

**(RE)COLLECTIONS IN THE ARCHIVE: MAKING AND REMAKING  
THE INTERNATIONAL DEFENCE AND AID FUND (IDAF)  
ARCHIVAL COLLECTION**



A dissertation submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of  
Philosophy in History, University of the Western Cape

Supervisor: Prof. Ciraj Rassool

## **DECLARATION**

**I, Geraldine Le Anne Frieslaar, declare that “(Re)collections in the archive: Making and remaking the International Defence and Aid Fund (IDAF) archival collection” is my own work, that it has not been submitted for any degree or examination in any other university, and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by complete references.**

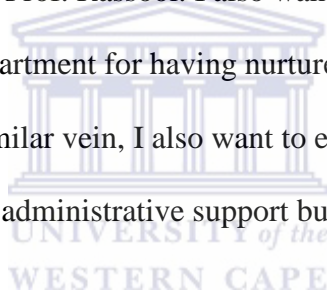
**Geraldine Frieslaar**

**27 November 2015**



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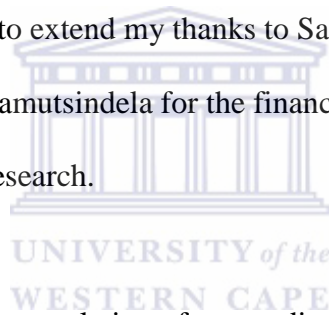


It would not have been possible to pursue this journey without the academic and financial assistance of the Centre for Humanities Research. This support came in the form of being awarded a doctoral fellowship in the Programme for the Study of Humanities in Africa from 2013-2015. I have gained immeasurable knowledge and have greatly benefitted from the interdisciplinary and intellectual exchanges that have been facilitated by the CHR. I am extremely grateful to Prof. Premesh Lalu, without whose insight and vigour the Centre would not enjoy the drive and commitment for academic excellence.

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## **ABSTRACT**

The work of the International Defence and Aid Fund (IDAF) conducted between 1956 and 1991 gave rise to a collection of records that traverse 35 years of support work. As a solidarity organisation IDAF provided support to liberation movements in South Africa through their legal and welfare assistance programmes. Equally significant, IDAF also sought to highlight the oppressive machinery of the apartheid government through the deployment of their research, information and publications programmes as a way of creating awareness and ‘keeping the conscience of the world alive.’ When the administrative records of IDAF were relocated to South Africa, with the Mayibuye Centre for History and Culture as chosen location, they were turned into an archival collection which also became a memorial to IDAF’s resistance work located in the foremost anti-apartheid university and politically in a new project that intended to create a museum about apartheid. Later the collection was incorporated into the Robben Island Museum (RIM) through an agreement between the University of the Western Cape (UWC) and the Museum. The dissertation examines the cultural history and the political life of the IDAF archival collection and the processes through which it was made and continues to be remade.

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AAM	Anti-Apartheid Movement
ACTAG	Arts and Culture Task Group
AEPP	Association of Ex-political Prisoners
ANC	African National Congress
AZAPO	Azanian People's Organisation
BCM	Black Consciousness Movement
BDAF	British Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa
CCS	Centre for Cultural Studies
CER	Centre for Research in Ethnic Relations
CMMH	Commission for Museums, Monuments and Heraldry
COSATU	Congress of South African Trade Unions
CPSA	Communist Party of South Africa
DAC	Department of Arts and Culture
DACST	Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology
DANIDA	Danish International Development Agency
DISA	Digital Imaging South Africa
FOIP	Freedom of Information Programme
HRC	Human Rights Commission
IAAM	Irish Anti-Apartheid Movement
ICMP	Integrated Conservation Management Plan
ICS	Institute of Commonwealth Studies
IDAF	International Defence and Aid Fund
GRAP	Generally Regulated Accounting Practice
IHR	Institute for Historical Research

IUEF	International University Exchange Fund
MK	uMkhontowe Sizwe
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MSU	Michigan State University
NAHECS	National Heritage and Cultural Studies Centre
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PAC	Pan Africanist Movement
RIM	Robben Island Museum
RTT	Right to Truth
SACC	South African Council of Churches
SACP	South African Communist Party
SACTU	South African Congress of Trade Unions
SADET	South African Democracy Education Trust
SAHA	South African History Archives
SAHO	South African History Online
SALDEF	South African Legal Defence Fund
SANROC	South African Non-Racial Olympic Committee
SFJ	Struggles for Justice
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SOMAFCO	Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
UCT	University of Cape Town
UDF	United Democratic Front
UDM	United Democratic Movement
UFH	University of Fort Hare



UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Education, Science and Cultural Organisation
UWC	University of the Western Cape
WESTAG	Western Province Task Group
Wits	University of the Witwatersrand



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## INTRODUCTION

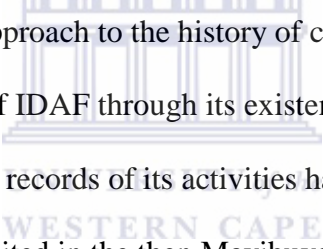
Time present and time past  
Are both perhaps present in time future,  
And time future contained in time past.  
If all time is eternally present  
All time is unredeemable.  
What might have been is an abstraction  
Remaining a perpetual possibility  
Only in a world of speculation.  
What might have been and what has been  
Point to one end, which is always present.  
Footfalls echo in the memory  
Down the passage which we did not take  
Towards the door we never opened  
Into the rose-garden. My words echo  
Thus, in your mind.  
But to what purpose ....  
Go, said the bird, for the leaves were full of children,  
Hidden excitedly, containing laughter.  
Go, go, go, said the bird: human kind  
Cannot bear very much reality.  
Time past and time future  
What might have been and what has been  
Point to one end, which is always present.<sup>1</sup>

In his philosophical meditation of time, T.S. Eliot wrote that the future and the past are always contained in the present. While this may hold promises of recovering or even capturing time, Eliot almost immediately reminds us about the elusiveness of time as it unendingly eludes being captured. Echoing with longing, Eliot's poem is marked by nostalgic yearning and an almost inescapable acceptance of the futility of pursuing time, as he explored the relationship between the past and the present and the deeply existential question of our consciousness of time. In particular, Eliot's captivating evocations of time resonate with lingering perceptions of archives as spaces of seduction, romance and nostalgia in which there is the promise that time can be recovered, however illusory that is.

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas S. Eliot, 'Burnt Norton', (1936).

Drawing on the insights offered by Eliot's thought provoking imaginings of time, I want to suggest that this might provide a productive way of thinking about our engagement with archives or as Carolyn Steedman termed it, our "romance of the archives"<sup>2</sup> in which historians "narrativise absence into presence, and into time."<sup>3</sup> According to Steedman, "[t]he way archives are, is to do with their inhabitants, temporary and permanent; the living and the dead."<sup>4</sup> With this in mind and by drawing on my own entangled engagement with the archive both as an archivist and as a historian working with a particular archival collection, this dissertation is a study of the making and the remaking of the International Defence and Aid Fund (IDAF) archival collection that is housed at the UWC Robben Island Mayibuye Archives at the University of the Western Cape (UWC).



By employing Roger Chartier's approach to the history of cultural forms,<sup>5</sup> I will explore the cultural history and political life of IDAF through its existence as a solidarity organisation and the process through which the records of its activities had been intended to become a 'living archive' when it was deposited in the then Mayibuye Centre for History and Culture at UWC. By exploring the cultural history and political life through which the shape and meanings of the IDAF archival collection were forged, the dissertation will argue that instead of reactivating this 'living archive', these records were laid to rest and turned into a forgotten memorial of IDAF's support work to the liberation movement in South Africa. Equally important, I argue that a study of the history of archives is crucial as a way in which to reimagine and rethink archives with regard to their deeper philosophical meanings.

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<sup>2</sup> Carolyn Steedman, 'Romance in the Archive', 5, Available at [http://www.restore.ac.uk/archiving\\_qualitative\\_data/projects/archive\\_series/documents/Steedman.pdf](http://www.restore.ac.uk/archiving_qualitative_data/projects/archive_series/documents/Steedman.pdf), Accessed on 26 September 2015.

<sup>3</sup> Steedman, 'Romance in the Archive', 8.

<sup>4</sup> Steedman, 'Romance in the Archive', 1.

<sup>5</sup> Roger Chartier, *Cultural History: Between Practices and Representations*, translated by L. Cochrane (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988).

In his reflections of working with the Bakunin archive, John Randolph accentuated this point by arguing that, “[b]ecause archives make us, it is important to know how any given archive has been and continues to be made.”<sup>6</sup> This question of the making and remaking of an archive becomes even more pertinent when thinking about the post-apartheid conditions in which the IDAF archival collection was created. Through its installation at the Mayibuye Centre, the collection was initially framed as one of the foremost heritage projects driven by the post-apartheid state, but later it became an abandoned project as a result of the changing conditions of the post-apartheid.

As Veronique Riouful and others have argued, the new democratic dispensation of 1994 brought its own conditions in which to reshape representations of South Africa as a country “promoting democratization, fostering reconciliation and national unity”<sup>7</sup> through which South Africa was represented as positive, reconciled and unified. Drawing on Riouful’s argument of the positive and universalist terms in which South Africa was recast in order “to fit the new political situation and to foster cohesion,”<sup>8</sup> it can be argued that in the project of recasting South Africa as a unified nation, it necessarily involved the silencing, forgetting or marginalisation of certain voices and narratives. In his reflections on the relationship between the archive and the making of the nation state, Kwame Anthony Appiah made a similar argument in which he noted that, “[n]ational history is a question of what we choose to remember, not just in the sense of which facts we use for our public purposes, but equally in the sense that we choose which facts actually count as ours.”<sup>9</sup>

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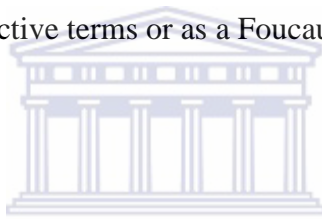
<sup>6</sup> John Randolph, ‘On the Biography of the Bakunin Family Archive’ in Antoinette Burton (ed), *Archive Stories: Facts, Fictions and the Writing of History* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2005), 211.

<sup>7</sup> Veronique Riouful, ‘Behind Telling: Post-apartheid Representations of Robben Island’s Past’, *Kronos*, No. 26 (August 2000), 22.

<sup>8</sup> Riouful, *Behind Telling: Post-apartheid Representations of Robben Island’s Past*, 26.

<sup>9</sup> Kwame Anthony Appiah, ‘Identity, Politics and the Archive’ in Xolela Mangcu (ed), *Becoming Worthy Ancestors: Archive, Public Deliberation and Identity in South Africa* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2011), 106.

While much has been written about the archive, the concept of ‘archive’ and ‘archives’ has become quite a contested concept both within and outside the archive. This can be seen from recent debates about the archive percolating within academic discourses and among archivists, debates that are taken up in the dissertation. Problematically, the term ‘archive’, ‘archives’ and/or collection is often employed too easily without much cognizance of the complexities inherent in the notion of ‘archive’ or the conceptual differences between ‘archives’ as a repository of an ordered system of preserved historical source material and ‘archive’, as a mode of thinking and knowing the world. Although there has been a discernible awareness around ‘archive’ and ‘archives’ particularly from scholars with diverse theoretical formulations of the archive emerging from across various disciplines in which the archive is either read in deconstructive terms or as a Foucauldian epistemology, the ‘archive’ has remained contested territory.



Though few have attempted definitions of the archive, there is much critique levelled against the archive, often with little recognition of the philosophy, theory, conventions and practices that govern it. Often, much to the dismay of those in the archival profession “the idea of the archive with which the professional archivist is familiar with has become overlaid and blended, even diluted or adulterated, with concepts drawn from the newly engaged disciplines: the text, the oeuvre, the corpus, the canon and the repertoire.”<sup>10</sup> Nothing is less clear today, according to Jacques Derrida, than the word archive,<sup>11</sup> and it is in this sense that

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<sup>10</sup> Alexandrina Buchanan, ‘Strangely unfamiliar: Ideas of the Archive from outside the discipline’ in Jennie Hill (ed), *The Future of Archives and Recordkeeping: A Reader* (London: Facet Publishing, 2011), 37.

<sup>11</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, translated by E. Prenowitz (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 90. In addition to Derrida’s articulations of the archive, the formulations of Michel Foucault have also contributed much to the fervour and debates around archives. See Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972). There is also earlier work on the concept of the archive in which Walter Benjamin preceded Foucault and Derrida in terms of critically thinking about the archive. See Walter Benjamin, ‘Theses on the Philosophy of History’ in Stephen E. Bronner (ed), *Critical Theory and Society: A Reader* (New York: Routledge, 1989), 257.

the archive has become contested territory which, in turn, has made archivists feel uneasy about the academic disciplines' advance into the field of archives.

The physical manifestation of archives as places of storage and preservation, where physical, documentary, visual, oral, virtual or material fragments of the past are kept, has also become an intense source of contestation and debate as archives are shaped through acts of remembering and forgetting which, in turn, hinges on changing public and political discourses.<sup>12</sup> In examining the configuration of an archive, this dissertation will ask questions about when and how records of human activity become archival collections. Do records become archives when they have crossed over the archival threshold, and have been subjected to the archival functions of appraisal, selection, description and preservation? In order to address these questions, this dissertation will show, through a study of the cultural history and political life of the IDAF archival collection, that the concepts of 'archive' and 'archives' encompass so much more, particularly when framed within a metaphorical and philosophical milieu.

The UWC Robben Island Mayibuye Archives is home to the IDAF archival collection which forms the core collection and is the largest single collection at the archive. Founded in the late 1950s by Canon John Collins of St Paul's Cathedral in London in response to the treason trial that saw Albert Luthuli and 155 other political leaders on trial for treason, IDAF provided financial aid for the legal costs incurred, as well as for the assistance of the dependents of the trialists. Despite its banning in 1966, the organisation continued its work by acting as a conduit for governments, organisations and individuals, through which they could

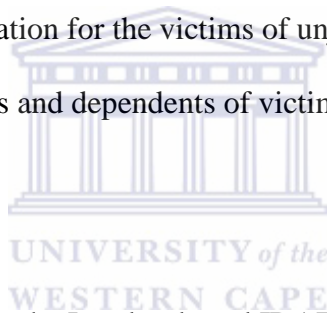
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<sup>12</sup> Carolyn Hamilton, 'Why Archive Matters' in Xolela Mangcu (ed), *Becoming Worthy Ancestors: Archive, Public Deliberation and Identity in South Africa* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2011), 121.



channel monetary donations as a way to alleviate the suffering of the victims of the apartheid regime.

IDAF thus conducted critical work in the struggle for liberation in South Africa, by providing support to the liberation movement through their legal and welfare assistance programmes. But equally significant was IDAF's work in highlighting the oppressive machinery of the apartheid government through the vigorous deployment of their research, information and publications programmes. This work was geared towards creating awareness of the brutal conditions of apartheid and countering the propaganda campaigns of the apartheid government. This work was in keeping with the three objectives of IDAF, which were to provide aid, defence and rehabilitation for the victims of unjust legislation and oppressive procedures, to support the families and dependents of victims and lastly, to keep the conscience of the world alive.<sup>13</sup>



During its thirty-five year lifespan, the London-based IDAF generated a vast administrative record of its activities that was essentially constituted in secret. With the impending end of statutory apartheid which saw the unbanning of political and solidarity organisations in 1990, F.W. de Klerk announced the release of Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners in a historic speech at the opening of parliament.<sup>14</sup> Amongst other political developments following this, it was decided to close down the operations of IDAF. This raised necessary questions of what needed to be done with the accumulated records of IDAF's activities. A decision was made to relocate these to the Mayibuye Centre for History and Culture at UWC,

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<sup>13</sup> 'IDAF Constitution' in IDAF Collection, MCH 31, Box 639, IDAF Constitution, correspondence, and publications, Historical Papers (UWC Robben Island Mayibuye Archives, Bellville).

<sup>14</sup> Frederik W. de Klerk, Speech at opening of Parliament, 2 February 1990, Available at <https://www.nelsonmandela.org/omalley/index.php/site/q/031v02039/041v02103/051v02104/061v02105.htm>, Accessed on 5 October 2015.

in part because of the university's reputation as 'the intellectual home of the left.'<sup>15</sup> The IDAF archival collection was, thus, construed as the 'hidden, exiled or counter archive' that offered a 'sliver' of the history of the struggle for liberation in South Africa.<sup>16</sup>

As a result of the pioneering work of the Mayibuye Centre as a leading cultural and historical institution in the advancement of heritage and museum transformation and in the development of heritage policies, a recommendation was made by the Cabinet of the Government of National Unity in 1996 that the IDAF/Mayibuye records should be incorporated into the newly formed Robben Island Museum (RIM).<sup>17</sup> After lengthy negotiations, and as part of a comprehensive memorandum of agreement between RIM and UWC, the recommendation to incorporate the IDAF/Mayibuye records into RIM was implemented in 2000. This incorporation was formalised in 2001 with the Mayibuye Centre being renamed the UWC-Robben Island Mayibuye Archives. These events were preceded by the creation of the Robben Island Museum itself as the first national museum in the new South Africa, which also incorporated some features of the Mayibuye Centre, the heritage transformation engine that conceived it. The dynamics of the negotiations over the archives that were left were complex and gave rise to an ambiguous agreement, especially around issues of the ownership and management of the archive. This is a complex set of issues that this dissertation will engage with in more detail.

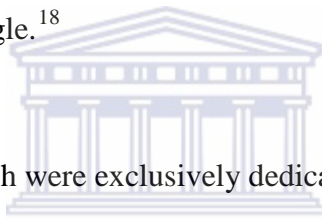
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<sup>15</sup> Barry Feinberg, *Time to Tell: An activist's story* (Newtown: STE Publishers, 2009), 133; Also see Ciraj Rassool, 'Full Circle: Concerning UWC's academic value' in Premesh Lalu and Noeleen Murray (eds), *Becoming UWC: Reflections, pathways and unmaking apartheid's legacy* (Bellville: Centre for Humanities Research, 2012), 92.

<sup>16</sup> Verne Harris, *Exploring Archives: An Introduction to the Archival Ideas and Practice in South Africa* (Pretoria: National Archives of South Africa, 2000), 11; Verne Harris, 'The Archival Sliver: Power, Memory and Archives in South Africa', *Archival Science* 2 (2002), 65.

<sup>17</sup> 'Media Statement by the Minister of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology, Mr. Lionel Mtshali dated 4 September 1996 regarding the Future Management and Development of Robben Island' in Robben Island and Gateway, Box 35 (UWC Archives, Bellville).

Described by some as a treasure trove, the IDAF archival collection narrates poignant stories of detention, trials, imprisonment, exile, suffering and activism of individuals and families during apartheid and the struggle for liberation. Yet, the archival collection, for the most part, has remained largely unexplored since it was deposited in the Mayibuye Centre in 1991. Indeed, it was to some extent cast in the shadows of South African historiography, and there it has continued to remain. The two exceptions were Denis Herbstein's book *White Lies* (2004) in which he explored the contribution of IDAF as a solidarity organisation to the liberation struggle and Al Cook's chapter in *The Road to Democracy in South Africa* series, entitled 'The International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa'. In a similar vein to Herbstein, Cook also reflected on the contributions and challenges of IDAF in their provision of support for the liberation struggle.<sup>18</sup>



In addition to these accounts which were exclusively dedicated to providing a somewhat triumphalist history of IDAF, references to IDAF's work in the liberation struggle can also be found in the autobiographies of various anti-apartheid activists who were either connected in some way to IDAF or worked for the organisation.<sup>19</sup> Notwithstanding this scant literature regarding the work of IDAF in the liberation struggle, according to Denis Herbstein, it is almost as if "IDAF has been airbrushed out of the liberation script."<sup>20</sup> Herbstein further argued that this glaring omission of the role that IDAF played in the liberation struggle has

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<sup>18</sup> See Denis Herbstein, *White Lies: Canon Collins and the secret war against apartheid* (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2004); Al Cook, 'The International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa, or IDAF,' in *The Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 3, International Solidarity, Part I* (Pretoria: South African Democracy and Education Trust and Unisa Press, 2008); In addition to these histories that have been produced about IDAF's work, two documentary films have also been made regarding IDAF's role in the liberation struggle. See Boris Ersson (directed), *Secret Mission South Africa: The Secret Agent* (1995); Paul Yule (directed), *White Lies* (1994).

<sup>19</sup> See for example, Rica Hodgson, *Foot Soldier for Freedom: A Life in South Africa's Liberation Movement* (Johannesburg: Picador Africa, 2010); Barry Feinberg, *Time to Tell: An activist's story* (Newtown: STE Publishers, 2009) and Diana Collins, *Partners in Protest: Life with Canon Collins* (London: Gollancz, 1992).

<sup>20</sup> Herbstein, *White Lies*, 327.

been exemplified in autobiographies and biographies that have been written subsequently, as well as published histories on the struggle for liberation.<sup>21</sup>

Apart from the focus on the history of IDAF as an organisation, there has also been a brief exploration of the IDAF archival collection through an emphasis on the evidentiary material that the collection can potentially yield. By focusing on the personal letters from IDAF's welfare assistance programme that was written primarily by women, Margaret Lenta argued that these letters offered a narrative of domestic heroism and in this way, gave more nuance to a history that often depicted men as the main protagonists in the liberation story. Arguing for a shift in the way history is written, Lenta drew on excerpts from the letters as a means of casting light on the suffering and everyday experiences that women and families, in particular, had to endure under apartheid.<sup>22</sup> In addition to Lenta's brief exploration of the letters from the welfare assistance programme, preliminary research by Helena Pohlandt-McCormick on the welfare programme has also opened up ways in which these letters could, potentially, add more complex and nuanced readings and interpretations.<sup>23</sup>

Besides this research, there have also been studies which have focused very briefly on the historical development of the Mayibuye Archives. In his doctoral dissertation, Ciraj Rassool briefly explored the genesis of the Mayibuye Centre through a focus on the biographical mediations that IDAF produced on key liberation struggle figures such Nelson Mandela.

These biographical mediations were inherited by the Mayibuye Centre when IDAF closed

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<sup>21</sup> Herbstein, *White Lies*, 327; See for example Nelson Mandela, *Long walk to freedom* (London: Little, Brown, 1994); M. Meredith, *A true gentleman: Nelson Mandela, A Biography* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1997); A. Sampson, *The long walk to freedom of Nelson Mandela* (London: Random House, 2000).

<sup>22</sup> Margaret Lenta, 'History effaced: the International Defence and Aid Letters' in *Social Dynamics*, 34:2, (2008), 203-215.

<sup>23</sup> Helena Pohlandt-McCormick, 'Taking Risks in the Post-Colonial Archive: Towards a Postcolonial Thinking of the Archive', Unpublished seminar paper presented at the South African Contemporary History and Humanities Seminar, Centre for Humanities Research, University of the Western Cape (16 April 2013) (Work in progress).

and later became part of RIM.<sup>24</sup> Other studies connected to the IDAF archival collection and the Mayibuye Archives have taken a more collections management approach as a result of their grounding in information science. Consequently, these studies were primarily concerned with the technical, operational and organisational challenges that the Mayibuye Archives faced especially with regard to issues around the access, preservation, relations and the digitisation of archival material.<sup>25</sup>

Despite these attempts at rendering IDAF more visible within the liberation struggle narrative, there remains a lack of understanding and knowledge around the critical support work that IDAF conducted in the liberation struggle. Less is even known about this particular collection and the genesis of how the support work of IDAF became an archival collection lodged at the Mayibuye Archives or even about the history of the Mayibuye Archives itself. In fact, more than two decades after its entry into the Mayibuye Centre, the IDAF archival collection lay in a state of suspended obscurity, in a sense forgotten, where it seemed to be symbolically interred in the basement of the UWC Library. This state of the IDAF collection is ironic, given that it was once deemed historically important and symbolic, as was exemplified by the political debates and contestations around its repatriation and placement at UWC in the early 1990s. Moreover, partly because of its highly affective content and in the way that it offered the possibility for various nuanced and textured narrations, it has also provided the possibility to challenge the dominant narratives of the liberation struggle.

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<sup>24</sup> Ciraj Rassool, 'The Individual, Auto/Biography and History in South Africa', Unpublished Ph.D Dissertation, (University of the Western Cape, Bellville, May 2004), 201-204; Also see Olusegun Morakinyo, A Historical and Conceptual Analysis of the African Programme in Museum and Heritage Studies (APMHS), 1997-2009' Unpublished Ph.D Dissertation, (University of the Western Cape, Bellville, 2011), 65-69.

<sup>25</sup> See Anthea Josias, 'Digitising photographic collections with special reference to the University of the Western Cape-Robben Island Museum Mayibuye photographic archive', Unpublished Master's thesis (University of the Western Cape, Bellville, 2000); Stephen Anderson, 'The Challenges of Digitising Heritage Collections in South Africa: A Case Study', Unpublished Master's thesis, Information Studies, (University of the Western Cape, Bellville, 2013).

While there is a growing literature on the liberation struggle, especially on liberation movements in South Africa, there has been a dearth of knowledge around the historical development and cultural politics of liberation struggle archives. Only a few studies have understood the importance of charting the genealogy of liberation archives and have taken up this challenge in their research. Thozama April's doctoral dissertation serves as an example of one of these recent studies concerned with the making of liberation struggle archives.<sup>26</sup> Although April's study primarily focused on the intellectual contributions of Charlotte Maxeke to the struggle for liberation in South Africa, she critically sought to engage with the silences and omissions of liberation archives on certain aspects of the liberation struggle.

In particular, April interrogated the silence of the National Heritage and Cultural Studies Centre (NAHECS) at the University of Fort Hare (UFH) on Charlotte Maxeke by arguing that the practice of archiving and the politics of archiving were inextricably intertwined and critical in understanding the configuration of liberation struggle archives. Subsequent to April's study, Bavusile Maaba extensively explored the history and politics of the archives of the liberation movements such as the African National Congress (ANC), Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) and the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) in order to understand the challenges, tensions, contestations and debates that surrounded the configuration of NAHECS at UFH with the repatriation, cataloguing, preservation and accessibility of this material.<sup>27</sup>

Notwithstanding these studies which, in some ways, have addressed the gaps around the importance of understanding the history and politics of liberation archives, it is my contention that there is still insufficient knowledge around the assemblage and configuration of

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<sup>26</sup> See Thozama April, 'Theorising Women: The intellectual inputs of Charlotte Maxeke to the discourse of the Liberation Struggle in South Africa', Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, (University of the Western Cape, Bellville, 2012), 199-238

<sup>27</sup> See Bavusile Maaba, 'The History and Politics of Liberation Archives at Fort Hare', Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, (University of Cape Town, Cape Town, 2013).

liberation archives and the significant meanings they hold in post-apartheid South Africa. Framed within the conditions of uncertain social, economic and political times, it has never been more urgent to address questions around archives and the politics of archiving. In seeking to contribute to this debate but also more importantly, to unsettle dominant notions of 'liberation archives', the dissertation will ask critical questions about the conditions of making and remaking of liberation archives. It will do so by focusing particularly on the IDAF archival collection.

One of the concerns of the dissertation is to understand why the IDAF archival collection has remained in the shadows of South African historiography, receiving alarmingly little archival attention from both scholars and its host institution. We also need to understand the more disquieting issue of why the IDAF collection has been rendered almost invisible within nationalist discourses on the liberation struggle. While this might be because of the clandestine nature under which the material was constituted, I argue in this dissertation that this invisibility occurred because of the conditions of the post-apartheid setting that required a shift from a resistance to a reconciliation narrative. However, it seems that this transition also demanded the silencing of counter-narratives of the liberation struggle, and I argue that the IDAF archival collection potentially challenges the hegemonic narrative of political triumphalism and reconciliation.

It is thus imperative to understand the history of the making of the IDAF archival collection as it offers a productive possibility with which to rethink the archive. Also, through the countless personal reflections in the form of heart-rendering letters juxtaposed with official state documents such as charge sheets, court records and affidavits, financial records, minutes and publications amongst some of the material contained in the IDAF archival collection, it is

possible to construct an alternative narrative of the liberation struggle.<sup>28</sup> More than that, I argue that the IDAF records offer the possibility through which histories can be ‘recovered’ or told for the first time by focusing particularly on aspects of liberation support work and information dissemination that have been neglected in the dominant narrative of the liberation struggle past.

Crucially, it also allows us to engage the question of what constitutes a liberation archive in South Africa. While it is generally assumed that the IDAF archival collection and the Mayibuye archive forms part of the liberation archive, however as this study suggests, it is primarily the records of the liberation movements, mainly the ANC, PAC, United Democratic Front (UDF) and so forth that are properly considered as constituents of the liberation archive. This distinction between liberation archives and archives of the anti-apartheid movements is discussed more extensively in this dissertation.

By drawing on the existing work of scholars such as Ann Stoler, Ciraj Rassool, John Randolph, Helena Pohlandt-McCormick and Carolyn Hamilton on the significance of understanding the archive as an historical object itself, this study will provide for a more productive way of thinking about the constitution of the IDAF archival collection through the different cycles of its production until it finally attained archival status.<sup>29</sup> However, it is not

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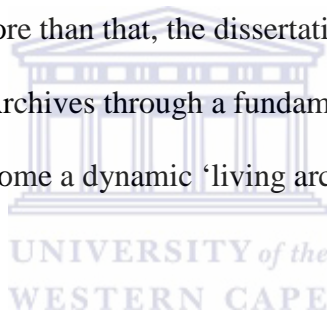
<sup>28</sup> Tom Nesmith, ‘Seeing Archives: Postmodernism and the Changing Intellectual Place of Archives’, *The American Archivist*, Vol. 65, No. 1 (2002), 41; Also see Joan M. Schwartz, ‘Having New Eyes: Spaces of Archives, Landscapes of Power’, *Archives & Social Studies: A Journal of Interdisciplinary Research*, Vol. 1 (March 2007), 362.

<sup>29</sup> See Ann L. Stoler, ‘Colonial Archives and the Arts of governance: On the Content in the Form’ in Carolyn Hamilton, Verne Harris, Michelle Pickover, Graeme Reid, Razia Saleh and Jane Taylor (eds), *Refiguring the Archive* (Cape Town: David Philip, 2002); Nicholas Dirks, ‘Colonial Histories and Native Informants: Biography of an Archive’ in Carol A. Breckinridge and Peter van der Veer (eds), *Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament: Perspectives on South Asia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993), 279-313; Antoinette Burton (ed), *Archive Stories: Facts, Fictions and the Writing of History* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2005). In this volume see Tony Ballantyne’s ‘Mr. Peal’s Archive’, 87-110; John Randolph’s chapter on the ‘Bakunin Family Archive’, 209-231 and Helena Pohlandt-McCormick’s chapter ‘In good hands: Researching the 1976 Soweto uprising in State Archives of South Africa’, 299-324;



only historians who give little biographical attention to the archives they work with. Whether still rooted to a nineteenth century positivist paradigm through which the work of the archivist is understood in Jenkinsonian terms as passive and invisible,<sup>30</sup> or because of administrative tasks and technical duties, it is glaringly obvious that save for a few archivists, the archival profession has been noticeably absent from scholarly, disciplinary and philosophical debates about archives.<sup>31</sup>

In rethinking archives, the dissertation argues that it is crucial for archivists to join the growing debate on the nature of archives and to become actively engaged in acts of knowledge production whereby they interrogate their work methodology and also investigate the history of archival objects. More than that, the dissertation argues for a reimagining of the UWC Robben Island Mayibuye Archives through a fundamental shift from its present ossified state in order for it to become a dynamic 'living archive' that produces knowledge as much as it preserves knowledge.



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Uma Dhupelia-Mesthrie, 'The Form, the Permit and the Photograph: An Archive of Mobility between South Africa and India', *Journal of Asian and African Studies* (2011), Carolyn Hamilton, 'Backstory, Biography and the Life of the James Stuart Archive', *History in Africa*, Vol. 38 (2011); Ciraj Rassool, 'The Individual, Auto/Biography and History in South Africa', Unpublished Ph.D Dissertation, (University of the Western Cape, Bellville, May 2004).

<sup>30</sup> Sir Hilary Jenkinson, famously postulated the four qualities of the archive which is: impartiality; authenticity; naturalness and interrelationship. Considered to be one of the classic thinkers on archival theory during the early twentieth century (however contested his theory might be), Jenkinson proposed a methodology which saw archives as "simply written memorials authenticated by the fact of their official preservation" in which "The Archivist's career is one of service", devoted to being a voiceless and invisible servant and custodian. See Hilary Jenkinson, *A Manual of Archive Administration* (London: Percy Lund, Humphries and Co Ltd, 1937), 12; Also see John H. Hodson, *The Administration of Archives* (Oxford: Pergamon Press Ltd., 1972), 3; Terry Cook, 'What Past is Prologue: A history of archival ideas since 1898 and the future paradigm shift', *Archivaria* 43 (1997), 23.

<sup>31</sup> See Terry Cook, 'The Archive(s) is a Foreign Country: Historians, Archivists, and the changing archival landscape', *The Canadian Historical Review*, Vol. 90, No. 3 (September 2009), 497-534; Joan M. Schwartz, 'Having New Eyes: Spaces of Archives, Landscapes of Power', *Archives & Social Studies: A Journal of Interdisciplinary Research*, Vol. 1 (March 2007), 326; Joan M. Schwartz and Terry Cook, 'Archives, Records and Power: The Making of Modern Memory', *Archival Science* 2 (2002); Barbara L. Craig, 'Outward visions, inward glance: Archives history and professional identity', *Archival Issues*, Vol. 17, No. 2 (1992); Tom Nesmith, 'Seeing Archives: Postmodernism and the Changing Intellectual Place of Archives', *The American Archivist*, Vol. 65, No. 1 (2002); Tom Nesmith, 'Archives From the Bottom Up: Social History and Archival Scholarship', *Archives & Social Studies: A Journal of Interdisciplinary Research*, Vol. 2, no. 1 (March 2008).

The dissertation is composed of six chapters. Chapter One introduces a number of key historical, theoretical and critical debates regarding the archive/archives. The departure point of this chapter is to firstly engage with the selected works of scholars such as Foucault and Derrida's articulations of the archive as it may be productive in reconceptualising the archive. In addition to Foucault and Derrida's theories on the archive, there has been a steady proliferation of literature around the nature of archives, its functions and its work. This has formed part of a wider interdisciplinary debate among scholars and now also increasingly amongst archival professionals.

With the recent sustained interest in archives from especially outside the archive from various disciplines, this chapter will, crucially, reflect on the intellectual history of archival thought over the last century by engaging with the classical texts on archival theory by thinkers such as Jenkinson and Schellenberg who shaped much of contemporary archival thinking. Drawing on this body of work that has been produced on the archive, this chapter will work towards a reimagining of the archive by arguing for a deeper philosophical understanding of the archive and an appreciation of the epistemological meanings the archive holds. The chapter will conclude by underlining the importance of an interdisciplinary conversation between archivists and scholars regarding the philosophical and practical underpinnings of the archive, an important debate which is yet to start.

Chapter Two argues that one of the ways in which the archive can be refigured is through a fundamental paradigm shift of the way in which archivists approach their work in archives. By focusing on my own engagement with the archive, both as the archivist working with the IDAF archival collection and as a researcher studying its records, this chapter seeks to bring to light the possibilities, challenges and limitations that frame this sometimes complex engagement. As a way of negotiating the somewhat tenuous relationship between the

archivist and historian, one of the aims of the dissertation is to argue that archivists and scholars should become more self-aware of the mediation that takes place within archives as this will create a better understanding of the archival processes that records are subject to. More importantly, this chapter calls upon on archivists to abandon their antiquarian approach to the archive and instead become researchers actively involved in knowledge production and activists of social justice.

Chapter Three is concerned with the configuration of liberation archives in South Africa. By focusing on the way in which these archives have been deployed and for which purposes, this chapter will attempt to examine the challenges and limitations that frame liberation archives and shape our understanding of them. Through a brief analysis of the configuration of other liberation archives in relation to the UWC Robben Island Mayibuye Archives, the chapter, importantly, makes an argument for the interrogation of the notion of liberation archives in post-apartheid South Africa. It also seeks to address critical questions of the role of liberation archives in the transition to democracy, in the making of a new nation and in sustaining this narrative of reconciliation and triumph.

Chapter Four provides a history of IDAF as a solidarity organisation in support of the struggle against apartheid in South Africa. The chapter traces the formation of IDAF from its early beginnings of support work in the 1950s right up until its subsequent banning in 1966 and its continued clandestine operations in London through their legal and welfare programmes but also more importantly, through IDAF's information and publications programme. Perhaps an unintended consequence of the secretive nature of its work is that IDAF, now in the form of an archive, has continued to be shrouded in mystery. This chapter also argues that there is a lack of understanding of the history of IDAF because the story of

IDAF sits uncomfortably in relation to the grand struggle narrative of individual heroism.

One of the ways of addressing this lack of understanding is to discuss the conditions which later enabled the assemblage of the IDAF archival collection.

Following from the previous chapter in which the cultural history and political life of IDAF as a solidarity organization is provided, Chapter Five traces the making of the IDAF archival collection by looking at the process in which the IDAF administrative records became an archive. The chapter seeks to uncover the mechanisms and dynamics that caused them to be transformed into archival documents and, more specifically, the meanings that were produced as the records were moved from exile to the post-apartheid milieu of political transformation, and as they moved from concealment to freedom. As part of constructing a cultural history and political life of the IDAF archival collection, and in an attempt to understand the relative invisibility of these records in its new setting, I argue that with their repatriation from London to Cape Town, these records consequently became entombed and memorialised in a nation-building project about heritage and the politics of legacy making.

Chapter Six explores the process through which the support work of IDAF came to stand as a largely forgotten and passive memorial to the liberation struggle. In an attempt to understand the process through which the UWC Robben Island Mayibuye Archives have seemingly been reduced to a burial ground of cultural and political material, especially after its incorporation into RIM, I argue that archive's incorporation into the Robben Island Museum gave rise to a problematic set of challenges which have continued to haunt the archive well into the present.

This chapter will argue that in this moment of incorporation, the records of IDAF became memorialised, which rendered them passive and in a sense, trapped within a national museum

whose focus is on espousing a triumphalist narrative of the liberation struggle. Although this chapter argues that the pioneering work of the Mayibuye Centre was laid to rest and consigned to the silences and the amnesic labyrinths of the archive, I want to make an argument for the reconstitution and reactivation of the Mayibuye archives through the deployment of research, activist and cultural work that would build on that done in the old Mayibuye Centre.

The dissertation ends with a concluding summary in which I hope to set the tone for further debate and dialogue by drawing on my own research experiences as an archivist and as a researcher. While practicing as an archivist has given me certain insights into the workings of archives, these insights have not made it easier to write a dissertation about a collection for which I feel a deep affinity to. In arguing for a reimagining of the UWC Robben Island Mayibuye Archives, in which I admit to my own deeply entrenched desire to see the Mayibuye Archives rejuvenated, I make a case for a deeper philosophical engagement with archives as privileged sites of knowledge, memory and contestation.

## CHAPTER ONE

### THE AURA OF ARCHIVES: INNOCUOUS CHARMS, FEVERS AND AFFLICTIONS

The archive is an excess of meaning, where the reader experiences beauty, amazement, and a certain affective tremor. The location will be secret, different for each person, but, in every itinerary, there will be encounters that will facilitate access to this secret place, and most of all to its expression.<sup>32</sup>

Set against a background of epistemological uncertainty and the ever shifting sands of political, social and cultural landscapes on a global level, there is an urgent need to raise questions around archives as a mode of thinking, singular archival collections, and the practices of archiving. The relationship between archivists and researchers with archives also needs to be addressed by exploring the challenges and possibilities facing archives, especially in post-apartheid South Africa. Engaging with the many predicaments of archives may prove to be difficult, but it is painfully necessary, especially with issues of neglect and apathy haunting arts and culture projects at the turn of the twenty-first century. In fact, the time is long overdue for a critical engagement about the relationships between the archives, the state and public and academic discourses.<sup>33</sup>

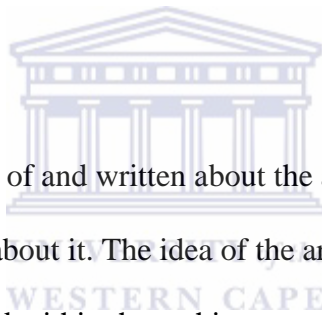
As a way of making a foray into this conversation, one of the central tenets of this dissertation is to propose a way of rethinking one particular archive through exploring the cultural history and political life of the IDAF archival collection and locating it within a broader set of critical debates that speak to questions of theory and practice, of the personal

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<sup>32</sup> Arlette Farge, *The Allure of the Archives*, translated by T. Scott-Railton (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2013), 31.

