and the prominent use of the work 'Jew' in the slogan; a word which in Polish, as Genevieve Zubrzycki points out in relation to Betlejewski's work, has often been seen (and used) as a derogatory term (Zubrzycki, 2013, p.104). Betlejewski's project was thus a challenging engagement with the Polish urban landscape and its habitual semiotics, forcing those encountering the cityscape to consider the banal hatred so often inscribed in it, as well as to think about the tragedy of the absences that this hatred conceals, and in encouraging active intervention against this hatred the project aimed to draw out urban space's potential as a surface for the public inscription of positive meanings.

The burning barn performance, by contrast, is not a direct intervention in an actual site of memory, but rather engages the Polish village landscape as a generic site of memory, in Nora's sense of *lieu de memoire*, as a trope, or symbolic site, rather than specific physical location (Nora, 1989). The performance takes place in the exact type of rural or small-town community,

like Jedwabne, that saw some of the most problematic relations between Poles and Jews during the war. The power of the performance is perhaps magnified by this approach: through a very direct, violent physical intervention in real public space, yet without reference to a specific mnemonic site, the gesture becomes more widely relevant. The evocation of the massacre in this performance in particular was explicitly intended by Betlejewski to provoke, and elicit participation and response. The project website features lengthy internet forum discussions, including objections to the project, as well as a film about the performance that dedicates a third of its length to protesters who tried to stop it going ahead, and allows the protesters to speak directly to camera. The other aspect of the project, the burning along with the barn of the notes containing anti-Semitic thoughts, also involved direct participation from the public.

Betlejewski also involved the local inhabitants of the village, Zawada, where the performance took place. The film shows a crowd of people enjoying the sunshine, drinking beer and eating, waiting for entertainment. Indeed, some spectators intervene angrily to help oust the protesters who had occupied the barn in order to prevent delay. Although the symbolism of the performance is less ambiguous in itself than is the case with the other artist discussed here, and is made plain by the artist during the performance, the participation of the crowd does introduce an element of ambiguity. Some members of the crowd do not seem aware of the intended meaning of the gesture, but are rather assembled purely for the spectacle itself: indeed, it has been suggested that the artist may not have fully informed them of the intended meaning of the performance (Lehrer and Waligorska, 2013, p.12). The carnival atmosphere surrounding the commemoration of a pogrom also introduces a note of disturbing irony, given the carnival element that, according to some researchers, characterised the phenomenon of the pogrom itself (see Himka, 2011). This atmosphere, at a performance designed to confront Poles with the crimes their compatriots had committed, seems incongruous, and it is unsurprising that some have found it offensive. It could also be added that the seeming failure to fully engage those participating in the performance (as spectators but also in a sense as part of the stage set of the performance – the 'bystanders') demonstrates that an invitation to participation can be tinged with ambivalence, not to say manipulation. Some observers have seen Betlejewski's seeming failure not only to fully inform and involve local people, but also, and perhaps even more importantly, the lack of actual

Jewish voices in his projects, as evidence of a rather insular dialogue whose participants are deliberately limited (Lehrer and Waligorska, 2013, pp.13-4).

While the burning barn episode may have been problematic in terms of nature of its engagement with the public in the immediate vicinity of the performance, it is clear from the framing of the project online and from the wider *I miss you* project that dialogue, participation and reflection on the part of participants are important to Betlejewski's work with the memory of the Holocaust and Poland's lost Jews. While in many ways his work differs from that of Bartana and Rajkowska, this is something, ultimately, that he shares with them. I will end this paper by suggesting one further, deeper level of dialogue, however, that can be seen in all three artists' works: this is a dialogue based not on a discussion or debate over the questions dealt with in the works, but a dialogue created by the overlaying of different spaces and times, one that speaks to deeper mnemonic processes and potentials. This type of multiple spatiotemporal aesthetic has in fact been identified by Lehrer and Waligorska as a key feature more generally of the most recent wave of artistic responses to the Holocaust in the Polish context, which they see as being characterised by the 'simultaneous invocation of multiple temporalities and spatialities' (Lehrer and Waligorska, 2013, p.4).

Yael Bartana, in using specific city locations and through her evocative but ambiguous use of symbols, imagery and aesthetics, evokes various contexts, overlaying early Zionist settlements with contemporary Israeli settlements, which in turn intertwine with the spaces of the concentration camp, the regimented public space of communist Poland and perhaps even Stalin's Gulag; although, as discussed above, it may be true that this can serve to obscure the specificity of its immediate context, in the end, the work is a reflection on the wider problem of 'spacelessness' – the lack of a space in which to be and belong that has characterised the experience of so many migrants and displaced people around the world throughout the 20th and 21st century, and which often leads to the retreat (voluntary or forced), as in the second film of the trilogy, into walled ghettos. Rajkowska overlays similar spaces: those of contemporary Jerusalem and contemporary Warsaw, Warsaw of the 18th century and the interwar period, the long-vanished Jewish settlement and the wartime ghetto. Again, other types of space are suggested, purified spaces free of the compulsory inscription of memory narratives, like the *Oxygenator*, made possible even in the mnemonically overloaded space of Grzybowski Square. Betlejewski's *I miss you, Jew!* project, as represented online, creates

a collage of images of cities and towns across Poland, and in fact also from other East-Central European countries, from Germany, Slovakia and Ukraine. Not only does the project uncover the past city within the present one by pointing to post-Jewish spaces, but it also draws similar spaces together from Poland and beyond to give powerful expression to the wider, regional experience of living in spaces marked by the absence of Jews. In building his political-cultural construct of Central Europe in the 1980s as a response to Soviet domination, the Czech writer Milan Kundera once commented that it was the Jews who were the 'integrating element in central Europe […] its intellectual cement, a condensed version of its spirit, creators of its spiritual unity'. It is this that makes the author 'love the Jewish heritage and cling to it with as much passion and nostalgia as though it were my own' (1984, p.35). Where Kundera presents a mental map of Central Europe united by its Jews, Betlejewski imposes on that nostalgic map a new one that suggests that the uniting feature of the region now is the absence of the Jews, the empty spaces that are often marked with casual anti-Semitic sentiment. Like the other artists discussed here, Betlejewski also evokes non-specific space, in his imitation of anti-Semitic violence in a generic Polish rural setting, which has the effect of evoking at once all space and none in particular.

This evocation of all space at once, and the conglomeration of chronotopes that can be seen in the work of all three artists, could be described using Michel Foucault's concept of the heterotopia. Heterotopias are specific cultural spatial constructs that create 'other spaces' in society: they allow multiple spaces and times to co-exist, collapsing ideas of linear time and strictly bounded space for a more fluid spatiotemporal experience (Foucault, 1986). In Foucault's terms, these spaces represent 'an effectively enacted utopia in which […] all the other real sites that can be found within the culture are simultaneously represented, contested and inverted' (p.24). The heterotopia is like the space beyond the mirror, both real and unreal simultaneously – but it is precisely through contact with this 'other' space that the viewing subject is able to examine, reflect on and reconstitute herself in the real space of the present. Sites of Jewish absence in Poland seem to invite heterotopic readings. Walking through the former Jewish district of Warsaw, for example, Rymkiewicz, describes the 'feeling of doubleness or tripleness in time, the feeling that we are suddenly find ourselves in several time zones'. At the same time, the author gazes into a dark window in one of the few surviving buildings, trying to somehow recapture the site's past

in the space beyond the reflective glass (Rymkiewicz, 1988, p.127). This process is difficult, however, and often, as in Rymkiewicz's case, the recapturing of the past and subsequent reconstitution of the subject in the present is obstructed and fraught: the space beyond the mirror is, after all, by definition inaccessible, even though we seem to see ourselves there.

The heterotopic dynamic as described by Foucault accurately captures the kind of spatial strategies employed in the artistic projects discussed above. Through cross-cultural spatiotemporal juxtapositions between Poland and Israel in the cases of Bartana and Rajkowska, and the collapsing of East-Central European or generic Polish space and time in the case of Betlejewski, multiple sites are created. Here, the community inhabiting the space is invited to discover its past, engage in dialogue with it and participate in its reconstruction and re-articulation, to reflect on its own memories as part of a wider network of related and interdependent pasts that stretch across the state, the region and the world. At the same time, each artist is careful to avoid giving definitive answers to the riddle of deciphering spaces of absence, and each couches her or his project in grotesque imagery, irony, kitsch or deliberate refusal to offer easily discernible spatial-mnemonic narrative.

Michael Rothberg (2013, p.83; see also Rothberg, 2009) has described how certain practices of memory, which he calls 'multidirectional', 'can take into account the kinds of constellations and intersections that emerge from the histories and aftermaths of violence, domination, and transculturation.' Indeed, the Warsaw ghetto is one of the sites that Rothberg identifies as having multidirectional potential, present as it is in the work of writers and artists who engage in disparate colonial aftermaths, from the experience of Turkish migrants in Germany to the black civil rights struggles in the US. These varying contexts intersect and entangle with one another to form complex 'knots' of memory (Rothberg, 2013, p.83). Rajkowska's, Bartana's and Betlejewski's multi-vectored sites perform the same function, overlaying memories of exclusion and violence in Poland with similar problems across Europe, in contemporary Israel and beyond. This type of memory is based not on dominant models of competition over victories or victimhoods, but on the need to share experience and engage in dialogue. This type of practice is not necessarily free of its problems: as Bartana's Polish-Jewish critics point out, orientation outwards to 'larger' contexts can serve to obscure the local and immediate, obscuring the physical space on which the heterotopia is constructed; at the same time, an overemphasis on the local can result in the

exclusion of parties that may have a right to participate in the conversation, as the seeming lack of significant involvement of Jews in Betlejewski's projects might suggest. These caveats notwithstanding, it is clear from the above analysis that the overlapping of various contexts and collapsing of space evident in all of the projects discussed in this paper can provide an effective and powerful alternative kind of public commemorative practice. They bring fresh perspectives on Polish-Jewish memory directly into the public sphere by demonstrating that publicly articulated memory does not have to be the result of top-down monologue, but can rather be the product of polyphony, and does not need to have a defined outcome or provide definitive answers; nor does memory even need to be constantly foregrounded and obsessed over, even in spaces that are designed to evoke it. Warsaw's post-Jewish sites, or the generic spaces produced by Betlejewski, are not static *sites* of memory that showcase singular and unquestionable memory narratives, but are rather tense *knots* of memory that reveal complexity, interconnectedness, and a lack of resolution that is as frustrating as it is conducive to creative, imaginative engagement. As James Young has argued in relation to the refusal of the counter-monument to freeze memory: 'it may also be true that the surest engagement with memory lies in its perpetual irresolution' (Young, 1992, p.267).