<sup>33</sup> 'State of the Archives: An analysis of South Africa's national archival system', 2014 prepared by Archival Platform (2015), Available at [http://www.archivalplatform.org/images/resources/State\\_of\\_the\\_Archive\\_FOR\\_WEB.pdf](http://www.archivalplatform.org/images/resources/State_of_the_Archive_FOR_WEB.pdf), Accessed 27 May 2015.

and political and of memory and forgetting. Thus, in refiguring or reimagining this particular archive, and in a critical historical analysis of what it might mean to trace the genealogy of an archive, part of the argument of this dissertation is that in order to better understand the archive, we need to probe or interrogate the complex meanings of the archive both in the physical world and as an expression of the internal psyche.<sup>34</sup> If archives are to remain relevant in an age of significant socio-economic, political and technological changes, scholars and archivists need to dig deeper in order “to see the elastic, inexact character of truth, and symbolic interpretation rather than literalism that allows us to err, to change, [and] to adapt.”<sup>35</sup> For this shift to occur, this chapter will work towards a reimagining of the archive by arguing for a deeper philosophical understanding of the archive and the epistemological meanings the archive holds.



Much has been imagined, thought of and written about the archive. Still, there remains much more to be imagined and written about it. The idea of the archive has become quite a contested concept both outside and within the archive as can be seen from ongoing debates percolating within academic discourses and among archivists about the archive as an institution or as a mode of thinking and a way of knowing. These debates will be explored in this chapter and throughout the dissertation. But how does one understand what the archive is and what it does and the inherent meanings it holds?

More specifically, how does one start to think towards a reimagining of the archive that both encapsulates a philosophy of the archive and the practices of the archival endeavour while at the same time, moving beyond this prescriptive empirical framework? In trying to think

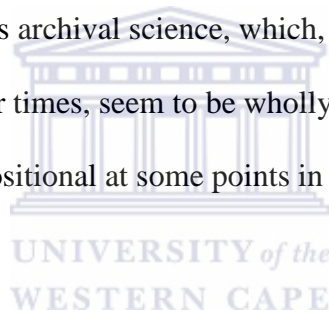
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<sup>34</sup> Brien Brothman, Review of Jacques Derrida ‘*Archive Fever: a Freudian Impression*’, translated by E. Prenowitz, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1995, *Archivaria* 43, (1996), 191-192.

<sup>35</sup> Hugh Taylor, quoted in Terry Cook and Graham Dodds (eds), *Imagining Archives: Essays and Reflections by Hugh Taylor* (Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2003), 15.

through the question of the archive, and through the exploration of diverse theoretical and practical formulations of the archive by scholars and archivists, this chapter will build an argument that archives should be recognised as “an intellectual discipline based on the philosophical study of ideas, not [just] an empirical discipline based on the scientific study of fact.”<sup>36</sup>

As a way of foregrounding a hopefully vigorous dialogue between scholars and archivists that is yet to start, perhaps it is pertinent to distinguish that this chapter will discuss two distinct genres of writing about the archive. Here, I am referring to the theoretical formulations of the archive juxtaposed with archival principles and practices of record-keeping or what became known as archival science, which, at times, may have suggestive points of intersection and, at other times, seem to be wholly disjointed. Though theory and practice will be discussed as oppositional at some points in the chapter, there are also several points of intersection.



Writing about the perceived dichotomy between theory and practice, Terry Cook and Joan Schwartz argued that, “[t]hese twins - theory and practice - should not be viewed as archival polarities.”<sup>37</sup> They further argued that, “[t]heory, then, is the complement to practice, not its opposite. Theory and practice should cross-fertilize each other in the theatre of archives, rather than one being derivative of, or dependent on, the other.”<sup>38</sup> Following Cook and Schwartz’s argument, I would argue that theory and practice should become integrated aspects of the work of the archivist, as a means in which to understand the deeper contextual meanings of the archive. I would further argue that in imagining a different future for the

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<sup>36</sup> Taylor, quoted in *Imagining Archives*, 19.

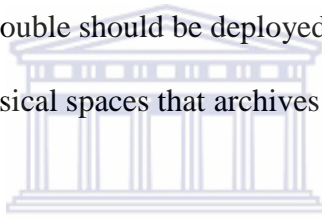
<sup>37</sup> Terry Cook and Joan M. Schwartz, ‘Archives, Records and Power: From (Postmodern) Theory to (Archival) Performance’, *Archival Science* 2 (2002), 181.

<sup>38</sup> Cook and Schwartz, ‘Archives, Records and Power’, 181.



archive, it is absolutely necessary that theory and practice should not be regarded as opposites but as complementary to each other.

Archives are troubled, and the trouble of the archives, as perceived by Jacques Derrida, lies “at the unstable limit between public and private, between the family, the society, and the State, between the family and an intimacy even more private than the family, between oneself and oneself.”<sup>39</sup> Verne Harris reiterated Derrida’s argument by meaningfully noting, “[t]he trouble with archives is that the word ‘archives’ – and the concept archived in the word – means different things to different people. Even people calling themselves archivists seem unable to agree on what archives are and are not.”<sup>40</sup> But perhaps it is not so much that this trouble is troubling. Instead this trouble should be deployed to unsettle and problematise the metaphorical, intellectual and physical spaces that archives seem to inhabit so trouble free.



We know that archives are complex and troubled spaces as they are precariously suspended between the private, the public, the personal and the political. Despite these challenges, archives remain paradoxically alluring. It has enticed some scholars and a growing number of archivists to critically think about its philosophy, history, politics and poetics that have initiated an interdisciplinary conversation, especially among scholars. In the last few decades alone, there has been a discernible awareness around archives in the form of very creative and diverse theoretical formulations of the archive which have emerged from across various disciplines in the humanities and the social sciences.<sup>41</sup> This interdisciplinary debate outside

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<sup>39</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, translated by E. Prenowitz (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 90.

<sup>40</sup> Verne Harris, 'Genres of the trace: Memory, Archives and Trouble', *Archives and Manuscripts*, Vol. 4: 3 (2012), 147-157.

<sup>41</sup> For critical discussions on the archive see Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Translated by A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972); Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, translated by E. Prenowitz (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1995); Carolyn Steedman, *Dust: The Archive and Cultural History* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2002); Thomas

the archive has, in some ways, contributed much to the knowledge around archives but has also revealed several limitations in the exploration of the archival discourse across the disciplines. In a rethinking of the archive and as a way of addressing these limitations, it is of critical importance that a nuanced understanding of the practices, history and theory is cultivated not only by scholars across the various disciplines, but also by those in the archival profession especially with regard to the dis/juncture between archival theory and practice.

In his essay, 'The Archive and the Human Sciences: Notes towards a theory of the archive', written in 1998, political theorist, Irving Velody asserted that "[a] science of the archive must then include a theory of its institutionalisation."<sup>42</sup> I would argue that an intellectual history of archives would thus not only improve the praxis of archivists but may be very productive in nurturing a more nuanced approach to the ethical, practical and political intricacies that shape the record as it is framed within the power/knowledge paradigm of the metaphorical archive or the material archive. In wrestling with the meaning of the archive, historians, literary critics, philosophers, political scientists and archivists, amongst others, have to find a way of engaging in a shared yet self-reflexive dialogue in order to "understand better the very ideas and assumptions about archives that have shaped their ethos, their concepts, their institutions, their collections, and their practices ...."<sup>43</sup>

### ***The lure of the archive***

In her reflections as a researcher in the archive, Harriet Bradley emotively pointed to the philosophical nature of the archive, in which she evocatively asserted:

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Richards, *The Imperial Archive: Knowledge and the Fantasy of Empire* (London and New York: Verso, 1993); Thomas Osborne, "The ordinariness of the archive", *History of the Human Sciences* 12:2 (May 1999).

<sup>42</sup> Irving Velody, 'The Archive and the Human Sciences: Notes towards a Theory of the Archive', *History of the Human Sciences*, Vol. 11: 4 (November 1998), 2.

<sup>43</sup> Terry Cook, 'The Archive(s) is a Foreign Country: Historians, archivists and the changing archival landscape', *The Canadian Historical Review*, Vol. 90: 3 (September 2009), 524.

Even in an age of postmodern scepticism the archive continues to hold its alluring seductions and intoxications. There is the promise (or illusion?) that all time lost can become time regained. In the archive, there lingers an assurance of concreteness, objectivity, recovery and wholeness. Caught up in the heady and powerful atmosphere of scholarship and professionalism we enter the rose garden, hearing the ‘hidden laughter of children’ in the leaves of the apple-tree. But as Eliot knew, we may only find that which we bring with us. In the end, what we hear is not, perhaps, the lost alterity; above all, what we find in the archive is ourselves.<sup>44</sup>

In stirring terms, through her reference to T.S. Eliot’s “Burnt Norton”<sup>45</sup> in which he affectingly spoke about the elusiveness of time, Bradley alluded to the elusive and mysterious nature of the archive as it enthrals, seduces and intoxicates those who enter its cloistered sanctum. Reference to the archive evokes images of a dusty, dark, forbidden and mysterious place filled with insurmountable mountains of material stacked from floor to ceiling with a forlorn archivist diligently sieving through faded, disintegrating yellow stained records. Despite this romantic imagery, the archive has become increasingly central both to scholarly research and to the existence of a democratic society. Velody reiterated this by arguing, “[a]s the backdrop to all scholarly research, stands the archive. Appeals to ultimate truth, adequacy and plausibility in the work of the humanities and social sciences rest on archival presuppositions.”<sup>46</sup>

Echoing this sentiment, Thomas Osborne argued that there is a family of disciplines that surround the archive rather than just history or the historiographical disciplines.<sup>47</sup> Drawing on Michel Foucault’s argument that clinical medicine is a discipline that is central to the epistemological structure of all the so-called human sciences, Osborne argued that the archive

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<sup>44</sup> Harriet Bradley, ‘The seductions of the archive: Voices lost and found’, *History of the Human Sciences*, Vol. 12:2 (May 1999), 119.

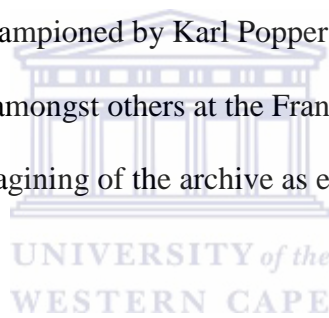
<sup>45</sup> See the introduction for part of the first quartet of T.S. Eliot’s poem, “Burnt Norton”.

<sup>46</sup> Velody, ‘The Archive and the Human Sciences’, 1.

<sup>47</sup> See Thomas Osborne, ‘The ordinariness of the archive’, *History of the Human Sciences*, Vol. 12: 2 (May 1999), 58.

is central to the humanities. Ever since the innovations made by August Comte, Jules Michelet and Leopold von Ranke which focused on transforming the archive into a site of historical knowledge production, archival research has, in effect, provided the foundation for research in the humanities.<sup>48</sup>

Though their approach to archival research was rooted in nineteenth century positivism and empiricism in an attempt to mirror the prevailing methodology of the natural sciences, they did much to advance the idea of exploring the archive as a site in which to pursue historical research, albeit based on the positivist modes of enquiry emphasising truth, evidence and authenticity. It was only at the turn of the twentieth century that this positivist and empiricist approach to historical research championed by Karl Popper and the Vienna Circle was challenged by Theodore Adorno amongst others at the Frankfurt School in particular. Despite this challenge, the recalcitrant imagining of the archive as evidentiary, objective and authentic has remained.



In her meditative reflections of doing research in the police archives held at the Library of the Arsenal in Paris, Arlette Farge has offered a way in which to understand the allure of archives. Farge beautifully articulated that, “[t]he taste for the archive is rooted in these encounters with the silhouettes of the past, be they faltering or sublime. There is an obscure beauty in so many existences barely illuminated by words, in confrontation with each other, imprisoned by their own devices as much as they were undone by their era.”<sup>49</sup> Despite the deceptive beauty of the archives in the way in which they can ensnare and grip hold of the

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<sup>48</sup> See Helen Freshwater, ‘The Allure of the Archive’, *Poetics Today*, Vol. 24: 4 (2003), 730; also see Francis X. Blouin and William G. Rosenberg (eds), *Processing the Past: Contesting authority in history and the archives* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 23-28.

<sup>49</sup> Arlette Farge, *The Allure of the Archives*, translated by T. Scott-Railton (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2013), 46.

lone researcher, archival research becomes an obsession that captivates the historian with promises of untold discoveries, fragmented as they are.

Farge also argued that doing research in archives sometimes “gives rise to the naïve but profound feeling of tearing away a veil, of crossing through the opaqueness of knowledge and, as if after a long and uncertain voyage, finally gaining access to the essence of beings and things.”<sup>50</sup> In her exploration of the police archives, Farge described the materiality of the archive to the reader through an account of her sensorial experiences of touching, seeing, smelling and feeling the records that would be placed in front of her. This is the allure of the archives that may entice historians to forget about the snares of archival research. Through her evocative description of doing research in the archives in which she engaged with the material nature of the archives, Farge suggested that the materiality of archives might be tied to the reason for the lingering image of the archives as truthful and impartial.<sup>51</sup> However, Farge emphasised that the aim of archival research is not “to unearth some buried treasure, but for the historian to use the archives as a vantage point from which she can bring to light new forms of knowledge ....”<sup>52</sup>

Harriet Bradley has also recognised that part of the thrill of doing archival research for the historian is that it is considered a rite of initiation into the profession.<sup>53</sup> Apart from being filled with potential exhilarating discoveries and intimate pleasures where archives quite literally entrance and bewitch those who wander there through its haunting temporality, Bradley went on to suggest that archives, perhaps, may even hold the promise (even if

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<sup>50</sup> Farge, *The Allure of the Archives*, 8.

<sup>51</sup> Farge, *The Allure of the Archives*, 4- 71.

<sup>52</sup> Farge, *The Allure of the Archives*, 54.

<sup>53</sup> Bradley, ‘The seductions of the archive’, 110; Also see Farge, *The Allure of the Archives*.

imaginary) of one finding oneself. She argued that, “[t]hrough the archive we strive to recover what we have lost, and to relive the lost past by retelling its stories.”<sup>54</sup>

And just perhaps it is in this sometimes frenetic pursuit of the archive to find this lost object, or in essence, to find ourselves, that we are overcome by what Derrida has termed ‘archive fever’ or have fallen under the spell of the archive. For Derrida, this is “the archive fever or disorder we are experiencing today, concerning its lightest symptoms or the great holocaustic tragedies of our modern history and historiography: concerning all the detestable revisionisms as well as the most legitimate, necessary and courageous rewritings of history.”<sup>55</sup>

Derrida further noted that an awareness of historical indeterminacy lies at the heart of this archive fever which compels us to persistently return to the archive as a source of knowledge. Put simply, “[w]e are *en mal d’archive*: in need of archives.”<sup>56</sup> More than this, according to Derrida we also burn for them. In trying to understand this need or desire to archive and for the archive, as it both tantalises and torments, it is worth remembering Derrida’s words in which he argued that “nothing is less reliable, nothing is less clear today than the word archive.”<sup>57</sup> Yet, we continue to be obsessed by the seductive pleasures and fetishised qualities of the archive in our nostalgic yearnings to return to the past. Derrida poignantly described this desire by saying:

It is to burn with a passion. It is never to rest, interminably, from searching for the archive right where it slips away. It is to run after the archive.... It is to have a compulsive, repetitive, and nostalgic desire for the archive, an irrepressible desire to return to the origin, a

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<sup>54</sup> Bradley, ‘The seductions of the archive’, 109.

<sup>55</sup> Derrida, *Archive Fever*, 90.

<sup>56</sup> Derrida, *Archive Fever*, 91.

<sup>57</sup> Derrida, *Archive Fever*, 90.

homesickness, a nostalgia for the return to the most archaic place of absolute commencement.<sup>58</sup>

Ironically, these fragments or remnants of the past only ever provide a “temporary satiation of the quest for full identity and narcissistic unity.”<sup>59</sup> Within a similar vein as Derrida, Helen Freshwater has argued that the allure of the archive can be tied to the seeming “promise [of] the recovery of lost time, the possibility of being reunited with the lost past, and the fulfilment of our deepest desires for wholeness and completion.”<sup>60</sup> Derrida and scholars such as Freshwater and Bradley have compellingly argued that the fascination of archives lies at the heart of the nostalgic yet impossible search for the lost object, as the recovery of lost time will never be realised, and the lost object will never be found.<sup>61</sup>

Drawing on Jean Laplanche, Helen Freshwater argued that “[w]hat we are searching for in the archive, as in psychoanalysis, is, in fact, a lost object.”<sup>62</sup> She went on to say that “[t]he narrative of the past event or evidence will have been transformed by our research in much the same way as the processes of displacement and repression alter the lost object.”<sup>63</sup> In the search for the lost object, what we potentially find in the archive is not just ourselves, but a substitute for the lost object that inevitably has been altered by our archival research.

Reflecting on her physical encounters with the archive, Carolyn Steedman perceptively remarked:

In the project of finding an identity through the processes of historical identification, the past is searched for something ... that confirms the searcher in his or her sense of self, confirms them as they want to be, and feel in some measure that they already are ... [but] the object has

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<sup>58</sup> Derrida, *Archive Fever*, 91.

<sup>59</sup> Freshwater, ‘The Allure of the Archive’, 738.

<sup>60</sup> Freshwater, ‘The Allure of the Archive’, 738.

<sup>61</sup> Freshwater, ‘The Allure of the Archive’, 745.

<sup>62</sup> Freshwater, ‘The Allure of the Archive’, 745.

<sup>63</sup> Freshwater, ‘The Allure of the Archive’, 745; Also see Jean Laplanche, *Life and Death in Psychoanalysis* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 1976), 19-20 and Carolyn Steedman, *Dust: The Archive and Cultural History* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 77.

been altered by the very search for it ... what has actually been lost can never be found. This not to say that *nothing* is found, but that thing is always something else.<sup>64</sup>

More than just searching for something in the past, Steedman argued that part of the allure of archives can be found in the physical phenomenology of archives as spaces.<sup>65</sup> Explaining her argument, Steedman deployed Gaston Bachelard's psychological study in which he explored the intimate spaces of people's lives with a specific focus on the house. In *The Poetics of Space*, Bachelard argued that:

In the theatre of the past that is constituted by memory ... we think we know ourselves in time, when all we know is a sequence of fixations in the spaces of the being's stability – a being who does not want to melt away, and who, even in the past, wants time to 'suspend' its flight. In its countless alveoli space contains compressed time. That is what space is for.<sup>66</sup>

According to Steedman, "[t]he Archive belongs to the kind of oneiric spaces that Bachelard described: alone in the Archive, in the counting house of dreams"<sup>67</sup> where the historian goes to be at home as well as to be alone.<sup>68</sup> For Steedman, this desire or fever for the archive is as much about wanting to know and have the past as it is about articulating a certain way of being in the world.

### ***Reimagining the Archive***

Apart from the archive's centrality to scholarly research, the archive also seems to be associated with power and control as archival records may also be used as instruments of power in the formation of the state through the silencing and suppression of records.

Paradoxically, the same records can also be empowering and liberating as they can hold the

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<sup>64</sup> Steedman, *Dust*, 77 (emphasis in the original).

<sup>65</sup> Steedman, *Dust*, 81.

<sup>66</sup> Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* (Boston: Beacon, 1958), 8.

<sup>67</sup> Steedman, *Dust*, 80.

<sup>68</sup> Steedman, *Dust*, 72.



state accountable if they contain evidence of oppression. Pointing to the decisive role that the archive plays in the formation and the subsequent safeguarding of the nation and the state, Jacques Derrida argued that, “[t]here is no political power without control of the archive, if not memory. Effective democratization can always be measured by this essential criterion: the participation in and access to the archive, its constitution, and its interpretation.”<sup>69</sup>

Drawing on Benedict Anderson’s concept of the nation as an ‘imagined community’, Richard Harvey Brown and Beth Davis-Brown made a similar argument regarding the centrality of the archive in the formation and creation of the nation.<sup>70</sup>

However, in reimagining the archive, the concept or the image of the archive has to take on new and diverse readings, meanings and forms as it stretches out over a vast terrain “tender[ing] promises of the preservation of primordiality and primariness, origin and source, authority and identity, intention and meaning, durability and permanence.”<sup>71</sup> In a paper presented at the 56<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the Society of American Archivists in 1992, Canadian archivist, Brien Brothman argued that the term ‘archive’ can refer both to an action or an object which can be translated into “the archive as edifice; the archive as text; the archive as record; the archive as institution; the archive as university; the archive as scene of dissimulation or manipulation; the archive as discourse; the archive as professional paradigm (knowledge).”<sup>72</sup>

Whereas Brothman touched more broadly on the diverse and often ambiguous meanings of the archive, another archivist, Eric Ketelaar considerably narrowed his understanding of what

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<sup>69</sup> Derrida, *Archive Fever*, 4, note 1.

<sup>70</sup> See Richard H. Brown and Beth Davis-Brown, ‘The making of memory: The politics of archives, libraries and museums in the construction of national consciousness’, *History of the Human Sciences*, Vol. 11: 4 (1998), 20.

<sup>71</sup> Brien Brothman, ‘The limits of limits: Derridean deconstruction and the archival institution’, *Archivaria* 26 (1993), 208.

<sup>72</sup> Brothman, ‘The limits of limits’, 208.

the archive is and what it does. Ketelaar argued that archives often resemble temples and prisons, both on an architectural and a procedural level. He noted, “[a]rchives resemble temples as institutions of surveillance and power architecturally, but they also function as such, because the panoptical archive disciplines and controls through knowledge-power.”<sup>73</sup>

Velody added to this argument by saying that the archive is perceived as a “well defined data-holding facility, somewhat like a penitentiary.”<sup>74</sup>

While Brothman and Ketelaar, amongst others, viewed the archive as a place, space, institution, information, knowledge or within the limits of Foucauldian discursivity,<sup>75</sup> there are also others who viewed the archive within a more metaphorical and philosophical sense.

Offering a more philosophical understanding of the archive, Verne Harris argued:

For ‘the archive’ is to be found whenever and wherever information is marked, or recorded, on a substrate through human agency .... It is to be found in a plethora of markings on the human body, from circumcision to facial scarification, from tattoos to amputations. It is to be found in carvings on stone, inscriptions in clay, writing on paper, imprints of light on film, and the patterning of bits and bytes on computer drives. ‘The archive’, in short, is all around us; it is on us and inside us. It is the stuff of daily life.<sup>76</sup>

While these reflections of the archive enable a preliminary understanding of the archive, I would argue that it would also be very productive to engage with the many historical, philosophical and corporeal complexities of the archive. Though the ideas of Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida have informed and stimulated much of the debate and fervour around archives, Walter Benjamin preceded them in his thoughts on the archive. In his seminal essay

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<sup>73</sup> Eric Ketelaar, ‘Archival temples, archival prisons: modes of power and protection’, *Archival Science* 2 (2002), 221. Also see Randall C. Jimerson, ‘Embracing the power of archives’ *The American Archivist*, Vol. 69: 1 (2006).

<sup>74</sup> See Velody, ‘The Archive and the Human Sciences’, 11.

<sup>75</sup> Brothman, ‘The limits of limits’, 208.

<sup>76</sup> Verne Harris, ‘Archons, aliens and angels: power and politics in the archive’ in Jennie Hill (ed), *The Future of Archives and Recordkeeping: A Reader* (London: Facet Publishing, 2011), 105.

‘The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction’, Benjamin proposed a way of thinking about the fascination that the archive holds for the historian to what he refers to as the aura of the object. Benjamin discussed the effects of modernity on the work of art by arguing that the mechanical reproducibility of photographs contributed to their loss of the aura, as they now lacked the characteristics of art because they subsequently shifted in their use from ritual to political.<sup>77</sup>

The aura for Benjamin represented the uniqueness, authenticity and permanence to explain what is perceived as art. He continued by arguing that the aura can also be explained by drawing a correlation between art and the occurrence of beauty in nature when he illustrated this by saying the reader should imagine the experience of looking at a distant mountain or a branch, and in that sense the aura of the mountain will be experienced.<sup>78</sup> Benjamin argued that a traditional work of art constitutes a similar experience because ideally, it possesses the qualities of an aura because of its uniqueness as it cannot be reproduced with complete accuracy to its original form. From this discussion, one can then also argue that the idea of the aura can be applied to other forms of representation as one of the ways in which to explain the allure of the archive.

Unlike the value of an art object, which is largely derived from its exclusivity, the value conferred on the document is tied to the informational content of the document which, in turn, bestows the document with an aura. Helen Freshwater reiterated Benjamin’s point by arguing, “[i]n an age of simulacra, which is rapidly completing its transfer of the production and dissemination of information on to the computer screen, we still privilege the paper

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<sup>77</sup> Walter Benjamin, ‘The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction’ in Hannah Arendt (ed), *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1968), 221; 224.

<sup>78</sup> Benjamin, ‘The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction’, 223.

document of documentation.”<sup>79</sup> However, technological advances or the digitisation of archives threaten at once to destroy the aura of the document or to provide a post-custodial situation in which one could imagine an archive without walls.<sup>80</sup>

In as much as Benjamin’s aura may explain the fascination with the archive, he also regarded the archive with great suspicion. Benjamin critically noted:

There is no document of civilisation which is not at the same time a document of barbarism. And just as such a document is not free of barbarism, barbarism taints also the manner in which it was transmitted from one owner to another. A historical materialist therefore dissociates himself from it as far as possible. He regards it as his task to brush history against the grain.<sup>81</sup>

In the passage above, Benjamin distinctively conveyed his concern about the way in which the archive should be approached as he cautioned that the archive should be read against the grain. In his cautionary note about the archive, Benjamin also alluded to the relationship between power and knowledge in the archive where knowledge can either be deployed as a means of suppression or liberation. Following on from Benjamin’s preliminary critical thoughts on the nature of the archive, Michel Foucault similarly proposed an understanding of the archive which is based on the relationship between knowledge and power. Imbricated closely in this relationship is “knowledge and the shaping of archives” and “archives and the shaping of knowledge.”<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Freshwater, ‘The Allure of the Archive’, 732.

<sup>80</sup> Terry Cook, ‘Electronic records, Paper minds: The revolution in information management and archives in the post-custodial and post-modernist era’, *Archives and Manuscripts*, 22: 2 (1994), 314.

<sup>81</sup> Walter Benjamin, ‘Theses on the Philosophy of History’ in Hannah Arendt (ed), *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1968), 256-257.

<sup>82</sup> See for example Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge* (New York: Routledge, 1992); and Kevin Walsh, *The representation of the Past: Museums and Heritage in the Post-Modern World* (New York: Routledge, 1992).

In his very complex and challenging work, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Foucault was primarily concerned with systems of thought and knowledge which are governed by rules. Foucault argued that the contemporary study of the history of ideas rests on discontinuities in discourse. He further argued that discourses emerge and transform as the result of a complex set of discursive and institutional relationships which are defined as much by breaks and ruptures as unified themes.<sup>83</sup> Through this methodological argument, Foucault proposed an understanding of the archive through the 'archaeological method' in which he aimed to describe discourse on its own terms and through its own terms. He reiterated this point by arguing:

Archaeology does not seek to rediscover the continuous, insensible transition that relates discourses, on a gentle slope, to what precedes them, surrounds them, or follows them ... its problem is to define discourses in their specificity; to show in what way the set of rules that they put into operation is irreducible to any other... it is not a 'doxology'; but a differential analysis of the modalities of discourse.<sup>84</sup>

He continued his argument by succinctly saying:

Archaeology tries to define not the thoughts, representations, images, themes, preoccupations that are concealed or revealed in discourses; but those discourses themselves, those discourses as practices obeying certain rules. It does not treat discourse as *document* ... it is concerned with discourse in its own volume, as a *monument*. It is not an interpretative discipline: it does not seek another, better-hidden discourse. It refuses to be 'allegorical'.<sup>85</sup>

In abandoning the traditional form of historical analysis, and in an attempt to practice a different history from what is said and known through archaeology, Foucault argued that discursive practices allow statements to emerge as events or things, through which the archive governs this system of statements or what he calls, "the system of discursivity."<sup>86</sup> For

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<sup>83</sup> Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 4-8.

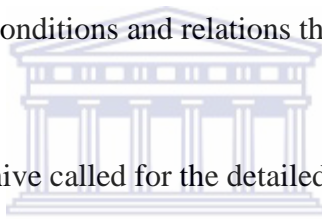
<sup>84</sup> Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 139.

<sup>85</sup> Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 138-139 (emphasis in the original).

<sup>86</sup> Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 129.

Foucault, “[t]he archive is first the law of what can be said, the system that governs the appearance of statements as unique events. But the archive is also that which determines that all these things said do not accumulate endlessly in an amorphous mass ....”<sup>87</sup>

Foucault read the archive as an epistemological experiment of critical inquiry in which the document is questioned rather than as an excavation site of evidentiary knowledge retrieval. In arguing for a different approach to historical analysis, Foucault proposed that the statement rather than the document should be described. According to Foucault the archive, then, can no longer be regarded merely as a collection of documents. Instead the archive is defined as “*the general system of the formation and transformation of statements*”, where statements and discourses are subject to the conditions and relations that govern the archive.<sup>88</sup>



Foucault’s formulation of the archive called for the detailed description of historical discourses through the individual statement which also performs an enunciative function. Though some critics of Foucault may complain that the Foucauldian archive is too abstract, I would argue that Foucault’s archaeological method for historical research may be quite productive in thinking about the underlying structures that have underpinned the thought systems, theory, practices and values in the making of the IDAF archive and how these have impacted on issues of knowledge production and access for present and future use.

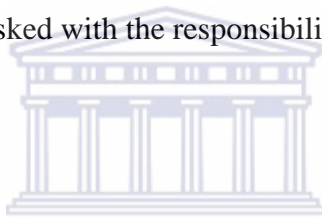
In *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, a lecture originally delivered by Jacques Derrida at the Freud Museum in London at an international colloquium on the history of psychiatry in 1994, Derrida proposed through the works of Sigmund Freud a psychoanalytic reading of the concept of the archive. In his initial reflections of the archive, Derrida started off with an

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<sup>87</sup> Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 129.

<sup>88</sup> Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 130 (emphasis in the original).

etymological explanation of the word 'archive'. Derrida traced the meaning of the word 'archive' from the Greek *arkhē* which at once names the commencement and the commandment.<sup>89</sup> Derrida aptly summarised this double meaning by noting, "[i]n a way, the term indeed refers ... to the *arkhē* in the physical, historical, or ontological sense, which is to say the original, the first, the principal, the primitive, in short to the commencement. But even more, and even earlier, 'archive' refers to the *arkhē* in the nomological sense, to the *arkhē* of the commandment."<sup>90</sup> He further argued that "the meaning of 'archive', its only meaning, comes to it from the Greek *arkheion*: initially a house, a domicile, an address, the address, the residence of the superior magistrates, the *archons*, those who commanded."<sup>91</sup> He went on to say that the archons are the documents' guardians in which they have the power to interpret the archives but also have been tasked with the responsibility of ensuring the physical security of the archives.<sup>92</sup>



For Derrida, the archives "needed at once a guardian and a localization" where the "archives could do neither without substrate nor without residence."<sup>93</sup> And it is in this "*domiciliation*, in this house arrest, that archives take place."<sup>94</sup> Through this exploration of the archive from the Greek superior magistrates' responsibility as archons to protect and to interpret the archive and the domiciliation of the archive as a physical location, Derrida underlined the power and authority vested in archives. He added that it is in this place of consignment that the institutional passage from the private to the public occurs.<sup>95</sup> Building on Derrida's

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<sup>89</sup> Derrida, *Archive Fever*, 1-2.

<sup>90</sup> Derrida, *Archive Fever*, 2.

<sup>91</sup> Derrida, *Archive Fever*, 2 (emphasis in the original).

<sup>92</sup> Derrida, *Archive Fever*, 2.

<sup>93</sup> Derrida, *Archive Fever*, 2.

<sup>94</sup> Derrida, *Archive Fever*, 2 (emphasis in the original).

<sup>95</sup> Derrida, *Archive Fever*, 2.

etymology of the concept of the archive, Michael Lynch argued that archival data is never raw as it passes from private to public.<sup>96</sup> Lynch noted:

Derrida's etymology enables us to recognise that archival data are never raw. An institutional passage from the private to the public precedes the formation of an archive, and this passage can be a site of struggle, occasionally resulting in breach, abortion, or miscarriage of the nascent archive. Consequently, we can appreciate that archives are as much products of historical struggle as they are primary sources for writing histories.<sup>97</sup>

Although Derrida's theoretical formulation of the archive certainly invited its own share of critique, it is important to note is that Derrida also offered a more complex view of archives beyond his initial literal description of the archive as a physical space framed within the architectural dimensions of a physical site. In his reading of the archive, Derrida argued that the archive is not only about the preservation of the past, it is also in anticipation of the future.<sup>98</sup> He suggestively noted, "[t]he archive has always been a pledge, and like every pledge, a token of the future."<sup>99</sup> Derrida elucidated on this point by saying that each time the archive is interpreted, it expands the archive. In this sense the meaning of the archive is never fixed as the boundaries keep shifting. This is the reason that "the archive is never closed" as "it opens out of the future."<sup>100</sup> Put another way, archives are almost always constituted out of a present concern about the future and the psychological desire to almost compulsively

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<sup>96</sup> Michael Lynch, 'Archives in formation: Privileged spaces, popular archives and paper trails', *History of the Human Sciences*, 12: 65 (May 1999), 67.

<sup>97</sup> Lynch, 'Archives in formation', 67.

<sup>98</sup> This is often a point in his argument that is not taken up as most scholars or archivists writing on the archive only take up Derrida's literal view of the archive as a physical space. See Derrida, *Archive Fever*, 18.

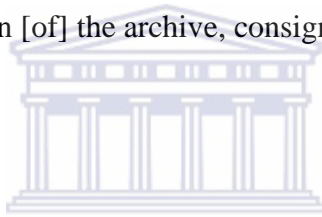
<sup>99</sup> Derrida, *Archive Fever*, 18; Also see Arjun Appadurai's brief yet concise essay on archives where he makes a similar argument of the archive being an aspiration rather than a recollection. Appadurai argued, "Rather than being the tomb of the trace, the archive is more frequently the product of the anticipation of collective memory." In Arjun Appadurai, 'Archive and Aspiration', 16. Available at [http://pzwart3.wdka.hro.nl/mediawiki/images/c/ce/ArjunAppadurai\\_ArchiveandAspiration.pdf](http://pzwart3.wdka.hro.nl/mediawiki/images/c/ce/ArjunAppadurai_ArchiveandAspiration.pdf). Accessed on 18 March 2013.

<sup>100</sup> Derrida, *Archive Fever*, 68.



acquire, collect and preserve remnants or traces of a past. One could even go as far as saying that archiving is not as much about the past as it is about the future.<sup>101</sup>

In his Freudian psychoanalytic formulation of the archive, Derrida offered a way in which we can begin to understand the desire to assemble, organise and preserve the record. According to Derrida, Freudian psychoanalysis offers a theory of the archive that rests on the two conflicting forces of the archive which is the death drive and the archive drive. Derrida argued that this death drive (sometimes also called a drive toward aggression and destruction) “destroys in advance its own archive.”<sup>102</sup> He forcefully wrote that the death drive “not only incites forgetfulness, amnesia, the annihilation of memory ... but also commands the radical effacement, in truth the eradication [of] the archive, consignment, the documentary or monumental apparatus ....”<sup>103</sup>



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He continued his lamentation by saying that the death drive’s “silent vocation is to burn the archive and to incite amnesia, thus refuting the economic principle of the archive, aiming to ruin the archive as accumulation and capitalisation of memory on some substrate and in an exterior place.”<sup>104</sup> According to Derrida’s argument, there is contention between the death drive and the archive drive as the death drive attempts to destroy not only its own archive but also any desire to archive or conserve while the archive drive is subject to the limitations of finitude. Derrida remarked on this tension between the death drive and the archive drive when he said:

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<sup>101</sup> Ketelaar argued by quoting Anthony Smith’s assertion that, “the only guarantee of preservation of some form of identity is in the appeal to ‘posterity’, to the future generations ... only the appeal to a collective posterity offers hope of deliverance from oblivion.” Eric Ketelaar, ‘Archive as a Time machine’, Closing speech of the DLM Forum, Barcelona, 8 May 2002, Available at <http://www.mybestdocs.com/ketelaar-e-dlm2002.htm>, Accessed on 5 May 2014.

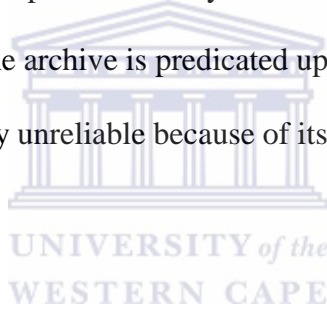
<sup>102</sup> Derrida, *Archive Fever*, 10.

<sup>103</sup> Derrida, *Archive Fever*, 11.

<sup>104</sup> Derrida, *Archive Fever*, 12.

The archive always works, and a *priori*, against it itself ... There would indeed be no archive desire without the radical finitude, without the possibility of a forgetfulness which does not limit itself to repression. Above all, and this is the most serious, beyond or within this simple limit called finiteness or finitude, there is no archive fever without the threat of this death drive, this aggression and destruction drive.<sup>105</sup>

More than just being a space for the storage and conservation of traces of the past, through its technical and archival processes that Derrida called archivisation, both Derrida and Foucault saw the archive as “produc[ing] as much as it records the event.”<sup>106</sup> Far from being inert, the archive, when read through a Foucauldian and Derridean lens, becomes an intentional apparatus in which power and knowledge can shape the way in which historical research is conducted which in turn affects our political reality.<sup>107</sup> Critics of Derrida would remark that while Foucault’s articulation of the archive is predicated upon mnemonic reliability, Derrida’s archive is mnemonically unreliable because of its feverish, hallucinatory and fragmentary nature.<sup>108</sup>



Scholars such as Carolyn Steedman and Thomas Richards have provided a different but no less interesting understanding on the archive. In her contemplation of the archive, Steedman focused on the historian’s romance with the archive through a somewhat nostalgic account of the historian’s engagement with the archives by recounting Jules Michelet’s visits to the Archives Nationales in France. Steedman revealed that:

It was by reading Michelet that I first understood history-writing in generic terms, as a form of magical realism, with the historian’s contribution not the mountains that move, the girls that fly, the rivers that run backwards, but the everyday and fantastic act of making the

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<sup>105</sup> Derrida, *Archive Fever*, 11 & 19.

<sup>106</sup> Derrida, *Archive Fever*, 17; Foucault; *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 130.

<sup>107</sup> Derrida cautiously noted that there is no political power without control of the archive, a point in the dissertation that I will be return to throughout this dissertation. In Derrida, *Archive Fever*, 4; see also Marlene Marnoff, ‘Theories of the Archive from Across the Disciplines’, *Libraries and the Academy*, Vol. 4, No 1 (2004), 5.

<sup>108</sup> Herman Rapaport, ‘Archive Trauma’, Review Article, *Diacritics*, 28: 4 (1998), 69.

dead walk and talk. Seeing the very particular things that historians have taken away from archives, and the particular kinds of narrative forms they have produced from their material, may be a way of understanding all the other things that might be done, and that might be written, out of the archive.<sup>109</sup>

Thoroughly frustrated with Derrida's notion of the archive, Steedman argued that archives are nothing like Derrida described them to be. In fact, according to Steedman, Derrida's meditation of the archive is not about archives but rather a contemplation of the history of Freudian psychoanalysis through the work of Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi's *Freud's Moses: Judaism Terminable and Interminable*.<sup>110</sup> Offering a more prosaic view on the archive, Steedman argued that Derrida failed to understand the corporeal and experiential nuances involved in doing archival research.

In her critique of *Archive Fever*, Steedman argued that the archive fever that Derrida wrote about is quite different from the one experienced by the researcher in the archive in relation to the materiality and the intimacy of the archive. Deconstructing the title of Derrida's *Mal d'archive* to the English translation of *Archive Fever*, (and finding the English translation particularly unfortunate) Steedman argued that archive fever is better described as an occupational hazard or an industrial disease rather than Derrida's search for origins in what he describes as archive fever.<sup>111</sup>

Tracing the development of the field of occupational disease in early nineteenth century England, through an investigation of the side-effects which came from the processing and production of the leather and paper industries, Steedman described the potential threats and

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<sup>109</sup> Carolyn Steedman, 'Romance in the Archive', Presentation, Available at [http://www.restore.ac.uk/archiving\\_qualitative\\_data/projects/archive\\_series/documents/Steedman.pdf](http://www.restore.ac.uk/archiving_qualitative_data/projects/archive_series/documents/Steedman.pdf), Accessed on 14 November 2014, 5.

<sup>110</sup> Steedman, *Dust*, 3.

<sup>111</sup> Irving Velody shares a similar view in which he argued that *Mal d'Archive* might be better titled 'The Trouble with Archives' rather than 'Archive Fever'. See Velody, 'The Archive and the Human Sciences', 1.

dangers that the researcher faced in contracting an occupational or industrial illness in the archive whilst working with such material.<sup>112</sup> To demonstrate her point, she used Jules Michelet's description of his own experience in the Archives Nationales in Paris. Quoting Michelet she wrote, "[s]oftly my dear friends, let us proceed in order if you please ... as I breathed in their dust, I saw them rise up. They rose from a sepulchre ... as in the Last Judgment of Michelangelo or in the Dance of Death. This frenzied dance ... I have tried to reproduce in [my] work."<sup>113</sup>

For Steedman, the archive can be thought of as a physiological process in which research is undertaken, framed by the potential dangers of industrial maladies which are contrasted by the intimacies and pleasures that the material nature of the archive can offer. Steedman's sensorial engagement with the archive invites a particularly evocative way of thinking about the archive. Though Steedman offered quite a severe critique of Derrida, especially with his failure to address the effects of archival research, I would differ with Steedman by arguing that Derrida's deconstruction of the archive may be productive in thinking through the questions of the archive.

Writing about the colonial archive of nineteenth century Britain in *The Imperial Archive*, Thomas Richards argued that the vast expanse of the British Empire presented an immense administrative challenge. Richards argued that the British Empire could really be seen as the first information society as this administrative challenge was met by producing maps, surveys and censuses. Drawing upon the work of Michel Foucault and Edward Said, Richards argued that the "administrative core of the Empire was built around knowledge-producing institutions like the British Museum, the Royal Geographic Society, the India Survey, and the

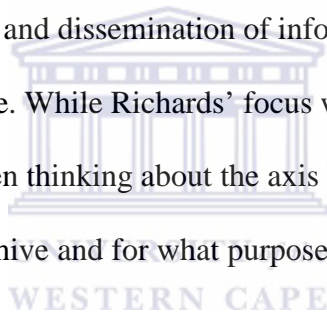
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<sup>112</sup> See Steedman, *Dust*, 22, 27.

<sup>113</sup> Jules Michelet, quoted in Steedman, *Dust*, 27.

universities” in which “the imperial archive was a fantasy of knowledge collected and united in the service of State and Empire.”<sup>114</sup>

In this way, the administrators of the Empire helped shape an enduring relationship between knowledge and power where the state was united through information rather than through coercive force. Richards saw the archive as “a utopian space of comprehensive knowledge” and argued that “the archive was not a building, nor even a collection of texts, but the collectively imagined junction of all that was known and knowable, a fantastic representation of an epistemological master pattern ....”<sup>115</sup> In *The Imperial Archive*, Richards sought to demonstrate the ways in which the knowledge and power axis developed in the British Empire through the accumulation and dissemination of information that was enlisted in the service of the state and the Empire. While Richards’ focus was on the colonial archive, his ideas may be very suggestive when thinking about the axis between knowledge and power, in other words, who controls the archive and for what purpose it is being controlled.



In post-apartheid South Africa, the debate on the archive was made explicit with the publishing of *Refiguring the Archive*, which was the outcome of a project that focused on a series of thirteen seminars hosted in 1998 by the University of the Witwatersrand’s Graduate School for the Humanities and Social Sciences. Constituted around a visit by Jacques Derrida to South Africa, the *Refiguring the Archive* project was conceived as an idea to address and interrogate urgent questions posed to the archive that followed in the wake of the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and the transformation of institutions in South Africa after 1994. In their interrogation of the archive, the contributors to the volume *Refiguring the Archive* proposed a (re)figuring of the archive by investigating the

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<sup>114</sup> Thomas Richards, *The Imperial Archive: Knowledge and the Fantasy of Empire* (London and New York: Verso, 1993), 4 – 6.

<sup>115</sup> Richards, *The Imperial Archive*, 11.

ethnographies and histories of archives, the way in which institutions such as archives are implicated in creating a particular vision of society and, very significantly, to understand the conditions and processes of the record.<sup>116</sup>

Most of the essays drew upon the work of Derrida, except for Ann Laura Stoler in her Foucauldian approach to the colonial archives in India. The volume provided productive insights into the workings of the archive. Much has been written since *Refiguring the Archive* was published in 2002, yet this remains a definitive and compelling body of work in which a cross-disciplinary discussion unfolded about the nature of archives through debates about memory, power, visibility, truth and reconciliation and other contestations all of which pervade the archive. Exceptionally, this volume also placed the archivist into a critically engaged position alongside thinkers of other disciplines.<sup>117</sup> More than that, it actively called for a new way of thinking about archives and the way in which we engaged with archives.

In a critique of this ambitious project, I would argue that *Refiguring the Archive* provided a beacon through the murkiness of the archive's uncharted, tempestuous waters but failed to actualise its goals of refiguring the archive. A refiguring of the archive in the post-apartheid imaginary of South Africa would have required us "to reimagine the boundaries of what we have come to believe are disciplines and to have the courage to rethink them."<sup>118</sup> As argued earlier, a reimagining of the archive would require a philosophical and investigative engagement with the archive that may take us into unfamiliar, unpredictable and ever-shifting territory that may produce more questions rather than provide answers. Quoting Proust, Joan Schwartz passionately implored archivists to realise that "[t]he real voyage of discovery

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<sup>116</sup> Carolyn Hamilton, Verne Harris, Michelle Pickover, Graeme Reid, Razia Saleh and Jane Taylor (eds), *Refiguring the Archive* (Cape Town: David Philip, 2002), 14- 16.

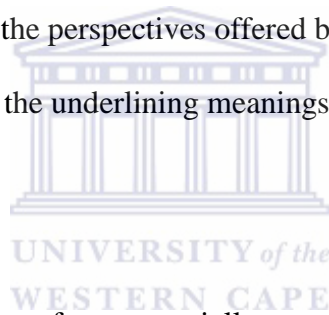
<sup>117</sup> Hamilton et al, *Refiguring the Archive*, 11.

<sup>118</sup> Marjorie Garber, *Academic Instincts* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 96.

consists not in seeking new landscapes but in having new eyes.”<sup>119</sup> Pushing this argument further, I would argue that in acquiring a new sense of vision, to seek out, or to probe the intellectual, physical, practical and metaphorical space of the archive will require an enquiry in a philosophy of the archive, not only by scholars but also crucially by archivists.

In a new way of thinking, seeing and knowing the archive, both scholars and archivists need to deploy a methodology of ethical self-awareness and reflexivity and enter the archive cognitive of the social, cultural and technological settings in which the archive exists.<sup>120</sup>

Therefore, in imagining another way of thinking about the archive and in trying to answer some of the questions that this chapter is grappling with, it will be both interesting and potentially instructive to draw on the perspectives offered by those in the archival profession as another means of interrogating the underlining meanings, backgrounds and histories of the archival record.<sup>121</sup>



With the growing interest in archives from, especially, outside the archive, with what can be termed as the ‘archival turn’ or an ‘archival impulse’<sup>122</sup> within various disciplines and from other spheres, and as a theoretical and historical inquiry into the making of an archive, it is crucial to reflect on the history of archival thought over the last century within the archival domain. As mentioned earlier, in addition to scholars such as Benjamin, Foucault, Derrida,

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<sup>119</sup> Joan M. Schwartz, ‘Having new eyes: Spaces of archives, landscapes of power’, *Archives and Social Studies: A Journal of Interdisciplinary Research*, Vol. 1 (March 2007), 362.

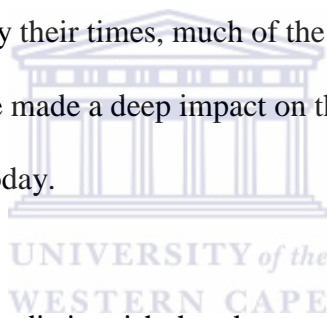
<sup>120</sup> Freshwater, ‘The Allure of the Archive’, 754; Also see Joan M. Schwartz and Terry Cook, ‘Archives, records and power: The making of modern memory’, *Archival Science* 2, (2002), 19.

<sup>121</sup> See Jennie Hill (ed), *The Future of Archives and Recordkeeping: A Reader* (London: Facet Publishing, 2011); Terry Cook, ‘The Archive(s) is a Foreign Country: Historians, Archivists, and the changing archival landscape’, *The Canadian Historical Review*, Vol. 90, No. 3(September 2009); Barbara L. Craig, ‘Outward visions, inward glance: Archives history and professional identity’, *Archival Issues*, Vol. 17, No. 2 (1992); Tom Nesmith, ‘Archives From the Bottom Up: Social History and Archival Scholarship’, *Archives & Social Studies: A Journal of Interdisciplinary Research*, Vol. 2:1 (March 2008); Schwartz, ‘Having New Eyes: Spaces of Archives, Landscapes of Power’ and Tom Nesmith, ‘Seeing Archives: Postmodernism and the Changing Intellectual Place of Archives’, *The American Archivist*, Vol. 65, No. 1 (2002).

<sup>122</sup> See Hal Foster, ‘An Archival Impulse’, *October* 110 (2004), 3.

Steedman and others critically thinking about the contested and ambiguous nature of the archive, there has also been a steady proliferation of literature around the nature of archives, its functions and its work which have emanated from archivists.

In the historical literature on the archive as a professional practice space, with special reference to the classic texts on archival theory by thinkers and practicing archivists such as Hilary Jenkinson and T. R. Schellenberg who shaped much of the thinking in terms of how archives are viewed within society today, it would be helpful to trace the intellectual history of archival thought over the last century. This is important because archival theory started to emerge from within the archival profession itself before the profession was stunted in its development. Though informed by their times, much of the supposed classic articulations of archival theory and practices have made a deep impact on the archive of which the reverberations are still palpable today.



At this point, it might be fruitful to distinguish that there are different genres or types of writing on the archive. Within the professional practicing space of the archive, writing on archival theory has for the most part been divided into two strains. One strain is archival but not theoretical because of the focus on the practicalities of archival work while the other is theoretical but not archival and calls for archivists to be historians or theoreticians.<sup>123</sup> But one might ask if whether being an archivist is merely a practical endeavour and the archival profession is a mere practical application of different processes, why is it imperative for both archivists and researchers to study archival theory at all?

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<sup>123</sup> John Roberts, 'Archival Theory: Much ado about shelving', *The American Archivist*, Vol. 50: 1 (1987), 67.



In an attempt to answer this question, I would argue that it would be very enlightening to explore the relationship between theory and practice and to investigate archival analysis by practicing archivists and not just theorists. In analysing the relationship between theory and practice, Heather MacNeil explained that archival theory based on the continuum model, “is the analysis of ideas about the nature of archives, *methodology* the analysis of the ideas about how to treat them, and *practice* the outcome of the application of methodology in particular instances.”<sup>124</sup> The difficulty arises when theory and method cannot be aligned and actualised into practice which, in turn, results in a crisis of the existing archival theoretical discourse.

Put another way, if ever there was a time to relate practice and theory or to find a way of reconciling the two seemingly opposing forces, that time would be now if those in the archival profession are to rethink their discipline and practice in order to meet the challenges of a postmodern world.<sup>125</sup> In moving closer toward an alignment between theory and practice, Terry Cook and Heather MacNeil, along with others, have argued that a paradigm shift is needed to think through the predicament of the archive, which has been “provoked by a number of societal, technological, and professional developments that have thrown into question, if not crisis, some of the basic tenets concerning the nature and value of archives.”<sup>126</sup> Cook added to this argument by saying:

At the heart of the new paradigm is a shift away from viewing records as static physical objects, and towards understanding them as dynamic virtual concepts; a shift away from looking at records as the passive products of ...administrative activity and towards considering records as active agents themselves in the formation of human and organisational memory; a shift equally away from seeing the context

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<sup>124</sup> Heather MacNeil, ‘Archival theory and Practice: Between two paradigms’, *Archives and Social Studies: A Journal of Interdisciplinary Research* Vol. 1: 1 (September 2007), 519 (emphasis in the original).

<sup>125</sup> Terry Cook argued that the impact of postmodernism has resulted in a crisis which calls into question the positivist concepts and methodologies on which the archive rests. In order to meet the challenges of postmodernism and various new technologies, Cook argued that what is required is a paradigm shift. See Terry Cook, ‘Archival science and postmodernism: new formulations for old concepts’, *Archival Science* 1 (2001), 3-4.

<sup>126</sup> MacNeil, ‘Archival theory and Practice’, 519.

of records creation resting within stable hierarchical organisations to situating records within fluid horizontal networks of work-flow functionality.<sup>127</sup>

In this precarious time of deeply unsettling visions of the future for archives and archivists, it has become of absolute importance that the archival profession realised the significance of theoretically studying the archive, first as a way to develop and nurture archival theory and secondly to address their “lack of theoretical investigation” which seriously impedes their professional standards.<sup>128</sup> In rethinking and seeing the archive anew, and in a critical analysis of what it might mean to trace the genealogy of an archive, part of the argument of this dissertation will be that in order to better understand the archive, the archive itself, as an object, needs to be anchored in its own intellectual history of theory, conventions, concepts, practices and debates.<sup>129</sup> Arguing this point very eloquently, Barbara L. Craig stated that, “[j]ust as personal identity is anchored in a strong historical sense [,] so is our professional identity-both come from the ability to experience ... continuity. Surely, if you have nothing to look backward to, and with pride, you have nothing to look forward to with hope.”<sup>130</sup>

In his analysis of the history of archival thought since 1898, Terry Cook argued this point convincingly in which he noted that, “[w]ithout understanding our predecessors’ intellectual struggles, we lose the benefit of their experiences and are condemned to repeat their errors.”<sup>131</sup> Along with Cook, archivists such as Frank G. Burke and F. Gerald Ham have also argued for archivists to become scholars concerned with historiography and developing “a

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<sup>127</sup> Cook, ‘Archival science and postmodernism’, 4.

<sup>128</sup> MacNeil, ‘Archival theory and Practice’, 541-542; Also see Barbara L. Craig, ‘Outward visions, inward glance: Archives history and professional identity’, *Archival Issues*, Vol. 17, No. 2 (1992), 114-124.

<sup>129</sup> See Barbara Craig’s argument about the necessity for an understanding of the history of archives *in relation to the study of archival records* in Craig, ‘Outward visions, inward glance’, 121.

<sup>130</sup> Craig, ‘Outward visions, inward glance’, 121.

<sup>131</sup> Terry Cook, ‘What Past is Prologue: A history of archival ideas since 1898 and the future paradigm shift’, *Archivaria* 43 (1997), 19.

new philosophy of archives.”<sup>132</sup> According to Burke and Ham, in particular, the historiographical method would allow the archivist to focus on the content and context of the record, which will assist in making informed decisions about the appraisal and description of collections.

Clearly at odds with Burke and Ham, John Roberts and Lester Cappon provided an astonishingly pragmatic view on the nature of archives. While Cappon thoroughly critiqued the approach of especially Burke to the archive, by saying that Burke is confused between archival theory and the theory of history, Cappon still conceded that the archivist is, at heart, an historian.<sup>133</sup> Roberts, on the other hand, fiercely rejected the view that history should be tied to archival practices at all, as he disparagingly only regarded it as a “fairly straightforward, down to earth service occupation.”<sup>134</sup> Demonstrating his narrow view of archives and the work of archivists, Roberts argued that it is:

extreme intellectual silliness to boggle oneself with such preposterous phantoms as archival paradigms, symbiotic links of medium and message, philosophy of mylar, and other prostheses that some archivists would thrust forward as credentials to sit at the grown-ups’ table.<sup>135</sup>

Though some of Roberts and Cappon’s criticisms are valid, such as the viability of a historiographical focus, given the practical limitations and frameworks that beset archives and archivists, I would argue that Burke and Ham have resuscitated a call to rethink the archive. However, within a similar vein as Cook and others, I too would argue that in order to come to terms with the ever-changing, evolving nature of the archive, its past needs to be

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<sup>132</sup> Frank G. Burke, ‘The future course of archival theory in the United States’ in *American Archivist* 44 (1981), 45; Also see F. Gerald Ham, ‘Archival edge’, *American Archivist* 38 (January 1975), 13.

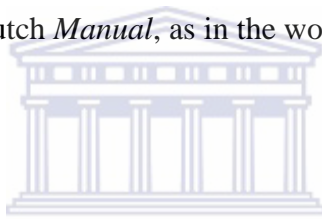
<sup>133</sup> Lester Cappon, ‘What, then, is there to theorise about?’, *The American Archivist*, Vol. 45: 1 (1982), 21.

<sup>134</sup> Roberts, ‘Archival Theory: Much ado about shelving’, 74.

<sup>135</sup> Roberts, ‘Archival Theory: Much ado about shelving’, 74.

thoroughly explored not only because “what is past is prologue”<sup>136</sup> but also as a way to rethink the epistemological foundations of the archive.

In explaining this, one of the seminal works that archivists are required to engage with on archives is the *Manual for the Arrangement and Description of Archives* that was published more than a century ago in 1898 by a group of three practicing Dutch archivists: Samuel Muller, Johan Feith and Robert Fruin. While the *Manual* was a consolidated and standardised response to issues faced by archivists in the Netherlands during the nineteenth century, it widely became an important treatise on archival theory and has remained regarded as such.<sup>137</sup> Laying a solid foundation for later books by Hilary Jenkinson (1922, 1966) and Theodore R. Schellenberg (1956, 1965), the Dutch *Manual*, as in the words of Schellenberg, became “a Bible for modern archivists.”<sup>138</sup>



Primarily focusing on the practices and methodology of archival work by especially outlining the archival concepts of arrangement and description, the *Manual* solidified the use of the concept of *respect des fonds* in archival practice and created a new concept of provenance, which provided a framework for the way in which records would be arranged and described in concordance with the way in which it was arranged by the records’ creator.<sup>139</sup> This being said, the *Manual* allowed the archivist to make subjective decisions regarding the arrangement of records that considered issues such as preservation, storage and usage.

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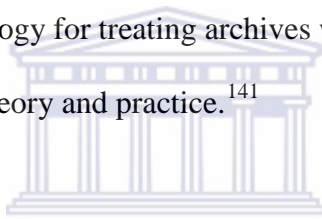
<sup>136</sup> Cook invoked Shakespeare’s phrase to emphasis the point that archivists can only write their prologue for the next century if they are able to understand their past. See Cook, ‘What Past is Prologue’, 19.

<sup>137</sup> John Ridener, *From Polders to postmodernism: A concise history of archival theory* (Duluth: Litwin Books, 2009), 21.

<sup>138</sup> Theodore R. Schellenberg, *Modern archives, principles and techniques* (Melbourne: Cheshire, 1956), 175.

<sup>139</sup> According to Ridener the concept of *respect des fonds* was already in place well before the publication of the *Manual* as the Dutch trio drew heavily from Josef Anton Oegg’s *Ideen einer Theorie der Archivwissenschaft (Ideas of a Theory of Archival Science)* in 1804. See Ridener, *From Polders to postmodernism*, 32-33 (emphasis in the original).

Though the authors of the *Manual* may have been visionary, Muller, Feith and Fruin were mainly preoccupied with the arrangement and description of the archive in terms of provenance and original order at the expense of the other archival functions of appraisal and selection. John Ridener argued that, “[t]he epistemological boundaries of the *Manual* are, for the most part, focused on creating practical unity, prescription of methods, and delineation of specific instructions to archivists.”<sup>140</sup> Ridener further argued that this allowed the authors to circumvent more philosophical and theoretical questions of the archive, which is crucial in understanding the nature of the archive especially given the challenges brought about by changing contexts of politics, technologies and historiographies. He concluded, however, along with Terry Cook, that the *Manual* is important because it codified European archival theory and enunciated a methodology for treating archives which has shaped much of the archival profession’s collective theory and practice.<sup>141</sup>



Following more than two decades later, the Dutch *Manual* set the stage for Sir Hilary Jenkinson’s positivist ideology on archives in his book, *A Manual of Archive Administration* (1922) in which he argued for the administrative importance of archives. Here, the archive is presented as impartial, authentic, evidential and trustworthy, and the archivist was regarded as the passive, objective and invisible servant and guardian of the archive.<sup>142</sup> Whereas the Dutch archivists only subtly engaged in some theorising in their *Manual*, Jenkinson’s *Manual* focused on constructing a theory of archives which was based on the moral and theoretical reasons for keeping archives.<sup>143</sup> Building upon some of the core concepts of the Dutch *Manual* such as original order and provenance, Jenkinson expanded on the practical

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<sup>140</sup> Ridener, *From Polders to postmodernism*, 28.

<sup>141</sup> Cook, ‘What Past is Prologue’, 22.

<sup>142</sup> Jennie Hill (ed), *The Future of Archives and Recordkeeping: A Reader* (London: Facet Publishing, 2011), 4; Also see Cook, ‘What Past is Prologue’, 23 and Jim O’Toole, *Understanding Archives and Manuscripts* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 1990), 71.

<sup>143</sup> Ridener, *From Polders to postmodernism*, 28-41.

guidelines offered by the Dutch archivists but found the *Manual's* almost exclusive focus on practice acutely lacking in its theoretical orientation regarding the new challenges brought about by technological innovation.

Primarily informed by Darwinian evolutionary theory and positivist historiography,<sup>144</sup> Sir Hilary Jenkinson, famously postulated the four qualities of the archive which are: impartiality; authenticity; naturalness and interrelationship. Considered to be one of the classic thinkers on archival theory during the early twentieth century (however contested his theory might be), Jenkinson proposed a methodology which saw archives as “simply written memorials authenticated by the fact of their official preservation” in which “[t]he Archivist’s career is one of service”, devoted to being a voiceless and invisible servant and custodian.<sup>145</sup> Jenkinson posited a theory that sought to avoid the question of appraisal as he perceived the role of the archivist as one of keeping, not to select archives. According to Jenkinson, the task of selecting or appraising records should be one left to the judgment of the records’ creator as any appraisal done by the archivist would taint the innocence of records in their archival setting.

While Jenkinson posited a theoretical approach to archives, his treatise unequivocally separated theory from practice.<sup>146</sup> Jenkinson’s theoretical guide irrevocably changed the landscape of archives as he continues to cast a long shadow over the field of archival education and practice, as some of the standards he has set for the profession remains significant even if no longer relevant, given the ongoing evolution of archival theory. Perhaps, Jenkinson’s most crucial contribution to the field of archival theory was that his

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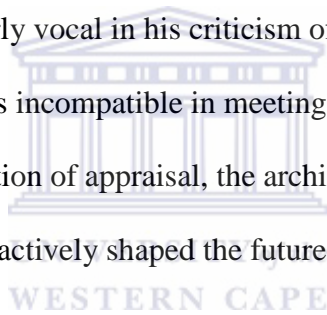
<sup>144</sup> Terry Cook quoted, in Hill (ed), *The Future of Archives and Recordkeeping*, 4.

<sup>145</sup> Hilary Jenkinson, *A Manual of Archive Administration* (London: Percy Lund, Humphries and Co Ltd, 1937), 12.

<sup>146</sup> Ridener, *From Polders to postmodernism*, 41.

*Manual* delineated the distinct boundaries between “the role of the archivist and its professional status as a discipline distinct from the study and writing of history.”<sup>147</sup>

Following closely behind Jenkinson were the two works of American archival theorist T. R. Schellenberg, *Modern Archives: Principles and Techniques* (1956) and *The Management of Archives* (1965). In contrast to the Dutch archivists and Jenkinson who narrowly focused on original order, provenance and custodianship, Schellenberg focused on the archival functions of appraisal and selection. Covering more ground than his Dutch predecessors and his counterpart across the Atlantic, through his extensive discussions on principles and techniques, Schellenberg argued for an interventionist strategy in shaping and managing the archival record. He was particularly vocal in his criticism of Jenkinson’s view on the question of appraisal and found his theories incompatible in meeting their archival needs in the United States. In Schellenberg’s formulation of appraisal, the archivist, in consultation with record managers and subject specialists, actively shaped the future of the archival record.



While Schellenberg has done much to advance archival discourse, there are a few troubling issues to his theory. According to Cook, one of the challenges of Schellenberg’s theory is the concept of “use[r]-defined archives.”<sup>148</sup> The danger of following a “use[r]-based approach” that is determined by trends in historiography and the expectations of users “removes records from their organic context within activities of their creator and imposes criteria on both appraisal and description that are external to the record and its provenance.”<sup>149</sup> In Cook’s objection to use[r]-based approaches, Gerald Ham argued that use[r]-based approaches to the archive would result in “a selection process so random, so fragmented, so uncoordinated, and

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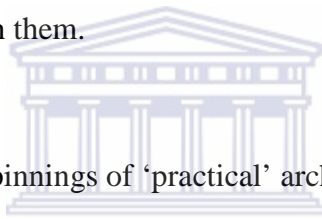
<sup>147</sup> Ridener, *From Polders to postmodernism*, 68.

<sup>148</sup> Cook, ‘What Past is Prologue’, 29.

<sup>149</sup> Cook, ‘What Past is Prologue’, 29.

even so accidental ... [and] too often reflect narrow research interests rather than the broad spectrum of human experience.”<sup>150</sup>

Whether still rooted to a nineteenth century positivist paradigm which viewed the archivist within Jenkinsonian terms as passive, invisible and neutral,<sup>151</sup> or because of administrative tasks and technical duties, it is glaringly obvious that save for a few archivists, the archival profession is largely absent from scholarly and disciplinary debates about the impact of the archive, the power it resonates and it how it shapes and is in turn being reshaped by society, culture and politics.<sup>152</sup> One needs to ask whether the archival profession has become too insular, with an almost exclusive preoccupation with answering the political, managerial and professional demands placed upon them.



This cursory perusal of the underpinnings of ‘practical’ archival theory that have permeated much of the last century has revealed the richness of the thinking around the archive. Much has changed over the last century, with technological advancements and shifts in historiography, but despite these developments, the archival profession has, for the most part, remained rooted to a nineteenth century positivistic approach where records are inert and innocent and archivists are passive guardians or the handmaidens to history. Terry Cook argued that, “archival theoretical discourse is shifting from product to process, from structure to function, from archives to archiving, from the record to the recording context, from the

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<sup>150</sup> Gerald Ham, quoted in Cook, ‘What Past is Prologue’, 29.

<sup>151</sup> See John H. Hodson, *The Administration of Archives* (Oxford: Pergamon Press Ltd., 1972), 3; Cook, ‘What Past is Prologue’, 23; and Joan M. Schwartz and Terry Cook, ‘Archives, Records and Power: The Making of Modern Memory’, *Archival Science* 2 (2002), 18.

<sup>152</sup> See Terry Cook, ‘The Archive(s) is a Foreign Country: Historians, Archivists, and the changing archival landscape’, *The Canadian Historical Review*, Vol. 90, No. 3 (September 2009), 497-534; and also Schwartz, ‘Having New Eyes’, 326.



‘natural’ residue or passive by-product of administrative activity to the consciously constructed and actively mediated ‘archivalisation’ of social memory.”<sup>153</sup>

Reiterating Cook’s argument, Ridener cautioned that, “theory is not a monolithic series of ‘scientific’ laws objectively true in all times and places, but rather an on-going, open-ended quest for meaning about our documentary heritage that itself is ever evolving.”<sup>154</sup> This open-ended, mediated, indeterminate and uncertain nature of the archive lies at the heart of the necessity to reimagine the archive and to argue for a fundamental paradigm shift in archival thinking. It is in this regard then that the next chapter will argue that one of the ways in which the archive can be reimagined, is for the archivist to adapt to the ever-changing environment of the archive by becoming a scholar and an activist who is actively engaged in the production of knowledge.



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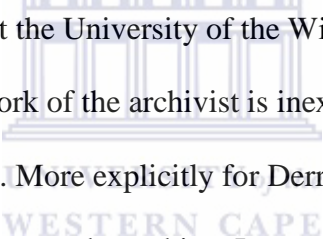
<sup>153</sup> Terry Cook, ‘Archival Science and Postmodernism: New formulations for old concepts’, *Archival Science* 1 (2001), 4.

<sup>154</sup> Ridener, *From Polders to postmodernism*, xix.

## CHAPTER TWO

### ARCHIVIST AS HISTORIAN/HISTORIAN AS ARCHIVIST

The work of the archivist is not simply a work of memory. It's a work of mourning. And a work of mourning ... is a work of memory but also the best way just to forget the other, to keep the other in oneself, to keep it safe, in a safe – but when you put something in a safe it's just in order to be able to forget it .... When I handwrite something on a piece of paper, I put it in my pocket or in a safe. It's just in order to forget it .... So, suppose that one day South Africa would have accomplished a perfect, full archive of its whole history – not simply apartheid, but what came before apartheid ... everyone in this country ... would be eager to put this in such a safe that everyone could just forget it .... And perhaps ... this is the unconfessed desire of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. That as soon as possible the future generation may have simply forgotten it .... Having kept everything in the archive ... let us forget it to go on, to survive.<sup>155</sup>



In a lecture delivered by Derrida at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) in 1998, he poignantly reminded us that the work of the archivist is inextricably tied to the existence and the dynamic forces of the archives. More explicitly for Derrida, the work of an archivist is a work of mourning. In my meditation on the archive, I too am engaged in a self-reflexive process of mourning through which the work of mourning is ritualistically performed and reified. But the work of an archivist is such that it also involves activism and scholarship. The archive not only asks for it but demands it. In attempting to rethink the archive, I will argue for a fundamental paradigm shift of the way in which archivists work in and with archives.

Although the historical and the archival professions developed in tandem with each other during the nineteenth century, historians have come to be the 'discoverers' and authors of the archival record while archivists have come to be regarded as the guardians or keepers of

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<sup>155</sup> Jacques Derrida, 'Archive Fever', Transcript of seminar, University of the Witwatersrand, August 1998 in Carolyn Hamilton, Verne Harris, Michelle Pickover, Graeme Reid, Razia Saleh and Jane Taylor (eds), *Refiguring the Archive* (Cape Town: David Philip, 2002), 54.

records in their often accepted role as the ‘handmaidens to history.’<sup>156</sup> This has created a widening fracture in the once productive partnership which characterises the symbiotic relationship between archivists and historians. As a way of negotiating the somewhat tenuous relationship between the archivist and historian, one of the aims of this dissertation is to argue that archivists and scholars should become more self-aware of the mediation that takes place within archives. In the words of prominent Canadian archivist, the late Terry Cook, both archivists and researchers should become aware of the “mediated nature of archives as appraised and selected records, as curatorial institutions, as professional activity, or as a body of theoretical and practical knowledge.”<sup>157</sup>

Through a self-reflexive enquiry by which I will focus on my engagement with the archive, both as the archivist working with the IDAF archival collection and as a researcher studying its records, this chapter will seek to bring to light the challenges and possibilities that frame this sometimes complex engagement. More importantly, by locating archivists as central to and within the archiving process, I will argue that it has become absolutely crucial for archivists to study the history of the archival records that they work with. This, in turn, will create a better understanding of the archival processes that these records are subject to. It is only then that archivists can start to imagine what a transformed archival landscape might look like. But how would archivists arrive at such a transformation and what would the new archivist look like? And why does the archival profession even need a paradigm shift?

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<sup>156</sup> Hugh A. Taylor, ‘The Discipline of History and the Education of the Archivist’ in Terry Cook and Graham Dodds (eds), *Imagining Archives: Essays and Reflections by Hugh A. Taylor*, (Metuchen, Scarecrow, 2003), 52.

<sup>157</sup> Terry Cook, ‘The Archive(s) is a Foreign Country: Historians, Archivists, and the changing archival landscape’, *The Canadian Historical Review*, Vol. 90, No. 3 (September 2009), 509.

### *Haunted by the spectre of positivism*

In the popular imagination, archivists have long been imagined as “aged antiquarians stooped over piles of ledgers in dusty basements”<sup>158</sup> who have been entrusted with the sacred mission of guarding the past through upholding the dictums of truth and objectivity. This perception echoes Jenkinson’s methodology which was informed by Darwinian evolutionary theory and positivist historiography. According to his positivist formulation of the archive, Jenkinson proposed a methodology which saw archives as “simply written memorials authenticated by the fact of their official preservation” in which “[t]he Archivist’s career is one of service.”<sup>159</sup>

Jenkinson went on to say that, “[h]e (the archivist) exists in order to make other people’s work possible .... His Creed, the Sanctity of Evidence; his task, the Conservation of ... Evidence ... the good Archivist is perhaps the most selfless devotee of truth the modern world produces.”<sup>160</sup> The Jenkinsonian archivist does not mediate, interpret or help construct archives; their professional career is a life of servitude where they unobtrusively work behind the scenes by bringing order to archives through arranging, describing and preserving the archival record. However, in the habitual cleaning and storing of the archive, archivists inevitably leave very large and often permanent footprints behind.

Although there has been a shift away from positivism, archives and archivists, for the most part, have remained locked into a positivist Jenkinsonian discourse that has become naturalised and has found expression through an archival practice that continues to perpetuate

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<sup>158</sup> Cook, ‘The Archive(s) is a Foreign Country’, 505.

<sup>159</sup> Hilary Jenkinson, *A Manual of Archive Administration* (London: Percy Lund, Humphries and Co Ltd, 1937), 12.

<sup>160</sup> Jenkinson, *A Manual of Archive Administration*, 12; See Chapter 1 for a fuller discussion on Hilary Jenkinson’s positivist formulation of the archive.

this professional myth of neutrality, passivity and objectivity.<sup>161</sup> Bringing this closer to home, Verne Harris takes this point further by arguing that much of the positivist archival thinking in South Africa has remained stubbornly resistant to transformation much like the embedded nature of apartheid patterns that are still very much prevalent within the post-apartheid South African society.<sup>162</sup> Harris has argued that in archives in South Africa, “many of our core ideas resist new realities, at most entertaining re-formation (rather than trans-formation).”<sup>163</sup> As a consequence, this both reinforces outmoded positivist archival ideas steeped in colonial and apartheid history and also continues to shape the way in which archivists imagine themselves and accept their scripted role as mere custodians of archives.

This image of archivists as antiquarians has remained pervasive and has cast them in the role of passive, neutral and often invisible keepers and caretakers of archives. Though this depiction is finally being challenged by some archivists and scholars across various academic disciplines, the reality is that archivists continue to be regarded as the “hewers of wood and drawers of water.”<sup>164</sup> Unfortunately, this is an image which has been actively cultivated and projected by archivists and accepted by scholars without much consideration for the mediation and continuous intervention that takes place during archival practices.

Drawing on W. Kaye Lamb’s argument in which he took issue with the self-accepted and prescribed role of archivists as the invisible caretakers of the archives, Cook has argued that archivists have done very little to address this continued perception of the archivist as

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<sup>161</sup> Joan M. Schwartz and Terry Cook, ‘Archives, Records and Power: The Making of Modern Memory’, *Archival Science* 2 (2002), 5.

<sup>162</sup> Verne Harris, ‘Claiming less, Delivering more: A Critique of Positivist Formulations on Archives in South Africa’, *Archivaria* 44 (1997), 132.

<sup>163</sup> Harris, ‘Claiming less, Delivering more’, 132.

<sup>164</sup> Cook, ‘The Archive(s) is a Foreign Country’, 507.

passive, curatorial, neutered and impartial.<sup>165</sup> According to Cook, Lamb argued that to many historians, the archivist “collects things, cleans them, catalogues them, puts them on shelves, and eventually takes them off shelves and puts them on a table when a historian wants them. All this is true enough, but it neglects entirely those aspects of the archivist’s job that call for intelligence, knowledge and judgment ....”<sup>166</sup> Cast within this light, archivists are not only regarded as passive but also as intellectually castrated as they perform the work of mere technicians who are preoccupied with managing and administering archives through digitisation, standardisation and preservation.

In his analysis of the relationship between the historian and the archivist, and the way in which the archives have, in a sense, become a foreign country to both archivists and historians, Cook made a compelling argument for the reinvention of archives. According to Cook, this approach should be centred upon the history of the record through a process where both archivists and scholars have to reacquaint themselves with the archives by abandoning traditional approaches through which they previously engaged the archives.<sup>167</sup> For archivists, this should be through interrogating their own history, work methodology and material practices. It should also be through acknowledging their intervention and subjectivities and finally recognising that their work is highly informed by institutional and societal dynamics and professional divisions.<sup>168</sup> For scholars, on the other hand, it should be to gain a better understanding of how archival practices, theory of the archival profession and the

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<sup>165</sup> Cook, ‘The Archive(s) is a Foreign Country’, 516.

<sup>166</sup> Cook, ‘The Archive(s) is a Foreign Country’, 507.

<sup>167</sup> Cook, ‘The Archive(s) is a Foreign Country’, 497.

<sup>168</sup> Verne Harris, *Exploring Archives: An Introduction to the Archival Ideas and Practice in South Africa* (Pretoria, National Archives of South Africa, 2000), 3.

subjectivities of the archivist might give shape, meaning and context to the record that ultimately informs how the mediated and enriched record is read and interpreted.<sup>169</sup>

In addressing the neutered and self-deprecating image simultaneously nurtured and loathed by archivists and positively reinforced through a confluence of societal and political factors, I would argue that archivists need to wake up from what Terry Cook calls their “comfortable state of complacent narcosis.”<sup>170</sup> Indeed, following Michelle Pickover’s argument:

Archivists, through archival practices such as appraisal, selection, arrangement, and description are not passive guardians but gatekeepers, active participants and contextualisers who posit layers of interpretative frameworks. They therefore play an important proactive role in the production of knowledge and in creating, preserving, controlling, altering, reinventing and reinterpreting the fragments of personal identities and social memory.<sup>171</sup>

Moreover as “agents of social change”<sup>172</sup>, archivists are entrusted with the responsibility to perform their work in the interests of social justice and activism rather than just as mere custodians. This has become pertinent, especially because archives are increasingly finding themselves on shifting ground in response to epistemological, political, financial and technological shifts which are consistently occurring, without a decisive strategy on how to chart a course through the murky waters of the present to the future.

One way of coming to terms with the ever-shifting ground underneath their feet, is for archivists to reimagine themselves through a process of “philosophising, contextualising, self-reflection, self-disclosure, self-deconstruction ....”<sup>173</sup> Put another way, archivists need to

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<sup>169</sup> Joan M. Schwartz, ‘Having New Eyes: Spaces of Archives, Landscapes of Power’, *Archives & Social Studies: A Journal of Interdisciplinary Research*, Vol. 1 (March 2007), 331.

<sup>170</sup> Taylor, ‘The Discipline of History and the Education of the Archivist’, 18.

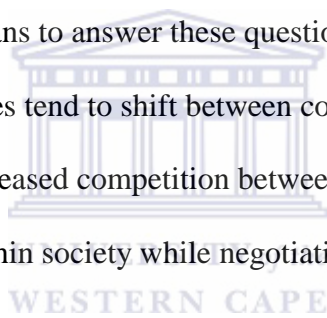
<sup>171</sup> Michele Pickover, ‘Negotiations, Contestations and Fabrications: The Politics of Archives in South Africa ten years after democracy’, *Innovation* No. 30 (June 2005), 2.

<sup>172</sup> Pickover, ‘Negotiations, Contestations and Fabrications’, 2.

<sup>173</sup> Harris, ‘Claiming less, Delivering more’, 140.

start questioning recalcitrant orthodox archival practices and rigid principles, and be creative and imaginative as they take up the call for social justice, activism and scholarship through their work of documenting, interpreting and mediating the archive.

But what would it mean to rethink a profession that has become imprisoned in scientific reductionism and too bound up in the bureaucratic and the technological constructions of the trade in response to the professional demands exercised on them? How would archives and archivists navigate their way through the webs of archival politics and the politics of archiving? How would archivists start to think themselves out of this predicament of being perceived as passive guardians towards becoming more engaged, imaginative activists and interpreters of archives? As a means to answer these questions, it may be productive to consider the way in which archives tend to shift between conditions of power and precariousness in response to increased competition between institutions for funding and resources, remaining relevant within society while negotiating its relationship to an existing political will.



### ***Between power and precariousness***

Until recently, archives were perceived “as a value-free site of document collection and historical inquiry, rather than a site for the contestation of power, memory, and identity.”<sup>174</sup> Far from being disengaged, archives can never be neutral, sanitised and passive repositories of inert and static objects gathering dust. Though archives might contain ‘old stuff’ or relics, archives are not passive storage vaults of raw, antiquated records as they sometimes engage quite vigorously in public policy debates around freedom of information, the protection of

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<sup>174</sup> Schwartz and Cook, ‘Archives, Records and Power’, 6.



privacy, copyright and intellectual property and issues around digitisation.<sup>175</sup> It is in this sense that archives have and will always be about power.

Recognising that power has always been central to archives, Terry Eastwood and Heather MacNeil have argued:

When public archival institutions were first established, they were defined and defended as bastions of citizen and state rights and laboratories of history. The *raison d'être* of both archives and archival repositories was to serve the needs and interests of law, administration, and history. Contemporary discussions link the purposes of archives and the role of archival institutions to more broadly defined societal needs and interests and revolve around issues of accountability, identity, inclusivity, and social justice. The notions of 'archives as arsenals' and as 'sites of collective memory' encapsulate this broader perspective.<sup>176</sup>

While archives have evolved over the years from first being perceived as bastions of citizen rights and laboratories of history to becoming sites of collective memory and arsenals of accountability and social justice, archives have remained the *loci* of power as they move between the intersection of the past, the present and the future. The archive, according to Jacques Derrida's formulation, opens up into the future because the open archive "produces more archive, and that is why the archive is never closed. It opens out of the future."<sup>177</sup>

George Orwell recognised the inherent power and importance of the archive when he declared in his novel, *1984*:

Who controls the past, controls the future; who control the present, controls the past .... The mutability of the past is the central tenet of Ingsoc. Past events, it is argued, have no objective existence, but survive only in written records and in human experiences. The past is whatever the records and the memories agree upon. And since the

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<sup>175</sup> Schwartz and Cook, 'Archives, Records and Power', 1.