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MARGIT ELLINOR: FORGOTTEN IMAGES
Bente Geving

Abstract

I began photographing my mother's room in 2002. Around that time she began changing the arrangements of pictures and ornaments, fetching things out that had been stored in cupboards and drawers, and putting away other things that had previously been features of the room. She assembled various objects on tables, shelves and in cupboards. She tidied and sorted. I became fascinated by the colours of her compositions, and wanted to enter her world.

Biographical note

The artist Bente Geving, born 1952 in Kirkenes, Norway, explains her work as follows: 'I am concerned about the context in life: between the personal life and historical events, between reality and dream, between the human made and the original. Between the spoken and the unspoken. I photograph my surroundings, make connections between places, past and present, put the images together in pairs or diptychs, in series which create new rooms. The images live their own life, they are changing and gain new importance through the viewer's experience and imagination.'

Bente Geving has exhibited widely in Norway, Germany and Sweden, and her work is represented in collections in Norway and abroad. Recent exhibitions include, *Down Under Up North*, 2013–14, an art and documentary project about the Sydvaranger iron ore mine in Kirkenes, with Per Berntsen, Art Museum of Northern Norway, Tromsø. In 2014, Geving was awarded a six-year Artist Grant from the Norwegian Council.

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MARGIT ELLINOR: FORGOTTEN IMAGES

Bente Geving

My mother, Margit Ellinor, was born Sámi. She grew up in Kirkenes, in the north of Norway, close to the Russian border. She moved south near Oslo at the age of 24, where she remained for the rest of her life. In 2001, she was diagnosed with Alzheimer's and she died in 2007.

In 2001, my mother began arranging and rearranging photographs, knick-knacks, silverware and other memorabilia, which decorated shelves and sideboards of her home. Part of this extended process was the replacement of these objects with sets of hidden objects from cupboards and drawers, as she constantly and continuously changed her own surroundings. She made arrangements with Sámi dolls and Norwegian flags, and placed together different things that had the traditional Sámi colours. I was fascinated by her juxtapositions of objects, the colours and form of her compositions, and I felt the desire to enter into this part of her world. Consequently in 2002, I started the

'Forgotten Images' project, photographing my mother's arrangements in my parents' home.

By producing this series about my mother, I also became aware of the context for, and the continuity within, my own art work since my first solo exhibition in Norway 1988. There I showed photographs featuring my grandmother and her sisters, Anna, Inga and Ellen, living near Kirkenes.

The Sámi people

The Sámi are the indigenous people of Finland, Norway, Russia and Sweden. They have their own language, clothes, culture and songs. It was important for the Norwegian State to colonise the border district near Russia with patriotic residents, who could speak the Norwegian language. This scheme of the Norwegian authorities was intended to force Sámis to forget their culture and to be assimilated as 'proper' Norwegians. By the end of the 19th century, the Sámis were forbidden to speak their own language in official contexts, such as in schools. The traditional songs of the Sámis called *joik* were also banned, but, even so, the *joik* survived secretly in some families. These laws were enforced until about 1960. In 1997, during the opening of the Sámi Parliament, King Harald V apologized for

Fig 3.3.1 - 8: Bente Geving, *Forgotten Images*.

the way the Norwegian State had handled the Sámi people throughout the years. 'The Norwegian State is founded on the territory of two peoples – the Norwegians and the Sámi', he said.

My grandmother and grandfather decided not to talk the Sámi language with their children. They always talked Norwegian with them, so my mother never learned to speak proper Sámi.

The rare thing is that it was the progression of my mother's short-term memory loss that helped her to regain her Sámi identity.

Forgotten Images has been exhibited at the National Museum of Photography, Horten Norway in 2005, Sogn og Fjordane Art Museum, Eikaas Gallery, Jølster in 2006, the Sámi Center for Contemporary Art in Karasjok in 2006, and in 2009-12 a selection of the photos were included in touring exhibitions in Sápmi: Finland, Norway, Russia and Sweden. *Gierdu: Movements in the Sami Art World*, curated by Eva Skotnes Vikjord and Irene Snarb, and *Being A Part: Sami Artists' Union, 30 Years Anniversary*, curated by Jan-Erik Lundström.

A COMMENT ON CONTEMPORARY SÁMI ART

Sigrid Lien

Abstract

How do contemporary Sámi artists seek to establish new modes of historicity through photography? How do they speak about forgotten places and forgotten identities? This short commentary outlines the important contribution being made to current developments in photography-based contemporary art with a focus on Norway's Sámi community. This text is published as a counterpart to the contribution to Disturbing Pasts from the artist Bente Geving.

Biographical note

Sigrid Lien is professor in art history at the University of Bergen, Norway, where her research primarily has been focused on the history and theory of photography, but also on visual arts (modern and contemporary), visual culture and museology. Her most recent research activities include: 'Silent images, Strong Lives: Early woman photographers in Norway', the HERA-project 'Photographs, Colonial Legacy and Museums in Contemporary European Culture' (PhotoCLEC) headed by Elizabeth Edwards (http://photoclec.dmu.ac.uk), and 'Photography in Culture', supported by the Norwegian Research Council. Lien is currently heading the national project 'Negotiating History: Photography in Sámi Culture'.

An earlier version of this material was presented on the occasion of the project conference 'Disturbing Pasts: Memories, Controversies and Creativity' (20 -22 November 2012, Museum of Ethnology/Weltmuseum Wien, Vienna). To view the film footage on the Open Arts Archive, www.openartsarchive.org, follow this link: http://www.openartsarchive.org/oaa/content/disturbing-pasts-memories-controversies-and-creativity-conference-15

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A COMMENT ON CONTEMPORARY SÁMI ART

Sigrid Lien, University of Bergen

How do Sámi contemporary artists seek to establish new modes of historicity through photography? How do they speak about forgotten places and forgotten identities? The photographic work of artist Bente Geving furnishes a good example of such photography-based Sámi contemporary art.

In a work titled *Margit Ellinor,* Geving, born 1952, presents a series of small kitsch still-life works on a coffee table – many of which convey Sámi imagery. One of her photographs is, for example, a close-up representation of a gold-rimmed porcelain plate placed on a white tablecloth. The plate is in itself decorated with a photographic reproduction in washed-out colours: a 'tourist' image of a beautiful young and smiling Sámi mother with her children. The happy little family is posing in a natural setting surrounded by green grass and mountain birch trees.

On one level, it is tempting to read Geving's photographs of decorative objects as an intimate portrait of the person who arranged them, the artist's mother, Margit Ellinor, who was diagnosed with Alzheimer's in 2001 and died in 2007. This understanding also seems to be in line with by the artist's own statement about the work: 'I started to photograph my mother's room in 2002. At that time she had begun to rearrange images and decorative objects, bringing forth things that had been stuffed away in drawers and cupboards, while removing others. She decorated and combined different objects on tables, on shelves and in cabinets. She did small changes – and moved things around. Every time I visited her, there were new constellations and arrangements. I became fascinated by the colours and her compositions – and also interested in going into her world to make my pictures out of her pictures. It became important. She said it was her work.'

Mass produced Sámi images of the past are in this way not only appropriated, but also transformed into what Geoffrey Batchen has termed 'personally charged material objects which induce the full, sensorial experience of involuntary memory' (2005, p.15). In this way, Bente Geving's work could also be seen as an example of Siegfried Kracauer's understanding of photography's ability to anchor the present tense of things past so that their cultural meanings can be explored (Barnouw, 1994, p.31). The artist uses photography, not to replace (failing) memory with sharp images full of information. Rather she enhances her mother's memory work through photography by adding new layers of meaning. The close-up photograph of the porcelain plate carries allusions to the act of touching of touching history. Finally, the slightly unfocused foreground of the photographic image of the still life may in itself be seen as a reflection of the near-sightedness inherent in memory processes, and the sense of crisis connected to them.

The photographs of Margit Ellinor's kitsch installations – where Sámi souvenir imagery is used as raw material – are part of the Sámi Collections (RiddoDuottarMuseat-Sámiid Vuorká-Dávvirat), situated in the community of Karasjok in Northern Norway. The collections were established in 1972 as a part of the political and cultural mobilisation and struggle of the Sámi population in what is not only a cultural history museum but a considerable collection of contemporary art by Sámi artists. Walking through the museum galleries, one could not help noticing that photography appears to have assumed something near to a dominant position. Geving's images became here an arena for articulating a sense of memory loss, not only on a personal, but also on a broader, collective level. Ultimately they seem to speak about repressed cultural identity in a museum designed exactly for that purpose.

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TROUBLED TRACES: PAINTING AND DISPLAYING INTERCULTURAL TRAUMAS OF ABORIGINALITY

Heather Kamarra Shearer

Abstract

Behind the pointillism of dot paintings or 'naïve' techniques, Aboriginal artists stridently critique histories of injustice, incarceration, racism, colonialism and dispossession. This personal testimony from Heather Kamarra Shearer, one of the 'stolen generation' of Aboriginal Australians, reflects on her life story and her present vocation in the field of legal rights and as an artist.

Biographical note

At the time of writing, Heather Kamarra Shearer served as an Aboriginal Justice Officer for the South Australian Courts Authority. She has previously held positions of Field Officer for Aboriginal Legal Rights Movement and Senior Caseworker of the Central Australian Stolen Generations and Families Aboriginal Corporation. As an Aboriginal artist she has presented work at seventeen exhibitions, and was employed as the Indigenous Arts Officer with Arts South Australia, and was Arts Coordinator for Jukurrpa Artists, as has participated in numerous community projects. Heather was recently nominated for a National DEADLY award in 2012, other awards include: NAIDOC Artist of the Year for Alice Springs (1992); Emerging Artists Award (SA 1993) and the Artist in Residency program in Limoges/Paris (The Jam Factory 1997). Heather's involvement in a range of committees include: the Adelaide Festival Centre Trust Foundation (2001); National Sorry Day Committee (1998 - 2001) and Tandanya National Aboriginal Cultural Institute (1997). She has appeared as a witness in the SA Parliamentary Committee for the SA Stolen Generations Reparations Tribunal Bill and contributed to the Senate Inquiry Report into Past Forced Adoption (2012) in her position as Truth Portfolio Convenor of the National Stolen Generations Alliance. Between 2012 and 2014 Heather worked as the National Project Officer with the National Stolen Generations Alliance. Heather's homeland is Ntaria (Hermannsburg).