<sup>176</sup> Terry Eastwood and Heather MacNeil (eds), *Currents of Archival Thinking* (Santa Barbara, California: ABC-CLIO, LLC, 2010), viii.

<sup>177</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, translated by E. Prenowitz (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 68.

Party is in full control of all records, and in equally full control of the minds of its members, it follows that the past is whatever the Party chooses to make it.<sup>178</sup>

Derrida and a host of others have reminded us in different ways that “[t]here is no political power without control of the archive, if not memory. Effective democratization can always be measured by ... access to the archive, its constitution, and its interpretation.”<sup>179</sup> More than just reminding us that control of the archive is central to attaining and maintaining political power, it accentuates the importance of archives in society not only for the present but also for the future.

Archives are implicated and entangled in complex webs of power relations which are underpinned by historical, political and economic undercurrents within society. As sites of power, archives have the power to protect and sanctify certain records while dismissing and destroying others. In addition to having the power to privilege some and to marginalise other records, they also control and determine the conditions of access which are enforced through a regime of archival practices, policies and processes. Writing about the power of archives, Joan Schwartz and Terry Cook have argued that archives are “a product of society’s need for information, and the abundance and circulation of documents reflects the importance placed on information in society.”<sup>180</sup>

According to Schwartz and Cook, the very nature of archives is such that they are “active sites where social power is negotiated, contested and confirmed.”<sup>181</sup> More than this, Schwartz and Cook have asserted that archives validate our experiences, perceptions and stories, and this in turn, contributes to a sense of a shared past and cohesion among individuals and

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<sup>178</sup> George Orwell, *Nineteen eighty-four* (London: Penguin, 2013), 35, 213.

<sup>179</sup> Derrida, *Archive Fever*, 4.

<sup>180</sup> Schwartz and Cook, ‘Archives, Records and Power’, 13.

<sup>181</sup> Schwartz and Cook, ‘Archives, Records and Power’, 1.

groups in society. Following the pair's argument, I would argue that archives, as records, and archivists, through their professional responsibilities, wield power over the way in which knowledge is produced. They also lend shape to collective memory and national identity while promoting accountability and social justice.

However, as Schwartz and Cook reminded us, the power of archives and records is also not stable as it is responsive to changes both inside and outside of archives.<sup>182</sup> The power of archives is unstable because archives are vulnerable to changes in archival practices, organisational dynamics, ideological differences and violent conflicts amongst others. This makes the archives a contested terrain fraught with challenges where ideological, political and fiscal battles are waged for the soul of the archives which can be bartered either as a tool of silence and oppression or as a tool of social justice and activism. Alluding to the precarious nature of archives as they shift between power and precariousness, Michelle Pickover has argued, "archives are always about propaganda, rights, desires, lies, ownership, personal histories, trust, nationalism, freedoms, concealments, acquisitiveness and surveillance."<sup>183</sup>

As a consequence, this makes archives a highly sought-after commodity not so much for the information that they may contain but how this information can be used.<sup>184</sup> Pickover cautioned that the vulnerability of archives lies in the way in which the information can be deployed, interpreted, hidden or destroyed by the public, researchers, archivists and the State.<sup>185</sup> Despite the power that archives wield through archival objects and archivists, there still seems to be reluctance, on the part of archivists in particular, to accept the inherent

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<sup>182</sup> Schwartz and Cook, 'Archives, Records and Power', 13.

<sup>183</sup> Pickover, 'Negotiations, Contestations and Fabrications', 6.

<sup>184</sup> Pickover, 'Negotiations, Contestations and Fabrications', 6.

<sup>185</sup> Pickover, 'Negotiations, Contestations and Fabrications', 6.

power of archives and the power that archivists have in shaping the archive. I would argue that this reluctance might be located within the way in which archivists have situated themselves primarily as technicians and custodians in relation to archives. Emphasising this, Pickover has argued that, “[m]any archivists do not see themselves in a social and political context or as documenting history but rather cocooned in the practical world of processing and storing material. Lost in the perceived practical banality of it all, archivists become immersed in their Sartrean selves ... and broader societal terrains are silenced ... and marginalised voices are *de facto* excluded.”<sup>186</sup>

Echoing this argument, Verne Harris has argued that, “any attempt to be impartial, to stand above the power-plays, constitutes a choice, whether conscious or not, to replicate if not to reinforce prevailing relations of power.”<sup>187</sup> Following Harris’ argument, the archivist will unavoidably become engaged in politics even if it is not through their own active decision-making. Harris succinctly noted:

The archive ... is not a quiet retreat for professionals and scholars and craftspersons. It is a crucible of human experience. A battleground for meaning and significance. A babel of stories. A place and a space of complex and ever-shifting power plays. Here you cannot keep your hands clean. Here the very notions of profession and scholarship and craft must be reimagined.<sup>188</sup>

More than just calling attention to the archives as a place of memory, mediation and contestation, Harris points out that the denial of the archives as a site of power and contestation can leave archives in a precarious position because the danger herein is that archives are presented as unproblematic and divorced from socio-economic and political

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<sup>186</sup> Pickover, ‘Negotiations, Contestations and Fabrications’, 3 (emphasis in the original).

<sup>187</sup> Verne Harris, *Archives and Justice: A South African Perspective* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2007), 248.

<sup>188</sup> Verne Harris, ‘Freedom of Information in South Africa and Archives for Justice’ Transactions of Public Culture Workshop, University of the Western Cape, Cape Town, January (2003), 11.

fluctuations. Schwartz and Cook emphatically argued that archivists and users of the archive should realise that, “[p]ower recognised becomes power that can be questioned, made accountable and opened to transparent dialogue and enriched understanding.”<sup>189</sup> If archivists do not question, the archival myth of neutrality and objectivity continues to be perpetuated and worse yet, archivists will continue to privilege the official narratives of the state to the detriment of the personal and multiple narratives of the marginalised and silenced.

In rethinking archives, it has become crucial to understand the underlying power of archives and the umbilical cord they share with scholarship, collective memory and nationhood. In a sense, this understanding of archives, as a site of power, veneration and activism has become almost urgent especially with political uncertainties and other operational challenges that are facing arts and culture projects at present in South Africa. Perhaps as a consequence of the perception of archives as passive storage facilities and the failure to understand the underlying power of archives, archives are marred by neglect and apathy.



### ***The shifting ground of the South African archival system***

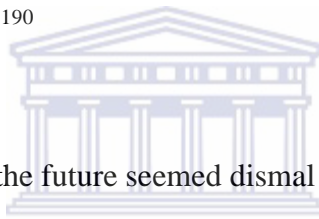
The conceptualisation of the South African national archival system emerged alongside the negotiation process in the early 1990s as part of South Africa’s transition to a democracy. In the wake of sweeping political changes, consultative processes were set up through which practitioners and other stakeholders could participate in developing policy and legislative frameworks for an archival system for the new dispensation. Equally important, these national dialogues and consultative processes provided a platform to discuss an archival strategy for the future that would address issues of redress and transformation. These

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<sup>189</sup> Schwartz and Cook, ‘Archives, Records and Power’, 2.

processes culminated in the formulation of the *National Archives of South Africa Act No 43 of 1996*.

The 1996 Archives Act held much promise, as was articulated by its optimistic and bold agenda, but this promise has not been realised as the initial energy and optimism around transformation waned in the absence of adequate resources, funding and an understanding of the work of archives. According to a recent report prepared by the UCT-based archive and heritage information and promotion agency, Archival Platform, “the optimism that marked the 1990s crumbled away as resources failed to materialise, backlogs in processing archives and records grew to unmanageable levels, training and opportunities for professional advancement became limited ....”<sup>190</sup>



In 2015, the vision of archives in the future seemed dismal and unsettling, at best, beset as archives were with epistemic and political uncertainties in the present. The crisis in which the national archival system found themselves in was already flagged as early as 2007 in ‘Archives at the Crossroads: Open Report to the Minister of Arts and Culture’ following deliberations of the conference, ‘National System, Public Interest’ that considered the dismal state of archives in South Africa. The ‘Open Report to the Minister of Arts and Culture’ argued that the significance of archives is, for the most part, unacknowledged and concluded that the danger herein lies in the creation of an inadequate and strained archival system that is plagued by protracted under-funding and poor service delivery.<sup>191</sup> The stark reality is that after 21 years of transformation processes that were informed by the promissory note of

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<sup>190</sup> ‘State of the Archives: An analysis of South Africa’s national archival system’, 2014 prepared by Archival Platform (2015), 32, Available at [http://www.archivalplatform.org/images/resources/State\\_of\\_the\\_Archive\\_FOR\\_WEB.pdf](http://www.archivalplatform.org/images/resources/State_of_the_Archive_FOR_WEB.pdf), Accessed on 27 May 2015.

<sup>191</sup> ‘Archives at the Crossroads 2007: Open Report to the Minister of Arts and Culture’ from the Archival Conference ‘National System, Public Interest’, April 2007.

democratic change, archives were still under siege from both within and from outside the archival realm. In their report Archival Platform argued:

Much good work was done systematically through the 1990s, but the hopes of that period have not been realised. Today the national archival system is in trouble. Good work is being done only in isolated pockets. There is no overarching policy framework for archives beyond that implicit in national and provincial legislation. The vision of the 1990s has evaporated. Chronic underfunding and a lack of resources is ubiquitous. The political will to change things is largely absent. The system, simply put is not delivering.<sup>192</sup>

Slightly predating this report of Archival Platform, Carolyn Hamilton attributed the crisis facing the national archival system to a combination of fractures, uncertainties, changes and ambiguities around archival inheritances of the colonial and apartheid periods. According to Hamilton, “[t]he neglect of the official archival institutions also speaks to contemporary epistemic and political uncertainties, ambiguities and contradictions surrounding the formal archival inheritance and the many forms of material held in other custodial formations.”<sup>193</sup> Although Hamilton conceded that the crisis in the national archival system was much more complex than bad management and being under-resourced, her argument was mostly concerned with the way in which colonial and apartheid state archives were seemingly being relegated to the margins because they were tainted and dubious in nature, and therefore viewed with distrust.<sup>194</sup>

While Hamilton mostly focused her attention on the swirling turmoil in which the national archival system found itself by looking at public archives, Archival Platform’s report went beyond that. Their report, ‘State of the Archives: An analysis of South Africa’s national

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<sup>192</sup> Executive Summary, ‘State of the Archives: An analysis of South Africa’s national archival system’, 2014 prepared by Archival Platform (2015).

<sup>193</sup> Carolyn Hamilton, ‘Forged and continually refashioned in the crucible of ongoing social and political life: Archives and custodial practices as subjects of enquiry’, *South African Historical Journal* 65:1 (2013), 21.

<sup>194</sup> Hamilton, ‘Forged and continually refashioned in the crucible of ongoing social and political life’, 20.

archival system' considered the way in which this crisis had also filtered through to non-public archives. The report provided a brief analysis of non-public archives by highlighting challenges such as funding and sustainability which was often a cause of immense anxiety and insecurity for some archives. Their report, furthermore, focused on issues of preservation, custodianship and digitisation amongst the challenges experienced with the implementation of collection management strategies. As a means to address these challenges, the report called for greater integration between public and non-public archives, the safeguarding of records and promoting access and use of archives amongst some of the suggested interventions.<sup>195</sup>

Although I strongly agree with most of these interventions, as suggested by Archival Platform, I would argue that the challenges that archives faced run deeper than issues of funding, custody, care or lack of technical expertise. Although these issues can contribute to archives experiencing challenges, I would argue that we need to broaden this peripheral vision by emphasising the need to reimagine archives.<sup>196</sup> By reimagining archives, I would argue that we need a new approach to the way in which we engage with the archives by understanding its work in a democratic society and by escaping the straightjacket of positivist archival theory. Because archives are often surrounded by ambiguities and seemingly insurmountable challenges, archives often find themselves confronting a very uncertain future.

As a way of addressing this uncertain future, I would argue that it is crucial for archivists to study their own history and the records that they work with as this would anchor archivists in a professional identity of their own. Hugh Taylor, a strong proponent of this view advocated

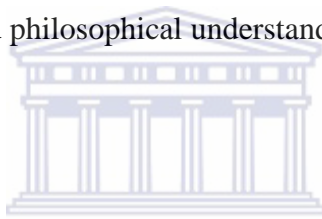
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<sup>195</sup> For a glance at the set of interventions which were proposed to address the crisis of the national archival system see 'State of the Archives: An analysis of South Africa's national archival system', 2014 prepared by Archival Platform (2015), 150-151.

<sup>196</sup> The report makes an argument that one of the interventions into the crisis should be to fundamentally review the archival system as a means to address the deep systemic flaws and structural challenges.



that central to the work of the archivist should be “a new form of ‘social historiography’ to make clear how and why records were created ....”<sup>197</sup> Echoing this sentiment, one of Canada’s pre-eminent archival educators, Barbara L. Craig, argued that the archival profession has a broad outward view in relation to their relationship with other professionals and society but has neglected to direct the view inward which would invite a probing inward analysis of their own history and the records that they are preserving.<sup>198</sup> Craig whimsically argued that instead of being chefs, archivists are waiters who “serve up a sumptuous bill of fare, but they have very little understanding either of the current cuisine or of its history.”<sup>199</sup> It is in this sense that she urged the archival profession to reverse their field of vision. As such, a reversal would enable a robust reorientation of the archival profession that would bring the practical, theoretical and philosophical understanding to how archivists engage with archives.<sup>200</sup>



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As archives are tethering on the edge of either remaining locked in their custodial cloisters or reimagining themselves, I argue that archivists need to adopt a more critical approach to the way in which they work with and within archives. Within a similar vein as Craig, I would also argue that it is absolutely essential for archivists to both study archival history and the history of the archival record itself. The benefits of such an approach may place archivists in a better position to respond to present and future challenges that the archive may face. It may also enable archivists to make informed decisions regarding collections based on the history of the archival record. Though Craig provided archivists with a skeletal framework toward becoming transformed archivists, she acknowledged the difficulty herein as archivists are always being pulled between being philosophers or plumbers. Archivists are often criticised

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<sup>197</sup> Hugh Taylor quoted in Taylor, ‘The Discipline of History and the Education of the Archivist’, 23.

<sup>198</sup> Barbara L. Craig, ‘Outward visions, inward glance: Archives history and professional identity’, *Archival Issues*, Vol. 17, No. 2 (1992), 113.

<sup>199</sup> Craig, ‘Outward visions, inward glance’, 115.

<sup>200</sup> Craig, ‘Outward visions, inward glance’, 113-124.

for their almost exclusive focus on the practicalities or technicalities of their work at the expense of theoretical issues which cannot be disaggregated from the archive, while conversely, they are also ridiculed by scholars and other archivists within the field for even having theoretical aspirations.<sup>201</sup>

### ***The predicament of the archivist***

Quoting Proust, Joan Schwartz asserted, “[t]he real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes but in having new eyes.”<sup>202</sup> She further argued:

If archivists are to discover the new intellectual landscape of ‘the archive’ – to seek out, expose, and address the physical intellectual, procedural, metaphorical, and functional spaces where knowledge and power intersect, to recognize spaces of archives as landscapes of power – then it will be, not only by looking for that territory from within the profession, but also by seeking it through new eyes, including those on the ‘outside’ looking in.<sup>203</sup>

Following from Schwartz’s argument, I would reiterate that it has become pertinent for archivists to re-evaluate their craft with new eyes. One way of acquiring an alternate vision and to reimagine the profession is to reconsider the relationship of history to the archive.

Although archivists have disengaged themselves from the historical profession for numerous reasons which are mostly tied up with the technicalities of archival work, historical research remains a crucial and central component of archival work. Despite the inherent importance of historical research to archival work, it seems that research which is undertaken by archivists is not encouraged within archives, especially if it is at the perceived expense of the technical duties of archiving. Restricted by the technical side of archiving that finds itself in a uneasy relationship with information science/knowledge management and limited by administrative

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<sup>201</sup> Craig, ‘Outward visions, inward glance’, 116.

<sup>202</sup> Joan M. Schwartz, ‘Having new eyes: Spaces of archives, landscapes of power’, *Archives and Social Studies: A Journal of Interdisciplinary Research*, Vol. 1 (March 2007), 362.

<sup>203</sup> Schwartz, ‘Having new eyes’, 362.

policies and procedures, most archivists still perceive themselves as mere technicians or caretakers.

It seems that archivists are firmly caught between this dichotomy between theory and practice which, in part, is of their own doing but in responding to this predicament, archivists need to explore ways of finding a balance as they move between the porous boundaries of the disciplines of archiving and history. In his reflections on the importance of historical knowledge in archival work, Tom Nesmith argued that “archival work is driven by an overriding historical imperative.”<sup>204</sup> Nesmith argued that many archivists had an historical orientation towards their work from as early as the nineteenth century and thus saw themselves both as archivists and historical researchers. However, as the archival profession evolved over the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries with the emergence of various archival manuals that advocated for a more contextual and practical application to archival work, most notably by Hilary Jenkinson, historical research eventually became sidelined and almost came to be regarded as a frivolous pursuit.

Although there were other leading figures such as Samuel Muller and Theodore Schellenberg who argued for an approach to archival work that encompassed history, archivists eventually established themselves as distinct from historians as the practical approach to archiving gained more ground. This resulted in an unfortunate distance between archivists and historians in a relationship that shares several communalities which can be traced back to the nineteenth century. In an attempt to address the emerging tensions in the fractious relationship between archivists and historians and more importantly, to advocate for a more historical or theoretical approach to archiving, Theodore Schellenberg proposed, in his

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<sup>204</sup> Tom Nesmith, ‘What’s history got to do with it: Reconsidering the place of historical knowledge in archival work’, *Archivaria* 57 (2004), 5.

manual, that the best preliminary training that an archivist can have is advanced training in history.<sup>205</sup> According to Schellenberg, this will provide the archivist “with a knowledge of the development of his country” and will provide the archivist with “training in research methodology, which is needed in all the work he does rationalising public records.”<sup>206</sup>

Weighing in on the archivist/historian debate, George Bolotenko argued that, “[t]he archivist and historian are in fact in symbiosis .... [O]ne might say that even as a good archivist needs to be, in some part, an historian, to know the world which interprets the facts in his keeping, the good historian must also be ... an archivist, to understand the world which preserves ... the manna of his calling.”<sup>207</sup> Despite being two sides of the same coin, archivists remain in the predicament in which they are compelled to choose between one of two paths which are either to become an archivist-historian focused on scholarly pursuits or an information technician whose focus is on standardisation and administration. This begs the question, why does it have to be either this or either that? Bolotenko argued that in moving towards the new archivist, the archivist need not necessarily be an historian, but “he should always be an archivist-historian.”<sup>208</sup> He argued that the new archivist should ideally be “a representative of the world of research in the world of administration - skilled in the trends, techniques, personalities, and developments of that world.”<sup>209</sup>

### ***Moving towards the new archivist***

And the often hidden archivist, maybe not even seen by anybody, getting these materials together, organizing them and making sure that they are not going to be destroyed by nature, copying them, conserving them, is doing something very beautiful in terms of our history, something very precious. It's linking up the generations. It's

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<sup>205</sup> Theodore R. Schellenberg, *Modern archives, principles and techniques* (Melbourne: Cheshire, 1956), 131.

<sup>206</sup> Schellenberg, *Modern Archives*, 131.

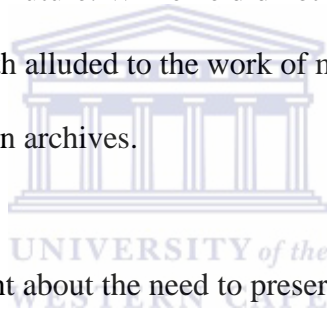
<sup>207</sup> George Bolotenko, 'Archivists and Historians: Keepers of the Well', *Archivaria* 16 (1983), 20.

<sup>208</sup> Bolotenko, 'Archivists and Historians', 20.

<sup>209</sup> Bolotenko, 'Archivists and Historians', 20.

doing something intensely humane. The connections between our ancestors, and we speak a lot about our ancestors in South Africa in different ways : we become the ancestors of others through these material traces and remains, impressions that are kept by the archivists and they are doing it, not for political advantage, not because they are selling the documents, not because they get money. They are doing it simply because it's there, like Everest, because it's there. They are doing it for the unborn... they are doing it, not as we used to think, to guard certainty; they are doing it to protect uncertainty because who knows how the future might use those documents.<sup>210</sup>

In his contemplation of his interaction with archives, former constitutional judge, Albie Sachs considered the paradox of the archives which, for him, rests on a feeling of remembrance and the safeguarding of the future. He beautifully described the work of an archivist as integral in guarding archives for an uncertain future. While he did not articulate it as such, I would argue that his reflections of archives both alluded to the work of mourning and activism that takes place through archival work within archives.



Although I agree with Sachs' point about the need to preserve, safeguard and care for archives, I would argue that in the face of existent crises and future uncertainties, archivists need to do a little bit more than just guarding archives. In transforming the archival landscape from "passive custodial to active interventionist"<sup>211</sup>, it is imperative that archivists become visible both to themselves and to others. They should not hide and quite simply cannot indulge any longer in their constructed invisibility. Instead, through their archival work, archivists should become activists who engage with the public and pursue social justice as a way of fostering social transformation and diversity.

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<sup>210</sup> Albie Sachs, 'Archives, Truth and Reconciliation', *Archivaria* 62 (2007), 14.

<sup>211</sup> Cook, 'The Archive(s) is Foreign Country', 530.

In moving towards the new archivist who, in part, is an advocate and activist for social issues, and very importantly, also a scholar, archivists will have to abandon their comfortable traditional antiquarian approach. The new archivist should interrogate her/his work methodology, acknowledge her/his intervention and subjectivities and recognise that her/his work is highly informed by institutional and societal dynamics. I would strongly argue that the archivist has an obligation to focus on the technical side of their work as much as recognising that archives are spaces of “knowledge, memory, nourishment and power”<sup>212</sup> in which the archivist is entrusted with the responsibility to also interpret the records they work with. In this way, archivists should also actively engage in the production of knowledge and public scholarship.

This perspective of the changing role of the archivist as a critical scholar is informed by the need for transformation of the heritage sector which insists that the role of the archivist can only be transformed if the archivist moves from being a mere custodian concerned with research on the provenance of the collection to the archivist as a critical scholar of the archive who both interrogates archival processes and looks for its deeper epistemic meaning. In moving beyond the archivist as custodian, the transformed archivists become scholars of their own work and their own collections.<sup>213</sup> Writing on the possibility of developing public scholarship through training in museum and heritage studies, Ciraj Rassool and Leslie Witz argued, “If museums are going to take forward their objectives of transformation beyond limited frameworks, this will depend on the extent they are able to develop as sites of

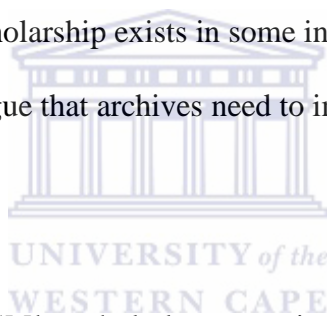
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<sup>212</sup> Randall C. Jimerson, ‘Embracing the Power of Archives’, *The American Archivist*, Vol. 69, No. 1 (2006), 20.

<sup>213</sup> Ciraj Rassool and Leslie Witz, ‘Transforming Heritage education in South Africa: A Partnership between the Academy and the Museum’, SAMP 2001: Strengthening the Network: A meeting of African Museums of the Swedish African Museum Programme, 22-27 August 1999.

research, not only by academics, but by their own staff. This research needs to be rooted in their archives and collections.”<sup>214</sup>

Having identified the ideal characteristics of the new archivist as an activist and a scholar, we have an outline of what the reinvented archivist should look like. Yet the question that remains is: how we would transform the archival landscape in order to facilitate this move towards the new archivist? I would argue that one of the first things to consider in reimagining the archival landscape is for archives to adopt an institutional policy that makes provision for archival scholarship whereby archival staff are encouraged to write, present and publish based on research within their own institutions and also other archives and collections. Although archival scholarship exists in some institutions and in others it exists on a voluntary basis, I would still argue that archives need to implement it as an institutional policy.



Walter Rundell also argued that, “[t]he scholarly curator is a better curator because of the deepened understanding that research and publication bring to his task. Thus, he is better able to serve the needs of history as well as his own institution.”<sup>215</sup> Reiterating this, David Mycue has also made an argument for archival scholarship to become a priority within archives along with creating inventories, indexing and preservation. According to Mycue, “[a] research program in institutional history would provide training for archivists, generate favourable publicity for their institutions, and demonstrate that their collection offered varied services for government officials, academics, or other citizens.”<sup>216</sup> Moreover, archival scholarship will also provide a solid foundation from which archivists can approach other

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<sup>214</sup> Rassool and Witz, ‘Transforming Heritage education in South Africa’.

<sup>215</sup> Walter Rundell and C. Herbert Finch, ‘The State of Historical Records: A Summary’, *American Archivist* 40, No. 3 (July 1977), 344.

<sup>216</sup> David Mycue, ‘The Archivist as Scholar: A Case for Research by Archivists’, *Georgia Archive*, 7: 2 (1979), 13.

archival practices such as appraisal, provenance and description. For example, archival scholarship might assist the archivist in making more informed decisions regarding what is deemed important for research and preservation based on research trends and their own research background.

Verne Harris has powerfully reminded us earlier that in the pursuit of activism and social justice, archives should never be a quiet sanctuary for archivists, scholars and the public.<sup>217</sup> Instead, they should be spaces of vigorous debate, contestation and public engagement as it is constituted and continues to be reconstituted by archivists, record creators, donors, institutional dynamics and political undercurrents. In this intricate nexus, through their archival work, archivists have a significant mission as active memory workers in which they give meaning and shape to memory. In this tumultuous time of archives being under siege, archivists need to take up the call to arms whereby they transform themselves from hoarders of ruins and relics to becoming active participants in which they can be activists of social justice and scholars who contribute towards knowledge production.

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<sup>217</sup> Harris, 'Freedom of Information in South Africa and Archives for Justice', 11.



## CHAPTER THREE

### THE CONFIGURATION OF 'LIBERATION STRUGGLE' ARCHIVES IN POST-APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA

Archives keep the secrets of the state; novels keep the secrets of culture, and the secret of these secrets.<sup>218</sup>

As has been argued in the preceding chapters, the archive, both as an institution and as an episteme, has been at the fulcrum of an intense debate in recent years. More than just reminding us that the archive is a site of struggle shrouded in contestation and ambiguity, these debates have brought into sharp focus the indeterminate and opaque nature of the archive in the way in which it refuses to be fully laid bare and calls attention to the fragility of the archive. With the transition from apartheid to democracy, the new South African state tentatively emerged in the post-apartheid setting burdened by the deeply entrenched psychological scars and documentary inheritances left behind by apartheid and colonialism. These sometimes deeply etched traces have left an indelible imprint on South African society and they continue to operate in very subversive and often insidious ways.

Having inherited the documentary traces of apartheid and colonialism, with which the new South African government has had to contend with, the early 1990s, in particular, also saw a proliferation of what came to be termed as 'liberation archives'. Conceived as one of the ways in which to redress "apartheid-fashioned gaps in social memory,"<sup>219</sup> the formation of liberation archives and the augmentation of existing collecting institutions with anti-apartheid and liberation struggle material were about "bringing the hidden, the marginalised, the exiled,

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<sup>218</sup> Roberto González Echevarría, *Myth and archive: A Theory of Latin American Narrative*, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1998), 33.

<sup>219</sup> Verne Harris, *Exploring Archives: An Introduction to the Archival Ideas and Practice in South Africa*, (Pretoria: National Archives of South Africa, 2000), 11.

the 'other' archive, into the 'mainstream'.”<sup>220</sup> Repatriated from exile, and consisting of the material of previously banned organisations as well as the records of solidarity organisations, and those of activists who had fought in the struggle against apartheid, liberation struggle related materials were unceremoniously thrust into a national process of heritage and archival transformation in the service of promoting the principles of democracy and reconciliation. Highly controversial because of its enduring contemporary significance and mired in continued secrecy as a consequence of the conditions in which they were constituted, liberation archives have been at the forefront of intense debates regarding issues of ownership, commodification, competition, marginalisation, silencing and collective amnesia.

In order to understand some of these complex issues, especially when placed within the greater crisis of the national archival system, this chapter will argue that while the formation of liberation archives held a promise “of unlocking the past, of lifting the veils of secrecy and of transparency,”<sup>221</sup> this, in effect, did not happen. Disillusionment gradually set in with liberation archives becoming increasingly caught up in the politics of identity, heritage and memory pervasive within the larger project of memorialising the liberation struggle. This chapter will argue that in order to understand this process in which some liberation archives have remained locked in secrecy while others have been relegated to the shadowy edges of liberation history, one needs to interrogate the category of liberation archives in post-

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<sup>220</sup> Harris, *Exploring Archives*, 11. During the early 1990s a number of strategies were employed such as publications and exhibitions as a means of bringing the hidden, lost and exiled archive into the mainstream. Emblematic of this endeavour, was an exhibition curated by Gordon Metz, who at the time was the curator of visual collections at the Mayibuye Centre for History and Culture in 1994. The exhibition was entitled 'Margins to Mainstream: Lost South African Photographers' and featured the 'lost' work of Ernest Cole, Bob Gosani, Willie de Klerk, Ranjith Kally, Leon Levson and Eli Weinberg. While the exhibition served as a means of bringing the hidden or lost archive into the mainstream, Gary Minkley and Ciraj Rassool argued that “the 'Margins to Mainstream' exhibition served to locate the Mayibuye Centre and its visual archive ... at the heart of resistance social documentary photography in South Africa.” For a further discussion on the 'Margins to Mainstream' exhibition see Gary Minkley & Ciraj Rassool, 'Photography with a difference: Leon Levson's camera studies and photographic exhibitions of native life in South Africa, 1947-1950', *Kronos*, No. 31 (November 2005), 186.

<sup>221</sup> Michelle Pickover, 'Patrimony, Power and Politics: Selecting, Constructing and Preserving Digital Heritage Content in South Africa and Africa', Conference paper presented at IFLA, Lyon (2014), 5.

apartheid South Africa. In an attempt to understand the category of liberation archives, it is important to consider what is deemed as liberation archives and whether this rendering as a liberation archive has influenced the way in which the history of the liberation struggle have been made more intelligible?

In the popular imagination, and in the rhetoric of political circles and to a certain extent, even in debates percolating within the academic community, there is a widely held notion that liberation archives almost exclusively contain the experience of apartheid and resistance, as seen through the eyes of the liberation movements. In addition, the strategic and prestigious positioning of liberation archives within the political landscape of South Africa made custody of this material very attractive and fashionable. Several archives, universities and museums contended for the coveted prize of being awarded custodianship of the liberation struggle material. In the scramble for these archives and the seeming uncritical acceptance of the liberation archives as the “authentic inheritor of liberation traditions,”<sup>222</sup> I would argue that an often neglected account of the liberation narrative is that of the records of solidarity organisations and other bodies that supported the liberation movements in the struggle for freedom in South Africa.

Set against this background, I would argue that the notion of liberation archives should be opened up to more serious critique by exploring what is deemed as liberation or struggle material, what is included and excluded from such archival repositories and the reasons for their inclusion, marginalisation or exclusion. Perhaps we should call into question the notion of liberation archives by considering who constructed these archives, and who controlled and maintained them and the boundaries of the category of archive. In thinking through the notion

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<sup>222</sup> Bavusile Maaba, ‘The History and Politics of Liberation Archives at Fort Hare’, Unpublished Ph.D Dissertation, (Cape Town: University of Cape Town, 2013), 3.

of liberation archives, it is important to remember that as with any kind of archives, liberation archives are highly political, problematic and contested spaces of knowledge and power.

As a way of situating the Mayibuye Centre for History and Culture within the post-apartheid terrain, where most of these archival institutions came into being, this chapter will explore the ideology and the discourses that underpinned the configuration of the liberation archives. It will do this through a brief focus on the configuration of liberation archives such as the Historical Papers at the University of the Witwatersrand, (Wits), the South African History Archive (SAHA), the South African Democracy Education Trust (SADET) and a more in-depth look at the National Heritage and Cultural Studies Centre (NAHECS) at the University of Fort Hare (UFH) in South Africa. By focusing on the ways and purposes for which liberation archives have been deployed, this chapter will argue that as a result of the politics of post-apartheid South Africa, liberation archives became caught within a nationalist liberation narrative that encourages selective amnesia while simultaneously venerating other aspects of the liberation struggle that fitted with a particular liberation struggle narrative as authorized by the state.

As much as collective amnesia has been nurtured as a condition of the post-apartheid, there has also been a sustained and almost obsessive desire to possess, own and control material related to the liberation struggle as this is considered to be politically fashionable and prestigious. This has led disconcertingly to increased rivalry between liberation archives, with the focus shifting to commodification and ownership which is often subject to political interference. Indeed, the focus has been shifted away from a concentration on the processes of archiving and knowledge production. However, before I further attempt to interrogate the notion of liberation archives through an exploration of the configuration of liberation archives

in post-apartheid South Africa, it is important to place their formation in relation to the wider developments of the South African archival system.

### *Traces of archives in South Africa*

There has been “archive” in South Africa for as long as humans have inhabited this part of the world. Collective stories, passed from generation to generation; rock paintings; signs patterned into dwellings, clothing, shields and so on; markings, temporary and permanent, on human bodies; these and many other forms of archive carried the narratives, messages and beliefs of people for millennia. Their traces can still be found in South Africa today.<sup>223</sup>

Although these traces of archiving can still be found throughout South Africa today, these fragments of the past have been habitually ignored. This may be because they were deemed too pedestrian to preserve except of course, in cases where these pieces of history could be exploited for financial gain. Another reason for them being overlooked is that the written record has always enjoyed more privilege at the expense of other modes of communication and recordkeeping such as the oral, visual and other sensory forms.<sup>224</sup> The arrival of European colonialism from the seventeenth century supplanted these forms of archiving, and by the nineteenth century, formal repositories came into being to manage the resources and administrative challenges of an expanding British empire.<sup>225</sup>

Following these modest pre-national, administrative colonial beginnings, the archival holdings underwent another development with the establishment of the Union of South Africa

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<sup>223</sup> Harris, *Exploring Archives*, 6.

<sup>224</sup> For a discussion on the connections between orality and literacy see See Isabel Hofmeyr, *We spend our years as a tale that is told: Oral Historical Narrative in a South African Chieftdom*, (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1994). Also see Alessandro Portelli, ‘What makes oral history different’, in Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (eds), *The Oral History Reader*, (London: Routledge, 1998), for his argument about the use and function of oral sources in creating meaning, content and form. For a discussion on how visibility has been subordinated to textuality, See Patricia Hayes, Jeremy Silvester and Wolfram Hartmann, ‘Photography, history and memory’ in Wolfram Hartmann, Jeremy Silvester and Patricia Hayes (eds), *The Colonising Camera: Photographs in the making of Namibian History*, (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1998), 2.

<sup>225</sup> Harris, *Exploring Archives*, 6.

in 1910 when they were configured into the nation through the creation of a National Archives Service under the auspices of the Department of the Interior.<sup>226</sup> With the institutionalisation of apartheid in 1948, and especially after the implementation of the Archives Act in 1962, the archives services were transformed into a formidable system with “an extraordinary capacity to secure the support of most white South Africans as well as the acquiescence or collaboration of significant sections of the black population.”<sup>227</sup> In a similar vein as colonialism, the apartheid state also sought to control social memory and the production of knowledge, as well as who had access to knowledge. Focused on legitimising apartheid rule and building support for their ideology, the apartheid state gave attention to constructing memory institutions such as archives, museums, libraries and monuments through which they collected and constructed official narratives that celebrated one set of people and marginalised another.



The struggle for liberation in South Africa was a long and bitter battle in more ways than one. It is a fragmented story marked by pain, loss and suffering because for the most part, the colonial and the apartheid structures sought to categorise, catalogue and classify its subjects through oppressive, discriminatory and often violent acts of dehumanisation and dispossession in the broadest sense.<sup>228</sup> The remnants that remain bear testimony to an unpleasant past, which the apartheid government attempted to destroy in the last few feverish moments of apartheid in the early 1990s, as the country was casting off the iron shackles of apartheid and emerging as a fledgling democracy. According to the findings of an investigation that was launched by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), huge

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<sup>226</sup> Harris, *Exploring Archives*, 6.

<sup>227</sup> Harris, *Exploring Archives*, 7.

<sup>228</sup> While colonialism paved the way for apartheid, the remnants of both colonialism and apartheid have remained visible and the effects are still palpable. In particular, apartheid was very successful in reaching into almost every aspect of the lives of the people which it governed by having control over the “racial classification, employment, movement, association, purchase of property, recreation and so on, all were documented by thousands of government offices”. In Harris, *Exploring Archives*, 8.

volumes of public records were destroyed between 1990 and 1994 in an attempt to sanitise the official record and keep the secrets of the apartheid state buried.<sup>229</sup>

However, the destruction of records by the apartheid state also went beyond that of public records. Apart from the public records generated by the state, there were also the records of resistance and struggles under apartheid, as individuals and organisations also started keeping their own account of the struggle for freedom. Often forced by the long reach of the tentacles of apartheid into informal spaces, liberation movements, solidarity organisations and activists generated records through their activism and resistance work that documented the underground activities and exile experiences of those opposed to apartheid. Harris noted that, “[b]y their silences and their narratives of power, their constructions of experience, apartheid’s memory institutions legitimised apartheid rule. A vast simmering memory of resistance and struggle was forced away into informal spaces and the deeper reaches of the underground.”<sup>230</sup> This material, considered to be subversive by the apartheid state, would constitute the shadow archives of the liberation struggle which would later be deployed as the antithesis or counter archives to the state archives. These archives would remain in the shadows until apartheid was dismantled in the early 1990s.

Often, this perceived revolutionary material would be confiscated during raids, to be used later as evidence against individuals or organisations considered to be enemies of the state. Sometimes they were part of the collateral destruction caused by bombings and other violent acts against those opposed to apartheid. As discussed earlier, some of these surviving non-public records that made it into the twilight of apartheid were subsequently also destroyed

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<sup>229</sup> Verne Harris, ‘The Archival Sliver: Power, Memory, and Archives in South Africa’, *Archival Science* 2 (2002), 64; Also see Harris, *Exploring Archives*, 9.

<sup>230</sup> Harris, ‘Archival sliver’, 69.

during the early 1990s in the hope of whitewashing the historical record.<sup>231</sup> Apart from the deliberate destruction of these records, there were also other ways oppositional voices were suppressed or marginalised through various forms of control and oppressive tactics such as banning, banishment, detention, imprisonment, torture and death.

### ***Constituting liberation archives for a post-apartheid South Africa***

This subversive archival materials that was produced during the course of the struggle for liberation were created through the work of writers, artists, poets, lawyers, teachers, clergymen, activists, political prisoners and ordinary people who in different ways chronicled and expressed their journeys and experiences of fighting against apartheid.<sup>232</sup> These accounts found a voice through the underground but mostly through exiled activities of the liberation movement and the activist work of various individuals and solidarity organisations that, in some or other way, were involved in the struggle. While some political organisations such as the African National Congress (ANC) had a clear archival imperative as Bavusile Maaba's study on the history and politics of NAHECS has suggested, and as the making of the IDAF administrative and organisational records into an archive would suggest, other organisations unfortunately lagged behind.<sup>233</sup>

Hindered by a lack of resources and arrested by the conditions of apartheid, some political and solidarity organisations had not established clear policy guidelines in relation to material generated during the course of their resistance work. These organisations preserved what they

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<sup>231</sup> Harris, *Exploring Archives*, 9.

<sup>232</sup> I draw upon Ann Laura Stoler's description of how the Dutch colonial archives are peopled with administrators, German and French planters and Islamic insurgents. Stoler's emphasis on how archives are peopled through different kinds of human action, interaction and transactions serves as an important reminder of the intimate and animate nature of archives, an aspect which is often neglected when working in the archive. See Ann L. Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense*, (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2009), 21.

<sup>233</sup> Maaba, 'The History and Politics of Liberation Archives at Fort Hare', 39-41.



could and when they could. Coupled with the state confiscation of material considered to be revolutionary and some of the resistance organisations voluntarily destroying their own material, this has resulted in an even more fragmented record of the liberation struggle by the end of apartheid.

After centuries of colonial oppression and four decades of experiencing the brutal force of apartheid, the revolution did not happen. Instead, apartheid was dismantled through a negotiated settlement between the liberation movement and the apartheid government.<sup>234</sup> The transition to a democratic form of government held the promise of a new beginning in which people could imagine better lives for themselves, but more than this, a new democracy carried with it the hopes of social justice, equity and accountability. Amidst the palpable excitement of the changing political situation within South Africa, with the unbanning of political and solidarity organisations, and the return of people from exile in the early 1990s, the records of the liberation struggle also underwent a shift from exile to freedom.

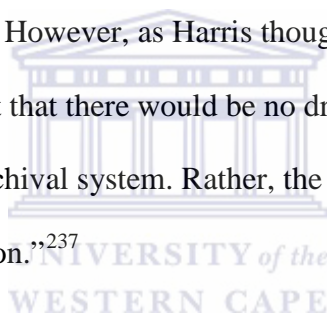
Returning triumphantly from exile, and crafting a prestigious position within a changing political landscape whose agenda, amongst other things, was concerned with the remembering, recuperating and the rewriting of history, the records of the liberation movements, solidarity organisations and records from anti-apartheid activists that documented different aspects of the liberation struggle came to be known as liberation archives. Constitutive of the ‘hidden, exiled or counter’ archives of the liberation struggle, the liberation archives or liberation struggle materials, as it is also sometimes called, were formally positioned in opposition to the state archives through the emergence of a transformation discourse during the early 1990s. A discourse on transformation, especially

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<sup>234</sup> For a trajectory of the negotiated settlement see Steven Friedman & Doreen Atkinson, *The Small Miracle: South Africa's Negotiated Settlement*, (Randburg: Ravan Press, 1994); Willie Esterhuysen, *Endgame: Secret Talks and the End of Apartheid*, (Cape Town: Tafelberg Publishers, 2012).

one that speaks to issues of memory, education and culture can be traced back to as far as the 1970s with the emergence of resistance art and literature and the conceptualisation of a people's education during the 1980s as a means of countering apartheid.

Building upon these projects of memory construction and oppositional historiography which emerged from the 1970s, the transformation discourse of the 1990s was primarily informed by the need for reconciliation, redress and equality. Reflecting on this period, Verne Harris noted that the transformation discourse in archives was constructed "around a commitment to redressing inherited balances and rectifying the exclusions of the past."<sup>235</sup> According to Harris, the impetus of the construction of a transformation discourse around archives was to take the archives to the people.<sup>236</sup> However, as Harris thoughtfully observed, "[t]he nature of the transition to democracy meant that there would be no dramatic dismantling and reconstruction of the apartheid archival system. Rather, the new would be built out of the old through a process of transformation."<sup>237</sup>



Emphasising the tension and challenges this created for archives, Helena Pohlandt-McCormick argued:

Not surprisingly, the years since 1994 have seen South Africa emerge as a complex and conflicted nation, burdened still with the legacy of apartheid and resistance. The legacy is visible in the poverty that now determines most of the divisions in the country. The destruction of historical archives and the concealment or exclusions of materials must be included in the repertoire of the state's efforts to change what was known and remembered of South Africa's past. Less visible, but no less dangerous, are complex patterns of behaviour (habits of secrecy, control, dissimulation, accountability or lack thereof) that have as much to do with apartheid bureaucracies as with resistance politics, most of all in the way they replicate each other. A new culture of remembering and accountability brings new evidence and

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<sup>235</sup> Verne Harris, 'Seeing (in) Blindness: South Africa, Archives and Passion for Justice', *Archifacts*, (October 2001), 5.

<sup>236</sup> Harris, *Exploring Archives*, 5.

<sup>237</sup> Harris, *Exploring Archives*, 10.

historical understanding into the open, but it also brings new challenges.<sup>238</sup>

Although there was a fervent desire to redefine archives during the 1990s, this reimagining had to occur within the constraints posed by an inherited bureaucratic system built upon the injustices and inequality of apartheid as well as the confines of a reconciliation narrative as set out by the agenda of a new democracy in the making. More than two decades later, since apartheid was dismantled and transformation began, and with the clarity of hindsight, I would argue that Harris and Pohlandt-McCormick's observations offer a critical provocation which implores us to think about the nature of a transformation discourse that was framed primarily within the spirit of reconciliation and unification. It provokes us to think what it would have meant if the old archival system was dismantled, in other words, if the new was not built out of the old archival system. If we cannot provide any answers to this question, then at the very least, these observations give us something very interesting to reflect on especially given the challenges and limitations which archives in South Africa have been grappling with in the post-apartheid era.

With the apartheid system being disassembled, the early 1990s saw a flowering of new heritage institutions, national museums, community museums, memorial projects, monuments and archival institutions. The early 1990s also saw the beginnings of a transformation discourse which offered a means through which existing heritage institutions could be reimagined.<sup>239</sup> The Mayibuye Centre for History and Culture at UWC was created

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<sup>238</sup> Helena Pohlandt-McCormick, 'In good hands: Researching the 1976 Soweto Uprising in the State Archives of South Africa' in Antoinette Burton (ed), *Archive Stories: Facts, Fictions and the Writing of History*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 319-320.

<sup>239</sup> Verne Harris, 'The Archival Sliver: Power, Memory and Archives in South Africa', *Archival Science* 2 (2002), 76; Also see Leslie Witz, 'Transforming museums on post-apartheid tourist routes' in Ivan Karp, Corinne Kratz, Lynn Szwaja and Tomás Ybarro-Frausto, with Gustavo Buntix, Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett,

in 1991 as part of this proliferation of post-apartheid heritage institutions. The centre's emergence was followed by the District Six Museum that was established in 1994 and the Robben Island Museum (RIM) in 1996, amongst a host of heritage institutions that came to be at the forefront of change by offering alternative histories and practices. Moreover, these post-apartheid heritage institutions allowed for the other, the marginalised, the exiled, and the hidden to be brought into the mainstream as a means of challenging conceptualisations of the mainstream.<sup>240</sup>

Cognizant of the limitations and omissions within colonial archives, I would argue that liberation archives aimed to perform a significant role in the narration of a new nation-in-the-making, both by filling the gaps in the official record and by potentially serving as “instruments of empowerment and liberation.”<sup>241</sup> Following Richard Harvey Brown and Beth Davis-Brown's argument that archives, libraries and museums “help to preserve a collective national memory and thence, to constitute a collective national identity,”<sup>242</sup> I would argue that liberation archives were configured as one of the ways in which to create modern ‘imagined communities’.<sup>243</sup> As Brown and Davis-Brown argued that, “[a]rchives, libraries and museums help to shape and preserve a shared past and thereby contribute to the social stability and solidarity amid rapid and otherwise more centrifugal change.”<sup>244</sup> Following this argument, I would suggest that liberation archives were deemed as instrumental in the process of nation-building.

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and Ciraj Rassool (eds), *Museum Frictions: Public Cultures/Global Transformations* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 108.

<sup>240</sup> Harris, *Exploring Archives*, 11; For a discussion on the ‘Margins to Mainstream’ exhibition see Gary Minkley and Ciraj Rassool, ‘Photography with a difference: Leon Levson’s camera studies and photographic exhibitions of native life in South Africa, 1947-1950’, *Kronos*, No. 31 (November 2005), 184-192.

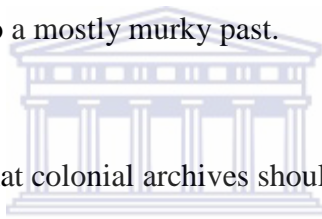
<sup>241</sup> Michelle Pickover, ‘Negotiations, Contestations and Fabrications: The Politics of Archives in South Africa ten years after democracy’, *Innovation*, No. 30 (June 2005), 5.

<sup>242</sup> Richard H. Brown and Beth Davis-Brown, ‘The Making of Memory: The Politics of Archives, Libraries and Museums in the Construction of National Consciousness’, *History of the Human Sciences*, Vol. 11 No. 4 (1998), 19.

<sup>243</sup> See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, (London: Verso, 1991).

<sup>244</sup> Brown, ‘Making of Memory’, 19.

In her insightful study on the Dutch colonial archives, Ann Stoler has argued that colonial archives were as much products of state machinery as technologies that bolstered the production of those states themselves.<sup>245</sup> Taking her argument further, Stoler contended that “[c]olonial archives were both sites of the imaginary and institutions that fashioned histories as they concealed, revealed, and reproduced the power of the state.”<sup>246</sup> While liberation archives were forged in the shadows of the underground or in exile as subversive and counter to the archives of the apartheid state, following Stoler’s argument, it can be argued that in post-apartheid South Africa, liberation archives were deployed to help bolster the production of the new democratic state. However, as with all archives, liberation archives also revealed as much as they concealed. Holding mere fragments of the past, they could only ever offer temporal and spatial incisions into a mostly murky past.



Significantly, Stoler has argued that colonial archives should be regarded as epistemological experiments and as sites of contested knowledge.<sup>247</sup> According to Stoler, “scholars should view archives not as sites of knowledge retrieval, but of knowledge production, as monuments of states as well as sites of state ethnography.”<sup>248</sup> Although Stoler’s study exclusively focused on colonial archives, I would argue that parts of her argument could also be productive in thinking through the questions of what constituted liberation archives, how they are shaped and how this rendering as liberation archives influenced the way in which these archives were positioned between power, knowledge and state. Following Stoler’s argument of thinking of the archive as a site of knowledge production rather than as source, I would argue that such a shift in thinking allows for the possibility of a more critical way of

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<sup>245</sup> Ann L. Stoler, ‘Colonial Archives and the Arts of Governance’, *Archival Science* 2 (2002), 98.

<sup>246</sup> Stoler, ‘Colonial Archives’, 97.

<sup>247</sup> Stoler, ‘Colonial Archives’, 87

<sup>248</sup> Stoler, ‘Colonial Archives’, 90.

thinking through the notion of the liberation archive and begs for a more critical approach of doing archival work not only in colonial archives but also in liberation archives.

By thinking of archives as sites of knowledge production and the way in which they are crafted by specific political and social conditions of a particular time, Stoler proposed that colonial archives should not only be read against their grain but also along their grain. She emphasised that, “[w]e need to read for its regularities, for its logic of recall, for its densities and distributions, for its consistencies of misinformation, omission and mistake, along the archival grain.”<sup>249</sup> Offering a critique of this attempt to read the colonial archive against and along the grain in *The Deaths of Hintsa*, Premesh Lalu argued that the tainted and subjective nature of colonial archives placed serious limitations on the way in which the subjectivities of the colonised could be recovered from the colonial record.<sup>250</sup>

In an earlier article which discussed the effects of digitisation, Lalu emphatically argued that the colonial archive was a political tool, as a means of controlling knowledge and subjugating the subjects of the empire.<sup>251</sup> Finding resonance with certain aspects in the way in which colonial archives were put in the service of colonialism, not much has changed as archives in the post-apartheid have also done the work of “fostering South Africa’s post-apartheid collective amnesia by bolstering a linear master narrative, in mythmaking, in invention, in silencing, in the self-commodification and commodification of the Archive, in marginalising the ‘other’ ....”<sup>252</sup>

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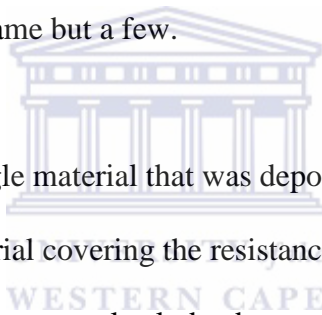
<sup>249</sup> Stoler, ‘Colonial Archives’ 92.

<sup>250</sup> Premesh Lalu, *The Deaths of Hintsa*, (HSRC Press: Cape Town, 2009).

<sup>251</sup> Premesh Lalu, ‘The Virtual Stampede for Africa: Digitisation, Postcoloniality and Archives of the Liberation Struggles in Southern Africa’, *Innovation* 34 (June 2007), 36.

<sup>252</sup> Pickover, ‘Patrimony, Power and Politics’, 3.

However, in sharp contrast to colonial archives that racially excluded, omitted and elided, liberation archives held the promise of “archives for the people, by the people”<sup>253</sup> in which the colonial subject could be reconstituted as an equal citizen of the new nation in the making. As the State Archives Service was clambering to reinvent and reassert itself within a rapidly changing environment of political and social transformation, various liberation archives started to emerge as records were repatriated to South Africa with the hope of redressing past imbalances.<sup>254</sup> Among these struggle archival repositories that mushroomed as a result of the influx of these collections were existing ones like Historical Papers at Wits, and new ones like the Mayibuye Centre for History and Culture at UWC, NAHECS at the UFH, the Nelson Mandela Foundation’s Centre of Memory, SAHA, South Africa History Online (SAHO) and SADET to name but a few.



In addition to the liberation struggle material that was deposited here in South Africa, a vast record of liberation struggle material covering the resistance activities of anti-apartheid activists and solidarity organisations was also lodged at various institutions abroad. This included the records of the Anti-Apartheid Movement (AAM) at the University of Oxford, ANC material at the University of Connecticut and the anti-apartheid movement collection at the Netherlands Institute for Southern Africa, amongst some of the more prominent collections housed abroad.

Complementing these rich resources of material objects, yet also adding another layer of complexity by offering a response to changes in technology, the years since 1994 have also seen a concerted effort of various digitisation initiatives as a means of preserving evidentiary material past struggles and efforts at resistance, disseminating information and promoting

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<sup>253</sup> Randall Jimerson, ‘Embracing the Power of Archives’, *The American Archivist*, Vol. 69: 1 (2006), 32.

<sup>254</sup> The State Archives Service reinvented itself as the National Archives in terms of the National Archives of South Africa Act in 1997.

greater access to archives. Some of these digitisation initiatives have included the creation of Digital Imaging South Africa (DISA), the Aluka project which entered into a partnership with DISA, the African Activist Archive project at Michigan State University (MSU), the creation of SAHO, the Nordic Documentation on the Liberation Struggle in Southern Africa, an initiative of the Nordic African Institute and the digitisation drive by the Historical Papers at Wits. All these initiatives were committed to preserve the records of the liberation struggle and to promote access to information by creating online libraries and archives around themes that spoke to liberation struggles in Africa.<sup>255</sup> Although some of these digitisation initiatives had varying degrees of success, the feverish drive to digitise has underlined the vulnerability of the archive and the degree to which archival collections were exposed to being exploited, violated and plundered, especially through digitisation initiatives, in which the neo-colonial often took the guise of open source. This troubling tendency has compelled a number of scholars and critics to argue for a more critical approach toward digitisation.<sup>256</sup> More than just “aggregating documents in cyberspace”<sup>257</sup>, digitisation projects are embedded in a politics of digitization. Here, Pickover suggested,

Digital technology does not just add something, it changes everything, it brings social, political, cultural environmental and economic changes and it accelerates the globalization process. ... Clearly cyberspace is not an uncontested domain. The digital medium contains an ideological base – it is a site of struggle. So the real challenges are not technological or technical, but social and political.<sup>258</sup>

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<sup>255</sup> For a discussion on the history of the Aluka project, its collaboration with DISA and the epistemological, political and technical complexities which can surround digitisation initiatives see Allen Isaacman, Premesh Lalu and Thomas Nygren, ‘Digitization, History, and the Making of a Post-colonial Archive of Southern African Liberation Struggles: The Aluka Project’, *Africa Today*, Vol. 52, No. 2 (2005), 55-77; For a discussion on the development of the DISA project see Michelle Pickover, ‘Patrimony, Power and Politics: Selecting, Constructing and Preserving Digital Heritage Content in South Africa and Africa’, Conference paper presented at IFLA, Lyon (2014), 9-17.

<sup>256</sup> See Premesh Lalu, ‘The Virtual Stampede for Africa: Digitisation, Postcoloniality and Archives of the Liberation Struggles in Southern Africa’, *Innovation* 34 (June 2007), 29-44; Pickover, ‘Patrimony, Power and Politics’, 9-17.

<sup>257</sup> Pickover, ‘Patrimony, Power and Politics’, 9.

<sup>258</sup> Pickover, ‘Negotiations, Contestations and Fabrications’, 8.



Beyond the “technical matters of preservation and access”<sup>259</sup>, scholars such as Jacques Derrida have emphasised that “the mutation in technology changes not simply the archiving process, but what is archivable - that is, the content of what has to be archived is changed by the technology.”<sup>260</sup> In other words, the technique of archiving changes the records as “every interaction, intervention, interrogation, and interpretation by creator, user, and archivist is an activation of the record”<sup>261</sup>, which becomes even more pronounced with the proliferation of electronic records. More than just being mediated and activated, digitisation creates a “fetishism with technology”<sup>262</sup> in which many of these digitisation projects have become caught up in contestations over power, ownership, copyright issues and access. Located in unequal power relationships in which information has become commodified, especially information deemed to have political and economic relevance such as the histories of the liberation struggles in Africa, it has created what Premesh Lalu has termed as the “virtual stampede for Africa” in which knowledge flows from the South to the North. This resonates with earlier forms of knowledge imperialism which has both bolstered inequities and further exacerbated the historical divide between the North and South relations.<sup>263</sup>

This brief exploration of digitisation initiatives, particularly concerned with documenting, preserving and creating access to liberation struggle material has highlighted the way in which digitisation can alter the records. Yet it has also revealed the complex political, epistemological and economic challenges brought about by the drive to digitise, which are

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<sup>259</sup> Lalu, ‘The Virtual Stampede’, 34.

<sup>260</sup> Derrida, *Archive Fever*, (as endnote 16), 17.

<sup>261</sup> Eric Ketelaar, ‘Tacit Narratives: The Meaning of Archives’ *Archival Science* 1 (2001), 137.

<sup>262</sup> Lalu, ‘The Virtual Stampede’, 31.

<sup>263</sup> For further discussions on the effects of digitisation see for example Premesh Lalu, ‘The Virtual Stampede for Africa: Digitisation, Postcoloniality and Archives of the Liberation Struggles in Southern Africa’, *Innovation* 34 (June 2007); 33-42; Peter Limb, ‘The Digitization of Africa’, *Africa Today*, Vol. 52: 2 (2005), 3-19; Michelle Pickover, ‘Patrimony, Power and Politics: Selecting, Constructing and Preserving Digital Heritage Content in South Africa and Africa’, Conference paper presented at IFLA, Lyon (2014), 9-17; Carolyn Hamilton, Verne Harris, Michele Pickover, Graeme Reid, Razia Saleh, Jane Taylor (eds), *Refiguring the Archive*, (Cape Town: David Philip, 2002), 17.

often aggravated by the failure to understand the contestations around the process of digitisation. Although recent years have seen an increase in literature around issues of digitisation, especially with academic studies interrogating the challenges and effects of digitisation at the UWC Robben Island Mayibuye Archives and at NAHECS, I would argue that the question around digitisation needs to be opened up to even more scholarly and public debate.<sup>264</sup> The question of technology poses an interesting challenge to archives and deserves more in-depth study. However, a study of such magnitude needs to be taken up somewhere else as it falls beyond the scope of this dissertation.

As mentioned before, for the purposes of this dissertation, and as a way of situating the formation of the Mayibuye Centre for History and Culture within the larger framework of other archives housing liberation struggle material, I will discuss only four archival projects liberation archives in relation to the Mayibuye Archives as a way of exploring their configuration as liberation archives and how they have formed part of the construction and the promulgation of a new national identity. In discussing the configuration of liberation archives, I will focus on Historical Papers at Wits, SAHA and SADET. In particular, I will focus on the configuration of NAHECS at the UFH in relation to the Mayibuye archives as such a comparative analysis is significant given the communalities between Fort Hare and UWC.

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<sup>264</sup> For more discussions around the digitisation initiatives in South Africa see Stephen Anderson's master's thesis on the organisational challenges of digitising archival collections at the UWC Robben Island Mayibuye Archives in Stephen Anderson, 'The Challenges of Digitising Heritage Collections in South Africa: A Case Study', Unpublished Master's Thesis (University of the Western Cape, Bellville, 2013); And Anthea Josias' study on the challenges of digitising photographic collections at the UWC Robben Island Mayibuye Archives in Anthea Josias, 'Digitising photographic collections with special reference to the University of the Western Cape - Robben Island Museum Mayibuye photographic archive', (University of the Western Cape, Bellville, 2000); Also see Bavusile Maaba's Ph.D dissertation for a discussion on the contestations surrounding digitisation in Maaba, 'The History and Politics of Liberation Archives at Fort Hare', 236- 246;

By briefly discussing the emergence of some of these institutions in historically and politically specific ways, it is hoped that this will better shape our understanding of them as sites of memory, power and contestations and the processes through which these institutions have been crafted as liberation archives. Some of these institutions that came to be known as liberation archives or as archives of liberation struggle material have had their antecedents in memory projects such as the collection of oral history and arts and culture projects which can be traced further back than the 1990s.<sup>265</sup>

The Historical Papers research archive at Wits came into existence in 1966 and came to house an expansive and comprehensive collection of over 3300 collections covering history, politics and culture from the mid-seventeenth century to the present day. Situated in the William Cullen Library, Historical Papers is an independent research archive, located in an academic setting, with collections pertaining to trade unions, labour organisations, political parties, human rights organisations, churches, women's organisations and activists. These collections matched the social history and labour history interests of many scholars in its School of Social Sciences. Comprised of a large collection of political trials, oral interviews, press clippings, photographs and other paper-based material, one of the primary aims of Historical Papers has been to serve the broader community and the university by making the archive more accessible for research.

Concerned with the preservation of “irreplaceable evidential testaments of human experience on which social equality is built,”<sup>266</sup> Historical Papers embarked on a digitisation drive with the financial support from the Atlantic Philanthropies Foundation and the Carnegie Corporation of New York. In keeping with their mandate, which is to “empower civil society

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<sup>265</sup> Harris, *Exploring Archives*, 11.

<sup>266</sup> Historical Papers: A platform for research and community engagement, Available at <http://www.historicalpapers.wits.ac.za/>, Accessed on 30 June 2015.

through access to information,”<sup>267</sup> the digitisation project covered a broad and diverse spectrum of collections such as political trials, inquiry commissions, and the papers of prominent historical figures amongst others which dated back to as early as the seventeenth century to the more recent records of the 1990s.<sup>268</sup>

Another one of the newer archival developments that eventually came to share a space with Historical Papers until recently, was SAHA. With its beginnings in the late 1980s, SAHA was established by anti-apartheid activists who had close ties with the United Democratic Front (UDF), the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) and the ANC.

Describing itself as an “independent human rights archive dedicated to documenting, supporting and promoting greater awareness of past and contemporary struggles for justice through archival practices and outreach, and the utilisation of access to information laws,”<sup>269</sup> SAHA committed itself to collecting and preserving liberation struggle material from individuals and organisations opposed to apartheid. The archival collections at SAHA comprised audio-visual collections, oral history collections, posters, photographs and archival material pertaining to the TRC, trade unions and the UDF.

Apart from documenting aspects of the South African democracy in the making, preserving archival material and making this material accessible to schools, universities and the broader public, SAHA also had quite a progressive and activist agenda through which they structured their work. As a way of promoting their activism and advocacy, SAHA had initially

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<sup>267</sup> Historical Papers: A platform for research and community engagement, Available at <http://www.historicalpapers.wits.ac.za/>, Accessed on 30 June 2015; Also see Zofia Sulej, ‘Changing Landscapes: The University Archive in a new South Africa’, *ESARBICA* 28 (2009), 158-159.

<sup>268</sup> For a better sense of the scope of Historical Papers’ digitization activities see their website at <http://www.historicalpapers.wits.ac.za/index.php?digital/U/>, Accessed on 30 June 2015.

<sup>269</sup> ‘About the South African History Archive’, Available at [http://www.saha.org.za/about\\_saha.htm](http://www.saha.org.za/about_saha.htm), Accessed on 30 June 2015, Also see Seán Morrow & Luvuyo Wotshela, ‘The state of the archives and access to information’ in John Daniel et al (eds), *State of the Nation: South Africa 2004-2005* (Pretoria: HSRC Press, 2005), 329-330.

structured their work around two core programmes. One was the Freedom of Information Programme (FOIP) through which SAHA made use of the Promotion of Access to Information Act 2 (2002) as a way of creating public access to information, and the other was the Struggles for Justice (SFJ) Programme which focused on the collection, preservation and creation of access to archival materials.<sup>270</sup> The most recent addition to the activist work of SAHA was the Right to Truth (RTT) project, a pilot project focused on creating access to the records of the TRC.<sup>271</sup>

South Africa's transition to democracy in 1994 also marked a change in how funds would be dispersed in the future. The election of a newly democratic government meant that international funders could now channel their funds elsewhere, as required, and that the elected government was now in a position to allocate funds to different programmes. While the health of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) once might have been high on the list of priorities for the new government, they had other more pressing challenges such as inequality, poverty, unemployment and lack of basic services that needed to be addressed.

It is in this sense that the government instead started to fund programmes that focused on the reconstruction and the development of the country through basic services such as housing, health and education. The government's focus primarily on these kinds of programmes had an adverse effect on the funding of cultural programmes. In fact, many NGOs folded up in the 1990s as a result of a lack of resources. SAHA had almost fallen victim to a similar fate as their funding dried up and left their continued existence in the balance. Following quite a turbulent period in 1994, an agreement was reached between Wits and SAHA with the

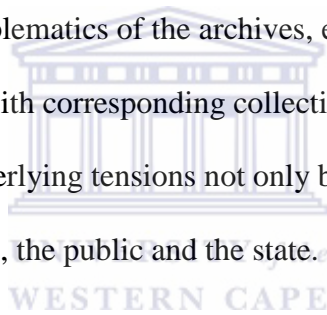
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<sup>270</sup> 'About the South African History Archive', Available at [http://www.saha.org.za/about\\_saha.htm](http://www.saha.org.za/about_saha.htm), Accessed on 30 June 2015.

<sup>271</sup> 'About the South African History Archive', Available at [http://www.saha.org.za/about\\_saha.htm](http://www.saha.org.za/about_saha.htm), Accessed on 30 June 2015.

signing of a Memorandum of Agreement (MOU) which enabled SAHA to move to Wits, where it came to share the same space as Historical Papers.

However, sharing the same physical location with SAHA only exacerbated the space constraints which Historical Papers had already started to experience as a result of its growing collections. In her study of the historical development of university archives and their changing role in democratic South Africa, Zofia Sulej emphasised the serious space problem of Historical Papers by arguing for the construction of a new archival building or to upgrade the existing infrastructure because the “collections are being severely compromised by the unsuitable and inadequate storage areas.”<sup>272</sup> While Sulej’s study did not attempt to engage with the tensions and problematics of the archives, especially between archives such as Historical Papers and SAHA with corresponding collection strategies, I would argue that her study subtly hinted at the underlying tensions not only between archives but also between archives, their hosting institutions, the public and the state.



While the issue of space physically constrained the work of Historical Papers, as noted by Sulej, I would argue that this only underlined the contentious nature of the relationship between two archives that were independent from each other, both of them jockeying for the prime position in becoming a leading archive in South Africa housing liberation struggle material. Another challenge in this union, which proved to be quite a complex issue for both Historical Papers and SAHA, was that the collection of SAHA was regarded as separate, according to the MOU, yet SAHA had to adhere to the requirements as set out by the head of Historical Papers even though SAHA had its own director.<sup>273</sup> This situation resulted in a very fraught and contentious relationship between Historical Papers and SAHA. Part of the

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<sup>272</sup> Sulej, ‘Changing Landscapes’, 159.

<sup>273</sup> Maaba, ‘The History and Politics of Liberation Archives at Fort Hare’, 234.

solution to this challenge came in the form of SAHA securing new funding in 2001. This resulted in a revised MOU with Wits which, as Bavusile Maaba has emphasised, led to “two separate research archives which not only operate and are managed entirely separately but are in competition with one another.”<sup>274</sup>

The challenges experienced by Historical Papers and SAHA point to what Michelle Pickover described as the competition between non-state archives for records of the anti-apartheid struggle which increased ever since the 1990s and was further fuelled by a lack of institutional support and resources.<sup>275</sup> In addition to the inadequate support given by the government, universities and other custodial institutions, Pickover pointedly argued, “[s]ome archivists become obsessed with possessing information that is perceived to be politically fashionable and consequently prestigious and celebrated. Collections and collecting then reflect possession rather than process, access or preservation.”<sup>276</sup> Although the revised MOU provided temporary functionality and respite in the contentious relationship between Historical Papers and SAHA, the latter eventually moved from Wits and found a new location for themselves at Constitution Hill in Braamfontein. This also confirmed SAHA’s existence as an independent NGO and ensured that it would not be confused with an academic archive.

Writing about various archival initiatives in South Africa, Seán Morrow and Luvuyo Wotshela argued that one of the ways of overcoming some of the challenges faced by physical archives was to create archives which often came in the form of oral history projects.<sup>277</sup> A few of these projects worth mentioning have been the ANC Oral History

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<sup>274</sup> Maaba, ‘The History and Politics of Liberation Archives at Fort Hare’, 235

<sup>275</sup> Pickover, ‘Negotiations, Contestations and Fabrications’, 5; 8.

<sup>276</sup> Pickover, ‘Negotiations, Contestations and Fabrications’, 5.

<sup>277</sup> Morrow & Wotshela, ‘The state of the archives and access to information’, 325.

Project in partnership with the University of Connecticut and the research produced by the SADET project, which culminated in the consolidation of oral testimonies into a published study covering different aspects of the liberation struggle in South Africa and the creation of a tangible archive of 1100 oral history recordings.<sup>278</sup> Established as a project under the presidency of Thabo Mbeki, in response over a “concern about the paucity of historical material on the arduous and complex road to South Africa's peaceful political settlement after decades of violent conflict,”<sup>279</sup> SADET was developed to focus on resistance politics by analysing the events of the four decades of apartheid and resistance which preceded the negotiated settlement and South Africa’s road to democracy in the 1990s.

In particular, the focus of the SADET series was to provide a voice for those who have previously been rendered voiceless by the imposition of the apartheid structures by drawing on the experiences of struggle veterans and activists as well as on the documentary material contained within the archives of the liberation movements, the state and trial records.

Although SADET has arguably been a useful project, especially in giving a voice to the marginalised and providing a more nuanced history of the liberation struggle, I would argue that as a presidential project, and having received credibility from the liberation movements, the accounts of the struggle in the SADET series have been tinged with triumphalism in which politics have been privileged at the expense of “agrarian, labour, cultural, gender and other areas of social life.”<sup>280</sup>

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<sup>278</sup> Morrow & Wotshela, ‘The state of the archives and access to information’, 325; Also see Anthea Josias, ‘Methodologies of Engagement: Locating Archives in Post-Apartheid Memory Practices’, Unpublished Ph.D Dissertation (University of Michigan, Michigan, 2013), 175- 215.

<sup>279</sup> ‘Historical Background of SADET’, Available at [http://www.sadet.co.za/about\\_us.html](http://www.sadet.co.za/about_us.html), Accessed on 12 August 2015.

<sup>280</sup> Morrow & Wotshela, ‘The state of the archives’, 325.



In addition to these objections of being a government intervention in which certain narratives were privileged, there was also the issue of the project's over-reliance on memory as a source of information without necessarily applying the rigour of additional archival research. More than this being representative of a "post-apartheid patriotic history,"<sup>281</sup> in her doctoral study of archival thinking and practices through post-apartheid collective memory frameworks in South Africa, Anthea Josias argued that despite these limitations "SADET provided the opportunity for contestation of which version would triumph in an institutionalisation project of note."<sup>282</sup>

Another instance that illustrated the configuration of archives and the deeply contested terms which sometimes framed their constitution, was one which played itself out in a small university town located in the Amathole district in the Eastern Cape. Established in 1916 in the small rural town of Alice in the Eastern Cape, the South African Native College, which was later renamed the University College of Fort Hare, for many years remained one of the only academic institutions that provided for the higher education of Africans, and for the early phase of its history, for other blacks as well.<sup>283</sup> The University of Fort Hare (UFH), as it is known today, has a long and illustrious history of providing one of the training grounds in which resistance struggle figures such as Oliver Tambo, Robert Sobukwe, Govan Mbeki and Chris Hani and scholars like I.B. Tabata and Z.K. Matthews were nurtured. Given the UFH's involvement in cultivating the minds of some the luminary figures in the struggle for independence on the African continent and its close association with the liberation

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<sup>281</sup> Martin Legassick quoted in Josias, 'Methodologies of Engagement: Locating Archives in Post-Apartheid Memory Practices', 194.

<sup>282</sup> Josias, 'Methodologies of Engagement: Locating Archives in Post-Apartheid Memory Practices', 215.

<sup>283</sup> For a history of the University of Fort Hare see Donovan Williams, *A History of the University College of Fort Hare, South Africa – the 1950s: The Waiting Years* (Lewiston, New York: Mellen Press, 2001); Also see Daniel Massey, *Under Protest: The Rise of Student Resistance at the University of Fort Hare* (Pretoria: Unisa Press, 2010) for the university's involvement in the liberation struggle.

movements in South Africa, it was decided that the university would become the repository of the liberation movements in the early 1990s.

However, this was not a decision that was taken lightly. After much debate about installing the ANC archives at Fort Hare, the ANC finally decided in 1991 to deposit their archives at the UFH. Amidst intense debate and disappointment for some who had hoped that the material would be deposited with them, Nelson Mandela announced that the ANC archives would be lodged at Fort Hare. Explaining this decision, Mandela said:

The University of Fort Hare should be proud for having produced such outstanding sons and daughters of the African continent. We, in the African National Congress, salute the university for the manner it has impacted the struggle for the liberation of our country. The struggle for the liberation of our country is clearly indebted to and has benefitted enormously from the individual and collective distribution of such visionaries and stalwarts who at various times have graced the liberation movement with their dignified and selfless presence. The names of Z K Matthews, O R Tambo, Robert Sobukwe, I B Tabata and Govan Mbeki evoke nothing but respect and such qualities as have underpinned our liberation struggle through the long and lean periods of our struggle. We recognise the fact that the history of the African National Congress is interwoven with that of the University of Fort Hare. It is for this reason that the African National Congress has resolved to lodge its archives with the University of Fort Hare.<sup>284</sup>

There was some opposition to this decision as some in the ANC felt that Fort Hare would be inaccessible for researchers because of the remote and isolated location of the university. Others such as Nelson Mandela, Oliver Tambo and Govan Mbeki (who, at the time, were highly placed within the ANC) moved for Fort Hare to be designated as the archival site for the ANC's repatriated struggle material. Revitalised by the prospect of hosting the archives of one of the liberation movements, UFH went on a forceful acquisitions drive whereby they approached the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC), the Azanian People's Organisation

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<sup>284</sup> Nelson Mandela quoted in Maaba, 'The History and Politics of Liberation Archives at Fort Hare', 63.

(AZAPO), the Unity Movement and the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) in order to become the premier archival destination of all the liberation movements in South Africa.

This was also a decision that simultaneously placed two historically black universities, namely UFH and UWC directly into a conversation and into a competitive struggle with each other, with both institutions coveting the prized materials pertaining to aspects of the liberation struggle.<sup>285</sup> Although the emergence of the Mayibuye Centre for History and Culture at UWC, which was configured in anticipation of the end of apartheid and initially built on some of the visual and documentary materials of IDAF's research programme, predated the development of the liberation archives project at UFH, it was the latter that eventually won the struggle over the archives of the liberation movements.

While the historical development of the Mayibuye Centre at UWC will be discussed later in the dissertation, it is important to note that the Mayibuye Centre and the liberation archives project at UFH were conceptualised along similar lines with both institutions having proposed a museum component and an archival component documenting the struggle for liberation in South Africa.<sup>286</sup> Beyond the similarities and contentions between these two institutions, this period saw the installation of diverse, yet equally significant collections pertaining to the liberation struggle at UFH and UWC. Yet, it can be argued that by being located at universities at the margins as determined by apartheid's institutional resourcing, this might have served to limit the power and effect of these collections. This was

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<sup>285</sup> This point was raised by Helena Pohlandt-McCormick in her brief discussion of the liberation archives at UFH and at UWC in which she argued that it is interesting that liberation struggle material was relocated to these two historically black universities, both historically disadvantaged by their location at the margins of development in geographical terms and their hierarchy in relation to other tertiary institutions. See Helena Pohlandt-McCormick, 'Taking risks in the Post-colonial archive: Towards a post-colonial thinking of the archive', Unpublished seminar paper presented at the South African Contemporary History and Humanities Seminar, Centre for Humanities Research, UWC (16 April 2013), 11. (Permission to cite obtained from author).

<sup>286</sup> 'Liberation Archives Project: An Institutional Plan', University of Fort Hare (NAHECS, University of Fort Hare, Alice).

compounded as the liberation struggle was turned into under-resourced heritage collections as part of reconciliation. The effect was that these materials were placed in seclusion, where they were unable to stir up trouble in the new society that seemed to settle into the diversity of reconciliation and the new rainbow nation.

Having established a solid relationship with the ANC in exile through its representative, André Odendaal, and especially after it already received ANC records from the London and Lusaka missions, UWC thought that the Mayibuye Centre was destined to receive the rest of the ANC's most prized material. However, this was not meant to be, and instead of UWC being bestowed with the honour of having the archives of the liberation movement lodged with them, this honour went to UFH.<sup>287</sup> In fact, the struggle for the ANC material later intensified when the ANC demanded that their material from the London and Lusaka missions be returned to them, upon which it was later shipped to Fort Hare after the removal of sensitive documents.<sup>288</sup> Whereas the Mayibuye Centre previously led the development of liberation struggle initiatives, and was also used as a model for the creation of other institutions, in a move that illuminates the way in which archives can become a means of empire-building, the Mayibuye Centre was surpassed in its efforts of being regarded as the premier destination of liberation struggle material.

As Fort Hare was positioning itself to become the foremost custodian of the material of the liberation movements, the Mayibuye Centre was left mainly with the corpus of the IDAF administrative and organisational records, records from trade unions, anti-apartheid and solidarity organisations, NGO's and individual archives of prominent struggle veterans,

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<sup>287</sup> Maaba, 'The History and Politics of Liberation Archives at Fort Hare', 64.

<sup>288</sup> For an account of the removal of the ANC collection at UWC see Thozama April, 'Theorising Women: The intellectual inputs of Charlotte Maxeke to the discourse of the Liberation Struggle in South Africa', Unpublished Ph.D Dissertation (University of the Western Cape, Bellville, 2012), 224-225.

activists, as well as lesser known individuals involved in the liberation struggle. Although the archival holdings at the Mayibuye Centre constituted in itself a treasure trove and were considered to be representative of aspects of the liberation struggle, which carried with it a certain level of prestige, it is clear that the two projects were not afforded equal status.<sup>289</sup> This was evident from the way in which both the ANC and UFH approached the issue of custodianship by it being made clear to UWC that they had lost the battle for the ANC archives despite assurances that the Mayibuye Centre project will also receive equal attention.

Alluding to this contention regarding the archives of the liberation movements, in the 'Strategic Plan' of the Centre for Cultural Studies (CCS) it was emphasised that "[t]he Centre [CCS] does not even compare with the UWC Mayibuye Centre because the latter receives records mainly from individual depositors of the liberation movement. The overlap that exists is indeed negligible."<sup>290</sup> With this statement the CCS revealed the prevailing sentiments regarding the Mayibuye Centre's endeavour of becoming the foremost liberation archive in the country but also importantly alluded to perceptions of what constituted liberation archives. In another meeting between the ANC and the Fort Hare Archives held in 1995, this contention regarding the competition for liberation struggle material and what can be deemed as liberation struggle material resurfaced, when Manileo Tau (who then headed the ANC archives project at Fort Hare at that point) asked Frene Ginwala about the possibility of

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<sup>289</sup> Although UWC had cultivated a relationship with the ANC amongst other organisations in exile, the ANC maintained that it had not made an agreement with UWC regarding the depositing of the ANC material at UWC and indeed later the ANC demanded that the records from London and Lusaka which already had found their way to UWC, be returned to the ANC headquarters after which it was shipped to Fort Hare. See Maaba, 'The History and Politics of Liberation Archives at Fort Hare', 92.

<sup>290</sup> 'The Strategic Planning, Centre for Cultural Studies', University of Fort Hare (NAHECS, University of Fort Hare, Alice), 1.

acquiring anti-apartheid archives from Europe. Ginwala responded by saying that they should not infringe on the collection policy of the Mayibuye Centre.<sup>291</sup>

Ginwala's response is interesting and tended to suggest that 'liberation archives' as defined by the liberation movements, did not necessarily include the material that was generated by solidarity organisations and the anti-apartheid movement. Beyond this, it also suggested that the Mayibuye Centre was not given the same prestige as the liberation archives project at Fort Hare because the Mayibuye project primarily contained the collections of IDAF and a few other solitary organisations and individuals. This is evident from the reductionist terms in which the Mayibuye Centre was framed through its depiction as an arbitrary repository made up of the lone collections of individuals. In certain ways, this explains some of the tensions which later emerged between the two projects at UFH and UWC. Unfortunately, some of this tension also structured and exacerbated the respective futures of both archival locations.

Despite controversy and unhappiness regarding the decision to lodge the ANC material at UFH, other organisations such as the Unity Movement, PAC, AZAPO and the BCM followed the ANC's lead by also signing agreements with UFH at a momentous event held in Johannesburg on 26 October 1992 which allowed for the depositing of their material at the CCS at the university.<sup>292</sup> Being a historically black university with an illustrious past that had produced a number of black intellectuals and prominent political figures across Africa such as Robert Sobukwe, I.B. Tabata, Robert Mugabe and Govan Mbeki, amongst others, it seemed a fitting choice, particularly against the background of a fast evolving political

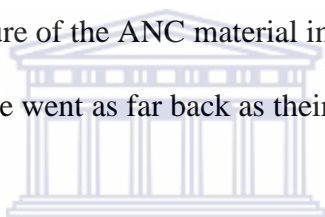
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<sup>291</sup> Minutes of the meeting of the ANC/Fort Hare Archives Committee, 21 April 1995, ANC Archives (NAHECS, University of Fort Hare, Alice).