An earlier version of this material was presented on the occasion of the project conference 'Disturbing Pasts: Memories, Controversies and Creativity' (20 -22 November 2012, Museum of Ethnology/Weltmuseum Wien, Vienna). To view the film footage on the Open Arts Archive, www.openartsarchive.org, follow this link: http://www.openartsarchive.org/oaa/content/disturbing-pasts-memories-controversies-and-creativity-conference-0

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TROUBLED TRACES: PAINTING AND DISPLAYING INTERCULTURAL TRAUMAS OF ABORIGINALITY

Heather Shearer

My name is Heather Kamarra Shearer, and I am an Aboriginal woman from Australia. My homeland is Ntaria (Hermannsburg, 120 kilometres West of Alice Springs). My language group is that of the Aranda People of Central Australia.[1]

It is generally known that when the agenda of one people was to colonise new lands, the Aboriginal/Indigenous people of those 'new' lands became a problem. With the continent now known as Australia being the last to be 'discovered' and claimed by the British in 1778, the colonisers had much experience from previous land grabs to know how to deal with the 'natives'. The history of Australia is not a pretty one.

The movement of explorers, anthropologists and missionaries in their respective searches for useable lands for settlement, agriculture and precious minerals, for scientific and historical knowledge, or to preach the word of their God to the Godless throughout the land, provided windows into the past like no other. Their records, photographs and writings whether showing distain, contempt, irreverence or admiration to the Aboriginal People, nevertheless has left a tangible legacy that cannot be ignored any longer.

Aboriginal People and Aboriginal Culture are internationally recognised as the oldest living peoples and culture on this planet. Modern methodologies have confirmed a minimum of 60,000 years, however, Aboriginal People believe it is much longer. Our culture is as diverse and complex as the land it honours. It has survived the passing of time, the ravages of nature and the onslaught of colonial invasion. It continues to survive the legacy of marginalisation in the modern world, and faces the future with regeneration, while as an oppressed People, we suffer horrendous health problems, substance abuse and social dilapidation,

through poverty and a lack of self-determination, and endure a Government manufactured, micro-managed, paternalistic experiment.

Yes, there are positives, and there are wins for Aboriginal People within the development of the country Australia. But do not for one moment believe that those positives and wins have been handed on a silver platter. They have been fought in the courts, the United Nations, with the blood, sweat and tears of amazing leaders within our community over the last two hundred years, and in more recent times, with the support of organisations such as Amnesty International and the World Health Organisation.

The Disturbing Pasts conference is one of several that I have chosen to participate in as an Aboriginal woman, and whether it assists the ongoing struggle for Truth, Justice and Healing in our Aboriginal Community, I do not know. In saying this, I urge you to consider that I believe most profoundly in the benefits of sharing

Figure 3.5.1: Two Families, HS/1991/002
This is my second painting, but the first one that I shared with my family to explain the reality of living with my adopted family (at top) and of searching for my Aboriginal family (at bottom). It shows the teaching from my adoptive parents, and the internal cultural identity that has always been in me from my Mother and Father. It is surrounded in a way that shows the isolation I felt throughout my journey.

Figure 3.5.2: Aranda Country, HS/1991/003
This painting is a representation – *not* a map – of the communities to which I am connected through my extended family in Central Australia. The Central Community is Mbantua (Alice Springs).

and caring. Let it be understood that I care about what has happened in the past to all the other participants who are bearing their souls, their pain and their hopes for their people's future in these few days that we are together.

We Aboriginal People learn about what happens in other countries for ourselves. We do not rely on newspapers, television or the internet. We accept the hand of friendship and support from others from all over the world. We visit their communities, speak to the People, see and work within their organisations and listen to their stories. We share our knowledge, experiences and stories, and we look for commonalities in how we have survived, and with every new encounter, connect in a spiritual way that unites us as Human Beings in our shared, diverse and amazing world.

Aboriginal Art is an expression of our Culture – nothing more, nothing less. However, what it encompasses is vast. We can express our Creation, Land, Food, Resources, Technology, Knowledge, Language, Dance, Story, Song-lines, Dreaming, Acknowledgement, Tradition, Education, Survival and Responsibility. Our Art is premised in our Tjukurrpa which is made up of three worlds: (1) The Human

World, (2) The Physical World and (3) The Sacred World. Our art practices are expressions of our Culture. Culture is not something that is given to us from the outside. Culture is an intrinsic essence within us that nurtures our identity – giving us an understanding of who we are. Culture is part of our genetic makeup, it is the life-force that guides our spirit, and subsequently the foundation of the voice we present outwardly.

As an ancient Culture, our Art is and should be respected as among the world's unique treasures.

Capturing the delicate beauty of the MacDonnell Ranges and my homeland areas around Hermannsburg (Ntaria) in watercolour, Albert Namatjira first tantalised the taste buds of the art world some eighty years ago. Since then, interest in Aboriginal Art has become apparent to the mainstream.

With the emergence of the majestic bark paintings from the Top End and soon after, the Traditional imagery in paintings from Papunya (Northern Territory) in the early 1970s, known as Western Desert Art, the world got a brief glimpse of the mysteries that Aboriginal culture possesses.

When viewing a lot of Western Desert Art, you imagine that you are a bird in the sky, looking down
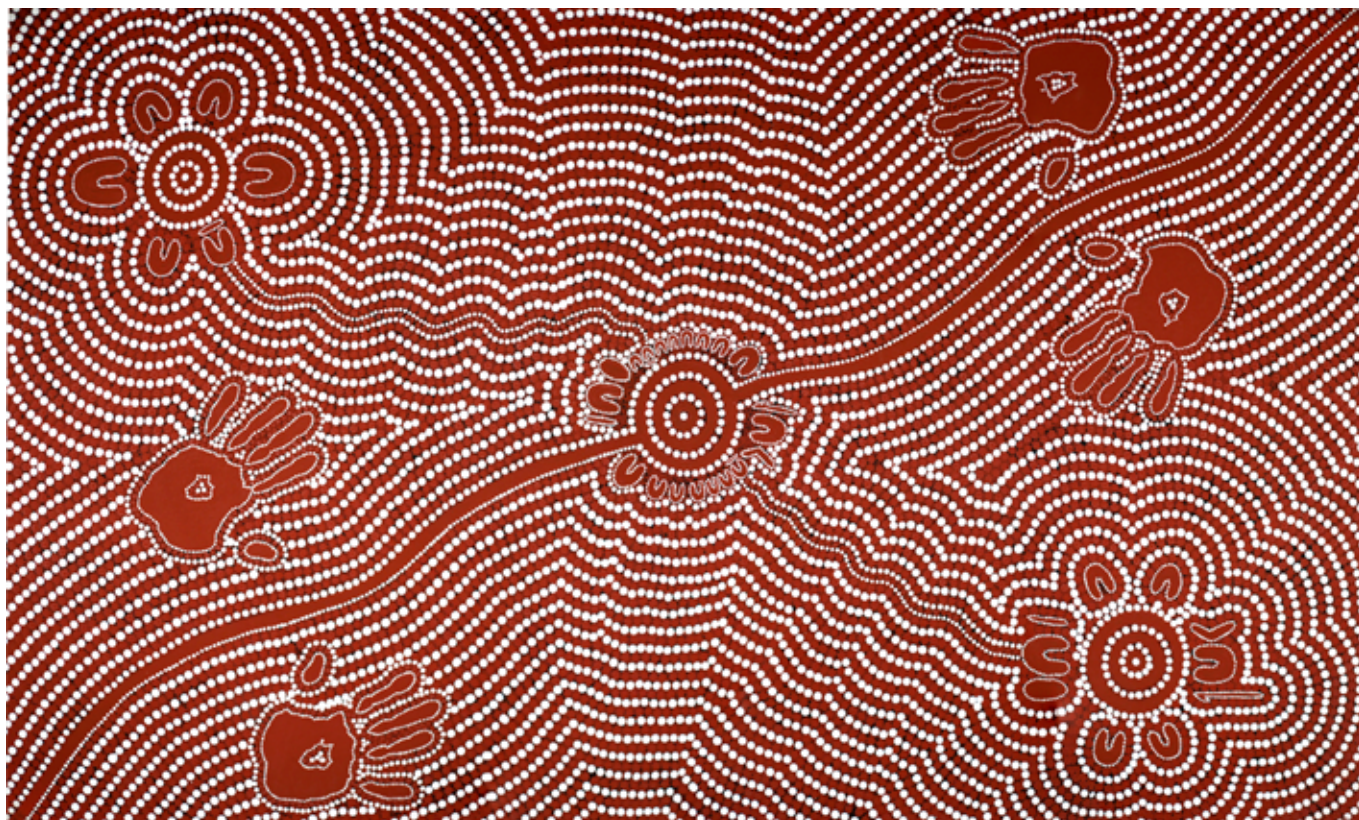
Figure 3.5.3: Kamarra's Journey, HS/1992
This painting represents my journey to reconnect with my family, and my position within my mother's and father's families.

Figure 3.5.4: Kamarra's Dreaming, HS/1992
This painting represents my journey and aspirations as I moved through my reconnection to my mother and father and extended family. The central part reflects my thoughts and dreams of 'what could have been' had I not been removed from my family.

over land, looking down over the painting. It is from this perspective that you can often recognise the contours of the land, paths of the rivers, the growth and changes of the vegetation and the earthy colours of the land, the tracks of the People and the animals that have passed by. Other images presented relate to the huge sand paintings prepared for traditional ceremonies which incorporate body painting designs relating to the status and responsibility of the participants. Iconography can be understood through legend.

I was born in Alice Springs in 1959, three months after the passing of the legendary Albert Namatjira. He was my mother's Uncle, which in the context of our extended family network he is one of my grandfathers. I have read much about him and heard stories from people who knew him. I have seen many of his paintings hanging in galleries, and prints for sale, and I have read books about his life. I am in awe of his talent, his strength, his wisdom and his stamina, in all that he went through due to his fame. Recently I finished a book

published in 1963 about his life *Namatjira: Wanderer between Two Worlds* by Joyce D. Batty, and it brought tears to my eyes and sorrow to my heart. I encourage all of you to find out more about this amazing human being – if anything, you will truly understand the realities of living in and between two worlds in all its hypocritical glory, and gain a better understanding of the battle of two cultures, laws, traditions and People, that continues today.

My story

I was born Tanya Kamarra Fly in Alice Springs in 1959. My mother gave birth to me in the Alice Springs Hospital, and I was taken immediately from her. At ten days old, I was taken to the Alice Springs Receiving Home and later transported 1,500 kilometres South to Adelaide (the capital of South Australia) and placed in the Kate Cocks Baby Home for Adoption.

I was taken not because my mother had given me up for a better life (as recorded in information given
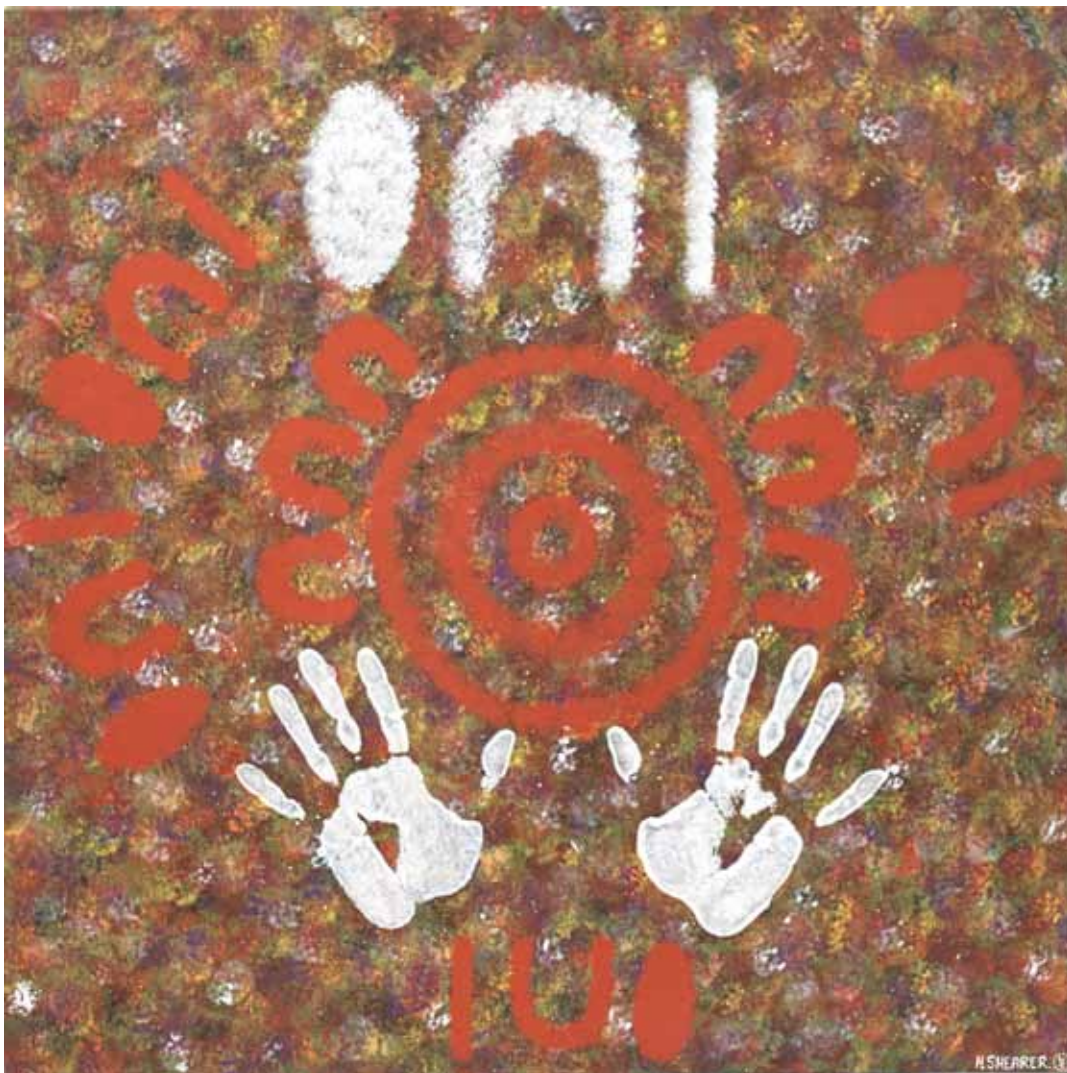

Figure 3.5.5 Ode to My Mothers, HS/1993/001
This is a painting that I did to remember my mother, who passed away before I found her, and my mothers and aunties and sisters from both sides of my family. It also recognises my family elders who have supported and instructed me in my artistic development.

Figure 3.5.6: Family Portrait, HS/1999
This painting is a template for lead-light windows. It represents my partner and me, our relationship and connections to our children and combined family

Figure 3.5.7: The Spirit Within, HS/1998/001
The message of this painting is to trust your gut feelings – intuition. Our spirit is within. When a person is aware and centred, he or she may at times shine like a beacon and attract those who are still unsure and searching. The star representing the strength of spirit reaches out to family members and community elders who continue to give encouragement. The background colours are those of the earth and vegetation, reflecting the movement of sand and time.
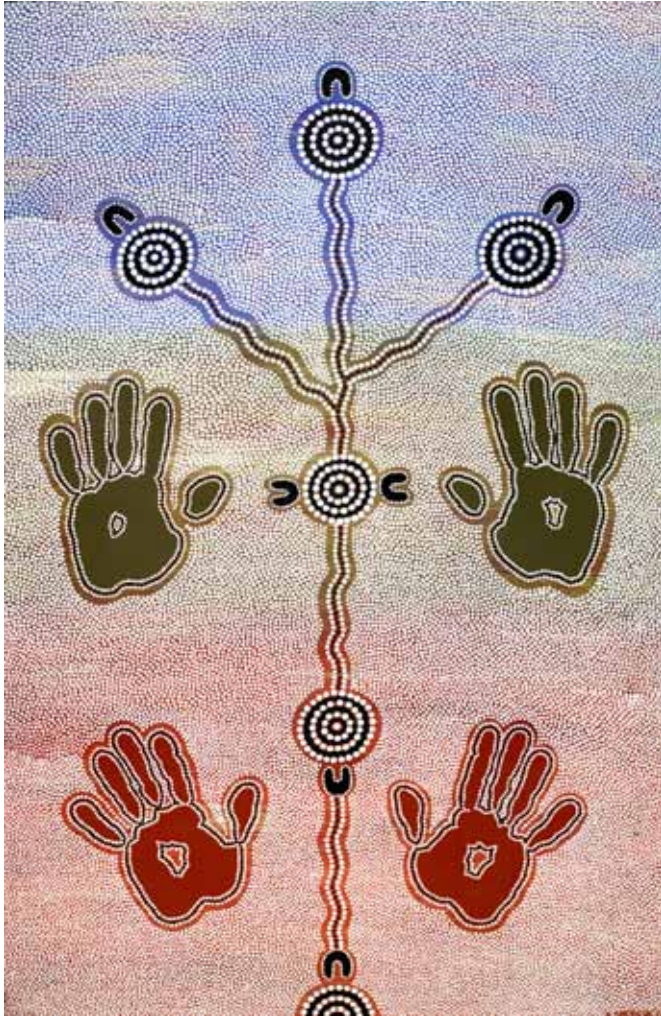
to my adoptive parents), but as a result of Government Policies and Legislation. This was publically exposed by the Bringing Them Home Report released in 1997, the final report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families, by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission.

I have been involved with this history, as a child removed, and – since 1978 – as a worker, activist and advocate in what is known as the Stolen Generations Movement.

In 1990, when Secretary of SNAICC (Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Care), I attended the United Nations Working Group on the Development of the Draft Convention for the World's Indigenous Peoples. During this trip, I travelled in Europe for three months seeking international support for a national inquiry into past removals of Aboriginal children. I also developed links for Aboriginal people who had been adopted overseas – predominantly in Europe, and met with Margaret

Figure 3.5.8: Josh's Painting, HS/2001/001
This is a painting I did for my son, Joshua, to explain his relationship to his brother and sister and our relationships to their fathers, and my current partner who has raised him since he was three years old.

Figure 3.5.9: Family Resolution/Family Portrait under the Seven Sisters, HS/2002/001
This is a family tree that shows me bringing and protecting my children as I reunite them with both my mother and father's sides. It relates to the Seven Sisters Dreaming which is a major Dreaming story that connects Aboriginal People across Australia.

Humphries who began the Child Migrant Trust. This work was instrumental in what became the National Inquiry that produced the Bringing Them Home Report.

As a result of this trip, I was targeted by those who did not want this history to be made public. After much anguish and disbelief, I retreated to the bush community of the man who claimed me as his daughter, in order to (as he put it) 'forget the politics of town and white men, come home and learn your culture,' which I did.

My art

In 1991, I moved to Atitjere (known on maps as Harts Range, but changed recently to Arltarpita following their successful land claim). There I began painting.

My art is culturally appropriate to being an Aranda woman. It details my life experiences and interpretations of my inherent Dreaming Stories, as taught to me by my family elders. I am a strong advocate of copyright protection, cultural respect and integrity, and have been involved in numerous aspects

Figure 3.5.10: Ntaria Star Campfire, HS/2009/012.
This painting shows me near a campfire – out bush – beside a majestic Ghost Gum Tree, under the stars with the Ntaria Star standing out like a beacon.

Figure 3.5.11: Tanya to Heather, HS/2010/007.
This is the pivotal painting, made to introduce my first solo exhibition planned for the next year or so. It tells my story from my birth as Tanya Fly through to my adoption in 1960 and my name change to Heather Shearer.

of the 'Australian Indigenous Arts Industry' over the past twenty-one years.

My first painting, which relates to my children, remains my private piece.

My second painting, and officially what I call the First painting that I showed to anyone, was entitled *Two Families*. It was done so that my family could understand what had happened to me, and the search I undertook for my family. The Art I create is my voice and expression as an Aranda Woman: an Aboriginal Australian, a Human Being.

Art in healing

At times, my work can be specific, and may represent:
- turning points in my life
- specific events that have impacted me throughout my journey
- activities I have been involved in
- thoughts, feelings and problems I have identified that I need to address
- exploring ideas and aspirations

My art is not 'art for art's sake'. Every piece of art I produce is a real story that is in my head, heart, mind and soul. I reinterpret what I see – what I can capture in a work of art. It is something tangible I can look at, put away, get back out and think about, analyse. That process assists me to work through what I am dealing with at that time.

The process may move along tangents which I follow up. I may develop a series of paintings, and can go back to any painting, and that is a whole story in itself.

I do no paint to sell (unless I have been specifically commissioned). I do sell when asked, only when I am ready to let that particular painting go.

Rather, I paint to tell my story. I cannot speak using language; painting is my voice and it comes from my soul, my spirit, my culture, my ancestors, my Tjukurrpa. I have been conducting Art in Healing workshops for years, and so know that the strength of this art is its direct relation and relevance to the People I present and work with. My personal journey may be different to theirs, but the issues, the feelings and the grief and loss is the same. I have an understanding, and work with them in a safe place where they can engage in personal discussions that are conceptually developed into a painting. Here there is access to counselling (if traumatic experiences bring on emotional responses) and there is an agreed code of conduct, respect and confidentiality between participants, mentors and support people. For many, it is the first time that they have been able to express innermost thoughts, memories, country and identity as Aboriginal People.

To make Art from Trauma is a revolution in itself. What I have learned throughout my schooling about the history of European art is that it has evolved from the vision of one person, and been elevated to heights that represent the voice of the people, and been the premise for revolution.