<sup>292</sup> 'Preparatory Project: Archives and Museum of Resistance', Centre for Cultural Studies, UFH (NAHECS, University of Fort Hare, Alice), 1; Also see 'Agreement of Deposit: Memorandum of Agreement entered into by and between the African National Congress and the University of Fort Hare', University of Fort Hare (NAHECS, University of Fort Hare, Alice).

landscape in which it seemed likely that the ANC would become the new ruling party in South Africa.

Offering quite a detailed account of the politics and challenges surrounding the formation of NAHECS and by looking at the challenges of constructing an archive with the explicit purpose of housing struggle material of the liberation movements, Bavusile Maaba studied the emergence of NAHECS by focusing on the politics around the repatriation of the material of the ANC, PAC and the BCM to the archive. Maaba's study traced the idea of an archive which came to house the material of the liberation movements at UFH back to 1990. While this idea of a liberation archive germinated following preliminary discussions between the ANC and Fort Hare about the future of the ANC material in 1990, Maaba's study suggested that the ANC's archival imperative went as far back as their days in exile.



Maaba argued that the ANC's archival imperative was evident from the construction of an archive at the Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College (SOMAFCO) in Tanzania which was used to house the records and artefacts generated from the ANC's educational and cultural activities. In addition to the construction of a building that served as the repository for the material, some SOMAFCO students were also sent for training in order for them to become archivists.<sup>293</sup> Symbolically, some of these students from SOMAFCO would later become the future archivists of some of the most prominent archives housing material pertaining to the liberation struggle in South Africa.<sup>294</sup>

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<sup>293</sup> Maaba, 'The History and Politics of Liberation Archives at Fort Hare', 39-40.

<sup>294</sup> Ike Maamoe and Andre Mohammed, both former students at SOMAFCO, studied and later became archivists. Both Maamoe and Mohammed respectively, continue to work at the CCS at UFH and the UWC Robben Island Mayibuye Archives at UWC.

With the end of apartheid and the repatriation of liberation struggle material to South Africa, the ANC's archival imperative eventually materialised in a pledge to deposit the records of the ANC at UFH, much to the chagrin of other institutions that also competed for the custodianship of the ANC's archival records. Exemplifying the importance and enormity of the privilege of becoming the custodian of the archives of the liberation movements as well as alluding to the prestige of being associated with such a project, the vice chancellor and rector of UFH, Mbulelo Mzamane stated in the Institutional Plan for the Liberation Archives Project in 1993 that:

Being granted custodianship of the archives of the liberation movement was the most significant responsibility given to the University of Fort Hare in the new South Africa. It marked a turn-around, a reversal of the negative legacy of apartheid. We became a privileged institution as the repository of the liberation archives.... The liberation archives brought previously unimagined prestige to our institution. The facility has also created potential for the betterment of the University's academic programmes.<sup>295</sup>

Although Maaba attributed this desire of Fort Hare to become the custodian of the liberation movements' material as divorced from power, resources and influence,<sup>296</sup> I would argue that this desire had everything to do with power and acquiring prestige and political capital within a rapidly changing political setting. Emphasising the privilege associated with hosting the archives of the liberation movements and further alluding to the power struggles between institutions contending for the material of the liberation struggle, Mzamane cautioned that, "[u]niversities in South Africa, better resourced, equipped and organised than any of the other institutions previously assigned exclusively to Africans, continue to watch the genesis of this project closely. We must ensure continued support for the University of Fort Hare in thwarting criticism and engendering positive feedback from the academic sector."<sup>297</sup>

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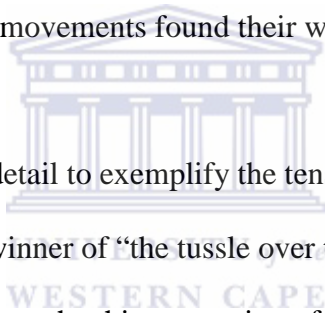
<sup>295</sup> 'Liberation Archives Project: An Institutional Plan', University of Fort Hare (NAHECS, University of Fort Hare, Alice).

<sup>296</sup> Maaba, 'The History and Politics of Liberation Archives at Fort Hare', 106.

<sup>297</sup> 'Liberation Archives Project: An Institutional Plan', University of Fort Hare.



This is a point which has also been argued by Michelle Pickover, as she observed that many institutions became engaged in a tense scramble for liberation struggle collections in the quest for prestige.<sup>298</sup> According to Pickover, “[c]ollections and collecting then reflect possession rather than process, access or preservation.”<sup>299</sup> Exemplifying the tensions, competition and challenges between institutions in the pursuit of liberation struggle material, Maaba revealed in his dissertation the extent to which archives can be structured around what is deemed politically prestigious.<sup>300</sup> Maaba further argued that while UFH had a very vigorous acquisitions drive by which it cultivated relationships with the liberation movements in a bid to become the premier hosting archival institution of the liberation movements, UWC in contrast, was only concerned with the records of the ANC and did very little to ensure that the records of the other liberation movements found their way to the Western Cape.<sup>301</sup>



Although Maaba went into great detail to exemplify the tensions between UFH and UWC in his depiction of Fort Hare as the winner of “the tussle over the archives”<sup>302</sup>, which left “UWC licking its wounds”<sup>303</sup>, I would argue that his contention of UWC as unconcerned with the material of other organisations is not entirely substantiated. Having embarked on a cultural and historical project from as early as the late 1980s which aimed to establish an apartheid museum and an archive dedicated to housing material of the liberation struggle, UWC proved itself to be one of the earliest pioneers in the field of cultural and historical work.<sup>304</sup> During the 1980s and 1990s, it became the foremost university associated with resistance, and it had

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<sup>298</sup> Pickover, ‘Negotiations, Contestations and Fabrications’, 5-7.

<sup>299</sup> Pickover, ‘Negotiations, Contestations and Fabrications’, 5.

<sup>300</sup> See Maaba’s discussion on the proactive and determined way in which Fort Hare approached other liberation movements with the hope that they will follow the ANC’s lead by depositing their material with Fort Hare. In Maaba, ‘The History and Politics of Liberation Archives at Fort Hare’, 73-80.

<sup>301</sup> Maaba, ‘The History and Politics of Liberation Archives at Fort Hare’, 64, 106, 228

<sup>302</sup> Maaba, ‘The History and Politics of Liberation Archives at Fort Hare’, 57.

<sup>303</sup> Maaba, ‘The History and Politics of Liberation Archives at Fort Hare’, 64.

<sup>304</sup> See Confidential Memorandum from Lieb Loots to the Rector, University of the Western Cape, in Academic Planning Committee Working Group re Establishment of Historical and Cultural Centre including an apartheid museum at UWC, Background Documents, Volume 1, 1986-1987 (André Odendaal papers).

a credible basis of preparing the groundwork for a museum of apartheid that would house such collections.

While Maaba attributed UWC's proposal for a cultural and historical centre as tied to their desire to become only the custodian of the ANC material, UWC had in fact also approached other organisations in exile apart from the ANC. For example, it acquired part of the original records of the Workers' Party of South Africa, the underground Trotskyist formation that was the main source for the formation of the Unity Movement.<sup>305</sup> Although Maaba painted a picture of UWC as having unsuccessfully pursued the ANC material in exile, I would argue that UWC was successful in other regards as it was actively engaged in the pursuit of cultural and historical material from other organisations and individuals. And the ANC in London gave its support to these moves.<sup>306</sup>



Framed within national debates regarding transformation and various consultative processes which started to emerge during the early 1990s, the ANC's Arts and Culture Desk set up a Commission for Museums, Monuments and Heraldry (CMMH) in 1991 as a vehicle for the formulation of a national policy on museums, monuments archives, heraldry and national symbols that would both safeguard and educate people about the heritage of South Africa. Chaired by Wally Serote, head of the ANC's Arts and Culture Desk and coordinated by Professor Themba Sirayi, director of CCS at UFH, the objective of the CMMH was to work towards "a common integrated and integrating cultural framework that [would help] to

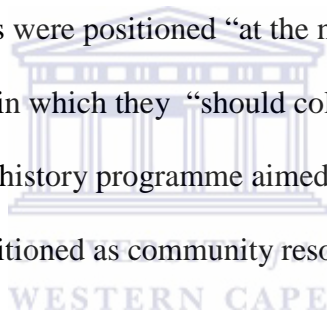
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<sup>305</sup> The other half of the collection was placed in Historical Papers at Wits. See Ciraj Rassool, 'The Individual, Auto/Biography and History in South Africa', Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, (University of the Western Cape, Bellville, May 2004), 3.

<sup>306</sup> Barry Feinberg, *Time to Tell: An activist's story* (Newtown: STE Publishers, 2009), 126.

promote the shared cultural identity and to put such identity at the centre of the development paradigm.”<sup>307</sup>

Criticising heritage institutions that were created under apartheid, the CMMH castigated these institutions for being “otiose, monuments of privilege, waste of money, institutionalised proof of white hegemony and abuse of the environment and culture.”<sup>308</sup> Having recognised that there was no coherent national policy for the management of heritage resources, the CMMH sought to advance a national policy through which heritage institutions and structures could “foster national unity, reconciliation and democratic values and be accessible to and preserved for the education, benefit and development of all South Africans.”<sup>309</sup> In the ANC’s proposed national policy, archives were positioned “at the nexus of cultural and civil rights” their role was accentuated as one in which they “should collaborate with cultural and heritage institutions in a people’s history programme aimed at empowering the voiceless, and [where] archival centres [are] positioned as community resources, not simply repositories.”<sup>310</sup>



Framed against this background, the CMMH convened a workshop near Bloemfontein in March 1992 with the objective of discussing the development of heritage policies. Drawn together from a wide range of experts and activists, the workshop expressed both disquiet over the wholesale destruction of state records dealing with the liberation struggle and a

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<sup>307</sup> ‘ANC Policy for Transformation and Development of Heritage Resources (Museums, Monuments, Archives and National Symbols) for a Democratic South Africa’, Discussion paper presented on behalf of the ANC Commission for Museums, Monuments and Heraldry to the ANC Culture and Development Conference, Civic Theatre, Johannesburg, May 1993 (NAHECS, University of Fort Hare, Alice), 1.

<sup>308</sup> ‘ANC Policy for Transformation and Development of Heritage Resources (Museums, Monuments, Archives and National Symbols) for a Democratic South Africa’, 1.

<sup>309</sup> ‘ANC Policy for Transformation and Development of Heritage Resources (Museums, Monuments, Archives and National Symbols) for a Democratic South Africa’, 2.

<sup>310</sup> ‘State of the Archives: An analysis of South Africa’s national archival system, 2014’ prepared by Archival Platform (University of Cape Town: Cape Town, 2015), 28.

growing concern regarding the status of records that were confiscated by the state from liberation organisations at the height of apartheid.<sup>311</sup>

As a result of these concerns, it was suggested that a moratorium should be placed on the destruction of such records and that records that were seized should be returned to the place or individual from where they were taken. Following the workshop, the ANC appointed an archives subcommittee which was tasked with examining the state of archival management in the country, formulating a draft archival policy document and to make recommendations regarding the transformation, popularisation and democratisation of existing archives.<sup>312</sup>

Shortly after the ANC returned from exile, the seemingly destined-to-be-new government-in-waiting established new headquarters in 1991 at Shell House in Johannesburg. In another move, the ANC further emphasised their commitment towards transforming existing cultural and heritage institutions and structures, as well as developing new ones by establishing an archives unit. Responsible for the repatriation of material from 33 ANC missions from different parts of the world, the ANC's Archives Division had an enormous task which was often plagued by organisational and logistical challenges that were deepened by a lack of capacity and human resources.<sup>313</sup>

The challenges inherent in repatriating evidentiary material from across the globe surfaced through the arrival of the SOMAFSCO material that arrived directly from Tanzania, unchecked and unprocessed at Fort Hare in 1992. This prompted the ANC in becoming more cautious with regard to the repatriated material, with Shell House, in a sense, becoming a

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<sup>311</sup> Graham Dominy, 'Archives in a Democratic South Africa', *S.A. Archives Journal*, Vol. 35 (1993), 67.

<sup>312</sup> Dominy, 'Archives in a Democratic South Africa', 67.

<sup>313</sup> For a longer discussion on the challenges of the ANC's archives unit see Maaba, 'The History and Politics of Liberation Archives at Fort Hare', 48-57.

holding area in which subsequent repatriated material from other missions were quarantined, sorted and sequestered from public memory. There they waited to be sifted and sanitised. Analysing the state of archives and access to information in 2004, Morrow and Wotshela argued that “this episode does reveal a shift in balance within the governing party, with a moment of openness between exile and office, a utopian pause between the old regime and the new realities, regrettably if predictably giving way to a more secretive mode.”<sup>314</sup>

The developments around the formulation of heritage and cultural policies and other heritage initiatives laid the foundation for the configuration of a liberation archive at UFH. Being regarded as “singularly fitted to be the repository of the records of the liberation movement because its chequered history [was], in itself, a mirror of the struggle of the oppressed people”, UFH was tasked with driving the establishment of the liberation archives project focused on “two structures of national importance, namely the Archives and the Museum of Resistance.”<sup>315</sup> Divided into three categories, the university’s archival holdings consisted of liberation archives, cultural heritage archives and university records which were housed between the spaces of the CCS and the University Library. In particular, the objectives of the archives were to support research on the liberation struggle in South Africa, to serve as a community resource, to support tertiary and school curriculum development, establish links with similar archives of the South African liberation struggle, be recognised as a national treasure and to be consolidated into a specially designed archival building which will also be representative of a monument to the struggle.<sup>316</sup>

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<sup>314</sup> Morrow & Wotshela, ‘The state of the archives’, 329.

<sup>315</sup> ‘Preparatory Project: Archives and Museum of Resistance’, Centre for Cultural Studies, UFH (NAHECS, University of Fort Hare, Alice), 1.

<sup>316</sup> ‘Liberation Archives Project: An Institutional Plan’, University of Fort Hare (NAHECS, University of Fort Hare, Alice).

Initially installed at the aptly renamed CCS, it seemed that the Centre was “destined to become the Mecca of the history of the struggle for liberation and the champion of the cultural dimension of development.”<sup>317</sup> Established in 1981 and formerly known as the Centre for Xhosa Literature that focused on collecting and preserving oral and written Xhosa material, it was transformed in 1991 into the CCS in the spirit of the changing political tide.<sup>318</sup> Under the leadership of Prof. Themba Sirayi, who was actively involved in formulating policies for the management of heritage resources through his strategic deployment as national coordinator within the ANC’s CMMH, I would argue that this, perhaps, gave the CCS a strategic political advantage when it came to a decision regarding the placement of the archives of the liberation movements.

Framed within new terms of reference, the CCS was charged with being the repository and custodian of archival material pertaining to arts, oral and literary materials, to serve as an educational resource for the academic community and wider public and to preserve this material.<sup>319</sup> However, similar to most historically black tertiary institutions in South Africa, the UFH also bore the burden of apartheid’s discriminatory laws which divided universities along ethnic and racial lines. While the legacy of apartheid left an indelible scar on the very fabric of life in South Africa, it also left institutions such as Fort Hare with serious challenges which needed to be addressed. It is, in this sense, that the archives of the liberation movements soon found their development plagued by various challenges. Describing these challenges as crisis flashpoints in the Institutional Plan of the Liberation Archives Project, several concerns were identified regarding capacity building, funding, resources and

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<sup>317</sup> ‘Preparatory Project: Archives and Museums of Resistance’, Centre for Cultural Studies, University of Fort Hare (NAHECS, University of Fort Hare, Alice).

<sup>318</sup> ‘Highlights: 1981-1994’, Centre for Cultural Studies, University of Fort Hare (NAHECS, University of Fort Hare, Alice).

<sup>319</sup> ‘Highlights: 1981-1994’, Centre for Cultural Studies, University of Fort Hare.

preservation challenges stemming from the challenges incurred in the implementation of the liberation archives project.<sup>320</sup>

Having not been able to escape unscathed from apartheid's grip, Fort Hare started picking up the pieces in the 1990s by starting a process through which issues such as sub-standard education, crumbling or lack of infrastructure and academic staff could be addressed. Added to this headache was the development of the archives of the liberation movements which the university was not primed for as the archives required financial resources, infrastructure and staffing. According to Maaba, this placed the archives at a "risk of not being properly managed and not meeting certain archival standards."<sup>321</sup>

Although several measures such as the recruitment of archival specialists were put in place as a means of addressing the challenges of the development of the archives,<sup>322</sup> there were some at the university and within the ANC who felt that the CCS could be doing more in relation to the research and preservation of the ANC archives. It was also the general consensus among some at the university that the CCS was not doing enough in order to procure more struggle material as some of this was lost to rival institutions.<sup>323</sup> In addition to these challenges, the CCS also required a sustained source of financial assistance in order to repatriate some of the material and for the remuneration of archival work.<sup>324</sup>

The other vexing issue that troubled the liberation archives project was the question of a proper archival facility. This prompted the ANC into action by having a series of meetings in order to ascertain the status of acquiring a suitable site for their archival records. In a

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<sup>320</sup> 'Liberation Archives Project: An Institutional Plan', University of Fort Hare.

<sup>321</sup> Maaba, 'The History and Politics of Liberation Archives at Fort Hare', 95.

<sup>322</sup> Maaba, 'The History and Politics of Liberation Archives at Fort Hare', 96-106.

<sup>323</sup> Maaba, 'The History and Politics of Liberation Archives at Fort Hare', 111.

<sup>324</sup> 'Liberation Archives Project: An Institutional Plan', University of Fort Hare.

confluence of increasingly troubling meetings between the CCS and the ANC, the contentious decision to transfer the ANC archives from the CCS to the University Library was taken at a meeting on 3 May 1994.<sup>325</sup> Although the reasons cited for this decision were based on the failure of the CCS to adhere to the strategic plan of the liberation archives project in appropriately accommodating, preserving and researching the ANC collection, I would argue that the relocation of the ANC archive was mostly tied to what seemed to resemble misunderstandings, personal politics and party alignment.

With the ANC archives transferred to the University Library in 1995 under the direction of head librarian, Manileo Tau, the CCS barely survived the battle for the ANC archives. Left with the archives of the other liberation movements, the CCS started to regroup by building partnerships with universities such the University of Michigan and by re-engaging in negotiations with De Beers regarding the building of an archives complex.<sup>326</sup> After years of delay, the CCS which was then subsequently renamed NAHECS, finally got a new building fully equipped in terms of archival regulations and the preservation needs of the archival collections. NAHECS opened on 19 September 1998. Ironically, as Maaba observed, the ANC material was returned to NAHECS in January 2010 after plans of the university and the library to “extend the building for [the] proper storage of the ANC archives did not materialise.”<sup>327</sup>

After briefly covering the emergence of some institutions that came to house struggle material and discussing the politics around their configuration, it is hoped that this has cast

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<sup>325</sup> ‘ANC Archives Project: An Update’, in CCS (NAHECS, University of Fort Hare, Alice); Also see Maaba’s Chapter Three, ‘The battle for the ANC archives: the CCS versus the University Library’, in Maaba, ‘The History and Politics of Liberation Archives at Fort Hare’, 107-146 for a more detailed discussion on the confluence of events which led to the relocation of the ANC archives to the University Library.

<sup>326</sup> ‘Liberation Archives Project: An Institutional Plan’, University of Fort Hare.

<sup>327</sup> Maaba, ‘The History and Politics of Liberation Archives at Fort Hare’, 197.



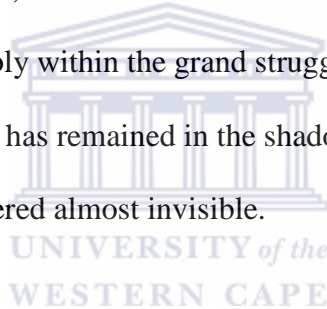
some light on the deeply contested and complex nature of these archives, uneasily poised between issues of power relations, memory politics and political patronage. More than this, I would argue that the discussion above has revealed or at the very least, has intimated that there are more than just challenges of limited financial resources and infrastructure or issues of institutional rivalry and competition over struggle material. Rather than framing this history of collecting as a horse race through an obstacle course, I would argue that the problems of archiving liberation material lie deeper than the circumstances visible on the surface. These are the issues that this dissertation investigates through a study of the IDAF collection.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### IN THE SHADOWS OF HISTORY: THE MAKING OF THE IDAF ARCHIVE IN LONDON

This chapter provides a history of IDAF that conducted critical work in supporting the liberation struggle in South Africa. It traces the socio-political conditions and relations for the formation and origins of IDAF from its early beginnings of support for the Treason Trial in the 1950s to its subsequent banning in South Africa in 1966 and its continued clandestine operations in London. Notwithstanding its critical support work for the liberation movement, little is known about IDAF. Perhaps as an unintended consequence of the secretive nature of its work, IDAF, even as an archive, has continued to be shrouded in mystery. Also the story of IDAF seems to sit uncomfortably within the grand struggle narrative of individual heroism. For these reasons, IDAF has remained in the shadows of South African historiography and has been rendered almost invisible.



As a way of addressing this lack of understanding around the history of IDAF, this chapter explores the complex cultural history and political life of IDAF as a solidarity organisation. By considering the time during which these records were created and shaped at different points during the existence of IDAF through their movement from exile to freedom when they were repatriated to South Africa, this chapter seeks to understand the conditions for the assemblage of an archive. In grappling with the broader concern of this dissertation which seeks to trace the constitution of the IDAF administrative and operational records into becoming fixed archival holdings within the UWC Robben Island Mayibuye Archives, it is imperative to understand the genealogy of the IDAF administrative records and the way in which the records were shaped and given meaning.

During its 35-year existence, IDAF operated, for the most part, as a clandestine organisation from London in support of the liberation movement in South Africa. The support work of IDAF generated a vast amount of diverse material consisting of legal records, official and personal correspondence, publications, photographs, films, microfilms, travelling exhibitions and posters. These records constituted the clandestine administrative records of a solidarity organisation that supported the liberation movement through legal and social welfare funding, but also, crucially, through their information and awareness campaigns. Although the contribution of international solidarity was recognised as being instrumental in defeating apartheid, the importance of IDAF's work has, for the most part, remained in the shadows of history.

In a speech made at the closing conference of IDAF in London on 25 May 1991, Professor Kader Asmal, an exiled South African and convenor of the Irish Anti-Apartheid Movement (IAAM), recognised the history of the IDAF as intrinsic to the South African history of liberation.<sup>328</sup> This was a sentiment that Nelson Mandela reaffirmed in an interview with Denis Herbstein in 1992, by describing the relationship of IDAF to the liberation movements as one that was absolutely crucial and formidable.<sup>329</sup> Yet, as formidable as this organisation was and as integral as IDAF was to the liberation story, its contribution to the liberation struggle is not only hardly known or acknowledged, but its history has been caught up in the post-apartheid politics of memory. This is evident from the glaring omission and marginalisation of the work that IDAF conducted in the various narratives of the struggle

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<sup>328</sup> 'Final Conference of IDAF, London 24-26 May 1991', 6 in Barry Feinberg collection, MCH 89, Box 18, Folder "IDAF", Historical Papers (UWC Robben Island Mayibuye Archives, Bellville); Denis Herbstein, *White Lies: Canon Collins and the secret war against apartheid* (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2004), 330.

<sup>329</sup> Herbstein, *White Lies*, 327.

against apartheid, such as autobiographies and biographies that have been written subsequently as well as in published histories on the struggle for liberation.<sup>330</sup>

There are exceptions to this marginalisation of the role of IDAF in post-apartheid narratives of the liberation struggle. One is a book written by Denis Herbstein entitled *White Lies*, where the pivotal work of IDAF in the liberation struggle was the central focus.<sup>331</sup> Other published work includes a chapter that was written by Al Cook for the third volume of the *The Road to Democracy in South Africa* series, simply entitled 'The International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa', where he reflected on the contributions and challenges of IDAF in providing support to the liberation struggle.<sup>332</sup> Margaret Lenta's focus on the personal letters from IDAF's welfare assistance programme also offered a way of understanding the importance of these documents as material pieces of history. In her study, Lenta used these letters to cast light on the suffering and everyday experiences that women and families, in particular, had to endure under apartheid.<sup>333</sup> In addition to Lenta's brief exploration of the letters from the welfare assistance programme, research by Helena Pohlandt-McCormick on the welfare programme has also suggested the significance of IDAF as an archival collection.<sup>334</sup>

Except for this scant literature on the history of IDAF, and almost ironically in keeping with the clandestine way in which IDAF operated, Herbstein has argued that it is almost as if

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<sup>330</sup> See for example Nelson Mandela, *Long walk to freedom* (London: Little, Brown, 1994); Martin Meredith, *A True Gentleman: Nelson Mandela, A Biography* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1997); Anthony Sampson, *The long walk to freedom of Nelson Mandela* (London: Random House, 2000).

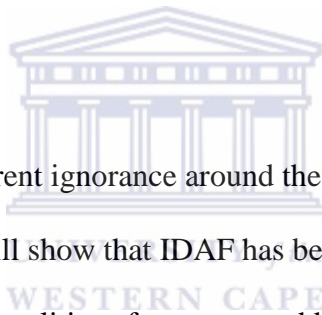
<sup>331</sup> Herbstein, *White Lies*.

<sup>332</sup> Al Cook, 'The International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa, or IDAF,' in *The Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 3, International Solidarity, Part I* (Pretoria: South African Democracy and Education Trust and Unisa Press, 2008).

<sup>333</sup> Margaret Lenta, 'History effaced: the International Defence and Aid Letters', *Social Dynamics*, 34:2, (2008), 203-215.

<sup>334</sup> Helena Pohlandt-McCormick, 'Taking Risks in the Post-Colonial Archive: Towards a Postcolonial Thinking of the Archive', Unpublished seminar paper presented at the South African Contemporary History and Humanities Seminar, Centre for Humanities Research, University of the Western Cape, (16 April 2013).

“IDAF has been airbrushed out of the liberation script.”<sup>335</sup> However, I would argue that rather than being airbrushed out of the liberation script, the culture of secrecy that marked IDAF’s often clandestine support work in London has continued to have effects, resulting in an inadequate understanding of its history in the liberation struggle. According to the former executive director of IDAF, Horst Kleinschmidt, IDAF was “an organisation that quietly, avoiding all limelight, performed a critical, specialised and professional role that complemented the political struggle for southern Africa’s liberation over a 30 year period.”<sup>336</sup> It can be argued that since the work of IDAF was shrouded in secrecy, which was a necessary prerequisite given the apartheid dangers in relation to which it operated, it is understandable that today few traces can be found of their operations in representations of the history of the liberation struggle.



In seeking to understand the apparent ignorance around the contribution of IDAF to the liberation struggle, this chapter will show that IDAF has been relegated to obscurity as a consequence of the post-apartheid politics of memory and because of the clandestine way in which IDAF operated during the struggle. This style of working was necessary but has had far-reaching effects with regard to its marginalisation in struggle history. In questioning the relative invisibility of IDAF within liberation discourses in South Africa, I will argue that the work of IDAF has been marginalised because its history, as an organisation, provides the possibility for more divergent, nuanced and textured narrations of the struggle against apartheid. I will also argue that what has now become its historical records, can perhaps destabilise the triumphalist, romantic struggle narrative pervasive within nationalist discourses

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<sup>335</sup> Herbstein, *White Lies*, 327.

<sup>336</sup> Horst Kleinschmidt, ‘The role of the International Defence Aid Fund’, Paper presented at the International Anti-Apartheid Movements in South Africa’s Freedom Struggle: Lessons for Today, University of KwaZulu-Natal, ICC, Durban, 10-13 October 2004.

of the liberation struggle or at least underline the fragmentary history of the liberation narrative.<sup>337</sup>

In a keynote address to a conference marking one hundred years of the ANC in 2011, Philip Bonner argued that, “[a]s history becomes more politically instrumental, it tends to be more homogenised and stripped down. Inconsistencies, the ignoble, even the human, get airbrushed out. Most critically, failures cannot be adequately addressed because the grand narrative of struggle is ultimately heroic and correct.”<sup>338</sup> While this argument might not necessarily lead to a conclusion of a conscious and deliberate silencing of the history of IDAF, I would argue that this narrative has resulted in its relative anonymity. This was because some materials within the IDAF archival collection, in particular the welfare and legal work that IDAF engaged in during the liberation struggle, fell outside the political project actively promoted by a few of the new political elite in South Africa. Driven by the ideals of justice and providing aid, IDAF had left behind a legacy of support work which found expression through welfare and legal aid. Some of these legacies in the records may have been perceived as sensitive and personal, tied to political subjectivities and unresolved tensions between individual heroism and trusteeship.

Given the focus of the dissertation on the constitution of an archive, this chapter will focus on the history of IDAF’s support work for the liberation movements through its legal, welfare and publications programmes. It will also specifically investigate the rationale for accumulating and later preserving this vast archival record of the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa. The chapter will ask questions about whether these records were just mere

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<sup>337</sup> See Philip Bonner, ‘Fragmentation and Cohesion in the ANC: The First 70 Years’ in Arianna Lissoni, Jon Soske, Natasha Erlank, Noor Nieftagodien and Omar Badsha(eds), *One Hundred Years of the ANC: Debating Liberation Histories Today* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2012), 2.

<sup>338</sup> Bonner, ‘Fragmentation and Cohesion in the ANC’, 2.

products of human activity and bureaucracy or if it is possible to think that they were assembled with a post-apartheid future in mind. By focusing on the methods of documentation and record keeping through which the programmes of IDAF were categorised and ordered in archival-like conditions, I will argue that the administrative arrangement of the IDAF material and the care and attention to its systematisation created the conditions for its transformation into an archive that was later deployed in Cape Town.

### *The early years of IDAF*

Considered by some as a charismatic and radical priest, Lewis John Collins and a small fellowship of non-denominational Christians and Quakers, established Christian Action on 5 December 1946 in post-World War II Britain. Framed against a background of the socio-economic and political difficulties of a post-war landscape, Christian Action stemmed from the sense to “translate faith into action in public life” by considering matters such as race relations, disarmament and peace between nations.<sup>339</sup> With his appointment to St. Paul’s Cathedral in London, Canon Collins became more daring for the controversial positions he took in the Church on issues such as nuclear disarmament and through the various ethical causes of Christian Action which focused primarily on Britain.<sup>340</sup>

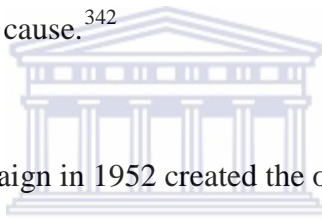
In 1950, Alan Paton’s novel *Cry, the Beloved Country* was published, which for many read like a call to arms. In the same year, Collins met with the Anglican monk, Michael Scott, after Scott had been declared a prohibited immigrant by the South African government for his

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<sup>339</sup> Canon L. J. Collins, ‘Christian Action over Twenty Years’ in *Christian Action* (December 1967), 4 in IDAF collection, MCH 31, Christian Action, Box 4071. (UWC Robben Island Mayibuye Archives, Bellville); Also see Trevor Huddleston, ‘The Birth of a Struggle’ in Ian Henderson (ed), *Man of Christian Action, Canon John Collins: The man and his Work* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1976), 45.

<sup>340</sup> For a historical background on the history and life of Canon Collins see Diana Collins, *Partners in Protest: Life with Canon Collins* (London: Gollancz, 1992); Lewis J. Collins, *Faith under Fire* (London: Leslie Frewin, 1966); Also see Ian Henderson (ed), *Man of Christian Action: Canon Collins – the man and his work* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1976); Collection of newspaper clippings regarding the work of Canon Collins in ‘Memoirs: Canon Collins news clippings’, IDAF collection, MCH 31, Box 4137, (UWC Robben Island Mayibuye Archives, Bellville).

anti-racist activities. It was the confluence of Paton's novel and having met Michael Scott that probably ignited Collins' passion to engage with the burning issue of racial discrimination and oppression in South Africa. He invited Scott to speak about the system of apartheid at a packed Central Hall and attempted to make the anti-apartheid issue one of the primary causes of Christian Action. Although his initial attempt to advance the anti-apartheid cause was halted by Christian Action's most distinguished supporters, Collins believed that this was a just cause, particularly because of its explosive nature.<sup>341</sup> A few decades later, during an interview with Denis Herbstein, Diana Collins who was the wife of Canon Collins, revealed to Herbstein that it was exactly the controversy surrounding the sensitive nature of legalised racial discrimination in South Africa that made her husband feel even stronger about taking up the anti-apartheid cause.<sup>342</sup>



The launch of the Defiance Campaign in 1952 created the opportunity for Canon Collins to become involved in the struggle. The Defiance Campaign, which called for acts of defiance against unjust laws, was a historically defining moment on more than a few levels. As acts of defiance spread across South Africa, the number of those arrested for engaging in protests increased significantly. In the aftermath of mass arrests, as a result of the Defiance Campaign, Collins received a letter from Father Trevor Huddleston, who was an Anglican priest of a mission parish in Sophiatown, Johannesburg. Huddleston asked Collins to assist his relief committee, which he ran together with Paton and Bishop Ambrose Reeves, with raising funds for the dependents of those who were jailed for their involvement in the campaign.<sup>343</sup>

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<sup>341</sup> Herbstein, *White Lies*, 10.

<sup>342</sup> Herbstein, *White Lies*, 10.

<sup>343</sup> Huddleston, 'The Birth of a Struggle', 53; Also see Herbstein, *White Lies*, 11.



Reflecting on this period some two decades later in a volume which celebrated the work of Christian Action and its founder, Canon John Collins, Father Trevor Huddleston wrote:

Yet by 1952, in South Africa itself, the Defiance Campaign against unjust and discriminatory legislation had been mounted on Gandhian lines. It was strictly a campaign of passive resistance .... The campaign was exceedingly effective. The prisons began to overflow. Included amongst those arrested and detained were Patrick Duncan – son of former Governor General – and Manilal Gandhi, son of the Mahatma himself. Christian Action responded to the appeal launched by the Campaign for funds to help the families of those who were in prison. Thus began a pattern of support which has never altered, except to grow in volume over the years in order to meet the ever increasing needs of the victims of state violence.<sup>344</sup>

Despite opposition and mixed expressions from numerous supporters of Christian Action, Collins managed to raise funds to the tune of £1,450 for the dependents of those jailed during the Defiance Campaign.<sup>345</sup> These events constituted the beginnings of a partnership that gave birth to IDAF as an anti-apartheid organisation.



More than just being a defining moment in the history of Christian Action in becoming an anti-apartheid organisation, the Defiance Campaign also signalled a shift in the thinking of the ANC since their formation in 1912. Whereas before, the ANC had held onto a philosophy of non-violence, the launch of the Defiance Campaign, which called for a non-violent campaign of civil disobedience, was representative of a shift toward militancy and the more radical thinking of younger members of the ANC such as Nelson Mandela, Oliver Tambo and Walter Sisulu.<sup>346</sup> According to Thomas Karis, who co-edited four volumes with Gwendolen M. Carter and Gail Gerhard documenting the apartheid struggle, “[t]he period 1950-1952 began with a commitment to militant African nationalism and mass action to tactics of

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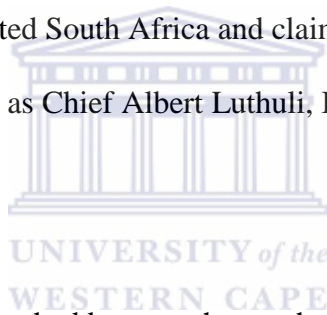
<sup>344</sup> Huddleston, ‘The Birth of a Struggle’, 47-48.

<sup>345</sup> Herbstein, *White Lies*, 16.

<sup>346</sup> Thomas Karis and Gwendolyn M. Carter (eds), *From Protest to Challenge: A Documentary History of African Politics in South Africa 1882-1964: Hope and Challenge 1935-1952, Vol. 2* (Stanford, California: Hoover Press, 1973), 403; ‘Report of the Joint Planning Council of the ANC and the South African Indian Congress, 8 November 1951’ in Karis, *From Protest to Challenge, Vol.2*, 458-465; Herbstein, *White Lies*, 12.

boycott, strike, and civil disobedience.”<sup>347</sup> While it can be argued that the Defiance Campaign presented a shift towards more radical thinking, as leaders of the resistance movement were reconsidering the effectiveness of a non-violent struggle against racial oppression, this particular moment in 1952 was also representative of the deceiving calm before the storm.<sup>348</sup> In some ways, the Defiance Campaign set the stage for even more dramatic events to come.

Collins’ sympathy for the anti-apartheid cause and his fiery sermons denouncing apartheid did not make him an agreeable figure in most parts of South Africa or in England, but some simply saw his views as based on ignorance and misinformation. It is in this regard, with the hope of changing his views, that a Durban business man, Jack Shave, invited Collins to visit South Africa in 1954. Collins visited South Africa and claimed to be very much enlightened after meeting several leaders such as Chief Albert Luthuli, Bram Fischer, Oliver Tambo and Walter Sisulu.<sup>349</sup>



While the intention of the invitation had been to change the Collins’ view of South Africa, it only served to reinforce the grim views he already held about racial discrimination and oppression in the country. Upon his return to England, he continued his efforts to mobilise support for the anti-apartheid cause. However, there was a setback in 1956, with the sudden recall of Huddleston back to England. This came as a devastating blow to Huddleston especially after he had witnessed the destruction of Sophiatown and the forced removal of its residents. He wrote in 1956:

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<sup>347</sup> Karis, *From Protest to Challenge*, Vol. 2, 403.

<sup>348</sup> Having had success with the implementation of the Bantu Education Act, the state became more confident of its ability to quell resistance. From as early as 1955, the state was investigating some 200 people on suspected charges of treason which would eventually culminate in the arrests of 156 people on charges of High Treason in 1956.

<sup>349</sup> See Newspaper article, ‘Race crisis in South Africa: Canon Collins on what he saw’’, in which Canon Collins gave an account of his visit to South Africa and what he observed in relation to apartheid. In IDAF Collection MCH 31, Box 3024, Memoirs: Canon Collins news clippings, Historical Papers (UWC Robben Island Mayibuye Archives, Bellville).

*'Partir, c'est mourir un peu'* ... and I am in the process of dying: in the process, every hour. The thing about such a death; the quality of it is to heighten the loveliness of what one is leaving behind. Without sentimentality or any foolish regrets, it is most necessary to try and evaluate one's feelings: to try and discover ... the witchery of Africa: the way it lays its hold upon your heart and will not let you go.<sup>350</sup>

While Huddleston attempted to come to terms with his impending recall, Collins had also lost a close contact and ally in South Africa.<sup>351</sup>

In the months following Huddleston's recall, things came to a head on 5 December 1956 with the arrest of 156 South Africans on charges of High Treason, a capital offence that carried the death sentence if convicted. The central element of the treason charge was a momentous event that took place during the previous year when almost 3000 delegates came together in Kliptown on 25-26 June 1955 at a Congress of the People to draw up the Freedom Charter.<sup>352</sup> Drawn from a grouping of the ANC, the South African Indian Congress, the South African Coloured People's Congress, the South African Congress of Democrats and the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU), the Congress Alliance adopted a set of demands named the Freedom Charter. This document was seen as a blueprint for a future non-racial, united and democratic South Africa.<sup>353</sup> With the arrests, Collins moved swiftly and sent Ambrose Reeves £100 of the available funds of Christian Action in order for him to set up a Treason Trial Defence Fund in South Africa. He made a promise that Christian

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<sup>350</sup> Trevor Huddleston, *Naught for your Comfort* (London: Collins, 1956), 13-14; also see Robin Dennison, *Trevor Huddleston: A Life* (London: Macmillian, 1999), 63.

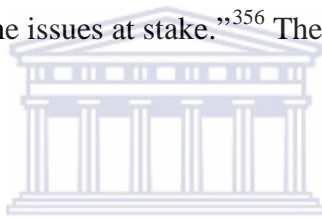
<sup>351</sup> Herbstein, *White Lies*, 26.

<sup>352</sup> The Freedom Charter is a unique document in the sense that it gave tangible expression to an alternative vision of the future and represented the hopes and aspirations of people that were oppressed by the government. The adoption of the Freedom Charter in itself was an historical occasion as it brought together people from across the racial and class divide for the first time to form a united front against state oppression. For a pictorial account of that historic event see Trevor Huddleston, *Father Huddleston's Picture Book* (London: Kliptown Books, 1990), 52-59; Also see Huddleston, 'The Birth of a Struggle', 53.

<sup>353</sup> Saul Dubow, *The African National Congress* (Stroud, Gloucestershire: Sutton Publishing, 2000), 51; Also see Barry Feinberg, *Isitwanlandwe: the story of the South African Freedom Charter* (New York: Cinema Guild, 1980).