If I share my experiences and my art with others to give them a creative option for them to face their fears, understand their trauma and give them a new vision of themselves and their future, then I have done some good, and honoured the talent of my art practice in line with the social responsibility that goes with being an Aboriginal Artist.

My art is born of the Traditional Culture I belong to. I have Irish and Italian heritage, but it is not those cultures that have nurtured me. They may be entrenched in my genetic makeup, and subsequently influence what I think and how I react, but they do not influence how I live.

I am not an educated woman. I only went to 4th Year in High School, and then on to Business College to learn typing, bookkeeping and stenography. I even attempted university, but had to withdraw for personal reasons. But I am educated in life.

My art reflects my on-going life story of living in and between two worlds. It is truthful and it is an educational process and tool that I use as part of my responsibility as an Artist, to heal my wounds of the past, teach my children and grandchildren their heritage, and choose at times to share with the wider community, and with the world. Whether it is fine art, naïve art, pointillism, contemporary, or any other term you choose, it does not particularly bother me. I know what my art is, my family knows what my art is, my fellow Aboriginal People recognise my art (even though many of them do not know me personally). As far as I am concerned, this is what matters to me. The 'Aesthetic' of any individual piece of Aboriginal Art determines an opinion, an interpretation, a like or dislike, by the viewer, and that is fine. What I share with you is that what has been presented in that Artwork: an expression of Culture. Whether it has a detailed story by that Artwork to assist you in the message of the painting is up to the Artist. Just know that it is a story that the Artist has allowed to be shared, and that should be received with respect and evoke an openness that has allowed you a window into our world, that survives within a world that mostly does not know anything about us.

I continue to work for Truth, Justice and Healing for Stolen Generations People, Families and our Communities, assisting with the shellshock of a

traumatised People subjected to genocidal practices that *they* thought would make us die out quickly and quietly.

As Australia takes its place on the United Nations Security Council, like so many Aboriginal People, I will be monitoring their participation, input and presentations about Human Rights issues relevant to us, while we continue to fight for Reparations for the past injustices that Aboriginal People today continue to suffer from.

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EMPOWERING ART: RECONFIGURING NARRATIVES OF TRAUMA AND HOPE IN THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL IMAGINARY

Fiona Magowan

Abstract

Aboriginal art has been the source of much contention between art curators, gallery owners, art critics and Aboriginal artists themselves. Early aesthetic debates about whether so-called traditional works should be considered ethnographic or artistic have led, at times, to conflicts over the rights of Aboriginal people to have their works exhibited according to the criteria applied to other kinds of Western artworks. This article explores how the dilemmas of troubled ethno-histories are critically embodied and reconfigured in texture and colour. It considers the problems that silenced histories pose for those responsible for their display to the public. As Aboriginal images often conceal troubled intercultural encounters it asks how artworks can be used to provide a counter-polemic to national rhetoric as artists seek to reshape and improve intergenerational futures.

This text is published as a counterpart to the contribution to Disturbing Pasts from the artist Heather Kamarra Shearer.

Biographical note

Fiona Magowan is Professor of Anthropology at Queen's University, Belfast. Her publications focus on Indigenous music, performance and Christianity; cultural tourism; religion and ritual; and sex and gender. She has conducted fieldwork in Arnhem Land, Northern Territory, Queensland and South Australia. Her books include *Melodies of Mourning: Music and Emotion in northern Australia* (Oxford, 2007); *The Anthropology of Sex* (Oxford, Berg 2010, co-authored with H. Donnan); and the co-edited volumes *Performing Gender, Place, and Emotion in Music: Global Perspectives* (Rochester 2013, with L. Wrazen); *Transgressive Sex* (Oxford, Berghahn 2009, with H. Donnan); *Landscapes of Performance* (Aboriginal Studies Press 2005, with K. Neuenfeldt); and *Telling Stories* (Allen and Unwin 2001, with B. Attwood). She is CI on an ESRC project (The Domestic Moral Economy in the Asia-Pacific, 2011-15) and was senior researcher on the HERA project Creativity in a World of Movement (2010-12). She has been a former Chair of the Anthropological Association of Ireland, member of the Royal Irish Academy's National Committee for Social Sciences and Chair of the Music and Gender Study Group of the International Council for Traditional Music.

An earlier version of this material was presented on the occasion of the project conference 'Disturbing Pasts: Memories, Controversies and Creativity' (20 -22 November 2012, Museum of Ethnology/Weltmuseum Wien, Vienna).

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EMPOWERING ART: RECONFIGURING NARRATIVES OF TRAUMA AND HOPE IN THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL IMAGINARY[1]

Fiona Magowan, Queen's University, Belfast

Since the early 1970s, the rise of contemporary Aboriginal Australian art has provided Aboriginal artists with an autobiographical medium through which to depict their identities regionally and as representatives of Australia's First Nations. In this article, I explore how the work of one Arrernte Stolen Generations' artist,[2] Heather Shearer, is facilitating new dialogues of identity. By speaking out the hurts of history as an acclaimed artist and activist rather than in the terms of 'victim' or 'survivor', I consider how the potency of Shearer's artistic achievements and politics are brought together in her narratives of art. These stories are personalised polemics that contrast with past government policies and political discourses. When an artist's life story is juxtaposed with 'official' narratives, it raises a double-sided question, firstly, about what is written into and out of Indigenous images and histories of telling; and, secondly, how stories expressed in art can transform an individual's suffering and hurt into a sense of pride and dignity. In this analysis, imaging one's personal past will be shown to be a co-active process of confronting the misconceptions posed by history, as Shearer has been intimately involved in fighting for the rights of Stolen Generations to reclaim family connections. First of all, I begin by briefly outlining the development of the Aboriginal art movement and locating Shearer's Arrernte relationships in the context of traumatic historical events that have informed her work as part of the Stolen Generations' Movement. I then consider how these aspects of her life have generated alternative imaginaries for her creative practice as national politics; one that is distinct from and yet in dialogue with the global art world.

Distinct histories have shaped the development of Aboriginal art for the global art market across the Australian continent. Yet, each region has also been subject to early European notions of 'primitive art' and the colonisers' shared visions of remote otherness. Based upon colonial views of art as part of the evolutionary relics of the past, this Western imaginary created misconceptions about how Aboriginal art should be understood when set against measures of cultural progress and degrees of civilisation, rendering paintings more suited to collectors' cabinets and the display cases of ethnographic museums (see Griffiths, 1996).[3] In his comprehensive analysis of Australian art styles and trajectories, Morphy (1999, p.330) has shown how Aboriginal art and artefacts continued to be produced in regions such as southeast Australia even when missionaries and government authorities were not always supportive of performances of 'traditional' culture.[4] Elsewhere, missionaries in northeast Arnhem Land were central to promoting a new art economy, as commissions in the early 1900s, from the then National Museum of Victoria sought to expand bark paintings and collections of other artefacts from 1911 to 1912 (Megaw and Megaw, 1994, p.62). Art and commerce had also been part of first contact since the arrival of the First Fleet to Southeast Australia in the 19th century, when trade encounters had been marked by ornately decorated weaponry from spear throwers to boomerangs and clubs (Morphy, 1999, p.330).

Paintings were thus only one component of a wider set of artefacts, including fibre baskets, headdresses, ritual armbands and necklaces, as well as decorated material culture from engraved weapons

2   Arrernte groups are divided into Northern, Southern, Eastern and Central areas located around Alice Springs covering an area of around 150,000 square km. Heather Shearer's ancestry includes both Eastern and Western Arrernte connections.

3   Throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries, objects were collected with scant information and documentation which remains difficult for curators to confirm in terms of cultural specificities, as records have been lost or have deteriorated over time.
4   He notes how in 1887, the governor of Victoria had asked to see an Aboriginal corroborree but that the government authorities prohibited it, presenting him with a picture of Aboriginal dancers by William Barrak as a substitute (Morphy, 1999, p.329).

and boomerangs to coolamons that could be sold.[5] As artworks circulated in global exchanges, some art critics and gallery owners considered that these objects' aesthetic was based more upon a universal taste than upon an understanding of the meaning or intention of the designs as they were produced in their local context. Such differences of opinion underpinned debates about whether works intended for sale could be truly representative of ritual forms. In turn, this led to artworks being variously classified according to degrees of authenticity or inauthenticity. In the 1930s in northeast Arnhem Land, bark paintings with public ritual designs were commissioned by the anthropologist Donald Thompson, together with Reverend Wilbur Chaseling who was also concerned to avoid innovation to preserve their 'authenticity' as they traded them to Australian museums (Williams, 1976, p.272 cited in Svašek 2007, p.107). Nevertheless, in spite of their efforts at realigning ritual forms with marketplace expectations, the fact that 'contemporary bark paintings from Arnhem Land… had always been made for sale' meant that they 'were treated with suspicion and hence were not authentic "primitive art"' (Morphy, 1999, p.374).

While European concepts of primitivism contrasted 'traditional' artworks of an unchanging past with the progressive ideals of a modern European avant-garde in the first part of the twentieth century, so some non-Indigenous artists such as Margaret Preston were actively drawing inspiration from Aboriginal art (Morphy, 1999, p.371; North, 1980).[6] At this time, the classification of Aboriginal art was also being redefined externally in part by the techniques and materials used in its production. In Central Australia, where ritual sand designs, body paintings and objects were highly restricted and not for public sale, the skills of a non-Indigenous artist, Rex Batterbee, were to prompt a new Arrernte watercolour tradition during his painting trips to Hermannsburg in the 1930s. In 1936, following a request from Lutheran mission superintendent, Pastor Albrecht, Battarbee began to teach Albert Namatjira

to paint landscape in watercolour (see Mountford, 1949; Battarbee, 1951; Hardy et al., 1992). As his work became renowned in Australian exhibitions for their European style, so Namatjira enjoyed national acclaim for the next twenty years until his death in 1959 and his style has persisted in other media with landscape images on contemporary Hermannsburg pottery (Morphy, 1999, p.279; West, 1996). The skilled eye of his artistry has been handed down to his maternal niece, Heather Shearer. Although she does not follow the style of his famous watercolours, she has gained national recognition independently for her own vivid and vibrant works having been a former winner of the (NAIDOC, National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Day Observance Committee) Artist of the Year Award and winner of the NAIDOC National Poster Design Competition.

By the 1970s, Aboriginal paintings were subject to art critics' dichotomies of traditional/contemporary and rural/urban, which, in turn, served to fashion political agendas in the making of national identity claims. This trend had begun in the mid-20th century, when European tastes were again changing in favour of more traditional designs through Preston's influence. This preference was to meet with a new challenge through the emergence of the Papunya school of painting in 1971 whose 'Aboriginal artists transferred their ancestrally inherited designs and images into synthetic paints on portable surfaces' (Caruana, 1993, p.107). Inspired by teacher-artist Geoffrey Bardon, Papunya men began to recreate their body paintings, sand designs or rock art on a mural on the school wall with permission of the owner of the Honey Ant Dreaming, Old Tom Onion Tjapangati (Caruana, 1993, p.108). With Bardon's help, interest grew to a degree that eventually led to the establishment of the Papunya Tula Artists' Cooperative (Caruana, 1993). The movement is renowned for its innovation and experimentation in colour, styles and images which gradually reduced the prevalence of 'naturalistic' figures in favour of concentric circles and dots which carried a plurality of meanings without revealing secret knowledge (Caruana, 1993, p.108). The movement has since had significant impacts upon several groups connected to this dreaming, including Arrernte, Anmatyerre, Luritja, southern Warlpiri and especially Pintupi whose artists have been recognised in exhibitions, major collections and national art prizes. What is particularly remarkable about the movement, Morphy (1999) argues, is the fact that it came after the inception of the watercolour tradition reflected in Namatjira's Aboriginal visions of his country.

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5   For example, art provided significant income for Aboriginal artists in communities in southeast Australia between 1916 and 1942 (Morphy, 1999, p.371).

6   Margaret Preston championed Australian modernism through her frequent travels to Europe, Africa, Oceania and the Middle East. She believed that Australian art could develop a unique style and she sought to incorporate influences from other cultures to that effect. Her work in NSW in the 1920s and especially after the 1930s illustrates the impact of Aboriginal Australian styles on her art together with her experiences visiting Aboriginal lands which further influenced her choice of colours. For details, see http://nga.gov.au/Preston/essay.cfm.

Artworld conflicts in defining the terms of innovation and tradition were also to form the basis of debates about what could be included or excluded from fine art and contemporary art genres. Today, such categories have become less contested and exhibitions within Australia and overseas have challenged the ethnocentrism of primitivism to liberate styles, genres and artistic intentions from concepts of authenticity. Instead, 'Aboriginality is not restricted to a narrow set of signs: it reflects complex political processes and relates to people's lives in their entirety' (Morphy, 1999, p.272). As we shall see, it is this diversity of genres which speaks to personal triumphs and traumas as well as to troubled state and national histories in the lives of Stolen Generations' artists.

The Stolen Generations' Movement

The blinkered views of Europeans about what constituted Australian Aboriginal art were also evident in government assimilation policies which had denied Aboriginal identity and rights and for whom the hurts of the past were not publicly acknowledged until the National Apology in 2008.[7] Heather Shearer's life and her artistic expressions have been marked by growing up through this denial of politics but it has also given her the impetus to seek her own personal legitimacy by her tireless involvement in the contemporary development of the Stolen Generations' Movement.[8] The Movement was spurred by the atrocities of state Acts across the continent that permitted child removal or which had the power to separate children from their families without legal challenge.[9] Legislation began in 1909 through the Aborigines Protection Act in New South Wales and other states soon followed. In some

regions, mission dormitories received children who had been stolen from their families while, in other areas, children were adopted by non-Indigenous families reassigning blood ties, creating cultural surrogacy (Rowse, 2012). All the Acts were abolished by 1969. However, the revoked policy had come too late for Shearer as she had been adopted into a family in Adelaide and was unable to access any information on her blood relations. The impact was emotionally and relationally damaging for her, affecting a sense of 'disconnected continuity'. She explained her feelings of loss growing up without her Alice Springs' relatives:

> I'm an observer in their stories, I should have been there and I wasn't. I really feel the loss of not growing up with them. I should be involved; a part of their stories not being told stories of them growing up. If I start talking about what I did when I was young, it's like, it's so surreal for them, my world that I grew up in, that's where there's a division.

By the 1960s, the nation had begun to imagine Aboriginal people as having a separate and legitimate status, but this idealism was far removed from the reality of the difficulties, which Shearer encountered during her search for her Aboriginal mother and other family members. It was not until she took up the job as secretary of the Aboriginal Child Care Agency (ACCA) in 1978 at the age of eighteen that she was given assistance to trace her relatives.[10] Gaining employment in a range of Aboriginal organisations, together with positions on committees and networks, Shearer was to play a key role in the politics of Aboriginal recognition to right past wrongs over the next thirty years, with her art gaining prominence from the early 1990s.[11] She attended the first Aboriginal Child Survival Seminar in 1979 in Melbourne, which was to form the basis of the new national body SNAICC (Secretariat of National and Aboriginal Islander Child Care). The organisation was established in 1981 and Shearer later held the position of Secretary of the organisation from 1988-1991. The first Link-Up Aboriginal Corporation had also been formed in New South Wales in 1980 just as discussions about SNAICC were in progress. Link-up

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7   Prime Minister Kevin Rudd made a National Apology to the Stolen Generations on 13 February 2008 in which he honoured Aboriginal Australians and explicitly acknowledged the wrongdoings of the past that had caused great suffering. His speech was sealed with a reciprocal gift from Stolen Generations' elder Aunty Lorraine Peeters who offered a glass coolamon as 'a symbol of the hope we place in the new relationship you wish to forge with our people'. For more details on the apology to Australia's indigenous peoples, see http://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/indigenous-australians/programs-services/recognition-respect/apology-to-australias-indigenous-peoples (3.7.2014).

8   In 1981, historian Peter Read coined the term 'The Stolen Generations', which was the title of his report for the Department of Aboriginal Affairs in NSW on the removal of children in the region from 1883–1969.

9   Legislation on the protection and restriction of Aboriginal people to designated reserves was first passed in Queensland 1897, Western Australia 1905, South Australia and under the Northern Territory Aboriginals Ordinance 1911.

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10   In 1937, the government had adopted assimilation as the national policy which posited that Aboriginal people would live as if they were non-Aboriginal. This would eventually lead to conformity with whiteness given the right training and education, not because Aboriginal people were viewed as becoming whites per se, but because 'their Aboriginality was seen "as a problem"' (HREOC, 1997, p.272, cited in Probyn, 2003, p.67).

11   From 1993–95 she was employed as partner in her own business as an artist and designer for Shear-Art Wholesalers.

provided support and networking services for Stolen Generations' children and their families. Through her work with these organisations, Shearer has been recognised for her outstanding contribution in the Northern Territory and South Australia to the Stolen Generations having been nominated for an acclaimed Deadly Award in 2012.[12] She explained how she is still driven by the fact that 'there are not enough people who understand the history of this, the true histories of the Stolen Generation, the movement and how it all came to be. Too many people are no longer with us that have been on this journey and we just need to get on with the job now' (Shearer quoted in Butler, 2013).

The politics of art in activism

Shearer's positions and awards have been hard won in a climate of political struggle over the recognition of Aboriginal rights. By the 1970s, there still seemed to be little public acceptance of the multiplicity of Indigenous cosmopolitics,[13] complex polities or diverse environmental relationships. While government grants were given to remote art centres and their curators, the recognition of land rights was still in its infancy. Government funds were also allocated to university research on art but struggling Aboriginal artists such as Kevin Gilbert (notable for his role as an activist in the Aboriginal Tent Embassy movement) did not receive funding for his initiative to establish a National School of Aboriginal Arts in 1971; instead, he was left to make ends meet out of his 'service-station art gallery located on the Pacific Highway' (Neale, 2000, p.269, see also Kleinert and Koch, 2012).

In different parts of the continent, access to resources and support for diverse expressions of Aboriginal art was unequal. The label 'transitional' had been applied to works that were not viewed as wholly traditional or part of the mainstream with the effect that they were neither one thing nor the other but held a liminal position which created a sense of 'category panic' (Spunner, 2012, pp.93–4). Ensuing tensions from non-Indigenous rural-urban discourses about Aboriginality led to a political backlash in the Aboriginal art movements of the 1980s. In this period,

Koori art, referring to Southeastern urban artists, emerged as 'a new political position of unity, strength and of reclamation, a self-assigned space' separate from that previously termed 'Aboriginal' by the art world (Neale, 2000, p.268, see also Kleinert and Koch, 2012, p.3). Narratives of 'us' or 'not them' became critical in defining resistance and, by differentiating Koori art from other art forms, these discourses also succeeded in integrating and networking artists with one another. A unifying ideology thus began to emerge throughout the '80s and '90s that sought to understand suffering as inherent in an Aboriginal history of the nation. Through repoliticising historical narratives, Stolen Generations' artists, like Heather Shearer, were learning new languages and capturing visions of the past from their families.

By the 1990s, discourses of tradition and modernity in art were being redefined and displaced by the politicisation of history itself as atrocities of invasion and Australian conquest had become essentialised in 'History Wars' which pitted 'official' Australian history against 'unofficial' discourses of Aboriginal struggles for rights and recognition. Birch (2006, p.22) considers that the historical record has been determined in part by giving prominence to certain histories while omitting others and that the report on the Stolen Generations in 1997 entitled *Bringing Them Home* has been fundamental to 'the struggle for control of how Australia's past and Australia's memory is reconstructed'. In this struggle, narratives of dispossession have become part of a national 'canon' (Bruner, 1991) that has been subject to the rewriting of the Australian past, told either as 'white blindfold history' or as 'black armband history', as Geoffrey Blainey labelled it in his 1993 Latham lecture which was then published in *Quadrant* (pp.10–5). Politicians waded in on the debates; taking the opposite view, then Prime Minister, Paul Keating's Redfern speech, made on 10 December, 1992, highlighted white Australia's role in Aboriginal dispossession.[14] His successor, John Howard sided with writers who denied the histories of child removal and violence as portrayed in *Quadrant Magazine* and who posited that the Stolen Generation had been 'rescued' rather than 'stolen' (Manne, 2009). Work by revisionist historians such as Reynolds (1999, 2003), Markus (2001) and Attwood (2000), which revealed the violence of frontier conflicts in the 19th century were considered sensationalised

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12 The Deadly Awards originated with the Redfern Boomali Aboriginal Arts Cooperative in 1995 and have become the country's recognition of Aboriginal achievements in politics, cultural activities, sport and entertainment.

13 Following Cheah and Robbins (1998, p.3), I use the term cosmopolitics here to refer to the field in which Stolen Generations' members find themselves navigating disparate, dislocated contexts variously as kin or friends but who also seek to legitimate their rootedness as a 'reality of (re)-attachment, multiple attachment or attachment at a distance' to places of familial belonging.