Action “would raise a fund to pay legal fees, look after the accused, help rehabilitate them if and when they were released, and meanwhile care for their families and dependants.”<sup>354</sup>

As a direct result of the events that occurred in South Africa, a solidarity organisation called the Defence and Aid Fund was founded and administered by its parent organisation, Christian Action. Governed by the ruling council of Christian Action of which Canon Collins was the chairman, the primary aim of Defence and Aid was “to assist in the development of a non-racial society in Southern Africa based on a democratic way of life.”<sup>355</sup> IDAF sought to achieve this aim through the deployment of three objectives which were firstly: “to aid, defend and rehabilitate the victims of unjust legislation and the oppressive and arbitrary procedures”, secondly, “to support their families and dependants” and thirdly, “to keep the conscience of the world alive to the issues at stake.”<sup>356</sup> The objectives of the Fund were also called clauses.



I would argue that by calling these objectives clauses an aura of religiosity was bestowed on them, since this resonated with the Christian ideals of humanitarianism and morality in which the Defence and Aid was founded. These objectives of the Fund found tangible expression through the first two clauses of the Fund’s work which were to provide funds for legal assistance and welfare aid for dependents of those imprisoned, on trial or banned. These clauses were later joined by a third clause in the late 1960s, as the need arose ‘to keep the conscience of the world alive to the issues at stake in southern Africa’ through the production and distribution of research, information and publicity.<sup>357</sup>

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<sup>354</sup> Cook, ‘The International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa’, 146.

<sup>355</sup> ‘IDAF Constitution’ in IDAF Collection MCH 31, Box 639, IDAF Constitution, correspondence, and publications, Historical Papers (UWC Robben Island Mayibuye Archives, Bellville).

<sup>356</sup> ‘IDAF Constitution’ in IDAF Collection MCH 31, Box 639, IDAF Constitution, correspondence, publications.

<sup>357</sup> Cook, ‘The International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa’, 146.

Defence and Aid remained in place for a few more years until it was superseded by the establishment of IDAF in June 1964, following a conference that was held in London.<sup>358</sup>

According to the constitution that was formulated, the Fund comprised of an executive committee that consisted of a president, three vice-presidents, a general secretary, an honorary treasurer and an auditor who, in effect, ran the everyday business of the Fund. The Fund, furthermore, also consisted of members or designated representatives who were drawn from national committees which could exercise their power at the Annual Conference.<sup>359</sup>

With the treason trail still ongoing, Bishop Reeves surmised that this was just a prelude of things to come and in a way, this signalled the beginning of the government's war on the liberation movements in South Africa. Quick to realise this and anticipating that things may get worse in South Africa, Reeves impressed upon Collins the gravity of the situation in South Africa. Collins made the move to set up Defence and Aid as a legally distinct organisation and renamed it the British Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa (BDAF) as a means of circumventing the sometimes narrow limits set by the council of Christian Action.<sup>360</sup> Although the Fund remained under the auspices of Christian Action for a while longer, the Fund was now independent in the way it could do fundraising.

This proved to be a well-timed and coordinated move as government repression increased with the accession of Hendrik Verwoerd to power in 1959 as he implemented the 1951 Bantu Authorities Act which provided for a system of 'Bantu authorities' in the 'homelands' by

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<sup>358</sup> The establishment of IDAF in 1964 will be discussed in more detail later in the chapter. See 'IDAF Constitution' in IDAF Collection MCH 31, Box 639, IDAF Constitution, correspondence, publications.

<sup>359</sup> 'IDAF Constitution' in IDAF Collection MCH 31, Box 639, IDAF Constitution, correspondence, publications, Historical Papers (UWC Robben Island Mayibuye Archives, Bellville).

<sup>360</sup> The British Defence and Aid Fund was set up as a limited company to continue fundraising for the anti-apartheid cause. See Herbstein, *White Lies*, 36; Cook, 'The International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa', 153.

imposing a hierarchical system of tribal governance.<sup>361</sup> Saul Dubow argued that this Act laid the foundation for the future Bantustans to be built on. Dubow argued that the Act, “gave the government extensive powers to proclaim chiefs and councillors, regardless of whether they enjoyed popular legitimacy.”<sup>362</sup> Known as the architect of apartheid or ‘apostle of centralised planning’<sup>363</sup>, Verwoerd introduced and implemented numerous apartheid laws during his terms as Minister of Native Affairs and as Prime Minister, and in this way further strengthened apartheid’s hold on those being oppressed.

In response to increasing government repression, 1959 was punctuated with intermittent uprisings in rural areas such as Witzieshoek, Sekhukhuneland, Zeerust and Mpondoland. Sketching the political setting of the 1960s, Bernard Magubane argued that, “[t]he introduction of Bantu Authorities in 1951, which both co-opted and subverted the power of the traditional chiefs, ... and diminished peasant/migrant landholdings ..., the effects of which were compounded by intensified influx control, eventually triggered a sequence of rural explosions ....”<sup>364</sup> Recognising the potential of rural resistance in the fight against apartheid, ANC leader, Govan Mbeki argued that “a struggle based on the reserves had a much greater capacity to absorb the shocks of government repression and was therefore, capable of being sustained for a much longer time than a struggle based on urban locations.”<sup>365</sup>

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<sup>361</sup> Bernard Magubane, ‘The Political Context’ in *The Road to Democracy in South Africa Vol. 1 (1960-1970)* (Cape Town: Zebra Press, 2004), 35; Also see Saul Dubow, *Apartheid 1948-1994* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 64.

<sup>362</sup> Dubow, *Apartheid 1948-1994*, 64.

<sup>363</sup> Dubow, *Apartheid 1948-1994*, 61.

<sup>364</sup> Magubane, ‘The Political Context’, 35; Also see Dubow, *Apartheid 1948-1994*, 78-80.

<sup>365</sup> See Govan Mbeki, *South Africa: The Peasants Revolt* (Hammondsworth: Penguin Library, 1964), 130-131.

However, Mbeki was a lone voice when it came to realising the potential of rural revolts, as the ANC espoused a modernising ideology with a strong focus on urban mobilisation.<sup>366</sup>

Rural uprisings soon spilled over into urban townships in response to police raids designed as punitive measures to discipline people, which further intensified tensions in South Africa.

According to Dubow, “[t]he countryside risings in the 1950s offered evidence of extensive rural-urban networks, often sustained by the migrant labour system, which served as a natural transmission belt for ideas and propaganda.”<sup>367</sup>

The tension finally exploded on 21 March 1960 with the police opening fire on an unarmed group of people protesting against the pass laws in the township of Sharpeville. The Sharpeville massacre left 69 people dead and 178 wounded; most with bullet entry wounds in their backs.<sup>368</sup> Though the Sharpeville massacre is one of many atrocities that occurred in South African history, it was significant in the sense that it brought the repressive apparatus of the apartheid state under the intense scrutiny of the international gaze.<sup>369</sup> According to Tom Lodge, what made Sharpeville so public was the presence of the press and its accessibility to Johannesburg. This allowed for the rapid dissemination and circulation of images of Sharpeville brutality that were circulated and broadcast around the world.<sup>370</sup>

As shock waves reverberated around the world and the South African government was starting to feel the pinch of international condemnation, Verwoerd temporarily relaxed the

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<sup>366</sup> Dubow, *Apartheid 1948-1994*, 80.

<sup>367</sup> Dubow, *Apartheid 1948-1994*, 80.

<sup>368</sup> Tom Lodge, *Sharpeville: An Apartheid Massacre and its Consequences* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 106. For a fuller account of the Sharpeville massacre and the events that led up to 21 March 1960, see Lodge, *Sharpeville*, 74-109.

<sup>369</sup> For a discussion on another event that preceded the Sharpeville massacre but that was subsequently overshadowed by the events in Sharpeville see Dubow, *Apartheid 1948-1994*, 74. The Coalbrook disaster claimed the lives of 437 men in a pit collapse at Coalbrook colliery near Johannesburg on 21 January 1960 as a result of the company’s disregard for safety rules. While this disaster might have been prevented, this event was one of many that demonstrated how little value the system of apartheid placed on human life.

<sup>370</sup> Herbstein, *White Lies*, 42.

pass laws on 26 March 1960. However, this proved to be almost inconsequential as the government declared a State of Emergency on 30 March 1960, which included the mass detention without trial of those deemed to be involved or to have sympathy with the liberation movements. In the wake of these events, the Defence and Aid Fund responded by providing support and assistance to the people and the families who were affected by the Sharpeville massacre and by financing an independent commission of inquiry into the shooting. With the imposition of the State of Emergency, the need for support and assistance increased significantly as detainees were often heads of households. In order to assist, Defence and Aid extended their work to include more cities and towns, and this led to the constitution of South African Defence and Aid Fund committees in all the major cities throughout the country.<sup>371</sup>



Finally, after a long drawn out trial that lasted for four and a half years, all of the treason trialists were acquitted in 1961. They were free, yet they could no longer practice politics openly because the government had declared the ANC and the PAC illegal in the previous year on 8 April 1960.<sup>372</sup> As the apartheid government continued to tighten its vice-like grip on the liberation movements by effectively closing down all avenues for legitimate protest action, and after decades of non-violent approaches, the liberation movements were now forced to consider violence against the state as another means to attain liberation. While the PAC had already embarked on a campaign of political violence against the state, the ANC officially only moved to armed struggle on 16 December 1961 when it started with its sabotage campaign.<sup>373</sup> Although the ANC denied that there was any link between themselves

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<sup>371</sup> Cook, 'The International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa', 156-157; Herbstein, *White Lies*, 46.

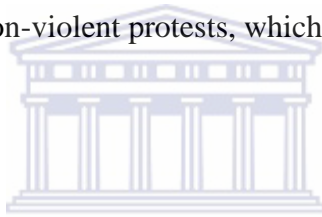
<sup>372</sup> Bernard Magubane et al, 'The Turn to Armed Struggle' in *The Road to Democracy in South Africa Vol. 1 (1960-1970)* (Cape Town: Zebra Press, 2004), 53-54; Also see Dubow, *Apartheid 1948-1994*, 81 .

<sup>373</sup> Magubane et al, 'The Turn to Armed Struggle', 80-131; Thomas Karis and Gail Gerhart (eds), *From Protest to Challenge: A Documentary History of African Politics in South Africa 1882-196, Vol. 3, Challenge and Violence* (Stanford, California: Hoover Press, 1977), 645-646; Also see 'Umkonto We Sizwe (Spear of the



and *Umkhonto we Sizwe* (MK) until 1962, the turn to an armed struggle proved to be quite a contentious issue among those in the inner circles of the Defence and Aid Fund as this was in sharp contrast to their own beliefs in pacifism and non-violence.<sup>374</sup>

According to Per Wästberg, who worked closely together with the Canon serving as intermediary between IDAF and Sweden, the Sharpeville massacre signalled a shift in the policy of non-violence that the liberation movements previously employed. However, the shift also presented a dilemma for the Christians and the pacifists in IDAF who did not believe in violence.<sup>375</sup> In the end, Collins gained the support of the members of his council by convincing them that the political situation in South Africa had become so repressive that it no longer allowed for peaceful, non-violent protests, which forced activists to pursue other methods of action.<sup>376</sup>



While Defence and Aid showed understanding about the need to take up arms, Collins was resolute that the funds raised should go toward legal defence and social welfare assistance rather than directly funding acts of sabotage. His resoluteness stemmed, in part, from Defence and Aid's commitment to non-violence and his refusal to abandon this assistance to the liberation movement.<sup>377</sup> As the political situation deteriorated in South Africa, Collins was faced with his own battles as his relationship Michael Scott had become strained as Scott sought more power in the operations of Defence and Aid.<sup>378</sup>

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Nation), Flyer issued by command of *Umkhonto We Sizwe*' and appearing on 16 December 1961 in Karis et al, *From Protest to Challenge*, Vol. 3, 716.

<sup>374</sup> Canon J. Collins, 'Christian Action over Twenty Years' in IDAF collection, MCH 31, Christian Action, Box 4071, Historical Papers (UWC Robben Island Mayibuye Archives, Bellville); Also see Herbstein, *White Lies*, 73-74.

<sup>375</sup> Per Wästberg, 'The Birth of a Fund' in Ian Henderson (ed), *Man of Christian Action: Canon Collins – the man and his work* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1976), 61.

<sup>376</sup> Wästberg, 'The Birth of a Fund' 61.

<sup>377</sup> Wästberg, 'The Birth of a Fund', 61.

<sup>378</sup> In a letter to Canon Collins, Michael Scott tendered his resignation from the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) following a press statement that Collins made which Scott perceived as being inconsistent

However, the Rivonia arrests provided Collins with the opportunity to re-focus on more pressing issues other than the internal politics of the organisation or the issues between him and Michael Scott. In the winter of July 1963, the police arrested Walter Sisulu, Govan Mbeki, Denis Goldberg, Ahmed Kathrada, Bob Hepple and James Kantor on Lilliesleaf Farm in Rivonia.<sup>379</sup> They were soon joined by Raymond Mahlaba, Andrew Mlangeni, Elias Motsoaledi, Lionel 'Rusty' Bernstein and Nelson Mandela on the list of those accused of sabotage and conspiracy. With the State calling for the death penalty, Defence and Aid had to move swiftly in order to procure a good legal team that would be able to defeat the prosecution's call for the death sentence as well as to subvert mounting pressure from police surveillance on local Defence and Aid committees.<sup>380</sup>

While Mandela, Sisulu and others were saved from their impending death sentences, and instead, received sentences of life imprisonment in Robben Island's maximum security prison in 1964, the period following the trial ushered in a turbulent time for Defence and Aid. The Rivonia trial alone carried a cost of nearly £20,000 and with the State severely clamping down on those considered to be opposed to the government through imprisonment, detentions, banishments and bans, Defence and Aid's resources were severely stretched.<sup>381</sup>

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with the resolution that the Annual Conference arrived at. See 'Letter from Michael Scott to Canon Collins dated 26 July 1962' in IDAF collection, MCH 31, Box 8, Historical papers, (UWC Robben Island Mayibuye Archives, Bellville); Also see 'Minutes of the International Defence and Aid Fund, 18 July 1961', Special Council Meeting of Christian Action in IDAF collection, MCH 31, Historical papers (UWC Robben Island Mayibuye Archives, Bellville); Herbstein, *White Lies*, 63-67.

<sup>379</sup> Bob Hepple was part of the original seven that was arrested on Lilliesleaf Farm in 1963. Hepple was charged along with the other accused on charges of sabotage. In a sinister twist of fate, the state prosecutor dismissed all charges against Hepple by making him a witness for the State. Faced with the prospect of having to testify against the accused, Hepple fled with his wife, Shirley to England. The dismissal of Hepple's charges, followed by his escape led to much speculation in the media but also caused damage to his relationship with those who were arrested. For a more detailed account of Bob Hepple's involvement in the struggle see Bob Hepple, Rivonia: 'The Story of Accused No. 11', *Social Dynamics* 30:1 (2004); Also see letter from Walter Sisulu to Bob Hepple dated 25 May 1964 in Bob Hepple collection, MCH 321, Historical Papers (UWC Robben Island Mayibuye Archives, Bellville).

<sup>380</sup> Herbstein, *White Lies*, 78.

<sup>381</sup> 'Statement by the Reverend Canon L. John Collins, Chairman, Defence and Aid International Fund for Southern Africa' at the 62<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of the UN Special Committee on Apartheid, 7 June 1965 in IDAF

With Verwoerd's government attempting to silence resistance through whatever means, Defence and Aid found it increasingly difficult to raise funds for the mounting legal cases that needed to be defended as government repression only escalated. Even with small successes such as ensuring the release of numerous accused around the country, mounting pressure from the apartheid government made it very difficult for the local Defence and Aid Committees to function within South Africa. Collins realised that he needed to look for another way in which funds could be raised.

Collins need not have worried about funds in order to continue the support work of Defence and Aid. The tragic events which transpired at Sharpeville not only brought about a sustained wave of international indignation but also galvanised individuals, organisations and governments into action by uniting them against apartheid. In the wake of the Sharpeville massacre in 1960, the Security Council of the United Nations (UN) adopted Resolution 134 on 1 April 1960, whereby they called upon the South African government to abandon its apartheid policies and racial discrimination.<sup>382</sup> This paved the way for the establishment of the Special Committee against Apartheid. The committee was established by the General Assembly under resolution 1761 of 6 November 1962, as a means of reviewing the apartheid policies of the South African government. Following the refusal of western states to join, the committee consisted primarily of South American, African and Asian states and included Algeria, Costa Rica, Ghana, Guinea, Haiti, Hungary, Malaysia, Nepal, Nigeria, Philippines and Somalia.

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collection, MCH 31, Box 4457, "Speeches made by Canon Collins in connection with IDAF, 1965-1977, Historical Papers (UWC Robben Island Mayibuye Archives, Bellville); Also see Herbstein, *White Lies*, 85.

<sup>382</sup> 'Resolutions adopted by the United Nations General Assembly and Security Council on the Question of Apartheid 1960-1980' in United Nations Centre against Apartheid, MCH 179, Box 8 (UWC Robben Island Mayibuye Archives, Bellville), Also see 'The United Nations: Partner in the Struggle against Apartheid', Available at <http://www.un.org/en/events/mandeladay/apartheid.shtml>, Accessed on 27 May 2015; Also see Enuga S. Reddy, 'Notes on the Origin of the Movement of Sanctions against South Africa', February 1965, Available at [http://www.geocities.ws/enugareddy/southafrica/1965-Notes\\_on\\_the\\_Origin\\_of\\_the\\_Movement\\_for\\_Sanctions\\_against\\_Apartheid.pdf](http://www.geocities.ws/enugareddy/southafrica/1965-Notes_on_the_Origin_of_the_Movement_for_Sanctions_against_Apartheid.pdf), Accessed on 27 May 2015.

With Enuga Reddy appointed as Secretary of the Special Committee, the committee began its work in full earnest in 1963. Finding resonance with some aspects of the work of Defence and Aid, the Special Committee was primarily concerned with the promotion of sanctions against the South African government, as well as arranging assistance to the liberation movements and the victims of apartheid. Another form of action against apartheid was to create awareness about the situation in South Africa through publicity campaigns to counteract the propaganda operations of the South African state.<sup>383</sup> Although there were aspects in the work of Defence and Aid and the Special Committee that resonated with each other, Reddy was of the opinion that the UN would be more likely to recognise an international organisation.<sup>384</sup>

With Defence and Aid branches already established in Sweden, Norway, Switzerland and Australia by 1964, Collins convened a meeting with delegates of these committees to constitute the Defence and Aid Fund (International) in the same year, which was soon after renamed the International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa (IDAF).<sup>385</sup> After its formation as an international organisation, IDAF along with Amnesty International and the World Council of Churches were designated as “suitable organisations through which member states might channel their gifts.”<sup>386</sup> With the endorsement of the UN Special Committee against Apartheid, and especially in the form of his developing friendship with Enuga Reddy, Collins garnered financial support from many countries for the fight against apartheid.

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<sup>383</sup> Mokhtar Taleb-Bendiab, ‘South African Propaganda’, UN Centre against Apartheid, June 1976’ in United Nations Centre against Apartheid, MCH 179, Box 8 (UWC Robben Island Mayibuye Archives, Bellville), Also see ‘Special Committee against Apartheid’, Available at <http://africanactivist.msu.edu/organization.php?name=Special%20Committee%20Against%20Apartheid>, Accessed on 27 May 2015.

<sup>384</sup> Herbstein, *White Lies*, 103.

<sup>385</sup> Herbstein, *White Lies*, 104.

<sup>386</sup> Canon J. Collins, ‘Assistance to the Victims of Apartheid, United Nations: Unit on Apartheid, Notes and Documents’, April 1971 in IDAF collection, MCH 31, Box 4457, “Speeches made by Canon Collins in connection with IDAF 1965-1977”, (UWC Robben Island Mayibuye Archives, Bellville).

In various addresses to the UN over a period of three years from 1965-1967, Collins powerfully and emphatically addressed the question of apartheid by stressing the need for humanitarian assistance in South Africa.<sup>387</sup> Collins had been known to the South African government as a staunch supporter of the struggle for liberation long before he made this controversial statement to demonstrate his support for the liberation movement in an address at the 62<sup>nd</sup> meeting of the UN Special Committee on Apartheid in June 1965. However, I would argue that it was this statement firmly established him as an enemy of the South African state. In his statement to the UN Special Committee on Apartheid in June 1965, Canon Collins proclaimed:

The policy of apartheid, certainly as it was practiced in South Africa, is clearly quite incompatible with the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. To put matters right in South Africa requires political action on a big scale. And, in a country where the victims of this policy, the vast majority of its citizens, are disenfranchised and persecuted under minority laws and enactments which make it an offence against the State even to wish to establish a non-racial society under a constitution which gives equal rights and responsibilities to citizens irrespective of race or colour, there is little if any likelihood of effecting the necessary political changes by normal, democratic, internal political processes. In such a situation it seems probable that only external pressures and the threat or execution of internal revolution will bring about the desired result. ... Because of the tyrannical legislation of the present South African government, no political organisation which seeks to change South Africa's racial policies can function properly in the open ... Those who wish to continue the struggle have to go underground. But what man or woman can happily or easily undertake such dangerous work if he or she knows that, by doing so, the well-being of the children and other dependents is at stake.<sup>388</sup>

Collins' indictment of apartheid evoked considerable criticism as many felt that his outspokenness around the situation in South Africa would mean that support work in the

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<sup>387</sup> See "Speeches made by Canon Collins in connection with IDAF 1965-1977" in IDAF collection, MCH 31, Box 4457.

<sup>388</sup> 'Statement by the Reverend Canon L. John Collins, Chairman, Defence and Aid International Fund for Southern Africa, at the 62<sup>nd</sup> meeting of the UN Special Committee on Apartheid on 7 June 1965' in IDAF collection, MCH 31, Box 4457, "Speeches made by Canon Collins in connection with IDAF 1965-77".

country could be hindered by the government.<sup>389</sup> Although government repression had almost completely destroyed the already weakened Defence and Aid committees in South Africa, there were those who felt that Collins' provocative statement seemed to have sealed the fate of the local committees as the government responded by banning the South African Defence and Aid Fund on 18 March 1966, in terms of the Suppression of Communism Act. This was the beginning of IDAF's existence as an underground organisation in South Africa, and its operations in the shadows of St. Paul's Cathedral, in the basement of the Collins residence at 2 Amen Court in London.

### *The support work of IDAF*

Faced with the new security challenges brought about by their banning in South Africa, IDAF now sought a means through which they could continue their work in the country, and circumvent the efforts of infiltration by the South African security police and their associates who operated in Britain. This help came in the form of Neville Rubin, an exiled South African lawyer, who devised a circuitous method through which to channel funds for legal assistance into South Africa. This involved setting up a "system of barriers that concealed the link between Amen Court and the South African lawyers."<sup>390</sup> According to Herbstein, the system worked on "'need-to-know', a device utilised by intelligence services."<sup>391</sup>

Rubin further suggested that Martin Bayer, a partner at lawyers Birkbeck Montagu's, become the intermediary between IDAF and the legal matters that IDAF were funding. Known only

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<sup>389</sup> At a United Nations Human Rights Seminar on Apartheid in 1966, Canon Collins took note of the criticism which was sparked by the statement that he made to the UN Special Committee on Apartheid in 1965. While he apologised for any embarrassment that his statement might have caused his friends and partners working against apartheid, Collins reiterated parts of his controversial statement by emphasising the need to support the resistance movement against apartheid. See 'United Nations Human Rights Seminar on Apartheid', Working paper prepared by Canon L. John Collins, Brazil on 23 August – 5 September 1966 in IDAF collection, MCH 31, Box 4457, "Speeches made by Canon Collins in connection with IDAF 1965-77".

<sup>390</sup> Neville Rubin interview in Yule, *White Lies* (1994); Herbstein, *White Lies*, 135.

<sup>391</sup> Herbstein, *White Lies*, 135.

as Mr. X, in order to conceal any connection with IDAF, Bayer was later succeeded by William Frankel. Adding another layer of secrecy to their security strategy, Collins and Bayer decided to set up three trusts, namely, The Freedom from Fear International Charitable Foundation, The Freedom from Hunger International Charitable Foundation and The Freedom from Hardship International Trust, all of which served as a cumulative smokescreen to channel funds.<sup>392</sup>

The advent of the banning order also meant that funding for the second clause, which was the welfare assistance programme, had to be set up in a similar way to the legal assistance for the work of the first clause. In her autobiography, *Foot soldier for freedom*, Rica Hodgson described the way in which the work of the second clause worked. Employing similar methods as those used for the legal assistance programme, the welfare assistance programme “created a strategy for identifying and assisting these suffering families of activists.”<sup>393</sup>

According to Hodgson, this was a difficult process but through the laborious and dedicated research of staff and volunteers, an index was created containing the names of people who required aid. Hodgson recounted:

We created a filing system to catalogue thousands of names and addresses and, where we could, to record their circumstances, based on information gleaned from press reports and other sources. This was nothing less than an alphabetical inventory of struggle and suffering these people had experienced first-hand or through their loved ones – everything from banning to house arrest, detention to crooked courtrooms, exile and banishment, murder in prison, hanging and torture.<sup>394</sup>

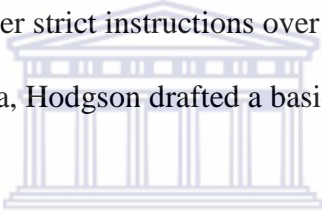
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<sup>392</sup> Neville Rubin interview in Yule, *White Lies* (1994); William Frankel interview in Yule, *White Lies* (1994); Also see Cook, ‘The International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa’, 181.

<sup>393</sup> Rica Hodgson, *Foot Soldier for Freedom: A Life in South Africa’s Liberation Movement* (Johannesburg: Picador Africa, 2010), 155.

<sup>394</sup> Hodgson, *Foot Soldier for Freedom*, 155.

From as early as the 1970s, Rica Hodgson and Phyllis Altman, had already started the letter writing programme by making use of intermediaries to send money to dependents in South Africa of those that had been imprisoned, detained or banned by the apartheid government.<sup>395</sup> The use of intermediaries was also considered a security measure in order to conceal any connection between IDAF and beneficiaries of the funding. Rica Hodgson, who was in charge of the welfare assistance programme, recruited intermediaries with no apparent political association to the liberation struggle in South Africa. Guided by a 12-point list of instructions that was drawn up by Hodgson of what they could talk about in their letters, correspondents would send money along with accompanying letters to beneficiaries in South Africa. In her autobiography, Hodgson provided an example of what the format of such a letter might have looked like. Under strict instructions over what subject matters to discuss in letters to recipients in South Africa, Hodgson drafted a basic format for intermediaries to follow. It read as:



Dear Mrs or Mr \*\*\* (insert name of South African recipient)  
I was sad/sorry/upset to learn of your circumstances/the  
circumstances of your husband/son/brother, and together with a few  
friends will try to send you some money regularly. Please reply or I  
will not know if you have received this. If you reply, I will send you  
the next amount we have collected on your behalf.<sup>396</sup>

According to Al Cook, former deputy director of IDAF, this made for a system with a built-in security that was virtually impregnable as well as accountable in auditing terms.<sup>397</sup>

Expanding on Hodgson's description of the way in which the letter writing programme worked, Herbstein explained further how the pen-pal operation worked:

A covering letter and cash arrived at their homes in a bulky registered package from 'Rev. Williams' – the Reverend Austin Williams of St Martins-in-the-Fields, Trafalgar Square, across the road from South Africa House. That was the first cut-out. They in turn mailed a money

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<sup>395</sup> Hodgson, *Foot Soldier for Freedom*, 156; Also see Yule, *White Lies*, 1994.

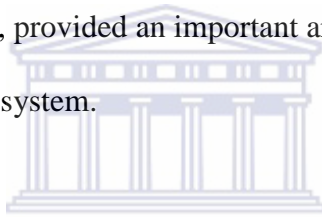
<sup>396</sup> Hodgson, *Foot Soldier for Freedom*, 157.

<sup>397</sup> Cook, 'The International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa', 216.



order to a family in South Africa, who believed it to be a personal gift from the sender. The family wrote back a thank you letter, which served as a receipt. The correspondent, now acting purely as conduit, mailed the thank you letter to another clerical go-between at an address in London. This priest was the welfare equivalent of 'Mr X'. He was the second cut-out.<sup>398</sup>

At first, these letters were kept in the basement of the Collins' home at Amen Court because of their sensitive nature before they were moved to a nondescript office near London Bridge. However, even from earliest days, these files were meticulously organised. Each letter was "filed in a perfect, comprehensive bookkeeping and information resource stored in impeccable conditions of order, safety and security at IDAF headquarters."<sup>399</sup> While it should be noted that each reply acted as a receipt of the money that was received, I would argue that this meticulous way of organising, provided an important archival precursor and created a pre-archival records management system.



Indeed, the conditions for a future archive were already being created from as early as the 1970s, as revealed in a letter from Phyllis Altman to Canon Collins in 1977 in which Altman briefed Collins on the progress of the classification of the material that had been generated by the work of IDAF. In her letter, Altman relayed to Collins that, "Nancy Dick, our 'archivist' has classified all the material at Newgate Street as per the attached lists. It is all stored on the third floor in boxes numbered 1-70 in two locked cabinets, especially designed for this purpose. We've found this very useful, for example 2 weeks ago, when I wanted statements made by liberation leaders it was very easy to find what was available."<sup>400</sup> Perhaps as a result of professional administration and bureaucratic methods, and even with a degree of foresight about the significance that these documents might have, Nancy Dick, Hodgson and Altman in

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<sup>398</sup> Herbstein, *White Lies*, 169.

<sup>399</sup> Cook, 'The International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa', 216.

<sup>400</sup> 'Letter from Phyllis Altman to Canon Collins', dated 25 July 1977 in IDAF collection, MCH 31, Box 4148, Historical papers (UWC Robben Island Mayibuye Archives, Bellville).

a sense, became the proto-archivists of the administrative and operational records of IDAF. Fulfilling the archival endeavour, they took great care in preserving these records, some of which were selected to be micro-fiched when the organisation was introduced later in the 1980s to computerisation as a way of increasing the efficiency of IDAF.<sup>401</sup>

As a result of the sensitive nature of the legal and the welfare work contained in the first two clauses, the administrative and operational records were initially kept in the basement of Amen Court where they benefitted from the security that St Paul's Cathedral offered.

Eventually, by 1968, the work of the first clause moved to the upper floor of a nondescript building in Newgate Street while the files of the second clause were set up in an office near London Bridge, with continued meticulous filing details and very restricted access.<sup>402</sup> The principle of 'need to know' was applied across the whole organisation and contact between the different departments was actively discouraged. According to Cook, they followed a principle that security increased as you went upstairs, a principle that was later followed when they moved their operations to Canon Collins House at 64 Essex Road.<sup>403</sup> If there was an air of secrecy and security surrounding the work of the first two clauses, then the work of the third clause, which focused on creating awareness about apartheid through the research and dissemination of information, was allowed a little more openness.

IDAF realised that propaganda campaigns on the issue of apartheid were crucial in the fight against apartheid.<sup>404</sup> With the South African apartheid government intensifying their own propaganda campaign, IDAF sought a way in which to counter the South African

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<sup>401</sup> 'Guide to using the IDAF South Africa Newscutting Micro-fische Archive 1975-1990', Research and Information Department, London, June 1991; Interview with Horst Kleinschmidt by author, St. James (19 February 2014), Herein after referred to as Interview with Horst Kleinschmidt, 19 February 2014.

<sup>402</sup> Herbstein, *White Lies*, 153 and A. Cook, 'The International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa', 184.

<sup>403</sup> Cook, 'The International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa', 185.

<sup>404</sup> Interview with Barry Feinberg by author, Fish Hoek (14 August 2014); Also see Cook, 'The International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa', 184.

government's campaign of misinformation. In order to counter this misinformation, IDAF's Information Service which later evolved into the Research, Information and Publicity (RIP) department, or the third clause, was started in the late 1960s by Alex Hepple and his wife, Girlie (Josephine) after they had arrived from South Africa following the closure of the South African IDAF committees.<sup>405</sup> They set up an office in Finchley, and with the help of a team of local housewives, assembled information regarding apartheid matters.

After the Hepples retired in 1972, they were succeeded by Alan Brooks in 1973 who was responsible for the birth of *Focus*, which was a bi-monthly journal focusing on political prisoners and trials in southern Africa. Whereas, the work of the research and information programme was run in a fairly modest and subdued way while under the leadership of the Hepples, with the arrival of Brooks, Hugh Lewin, and then later Barry Feinberg, the Research and Information department became a crucial cog in the anti-apartheid machinery, especially in the research and the dissemination of information about apartheid. A few years later after his return to South Africa, in an interview with Wolfie Kodesh, Barry Feinberg recalled those turbulent times:

Firstly, the regime was intensifying its propaganda campaign and its dis-information campaign internationally and people were listening to it. It was handing out stuff free, it was spending loads of money. It was really grossly distorted things. And there was not ... a proper counter to it. OK, so the ANC and the anti-apartheid movement had their spheres of influence, but they were very constrained by whatever the media decided they were able to - whatever the media decided was suitable for them to give the ANC space or time or whatever it is. So that the movement was really ... in a very poor position in relation to the situation.<sup>406</sup>

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<sup>405</sup> Interview with Bob Hepple, 21 April 2011, MCV 1908, (UWC Robben Island Mayibuye Archives, Bellville).

<sup>406</sup> Wolfie Kodesh interview with Barry Feinberg, 27 January 1993, Oral History for Exiles Project, MCA 6-274, (UWC Robben Island Mayibuye Archives, Bellville).

Under the auspices of the third clause, IDAF was preoccupied with the objective of 'keeping the conscience of the world alive' which the Research and Information Department sought to achieve through the deployment of various strategies of propaganda and awareness campaigns. It is through these campaigns that IDAF disseminated information documenting struggles against repression and other acts of resistance by making use of visual materials and texts. According to a guide compiled by IDAF's Research and Information Department in 1991, "[t]he Fund ran an extensive information service, including a bimonthly journal *Focus on Political Repression in Southern Africa*, and produced books, pamphlets and photographic exhibitions on apartheid rule. It also produced films, videos and other audio-visual materials, and maintained a library of photographs."<sup>407</sup>

Increasingly, the work of IDAF's research and publications unit became the mouthpiece of the resistance movement. This was despite opposition within the IDAF structures in the persons of Canon Collins and Phyllis Altman who, at times, felt prickly about the radical nature of the work of the Research and Information department. Another reason for their cautious behaviour was that they did not want create tension between themselves and other organisations such as the Anti-Apartheid Movement (AAM) that led the propaganda offensive.<sup>408</sup>

When Barry Feinberg was appointed as head of the information division of IDAF in 1975, he realised with a sense of urgency the necessity of the work of the Research, Information and Publications department. This work was necessary if IDAF wanted to keep up with the growth of militant opposition to apartheid and the South African government's brutal

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<sup>407</sup> 'Guide to using the IDAF South Africa Newscutting Micro-fiche Archive 1975-1990', Research and Information Department, June 1991, 3; Interview with Barry Feinberg, 14 August 2014.

<sup>408</sup> Herbstein, *White Lies*, 195.

response to this.<sup>409</sup> In fact, as government repression increased from the 1970s, which erupted with the Soweto uprising on 16 June 1976, in which the police opened fire on protesting schoolchildren, the Research, Information and Publication department realised they needed to generate wider public awareness.<sup>410</sup> According to Feinberg, “the substantial growth of militant opposition to apartheid required a commensurate shift in the informational sphere towards generating wider public awareness about the issues at stake in South Africa.”<sup>411</sup>

In order for this shift to occur, and to capture and fix the attention of the world on the issues at hand, he recommended that they needed to produce much more attractively presented materials and publications while “retaining the non-pejorative approach necessary to promote the broadest sympathetic response.”<sup>412</sup> Feinberg also argued that, “[i]t was equally important to develop a marketing capacity to sharpen the profile of IDAF as a specialist source of well-researched and verifiably accurate information and to persuade bookstores to stock our publications ....”<sup>413</sup> More than just being an unashamed propagandist for the ideal of a democratic South Africa, as Feinberg admitted in his autobiography, *Time to tell*, I would argue that Feinberg and his predecessors understood the power of visual images as a resource and as a strategy in the fight against apartheid.

In a more recent interview with Feinberg, he disclosed the importance of IDAF’s counter propaganda campaign by saying:

We had entered into all kinds of developments through IDAF to advance propaganda. We provided the ANC for example with a lot of help . . . . And what we did, is that we made our material available for everybody who wanted to use some but we also turned our material

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<sup>409</sup> Barry Feinberg, *Time to Tell: An activist’s story* (Newtown: STE Publishers, 2009), 85.

<sup>410</sup> See Noor Nieftagodien, *The Soweto Uprising* (Auckland Park: Jacana, 2014) for a historical account of the Soweto uprising and its aftermath.

<sup>411</sup> Feinberg, *Time to Tell*, 85.

<sup>412</sup> Feinberg, *Time to Tell*, 85.

<sup>413</sup> Feinberg, *Time to Tell*, 85.

into products and that really was my aim: to create attractive, viable propaganda material that was convincing because it was solidly based on facts and could be objectively verified by anybody who was getting engaged in getting that information. Often 'propaganda' was simply a vehicle for persuading people as you would in advertising. ... And apart from books and pamphlets - and you [have] probably seen examples of them at the centre - there were vast numbers of movies we made .... We would interview people who were relevant and then insert them into the documentaries, [into] documentary footage which was historical. And ... we also did photographic exhibitions .... We went around to photo agencies in London and literally stole material. We located what the South African material was and what you do is, you borrow material from photo agencies and we would copy it. We had photographers and we built up a big collection based on these resources. ... At a later stage we even commissioned British and other photographers to go into South Africa. We put them in touch with the underground movement and they would spend time travelling around the country, photographing things and providing us with big collections [for] which we were in the position to demand particular emphasis and subjects, [and these was brought] back to us. It was a bit hazardous sometimes. There were some problems but eventually we were able to mount exhibitions even at the United Nations and then the United Nations would then commission us to do other subjects more in keeping into their particular approach to the struggle against apartheid. ... And by the time IDAF had ended, we had two large containers ... absolutely full of material to bring back to South Africa.<sup>414</sup>

WESTERN CAPE

Shifting from the ancillary back-room operation, the information department of IDAF became a well-oiled propaganda machine as it churned out pamphlets, books, documentary films, photographs and exhibitions in support of the resistance movement through a focus on the repression of apartheid and the social and cultural aspects of the resistance movement.<sup>415</sup>

The information department, in a sense, became the engine room where ideas, plans and propaganda campaigns were formed and given shape to be disseminated for the education and inspiration of supporters of the liberation struggle. This work invariably increased the

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<sup>414</sup> Interview with Barry Feinberg, 14 August 2014.

<sup>415</sup> IDAF produced catalogues through which they promoted the publications they had on offer. For an example of publications, tapes, records, films, badges, posters and exhibitions that could be ordered from IDAF see IDAF Catalogue 1989, London in Special Book Collection, Historical Papers, (UWC Robben Island Mayibuye Archives, Bellville); Also see Feinberg, *Time to Tell*, 85.

volumes of IDAF's administrative and operational records that continued to be meticulously kept.

### ***Vulnerability to infiltration***

Though the Fund was already subject to scrutiny from the apartheid government even before its banning, the work that the Research and Information department did in 'keeping the conscience of the world alive,' had raised IDAF's public profile considerably. The irony is that while the work of the research and information programme concealed IDAF's other extremely sensitive and secretive legal and welfare matters, it also made IDAF more vulnerable to infiltration by the security police. Their fears of infiltration were well-founded, as the South African government stepped up their campaign of eliminating their opponents through a 'dirty tricks' operation in which they made use of letter bombs and burglaries in the attempt to destabilise the anti-apartheid movement.<sup>416</sup>

Although IDAF had devised a multi-layered built-in security plan in which they could continue their work, there were a few incidents of attempted infiltration, but it was only after the Publications department was burgled at Newgate Street in 1980 that it became very apparent to IDAF that their approach of concealment was no longer feasible. One particular moment in the history of IDAF that its members found quite 'painful' was the Craig Williamson and International University Exchange Fund (IUEF) episode that threatened to destroy IDAF. From as early as 1977, the South African spy Craig Williamson, made himself

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<sup>416</sup> For a personal and emotional account on surviving a motor bomb attack planned by the security police of the apartheid government in which ANC activist, lawyer and former constitutional judge, Albie Sachs almost lost his life see Albie Sachs, *The Soft Vengeance of a Freedom Fighter* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1990). For an account of the work of the TRC and the submissions that were made to the commission regarding the perpetration of human rights violation see Antjie Krog, *Country of my Skull: Guilt, Sorrow and the Limits of Forgiveness in the new South Africa* (Johannesburg: Random House, 1998); Also see the TRC Final Report, Available at <http://sabctrc.saha.org.za/reports/volume5/chapter6/subsection10.htm>, Accessed on 18 March 2015; Victoria Brittain, 'They had to die: assassination against Liberation', *Race and Class*, Vol. 48 (1) (2006), 8; Also see Cook, 'The International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa', 185.

indispensable to the work of the Geneva based IUEF which disbursed scholarships and bursaries to refugees from Southern Africa and South America.<sup>417</sup>

Under the leadership of Lars-Gunmar Erikson, the IUEF functioned in much the same way as IDAF, as they shared a “culture of secrecy, the unorthodox transfer of funds into South Africa, and a driving ambition to become the biggest of the anti-apartheid relief agencies.”<sup>418</sup>

Although Collins and Erikson had a good working relationship, Erikson wanted to subsume IDAF into the workings of the IUEF, which sometimes caused tension in their relationship.