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14 'We committed the murders. We took the children from their mothers. We practised discrimination and exclusion. It was our ignorance and our prejudice, (Keating, 2000, pp.60–4).

by some Australians.[15] Kevin Rudd was subsequently criticised for manoeuvring between both positions (Manne, 2009). McIntyre and Clark (2004, p.12) note that historians were 'ill prepared for such public controversy' in a discipline that is based on interpretive difference rather than the 'forms of unilateral assertion'. More troublingly, these politicised debates were largely dissociated from their visceral effects upon Aboriginal people who wished to express their own histories rather than have them represented through non-Indigenous lenses (see, for example, Birch, 2006).

Heather Shearer's tenacity in pursuing her own cultural history is testament to a righteous anger which she has turned outwards for the benefit of other Aboriginal people through her work on numerous professional bodies. She has assisted them to recover links with families and communities that have been broken and helped them return loved ones to their rightful homelands. These efforts have been captured on screen and she has worked as a consultant for a 1986 documentary about removal and in numerous roles as a member of the National Sorry Day Committee (1998-2001),[16] the Central Australian Stolen Generations and Families' Aboriginal Corporation Alice Springs and the Northern Territory since 2002 and as the South Australia delegate for the National Stolen Generations Alliance since 2009. The accounts of those she works with were seldom heard in the 'official histories' and yet they are the critical narratives that lie at the success or failure of the making and remaking of the nation. The 'Great Australian Silence' that Stanner identified in his Australian Boyer Lectures in 1968 continues in the identity politics and conflicting discourses about contemporary Aboriginal social life depicted in the 2013 UK and 2014 Australian screenings of John Pilger's film *Utopia*.[17] Despite the visual evidence of 'inhuman,

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15 Events that were subject to this critique included the 1838 Myall Creek Massacre. This violent encounter resulted in the murder of 28 Aboriginal men, women and children. Seven whites were tried and hanged for the crime. For more details, see: http://www.myallcreekmassacre.com/Myall_Creek_Massacre/Aftermath.html.
Walker (2013, p.312) notes that the annual memorial of this event has enabled healing processes to begin.
16 National Sorry Day ceremonies and marches are held annually on 26 May. Beginning in 1998, the year after the Stolen Generations' *Bringing them Home Report* was debated in Parliament, these events bring Australians together to express their remorse at the histories of removal and traumas caused to Aboriginal people.
17 W.E.H. Stanner had accused Australian historians of ignoring the effects of invasion, which was a result of evading others' views about Aboriginal treatment with a view to them becoming insignificant (see Gunstone, 2004). Pilger's film examines abuses and mistreatment experienced by Aboriginal people at Utopia, 200 miles North of Alice Springs

disgraceful and embarrassing' conditions in Utopia (Waters, 2014), some commentators' critiques have emphasised how its residents have been cast as 'victims' while it omits any reference to the production of the extraordinary artwork that its artists produce (Finnane, 2014).

In other educational arenas, terms such as 'invasion' together with revisionist histories have become recognised discourses in Australian schooling, as Aboriginal History has been compulsory to year 10 since 2010. However, it is only since January 2012 that more emphasis has been given to teaching about Stolen Generations with reference to the National Sorry Day and the Anniversary of the Apology in this curriculum. In these new and rapidly shifting milieux, historical accounts are inevitably couched in particular epistemological and interpretive terms as courses seek to chronicle the intercultural dynamics of cause and effect. In historical summaries of the Stolen Generations, it is often the moment of the traumatic event that is highlighted in children having been taken away. Questions of how Aboriginal people experience processes of regaining their pride and sense of personhood in the nation are only just reaching the understanding of many younger Australians and there are many other stories that are still continuing to emerge about how the Stolen Generations have successfully managed to empower themselves and their families.

Such is the story of Heather Shearer. By telling stories about her family in art, Shearer reconnects with her Alice Springs' family. Retracing her past in paint is one outworking of many other trajectories of her coming to know herself as she forms and reforms the enduring and unbroken relationship to her *Tjukurrpa* (Dreaming Law). The physicality of reconnection is as important as the narrative of belonging. Upon return to Alice Springs, her aunt had taken her to Ntaria (Hermannsberg) where she met her uncle and worked out her genealogies, before going on with another aunt to Atitjere (Harts Range) to chart a map of the area and individuals within it. Artistic connectedness for Shearer is a relationship between colour, kin and country, embodying 'the essences of the ochres' through which she has remarked that she 'looks back to our elders to get our guidance and we never forget where we come from'. Her reclamation of the colour of the land in painting in those early days was a statement about the inner essence of Shearer's personal identity, as well as an externalisation of the

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and the effects of endemic poverty, indigenous imprisonment and disadvantage that have marked the histories of white Australian policies on its indigenous inhabitants.

right to belong. She has commented:

> I started to visualise what I hadn't learned growing up, so I painted to have something tangible to look at it and read it just to know which communities were which and from there I started doing family trees, 'cos I'd meet my brothers and sisters and they'd have children and I'd think which one was that? In my notes, that's how I structured to do the paintings.

This is a process that she has had to undertake herself. Over the years, painting has become a personalised practice of reconciling her land, family and kin to herself that was far removed from national debates about what constituted Aboriginal art. Her Arrernte painting skills were shown to her by one of her Aunties, as she explained:

> There was one day she was doing this painting and she had this corner and I said 'see that corner there, that's not finished yet'. She gave me the stick and said, 'that's for you to paint… if you don't paint it, I'm gonna leave it blank'. So, I was like 'I'll give it a go.' The yarning and the discussion that went around while we were working on this painting just embraced me so much more, it was brilliant.

Nevertheless, Shearer did not adopt her Aunty's painting style. Instead, she sought to differentiate her work as a means of showing the alternative pathways of her life story which reminded her of times spent in Adelaide at Aldinga beach with the colours of the ocean, sand, rocks and cliffs, as well as of other colours in the desert and the teachings of her mother and father. Together with the right to be connected to kin came the responsibility of holding the *Tjukurrpa* (Dreaming Law) appropriately.

Heather Shearer's artistic sophistication enables her to go beyond the personal as a sought-after artist who can also create national representations of Aboriginal history. She most commonly produces these kinds of works in response to commissions from institutions through which she is able to extend her own kin narratives. In having the opportunity to work at different levels, Shearer's artworks have taken on a force of activism in which emotion narratives about the paintings 'mark one's own presence' at the same time as they can evoke collective ideals by alluding to policies that have failed to be translated into appropriate action in the nation (Ahmed, 2004, pp.14–5). A new politics of communicating identities through the past has developed amongst the Stolen Generations in art, music and autobiographies. This personalised

communicative space has afforded the potential for Aboriginal people 'to counter institutionalised and attitudinal racism by constructing narratives that offer alternative perspectives to those of European myths of Aboriginal inferiority' (Dalziell, 1999, p.172).

Along with other Stolen Generations' artists, Shearer has sought to counter hegemonic discourses by critiquing definitions of Aboriginality through a radical visual politics and by exploring the inherent contradictions of pan-Aboriginal values that recast the fragmentation of 'traditional' communities as both culturally distinctive *and* responsive to pluralism. By politicising and positioning Aboriginality as a reactive rhetoric against and through subordinated autobiographies, artists like Shearer have sought to work in a combination of image-making and narrativising processes that Dalziell (1999, p.272) has termed 'the discovery of the voice' which does not necessarily deny pain experienced but repositions the voice in the context of 'the understanding other'. The process is necessarily delicate, however, for those who 'haven't grown up to learn the song', as Shearer puts it. Yet, as she explains, her willingness to engage with the pain of dislocation is not simply a means of overcoming it but of reshaping her own history and those of her kin, challenging official histories in the process. She repositions her life story not as a victim of colonial assimilation but as a creative artisan of a powerful political corrective with the potential to affect a new communicative dynamic for herself and for other artists through the force of their visual narratives.

Experiencing 'Narrativity'

One reason why the new poetics of Aboriginal art is so effective is because artists like Shearer are changing the conditions of intercultural politics and discourses of history. They stand at an interstitial point through reclaiming their rights to belong by challenging histories of denial, narrativising their place in the world. Yet, part of the problem of reconstructing the 'History Wars' from an Aboriginal voice is the question of how dislocation occurs between intention and reception, narrator and listener in the work of 'becoming-text' (or artist) 'which becomes the condition for discourse itself' (Ricoeur, 1996, p.152). Ricoeur points out that the reader needs to be aware of a 'conflict of interpretations' creating rivalry between 'literal' meanings or 'social motivations' of texts alongside the fullness of their multivalent potential (1996, p.152). Following Seyla Benhabib, Mara Rainwater (1996, p.105) argues that interpretation is itself a process of dialogue. Thus, when acts of narrating the past are denied, such as in the 'History Wars', so interpretation

may lose its potency as a source of productive dialogue to move beyond entrenched rhetorics and change the politics of meaning. What is particularly poignant in this juncture is the image in relation to the word. The image enables the viewer to move beyond the politicisation of semantics to engage with the artists' experience of being there as a new form of social imaginary. For Shearer, who uniquely holds the 'poetic licence to interpret' her own style and meanings as they relate to her Atitjere family, referencing her belonging is a combination of creating (in terms of attachments to the *tjukurrpa*) and recreating the image as a modification of its original reference.

An artwork thus speaks to much more than the form or shape it evokes. In explaining the context of one of the series of her paintings of the Ghostgum, she commented,

> When I think about them, I'm really complex in what I'm interpreting there. I just say to other people it's gumtree and shoots but when I explain it it's so much more. Places where I've been and I've seen the beautiful gumtree. When I'm homesick in Port Augusta, I just close my eyes and I'm home and I can remember every place I've been there … I might do a series of ten Ghostgums and every one will look different as I might be highlighting a different aspect. In this one here, I'm highlighting the waterways. The painting is the externalisation of the place as an interpretation of expression of it. It's an expression of what comes to me which is the strength of it.

Rainwater (1996, p.107) concludes that what she calls 'narrativity' is a process of self-making in communication and interconnectedness with others in recognition of their 'self-definitions' and 'acts of narration'. Selfhood thus acquires legitimacy through acts of narration when listeners are receptive to the speaker's purposes.

In Shearer's account we also see that narrativity in turn, entails an intertwining of what Josephides (2010, p.164) calls 'speaking-with' aligned to 'feeling-with'.[18] The sensorial dimension of self-other empathising can prompt both speaker and listener to engage a 'moral imagination' in which 'dialogue and conversation are *cooperative* models for communication that can certainly be as effective as purely argumentative

strategies in fostering mutual understanding' (Benhabib cited in Rainwater, 1996, p.106). As Josephides (2010, p.166) notes, '[s]peaking … becomes an act that constructs both the self and the other and elicits the self from the other'. In this case, Shearer shows through her paintings, how narrativity invites the reader/listener into dialogue and conversation with her as she relates the histories behind her artwork, making it possible for her to 're-story' fragmentations of other 'official histories' through her own practices of self-making and alterity (Curtis, 2005, p.15). In this way, she is able to 'thread the thread of memory back' (p.15) from a range of her life experiences, inviting listeners to empathise with the conditions of her storytelling.

The process of threading narrativity back as action and 'moral imagination' is evident in many Aboriginal lifestories. For example, Deborah Rose's acclaimed work, *Hidden Histories* (1991), begins with a quote from Riley Young whose elders told him how he was to react to Europeans. They advised him 'if he wants to fight, give it away. Because olden times you know, you can get shot like a dog. They shoot you like a dog, and just let you burn on the fire'. These stories are not merely recountings of past violence; rather they act as 'affective mentalities' (Berlant, 2012), which narrator and hearer hold towards to the world. Their re-storying brings forth emotional refractions of the past that coalesce to create vivid recollections. While in some circumstances, memories of suffering may contribute to what Lauren Berlant (2011) refers to as 'dissociative life', 'a condition beyond which there is no immediate sense of hope', they may simultaneously, 'open an understanding of the present that is intended to lead to an altered future' (Rose, 1991, p.xxii).

Standing strong on a world stage

New communicative spaces between art and autobiographical narrative can provide a means of engaging with and transforming emotional anguish arising from experiences of oppression. Shearer shows how art can facilitate intercultural conversations about pride, locating her personal accounts of family and emotional trauma within a broader history of what Ahmed (2004) has termed 'affective economies' in which emotions circulate between individual and collective bodies and signs, taking note of the differential bodily experience and boundaries between alternative world views.[19] Ahmed argues that the attribution of emotion to a nation recreates it as a

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18 In discussing GrØnseth's experiences of working with Tamil refugees, in the same volume on *Mutuality and Empathy*, Josephides notes how GrØnseth viscerally experienced the rejection of her Tamil friends that in turn created an 'empathic understanding' (Josephides, 2010, p.168).

19 How one reads or interprets the other, inevitably influences how emotions are identified thus 'differentiating between the subject and object of feeling' (Ahmed, 2004, p.13).

shared object of feeling. The emotions Shearer conveys in explaining her art are specific to the remaking of her life story as a Stolen Generations' woman and a National Stolen Generations' Committee representative, extending from her Arrernte identity and permission given by her elders to paint. This process was brought home poignantly to me on one occasion when we were discussing the depth of feeling that she embodied in the symbol of handprints on her artworks. She explained that she always leaves the imprint of her *own* hand. This technique retains the space between the heel of the hand and the fingers but sometimes she paints over the image filling it in and at others, she leaves the gap. Her physical handprints then are an important aspect of her artistic selfhood – her signature. In some cases, she would take photos of the handprints to use as web designs to ensure that 'they're still the images of my paintings'. The common motif is also a lasting extension of herself.

Shearer's attention to detail in thinking about producing her authenticity of selfhood in the traces of touch within the painting is an expression of pride as much as rights of sensorial ownership. She previously extended the technique to include sweat, which she rubbed on the canvas and then painted over. Thus, rather than being a 'distanciated text' by which I came to know the meaning of the image, the sensoriality of her practice created a new dialogical context, as it reconfigured my understanding of herself within the land as a visceral force animating the painting.[20] As Shearer's stories and analysis of her artistic process suggest, 'narrativity' has the potential to move the listener/viewer beyond mere representations and interpretations of the image, inviting us to engage with her ruptures of selfhood affected by dislocation from her family. In making art, she affirms her identity with pride, drawing upon an embodied aesthetic that affirms visual, verbal and sensorial recognition of her identity and that of her relatives.

For those viewing the work of overseas artists, the outcomes of international visits may be unpredictable or difficult to assess. Durrant and Lord (2000, p.15) note that in analysing artworks there is the opportunity to consider 'cultures in transition' across 'different human environments and differently empowered subjects-in-process'. In one sense, travel has become a medium for enlarging the creative imagination to new ways of perceiving, feeling and engaging. Being

out-of-place may also encourage artists to become, as Markiewicz (2000, p.37) has observed, 'unaccommodated' in a process of 'losing oneself'. As artists move beyond the familiar home spaces of politics, nationalism and activism they encounter new modes of creative practice. This openness of artists to other cultural aesthetics invariably impinges upon their sensorial attachments to 'home'. However, Markiewicz (2000, p.38) argues that the effectiveness of art is not so much about generating a temporary sense of 'at-homeness', a refuge for 'housing oneself' when out of place, but creative improvisation is a process of embracing the sense of being 'unaccommodated'.

In the case of Stolen Generations' artists, such as Heather Shearer, this process is reversed. By having been deprived of the comfort of knowing 'home' and the sensoriality of place, feelings of being out-of-place or 'unaccommodated' have become normative. In her national and international movements, Shearer has built upon personal and professional networks and accrued a global profile through which she is able to present a new intercultural aesthetic. It is one that challenges the reified ideal of Aboriginal people as 'a seminal Other of the European imagination' (McLean 2011, p.69). Instead, her story and art is a microcosm of particular aspects of Australian history and the cosmopolitics of identity as it relates to her land and her family. Reviewing the literature on Aboriginal artists' presence on the world stage, Elizabeth Burns Coleman notes that there has been a longstanding practice of artists seeking to dialogue with 'sympathetic "whitefellas"' (McLean, 2010, p.19, cited in Burns Coleman, 2009, p.16) who have intentionally sought to attend exhibitions and talks bringing their own voices and perspectives to art world debates. Indeed, the opportunity to create new artworks overseas has given Shearer the chance to reflect upon how she presents and negotiates her identity which has further informed her aesthetic style in a feedback loop. In this process, the effects of dislocation together with (re)attachments to homeland and exposure to feelings of being-at-home overseas, mean that diverse senses of 'at-homeness' and being 'unaccommodated' articulate with one another and open up new 'spaces of affect' (van Alpen, 1997, cited in Markiewicz, 2000, p.44).

Repositioning the politics and poetics of difference

In her accounts of participating in and running international art workshops and exhibitions, Shearer explained how the opportunity to take collaborative work overseas has provided other ways of thinking about collective identities on a global scale. As part of

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20   For a critique of the distinctions between how texts are distanciated due to the inaccessibility of the reader to the writer's utterances in the present versus the immediacy of the interpretive moment of 'dialogic utterance', see Wolterstorff (1995, pp.142–4).

an Ulster Arts invitation to Belfast in 1996, she gave a week of art workshops in Corrymeela, Ballycastle with women and mothers. The creative space enabled those involved to affirm senses of self in country while recognising cultural difference:

> [I was] so privileged to be up there with the ladies and with the painting. It was not about going through the torture of what those issues were, but it's about, here, celebrate your life, the colours of your country, look at you, you know. And it was just fantastic.

Rather than focusing on traumas of the past, the opportunity to celebrate creativity together intensified a shared affect, bringing these women into a 'relational aesthetic' of hope (Bourriaud, 2002).

Connecting diverse artistic practices and ideologies was also part of a second Ulster Arts funded project which culminated in a community-led mural when Shearer assisted Tasmanian artist Max Mansell and local youth to design the gable of a building in New Lodge.[21] Shearer recalls:

> The painting was a snake. When St. Patrick threw the snakes out, we thought Snake Dreaming because when we came up with the name for it … the Rainbow Dreaming was the connection through the rain and the rainbows of my country.

As international opportunities have increased for Aboriginal artists to showcase their works, so too have the occasions to share stories, expanding the horizons of engaging with others. Rather than just presenting artworks to display or narrate to audiences, Shearer explained how she has reoriented her views about the power of art through intercultural exchange. In 1998, two years after the Belfast trip, an exhibition, *Soaring Visions*, linked Shearer with Canadian First Nations' artists to share artistic ideas and perspectives.[22] The research activities surrounding the work on this visit challenged her views about what kinds of impacts her work might have in global settings:

> There was a lot of research around it looking at our responsibility as artists in the education process and how our art is part of that. It was awesome because it gave me something to think

about. It was coming on me that I had no idea about how it would be seen in a world context.

The realisation that narratives might be variously empowering and affirming or evoke unanticipated reactions, gives artists new potentialities for reflecting upon how their images may impact upon others' identities. As artists from other nations make sense of Stolen Generations' artworks, they, in turn, recover the agency of the artists they are discussing.[23] Shearer's recognition that there is a burden of uncertainty surrounding how her artistic interpretations are remade in other cultural contexts brings with it the responsibility of educating other nations about her own 'unofficial histories' that are gaining official recognition overseas.

The legacy of Stolen Generations' traumas has been addressed by many Aboriginal artists (and musicians), a number of whom are active in national Aboriginal politics. Ways of depicting Aboriginal selfhood in art, music and dance have become recognised modalities of cultural affirmation. Beyond localised politics of performance, Stolen Generations' artists like Shearer continue to impact international arenas, partly in their efforts to counteract non-Indigenous histories of disempowerment. As Shearer's work shows, the legacy of Aboriginal testimonies is not only about an individual's 'lived experience' but it is also about 'shifting interactions between agency, migration and the aesthetic entanglements that join these [intercultural] dimensions, while simultaneously guarding against romanticised conflations' (Durrant and Lord, 2000, p.13).

In trying to avoid romanticising representations of identity, I have sought to critique the problems inherent in narrativity, examining the complexities of making images that have shaped Shearer's artistic identity, together with some broader intersubjective challenges that working with an international arena of storytelling and artistry brings. As artists share their backgrounds and listen to one another's histories, so they increase visceral credence of each other's life histories through the effects of tone, dynamics, timbral quality and vocal intensity. It is in the power of presencing their life stories in colour and pattern that Aboriginal artists have the capacity to move audiences. Through art, the complexities of Australian Aboriginal life worlds have gained recognition internationally and Stolen Generations' artists have shown how creativity in pictorial forms can vocalise strong feelings about past sufferings, which they and their families have endured

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21 New Lodge is a largely working-class Catholic area in north Belfast that has experienced violence between republican and loyalist paramilitaries. There is an extensive tradition of painting murals on walls and the sides of buildings representing the history of Northern Ireland's conflict.

22 The trip was supported by the University of Adelaide, Underdale Campus and the University of British Columbia.

23 See also Durrant and Lord (2000, p.18) on recovering migrant histories through art.

as a result of the effects of Australian government policies. For those like Shearer, art has become a key medium and co-active voice in effecting transference from a sense of dislocation to the affirmation of acceptance, rights of belonging to Country and pride in being an Aboriginal woman. As this process has gathered momentum among artists, so it has influenced ways of reconceiving national discourses, inviting non-Indigenous viewers to respond to the politics of difference, as well as to reconsider how Aboriginal re-enfranchisement has opened out the possibilities for remaking Aboriginal histories on their own terms, anew.

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