Another bone of contention between the IUEF and IDAF was the ever-vigilant and guarded posture that IDAF adopted whenever the topic was raised about its support work, while the

IUEF felt that IDAF needed to be more transparent regarding the way in which the

organisation functioned. In a letter to Erikson in 1976, Collins demonstrated just how serious

IDAF was about security. Collins accentuated the sensitive nature of the work that IDAF was

doing by writing to Erikson:

I am, as I think you will understand, unhappy about the circumstances which have made you feel it necessary to call such a meeting .... I know you will appreciate that I do not expect to have a great deal to say during the conference, because of the delicate nature of the work we have in hand under what is our No. 1 clause in our ‘terms of reference’. It is, of course, of the utmost importance that other organisations that may now wish to cooperate in this work should understand how necessary it is that “wires do not get crossed.”<sup>419</sup>

However, the IUEF differed from IDAF in the negligent sense of security that they had,

which made them more permeable to someone like Williamson.

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<sup>417</sup> See Boris Ersson (directed), *Secret Mission South Africa: The Secret Agent* (1995); Paul Yule (directed), *White Lies* (1994).

<sup>418</sup> Herbstein, *White Lies*, 208.

<sup>419</sup> ‘Letter to Lars-Gunmar Erikson from Canon Collins dated 2 February 1976’ in IDAF collection, MCH 31, Box 4149, UN Trust Fund for South Africa: Papers and Correspondence (1976-1978), Historical Papers (UWC Robben Island Mayibuye Archives, Bellville).



After Williamson had firmly ingratiated himself into the ranks of the IUEF, he then set his sights on IDAF. There were several people like Altman, Cedric de Beer, Feinberg and later, Horst Kleinschmidt, who joined IDAF in 1979 as fundraiser, who had their suspicions about Williamson.<sup>420</sup> However, because Williamson had aligned himself so successfully with prominent members of the ANC and even the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA), it was difficult for them to prove their suspicions. Eventually, Williamson's cover was blown by a defecting security agent, Arthur McGiven in 1980, but by then, it was too late for the IUEF as Williamson had effectively destroyed them from the inside. IUEF ceased their operations in 1981 following an inquiry that revealed rampant corruption and mismanagement.<sup>421</sup> It was the end of the IUEF and a very close call for the broader network that IDAF was a part of.



### ***From charity to bureaucracy***

With Collins nearing retirement, the matter of security became even more pressing as the Collins family would have to leave Amen Court, which was also the home of the Fund's most sensitive documents. Given the Canon's impending retirement and the need for increased security, it was decided that all the departments needed to move to a centralised location. Eventually, all of the departments were rehoused in an old meat-packing plant and warehouse at what would later be known as Canon Collins House at 64 Essex Road, Islington. Al Cook described the building as "four storeys high, standing like a bulwark above the surrounding shops and pubs of that time, yet unobtrusively designed, and retiring into its own surrounding shops acre of shade, it was the natural fortress that could have been designed for IDAF."<sup>422</sup>

From this architectural description of the building, Cook beautifully evoked imagery of this

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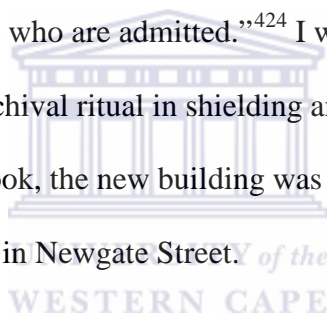
<sup>420</sup> Interview with Horst Kleinschmidt, 19 February 2014; Yule, *White Lies* (1994).

<sup>421</sup> Interview with Horst Kleinschmidt, 19 February 2014; Craig Williamson interview in Ersson, *Secret Mission South Africa: The Secret Agent* (1994).

<sup>422</sup> Cook, 'The International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa', 186.

building as a place of veneration and as a place of discipline and surveillance. In his discussion of the architecture and procedures of archives, Eric Ketelaar has argued that archives often resemble temples and prisons,<sup>423</sup> and from Cook's visual description, I would argue that this building, in a very unassuming way and perhaps not articulated as such at the time, can be likened to an archival temple and prison as it both offered protection as much as it inspired discipline.

While the building may not have had the architectural appearance of a temple, I would reiterate Ketelaar's argument that "archives serve, symbolically, as temples shielding an idol from the gaze of the uninitiated, guarding the treasures as a monopoly for the priesthood, exercising surveillance over those who are admitted."<sup>424</sup> I would argue that this building indeed performed a significant archival ritual in shielding and guarding the valuable material of IDAF's work. According to Cook, the new building was premised on the same security principle followed at the building in Newgate Street.



Cook described the principle as such, "The principle for the modifications was the tried and tested one of the lowest security on the ground floor, where a glass-storefront housed the IDAF Publications Bookshop, working up to the highest security on the third floor that housed Programmes 1 and 2."<sup>425</sup> In continuing his spatial description of the building, Cook said:

Books, publications, and packing materials were stored in the basement. Behind the storefront were the design and audio-visual sections, which included a video viewing room. Besides making its own videos and films, the department recorded and purchased news and other programmes on apartheid, and radio programmes as well, and was able to show or play them to interested people and

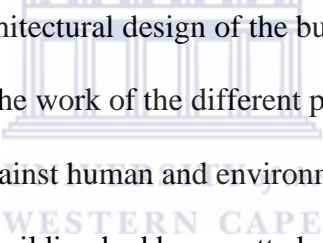
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<sup>423</sup> Eric Ketelaar, 'Archival temples, archival prisons: Modes of Power and Protection', *Archival Science* 2 (2002), 221- 238.

<sup>424</sup> Ketelaar, 'Archival temples', archival prisons: Modes of Power and Protection', 234.

<sup>425</sup> Cook, 'The International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa', 186; Also see Yule, *White Lies* (1994).

researchers .... The next floor up, the first floor, housed the Research Department. A receptionist met visitors ... and looked after them until one of the dozen or so staff ... could come to meet them. All the doors behind reception areas were kept locked at all times .... The next floor up was the centre of the administration. It housed a reception area and the offices of the director, initially Phyllis Altman until she retired in 1984 and then Horst Kleinschmidt, and their secretaries .... Finally, on the top floor, behind doors with a lock whose combination was regularly changed, guarded by a video camera staring down the stairwell at anyone coming up, at whom its red light blinked threateningly, lay the secret recesses of Programme 1 and 2, headed at that time by Hilary Rabkin and Peggy Stevenson respectively .... At great expense, provided once more by the ever-supportive and committed Swedes, the precious files had been housed in the latest fireproof, waterproof and bomb-proof safes .... An ongoing project of the previous ten years had been to commit all the files to microfiche, so that the safes had not only to be fireproof, but heat proof, to prevent the celluloid microfiches from bursting into flames inside the safes, should there be a fire.<sup>426</sup>



From this vivid account of the architectural design of the building, Cook drew attention to the physicality of the space in which the work of the different programmes of IDAF were organised, stored and protected against human and environmental factors. He described in great detail how the inside of the building had been gutted, rebuilt and reinforced through various painstaking and expensive modifications which took into consideration the issues of security and the preservation of their work. By drawing on Cook's invaluable descriptions of IDAF's spatiality and his insights about its procedures, I would argue that their concern about the security and the preservation of the records they were working with, were also key precursors of an archival imperative for the future.

It may be true that administrative records are the bedrock of every religious, economic, or social organisation as a means to keep track of its activities. However, Eric Ketelaar once argued that, “[a]rchiving is not about history looking backward, but about storing and

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<sup>426</sup> Cook, ‘The International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa’, 186-7.

securing for the future.”<sup>427</sup> He further said that “archiving [which is] all the activities from creation and management to the use of records and archives, has always been directed towards transmitting human activity and experience through time and, secondly, through space.”<sup>428</sup> Following this argument, this was certainly the case in the work of IDAF as well. Within this vein, I would strongly argue that the archival practices of IDAF were not only the eventual result of bureaucratic organisational activity but that IDAF began to do preservation work alongside recordkeeping, and it was this that created the conditions for a future archive.

Canon Collins retired in 1981, and despite his advanced years, he remained active in the work of the Fund. However, in light of his retirement and given that the security of IDAF was almost compromised through the Williamson spy incident, it was decided that a re-organisation of the Fund was necessary.<sup>429</sup> This coincided with the increasing tension between the national committees, especially the Swiss and the Dutch committees, and IDAF as these committees began to challenge the secretive and authoritarian nature of their parent organisation. Following a turbulent period in which various subversive agendas were revealed, aimed at creating disunity within the organisation, a new constitution was adopted at the Annual General Meeting in 1980.<sup>430</sup>

Driven by Ernst Michanek, who was the director-general of the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), “IDAF became more and more an adjunct of the struggle in South Africa rather than a voluntary organisation dishing out charity.”<sup>431</sup> Although regarded by some as a mere charity organisation, according to Per Wästberg, who was a close friend of

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<sup>427</sup> Ketelaar, ‘Archival temples, archival prisons: Modes of Power and Protection’, 233.

<sup>428</sup> Ketelaar, ‘Archival temples, archival prisons: Modes of Power and Protection’, 233.

<sup>429</sup> Interview with Horst Kleinschmidt, 19 February 2014; Herbstein, *White Lies*, 280.

<sup>430</sup> Interview with Horst Kleinschmidt, 19 February 2014.

<sup>431</sup> Barry Feinberg quoted in Herbstein, *White Lies*, 280.

Collins and acted as a link between IDAF and the Swedish government, IDAF encompassed more than that. Wästberg wrote:

One aspect of the work of IDAF, repeatedly emphasised by John Collins, is that any vestige of paternalism, any attachment of strings, any consideration of self-interest in the provision of aid will not do. Only by giving the liberation movements the humanitarian aid they need, by sharing with them in their struggles, can the international community demonstrate the sincerity of professed belief in a non-racial democratic South Africa.<sup>432</sup>

Despite this sentiment, IDAF embarked on a process of rationalisation under the financial and administrative leadership of Michanek whereby the organisation became more bureaucratic and efficient. However, what troubled Collins was that this may have been at the cost of the voluntary work that IDAF was premised upon. Working tirelessly for most of his life, after his return from Austria on IDAF business, Canon Collins passed away at the age of 77 years on New Year's Eve, 1982 after a heart attack.<sup>433</sup>

Following Collins' death, Phyllis Altman was appointed as director where she also oversaw the move of the whole IDAF operation into one central location. Canon Collins House at 64 Essex Road, Islington became the new home for the work of IDAF. In a sense, this site also became a memorial to the legacy of John Collins. Altman retired after a few years and handed the reigns over to Horst Kleinschmidt who then proceeded, under the guidance of Michanek, to rationalise and reorganise the organisation. As IDAF became more business-like, the style of the organisation changed.<sup>434</sup>

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<sup>432</sup> Per Wästberg, 'The Birth of a Fund' in I. Henderson (ed), *Man of Christian Action: Canon Collins – the man and his work* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1976), 62.

<sup>433</sup> 'Anti-apartheid champion dies', *Sunday News*, 2 January 1983 in IDAF collection, MCH 31, Box 4148, "Letters of condolences on death of Canon Collins 1983", Historical Papers (UWC Robben Island Mayibuye Archives, Bellville).

<sup>434</sup> Cook, 'The International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa', 208.

With Kleinschmidt at the helm, “the activities that had been previously been called clauses, a more religious or moral term, were now referred to as programmes. The cloak-and-dagger usages so beloved by the Canon, such as Mr X for Frankel, were abandoned, and Kleinschmidt introduced the less melodramatic but no less inscrutable term, the Consultant.”<sup>435</sup> Kleinschmidt also added another arm to the operations as a way to streamline and professionalise the organisation by arranging the administration component into what became known as programme 4.

With hindsight, it seems that the reforms at IDAF arrived just in time before the total onslaught of the apartheid government on the liberation movements during the 1980s. Under the leadership of President P.W. Botha, the regime moved to a “new level of murderous brutality”<sup>436</sup> as opponents of apartheid were ruthlessly and swiftly dealt with. As Botha pushed through his reform plan for South Africa by establishing a tricameral parliament for whites, coloureds and asians, the resistance movement also started gaining momentum with the establishment of the United Democratic Front (UDF) in 1983 at the Rocklands Community Centre in Mitchell’s Plain, on the unforgiving windswept sandy flats, on the edge of Cape Town.<sup>437</sup> With the regional changes that had taken place such as Zimbabwean independence in 1980, apartheid South Africa was well aware that they needed to maintain their stranglehold on any efforts at resistance. The decade of the 1980s witnessed unprecedented state repression in response to increased protests, resistance and violence. This, in turn, resulted in a dramatic increase in the number of arrests, detentions and court cases as the apartheid regime responded with brute force.

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<sup>435</sup> Cook, ‘The International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa’, 208.

<sup>436</sup> Cook, ‘The International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa’, 209; Also see Tom Lodge, ‘Reform, Recession and Resistance’ in Tom Lodge and Bill Nasson (eds), *All here and now: Black Politics in South Africa in the 1980s* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1991), 29; 31-32.

<sup>437</sup> Tom Lodge, ‘The Launch of the United Democratic Front’ Resistance’ in Tom Lodge and Bill Nasson (eds), *All here and now: Black Politics in South Africa in the 1980s* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1991), 49; Dubow, *Apartheid 1948-1994*, 205-210.

Tethering on the brink of civil strife, the South African government had its hands full with the enormity of increased resistance, especially also after Oliver Tambo's call that South Africa should be made ungovernable. The institution of another State of Emergency in 1985 led to more arrests and trials, as the government sought to quash any resistance. However, the increased volume of arrests also meant that IDAF had to ensure funding for the people on trial as well as their dependents, which placed severe constraints on the organisation. In a letter to Al Cook, Horst Kleinschmidt reflected on this period by noting the strain placed on IDAF. Kleinschmidt wrote:

The scale of activism [organised and spontaneous], and the response of the state by increasing its repressive machinery, put a new burden on IDAF that nearly broke our back. Although we had gone through a period of re-organisation after the death of Canon Collins, and were equipped to handle large numbers of cases better than previously, our own ability to raise more funds, to assess more letters of appeal, to expand the network of attorneys and advocates, and then keep tabs on each detainee, of each charge sheet if a person or persons were brought to court, and then to assess the associated legal and welfare costs and effect payment - cumbersome due to the secret machinery we had to engage – stretched our own machinery and staff input to the limits.<sup>438</sup>

The increased number of trials also saw legal costs soar at an alarming rate that would have been impossible for IDAF to sustain for very long. According to Cook, “at the time of Collins’ death, the bill for the legal defence had been £1 million. Now it was £5 million and rising.”<sup>439</sup> In order to remedy this situation, IDAF imposed various guidelines on legal firms as a means to lower the exceedingly high defence costs, thereby setting a maximum tariff for lawyers. Although this measure was unpopular among some of the lawyers, it also provided an opportunity for employment for smaller firms and an emerging number of black lawyers.

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<sup>438</sup> Horst Kleinschmidt, quoted in Cook, ‘The International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa’, 234.

<sup>439</sup> Cook, ‘The International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa’, 234.

According to Herbstein, “IDAF now became a branch of the struggle, its funds allowing scores of small ‘non-white’ law practices to act as creative protectors of resistance.”<sup>440</sup>

With the adoption of the doctrine of ‘common purpose’ first used in the Solomon Mahlangu trial at the end of the 1970s, and later used again in the trials of the Sharpeville Six and the Uppington 14 (originally the Uppington 25 before charges were dropped), the desperation of the apartheid regime became palpable.<sup>441</sup> This desperation found expression through the Delmas trial that lasted from 1985 to 1989, which was also one of the last major trials that IDAF funded before apartheid came to a grinding halt. In an ironic sense, and finding resonance with the treason trial of 1956 to 1961, the Delmas trial was a return to the use of treason as a charge. It was a costly and lengthy trial that saw 19 members of the UDF accused of treason and murder. Eventually, after spending more than 4 years in jail, all of the defendants were freed in 1989.



### ***Struggle interrupted***

Unexpectedly for some, on 2 February 1990 apartheid came to an end. In the almost two months following the release of the Delmas accused, President F.W. de Klerk made an announcement that startled some in the liberation movements. He lifted the ban on the ANC, PAC and other political organisations, as well as IDAF, and announced that political exiles would be allowed to return and that all political prisoners would be released from prison.

After 35 years of support work given to the liberation movements, the battle against apartheid had been won. IDAF had fulfilled its mandate in keeping with the promise that Canon Collins made in the 1950s when he first pledged his support for the fight against apartheid. With

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<sup>440</sup> Herbstein, *White Lies*, 302.

<sup>441</sup> According to the doctrine of ‘common purpose’, if a crime or crimes was or were committed by a member or members of a crowd, then any other member or members of the crowd was or were as guilty as the person or persons who had actually committed the crime(s). See Cook, ‘The International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa’, 242.



liberation achieved in South Africa, IDAF was now faced with an uncertain path as it faced questions about its future and whether its support work would still be required. Herbstein adequately summed up the situation that IDAF was facing by this comment:

IDAF emerged into the post-apartheid light, blinking, unsure of the next step. It had always been understood that the end of apartheid would mean the demise of John Collins' great undertaking. But now it was all happening so suddenly.<sup>442</sup>

Apartheid was defeated, but now IDAF faced a range of other problematic questions that went beyond their survival. With South Africa still very much in the throes of political violence and instability, IDAF was troubled by two aspects of its work which they knew remained crucial even within the context of a newly liberated South Africa. In the event of IDAF closing their doors, what would happen to the legal support for the on-going trials, and what would happen to the welfare assistance recipients of Programme 2 in South Africa? It was for these reasons that the Fund decided at its 1990 Annual Conference in Ottawa, Canada that a delegation would be sent to South Africa in order to gauge the political climate, and to meet leaders from various organisations in order to ascertain if the services of IDAF were still required.<sup>443</sup> Al Cook remembered this situation with a tinge of cynicism when he said:

The question for IDAF now was: would it still be needed? The answer was not a simple one. Stranded in London, 'Fortress IDAF' with its strictly laid down mandate, its cumbersome, security-dominated building and establishment all based on being banned, suddenly seemed like a dinosaur. Its complexity of systems and staff of 60, half of whom were not South African, could not simply be transferred to South Africa, and would hardly be welcomed if it could.<sup>444</sup>

The possibility of dissolving IDAF was met with mixed responses as there were those both within the liberation movement and the IDAF structure that felt IDAF still had a role to play

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<sup>442</sup> Herbstein, *White Lies*, 318.

<sup>443</sup> Kodesh interview with Horst Kleinschmidt, 16 March 1993.

<sup>444</sup> Cook, 'The International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa', 246.

while others felt that it was appropriate for IDAF to close its operations and hand the reins over to organisations within South Africa. In an interview conducted by Wolfie Kodesh conducted as part of the Oral History for Exiles Project, Horst Kleinschmidt remembered this period as particularly difficult and politically laden. He said:

I came from May 1990. I came back to the country 14 times in the ensuing 18 months to try and discuss with officials of the ANC what should happen to IDAF and best restructure it. And the discussions simply and frankly floundered. It wasn't just me who did those discussions, other people participating and then including IDAF staff. When they saw the going got rough I was rather abandoned. I thought that people were much more keen to cover their backs in terms of their standing in the ANC and stand for what was happening. And in the end it was sort of fairly easy to cast the blame on me and partly on to our group. But it closed down too quickly. It closed down too early and it became like that simply because we didn't have any means of fundraising anymore because the movement wanted to have that money. I think there were tricks by the treasury. But I think there were other tricks too. There are still today things being said: 'it was time that we shut down that white structure and that ...' I just picked up the gossip. And there was this temporary feeling that the things that IDAF was doing could now be done by the ANC legally itself inside the country. I think that was the ... conception. It hasn't happened. We put forward proposals as to how we could help, for example with the returnees by expanding the system which we already had. I offered to put any 10 ANC chosen people through our welfare department and let the ANC run the structure here inside the country but nothing of that was ever taken up. It was just ignored.<sup>445</sup>

From these meetings, it became very apparent that IDAF was deemed to be no longer necessary for the way forward. In the ensuing months, haunted by its decision not to defend Winnie Mandela, wife of Nelson Mandela, as she stood trial for kidnapping and being accessory to assault charges, on the grounds that this was not a human rights issue, IDAF became more alienated from the liberation movement with which it worked so closely before. It is against this background of the complexities of changing political conditions that the closure of IDAF was recommended. At a special conference held in London in December

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<sup>445</sup> Wolfie Kodesh interview with Horst Kleinschmidt, Oral History of Exiles Project, MCA 6- 298, (UWC Robben Island Mayibuye Archives, Bellville), 16 March 1993, Interview with Horst Kleinschmidt, 19 February 2014.

1990, amidst highly charged emotions, the recommendation that IDAF should be dissolved was accepted.<sup>446</sup>

As a final contribution to the liberation movement in South Africa, IDAF hosted its final conference at the Ibis Hotel, Euston in London on 24-26 May 1991 where it both reviewed and celebrated its history and achievements. More importantly, this conference served as an opportunity to formally hand over IDAF's work and resources to organisations based in South Africa.<sup>447</sup> Among the guests were representatives of the ANC such as Walter and Albertina Sisulu, Kader Asmal, Dullah Omar, Hamilton Keke who represented the PAC, and individuals who represented the South African-based organisations that would be taking over the work of IDAF. During the first two days of the conference, all the speakers paid tribute to the critical role that IDAF played in the struggle for liberation, with Dullah Omar expressing his appreciation for the contribution of IDAF most vividly when he said, "IDAF made it possible for many of our people and organisations to stand on their own feet. Indeed, you have helped to humanise the struggle. Nobody knew where the money came from. Nobody got kudos. This was the key to its success."<sup>448</sup> The conference concluded with a memorial service to Canon Collins in the Crypt of St Paul's Cathedral on Sunday, 26 May and this marked the end of IDAF as a solidarity organisation.

After the conference, IDAF started winding up its affairs and completed the transfer of its work to South African-based organisations that would take over its functions. The closure of IDAF also meant that more than 50 staff members were made redundant by the end of June

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<sup>446</sup> 'IDAF Trustee Recommendation', 7 December 1990 and 'Address by Horst Kleinschmidt to the IDAF Special Conference, December 1990' in IDAF collection, MCH 31, Box 4150, "Special Conference, December 1990", Historical Papers (UWC Robben Island Mayibuye Archives, Bellville).

<sup>447</sup> Cook, 'The International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa', 247.

<sup>448</sup> 'Dullah Omar Speech', Final Conference of IDAF, London, 24-26 May 1991, in Barry Feinberg collection, MCH 89, Box 18, "IDAF", Historical Papers (UWC Robben Island Mayibuye Archives, Bellville).

1991, which for some, may have come as a shock. Herbstein wryly commented, “[s]ome employees, for whom this was the only working environment they had known, might have believed they would be employed indefinitely, until retirement, like members of the English civil service.”<sup>449</sup> However, in an attempt to soften this blow, retrenchment packages were offered to those who faced unemployment, and IDAF continued operating with a skeleton staff until it formally shut its doors on 16 December 1991.

The job of this skeleton structure was essentially to tie up the loose ends but most importantly, to pack and ship the material to the organisations in South Africa that would resume the work begun by IDAF. Given the sensitive nature of the legal and welfare records and the danger of sending these to a politically volatile South Africa, it was decided that some of the records would be stored in London for the time being. IDAF retained the services of a Research Department archivist, Lis Hacker, who indexed the IDAF material. Subsequently, the legal and welfare records were stored with Hays Business Services, and the microfilm archive of the work of the research department was stored with Wansdyke Security.<sup>450</sup> At the same time as IDAF’s dissolution, most national committees also decided to close their operations, with some of their materials being deposited at local archives. This was the case of the New Zealand national committee, whose material was deposited at a local archive in New Zealand.<sup>451</sup>

After various consultative meetings in South Africa, it was decided that the work of Programme 1 would be inherited by the South African Legal Defence Fund (SALDEF) which

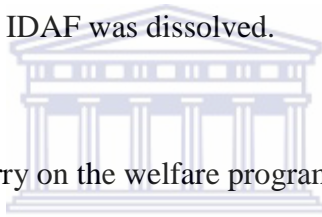
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<sup>449</sup> Herbstein, *White Lies*, 318.

<sup>450</sup> ‘Letter to from Al Cook to trustees dated 7 April 1992’ in IDAF collection, MCH 31, Box 2260, “Al Cook’s Files”, Historical Papers (UWC Robben Island Mayibuye Archives, Bellville).

<sup>451</sup> ‘Minutes of the 10<sup>th</sup> and Final Conference of the International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa, 24-26 May 1991’, Ibis Hotel, Euston, London in Barry Feinberg collection, MCH 89, Box 18, Folder ‘IDAF’, (UWC Robben Island Mayibuye Archives, Bellville).

was based in Cape Town. SALDEF was specially created for this purpose as a means to carry the burden of the legal work that was still on-going. According to the late Ntobeko Patrick Maqubela, who had been appointed as SALDEF's national director in 1991, the organisation's primary objectives were to assist with legal aid for those who continued to be politically repressed, to assist victims of apartheid in seeking restitution and to advocate for the establishment of an equal public defender system.<sup>452</sup> Unfortunately, though it was assisted by IDAF through its transitioning period, SALDEF struggled to get off the ground, with donors switching from human rights work to rebuilding South Africa through reconstruction, housing and education programmes.<sup>453</sup> Limping on for a while longer, SALDEF eventually closed its doors in mid-1994 as a result of the rampant mismanagement of legal firms and the withdrawal of IDAF donors when IDAF was dissolved.



Although IDAF had offered to carry on the welfare programme from London or to base that operation in South Africa, this gesture was refused by the liberation movement. The work of Programme 2 was inherited by the Dependents' Conference of the South African Council of Churches (SACC) and the Association of Ex-political Prisoners (AEPP). By the time IDAF closed, it had 2000 families on their books which may have just been too large a number for the Dependents' Conference to handle as they also folded under pressure.<sup>454</sup> According to Kleinschmidt, plagued by weak administrative structures and a lack of capacity, SACC and the AEPP did not appear to have honoured any commitment, as IDAF often received sad

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<sup>452</sup> 'Letter from Ntobeko Maqubela dated 12 September 1991' in IDAF collection, MCH 31, Box 2260, "Al Cook's Files", Historical Papers (UWC Robben Island Mayibuye Archives, Bellville).

<sup>453</sup> Horst Kleinschmidt hinted at the difficulty that SALDEF was experiencing in taking over the legal tasks of IDAF in a letter to the IDAF trustees on 26 September 1991. See 'Letter from Horst Kleinschmidt to Trustees and Consultant dated 26 September 1991 in IDAF collection, MCH 31, Box 2260, "Al Cook's Files", Historical Papers (UWC Robben Island Mayibuye Archives, Bellville).

<sup>454</sup> According to the Minutes of the 10<sup>th</sup> and Final Conference of the International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa, Horst Kleinschmidt pegged the number of families on their books as over 3000 while Herbstein claimed that it was 2000. See Herbstein, *White Lies*, 325.

appeals in the form of letters from former recipients who could not get help after IDAF ceased functioning.<sup>455</sup>

Preceding the closure of IDAF and anticipating the changing political climate in South Africa, UWC had embarked on a project on the history of the liberation struggle in South Africa during the late 1980s. Their plan was to establish an apartheid museum of which the IDAF material would become the centrepiece. It is in this regard that André Odendaal, a lecturer in the History Department at the UWC, was dispatched to London in 1988 by UWC rector, Jakes Gerwel. He was to negotiate the transfer of IDAF's informational material such as newsreels, films and particularly photographs which they had hoped would become the basis for an expanding visual archive.<sup>456</sup> UWC presented a convincing proposal in which they outlined what they envisaged for their centre, and based on their close relationship with the liberation movements it was decided that the work of Programme 3 was to be transferred to the Mayibuye Centre for History and Culture at the UWC.<sup>457</sup>

Eventually, the Mayibuye Centre became home to the records all of IDAF's programmes, even to the legal and welfare records when it was deemed safe enough for the records to be relocated to South Africa.<sup>458</sup> Another recipient of the work of IDAF was the Johannesburg based Human Rights Commission (HRC). As a result of the human rights work that the HRC was doing in terms of research, this organisation inherited the existing research of IDAF on

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<sup>455</sup> 'Letter from Horst Kleinschmidt to Trustees and Consultant dated 26 September 1991 in IDAF collection, MCH 31, Box 2260, Historical Papers (UWC Robben Island Mayibuye Archives, Bellville); Also see Herbststein, *White Lies*, 326.

<sup>456</sup> 'Study Leave Report by André Odendaal, Department of History (1990)', Fakulteit Lettere en Wysbegeerte Verslae: Studieverlof, konferensie/kongresse bygewoon (Ciraj Rassool Papers).

<sup>457</sup> Feinberg, *Time to Tell*, 125-126.

<sup>458</sup> IDAF material was also donated to several university libraries and research institutions such as the University of Natal, University of Fort Hare, Yale University Library, Institute of Commonwealth Studies (London) and the Centre for Studies of Africa and Middle East (CEAMO), Havana. See receipts of acknowledgement of donation of IDAF material in 1991 in IDAF collection, MCH 31, Box 2260, "Al Cook's Files"(UWC Robben Island Mayibuye Archives, Bellville).

the issue of human rights in South Africa. With the sensitive files of the legal and welfare records initially stored in a secure vault in London and the rest transferred to South Africa, IDAF closed as an institution. Through the “organised and stored files it had guarded so diligently into an archive”<sup>459</sup> throughout the years of its existence, the records of IDAF officially became an archive of the future post-apartheid.

In this chapter, I have traced the cultural and political history of IDAF from an active solidarity organisation to its abrupt closure and its metamorphosis into becoming an archive of the liberation struggle. By focusing on the history of the organisation’s support work for the liberation movements through its legal, welfare and publications programmes, this chapter has sought to highlight the contribution of IDAF to the liberation struggle. More importantly, it has sought to emphasise the importance of the store of records IDAF had accumulated and meticulously preserved and managed during its 35 years of support work. In an attempt to understand the rationale behind this archival desire, especially given the clandestine nature in which these records were created, I have argued that the meticulous recordkeeping and archival practices of IDAF were a significant precursor to its transformation into an archive of the post-apartheid. The chapter has also raised questions about the relative invisibility of IDAF within the popular imagination and within nationalist discourses of the liberation struggle, a question that will be explored further in the next chapter.

In seeking to understand the constitution of IDAF as an archive, this chapter has attempted to show how the complex political and cultural history of IDAF gave shape and meaning to the records. The repatriation of the IDAF records from exile to post-apartheid South Africa

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<sup>459</sup> Cook, ‘The International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa’, 248.

created the hope that this 'living archive' would be reactivated and redeployed in a new democracy. However, in the next chapter, I will show that instead of resuscitating this work of IDAF, the records were turned into a memorial of IDAF's resistance work. By focusing on the development of the Mayibuye Centre of which the IDAF records became its foundational collection, I will argue that with the insertion of the IDAF records into a nation-building project that sought to create a museum of apartheid, perhaps with unintended consequences, they eventually came to stand as a largely forgotten monument to the liberation struggle within the politics of post-apartheid memory.





## CHAPTER FIVE

### IN THE LABYRINTHINE ANNALS OF RESISTANCE HISTORY: MAKING AND REMAKING AN ARCHIVE FOR THE POST-APARTHEID

We worked with a particular energy that wasn't characteristic of that space. So there was an activism in the formation of the Mayibuye Centre. That was key to understanding it. And the challenge is then to translate it and build [it] into an organisation and an institution that can be sustained over time. And that is a key reason why it was not like many of the community projects that folded up as NGO funding dried up and changed in the post democracy period but that it was incorporated into a national cultural institution.<sup>460</sup>

The previous chapter traced the genealogy of IDAF as a solidarity organisation through their support work to the liberation movements in South Africa. I have argued that the meticulous recordkeeping and archival practices of IDAF created the conditions through which the administrative and operational records could later be inaugurated as an archive and deployed in Cape Town. In seeking to understand how archives are created, this chapter will continue to focus on the cultural history and political life of the IDAF archival collection by exploring the development of the Mayibuye Centre since its inception as a vibrant cultural and historical project and its gradual transformation into a custodial chamber of interred and incarcerated mnemonic and material objects. Through an exploration of the complex processes embedded in the making of archives, this chapter will argue that these records were steadily entombed and turned into a memorial to IDAF's support work to the liberation movements.

When IDAF was formed during the 1950s in solidarity with the liberation movements in South Africa, the organisation was driven by the ideal of activism and social justice. This was

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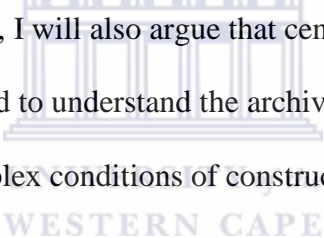
<sup>460</sup> Interview with André Odendaal by author, Cape Town (28 May 2014), (Herein after Interview with André Odendaal).

best articulated through its engagement with social and political issues which found expression through the information, research, publications and outreach programmes it pursued. This spirit of activism was continued through the pioneering work of the Mayibuye Centre for History and Culture at UWC. This was a project that unfolded during the latter part of the 1980s focused on establishing an apartheid museum and a liberation archive through which histories could be ‘recovered’ or told for the first time by focusing on aspects that had been neglected in the past in South Africa.

In the post-apartheid imagination, it can be argued that the records of IDAF were perceived to be instrumental in the process of nation-building and in the facilitation of the transition to democracy. They first served as an invaluable resource for the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Committee (TRC) and later were incorporated into the Robben Island Museum (RIM), a new national museum about apartheid and resistance in South Africa. However, more than two decades later, the IDAF records lie seemingly in a state of suspended obscurity, ironically interred and forgotten in the basement of the UWC Library. As part of constructing a cultural history and studying the political life of the IDAF archival collection, and in an attempt to understand the relative invisibility of these records in its current setting, I will also argue that with the repatriation of these records from London to Cape Town, they consequently became entombed and monumentalised in a nation-building project about heritage and the politics of legacy making.

In *Archive Stories*, a collection of archive narratives about the creation of archives and how archives are interpreted and experienced, the authors emphasised the necessity to recognise

the “backstage of archives”<sup>461</sup> by regarding the history of the archive itself and one’s own personal encounters with the archive.<sup>462</sup> In the same volume, John Randolph argued that archives were objects that gathered meaning over time and, crucially, were also objects which should be understood as having histories of their own.<sup>463</sup> According to Randolph, “[t]he life of a collection begins before it enters such institutions, just as often, collections change hands; and in this sense, the physical history of an archive is a story of production, exchange, and use across and among a number of social and institutional settings.”<sup>464</sup> Randolph argued further that, “[f]or this reason ‘biography,’ rather than institutional history, suggests itself as a productive metaphor for thinking about the physical history of an archive and its relationship to lived experience, including our own.”<sup>465</sup>



Drawing on Randolph’s argument, I will also argue that central in the construction of a biography of an archive is the need to understand the archive as an historical object, itself, which is often created under complex conditions of construction.<sup>466</sup> It is only then that it can create the possibility to read the archive in a much more intricate and nuanced way by focusing on the life of an archive through considering the history of archives, the principles, practices and theoretical underpinnings that they are subjected to. This chapter will thus explore the development of the Mayibuye Centre by focusing on the processes of selection, interpretation and intervention that gave shape to the IDAF archival collection and that continue to re-shape this collection. Significantly, this biographical approach might also

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<sup>461</sup> Antoinette Burton, ‘Introduction: Archive Fever, Archive Stories’ in Antoinette Burton (ed), *Archive Stories: Facts, Fictions and the Writing of History* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2005), 7.

<sup>462</sup> Burton, ‘Introduction’, 8.

<sup>463</sup> John Randolph, ‘On the Biography of the Bakunin Family Archive’ in Antoinette Burton (ed), *Archive Stories: Facts, Fictions and the Writing of History* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2005), 209-210.

<sup>464</sup> Randolph, ‘On the Biography of the Bakunin Family Archive’, 210.

<sup>465</sup> Randolph, ‘On the Biography of the Bakunin Family Archive’. 210.

<sup>466</sup> Randolph, ‘On the Biography of the Bakunin Family Archive’, 210; For a South African scholar among many who have also adopted this approach, see Carolyn Hamilton, ‘Backstory, Biography and the Life of the James Stuart Archive’, *History in Africa*, Vol. 38 (2011), 320.

enable a deeper understanding of the way in which the archive was and is still being forged through historical, political and archival processes.

This is a point that has already been argued elsewhere by a number of historians. Writing on nineteenth century Dutch colonial archives, Ann Laura Stoler argued that “[t]o understand an archive, one needs to understand the institutions that it served. One needs to understand what subjects are cross-referenced, what parts are rewritten, what quotes are cited, not only about how decisions are rendered but how colonial histories are written and remade.”<sup>467</sup> In her reading of the colonial archives, Stoler argued for a more nuanced approach to reading and interrogating the archive.

Stoler argued that as much as historians should be reading archives ‘against the grain’ as a way of producing histories from below, they should also be reading archives ‘along the archival grain’ in order “to read for its regularities, for its logic of recall ... for its consistencies of misinformation, omission and mistake ....”<sup>468</sup> She further argued that if archival production is both a process and a technology of rule, then historians should understand it as such, including the way in which it frames archival biography. Though Stoler’s meditation focused on the colonial archive, I would argue that her articulations of the archive as an epistemological experiment and archiving as a process can be deployed in a very productive way through which the idea of the ‘liberation archive’ can be thought through.

Writing extensively about the biographical production of I.B. Tabata’s biography and the contestations around it, Ciraj Rassool emphasised the importance of giving biographical

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<sup>467</sup> Ann Laura Stoler, ‘Colonial Archives and the Arts of Governance: On the Content in the Form’ in Carolyn Hamilton et al (eds), *Refiguring the Archive* (Cape Town: David Philip, 2002), 98.

<sup>468</sup> Stoler, ‘Colonial Archives and the Arts of Governance’, 92.

attention to the archive. Focusing his critique on Allison Drew's approach of 'mining' the archive during her project that attempted to document the existence of a "radical left tradition" between 1907 and 1964, Rassool cautioned against the danger of regarding "documents as containers of facts and archives, as repositories of collections of facts."<sup>469</sup> He further argued that "viewed in this way, documents bec[o]me divorced from their own history of safekeeping, storage, collection and recollection as they had been passed along or transacted into circuits of distribution within which they shed old meanings and took on new ones."<sup>470</sup>

Similarly, an emerging number of historians are joining this view and adding their voice to a growing literature around understanding the importance of the history of the archive through its production and deployment. As mentioned above, in the volume *Archive Stories*, historians discussed a possible re-orientation in the way in which academic disciplines engage with the archive by arguing for a genealogical approach in understanding it. The work by John Randolph on the biography of the Bakunin family archive and by Helena Pohlandt-McCormick on her archival experience doing research of the 1976 Soweto uprising, in this volume, are particularly productive in thinking about how the archive is made and later deployed in various ways.<sup>471</sup>

In an attempt to explore the biography of the Bakunin archive "across the cycles of its production, exchange, and use,"<sup>472</sup> Randolph argued that in order to understand one's own

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<sup>469</sup> Ciraj Rassool, 'The Individual, Auto/Biography and History in South Africa', Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, (University of the Western Cape, Bellville, May 2004), 124.

<sup>470</sup> Rassool, 'The Individual, Auto/Biography and History in South Africa', 124.

<sup>471</sup> Antoinette Burton (ed), *Archive Stories: Facts, Fictions and the Writing of History* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2005). In this volume see Tony Ballantyne's 'Mr. Peal's Archive', 87-110; John Randolph's chapter on the 'Bakunin Family Archive', 209-231 and Helena Pohlandt-McCormick's chapter 'In good hands: Researching the 1976 Soweto uprising in State Archives of South Africa', 299-324.

<sup>472</sup> Randolph, 'On the Biography of the Bakunin Family Archive', 210-211.

archival experience, it is crucial to interrogate the history of the archive. In his interrogation of the life and activities of the Bakunin archive, Randolph meticulously crafted a narrative through which he followed the journey from the making of the Bakunin archive in their domestic setting within the Bakunin household to becoming an archival collection within the St. Petersburg's Institute of Russian Literature. In tracing the trajectory of the Bakunin archive through its making, changing hands several times, and in the way it was used, Randolph importantly argued that "the life of an archive is not merely the story of its physical 'preservation,' but of a capillary interplay between conceptual continuity and objective change."<sup>473</sup>

By drawing on her research experience in the State archives in Pretoria, from the early 1990s during her doctoral studies which focused on the records generated by the work of the Cillie Commission of Enquiry into the events of the 1976 Soweto uprising, Pohlandt-McCormick argued that this particular archival collection had been shaped by the prevailing political situation of that time and the shifting historical terrain.<sup>474</sup> In her reflections of doing research in the archive, Pohlandt-McCormick also raised critical questions about the way in which the archive shaped the production of knowledge. She argued that sources were never innocent as they were shaped by thought, biases and assumptions and crucially, it would only ever offer a 'sliver of a sliver'.<sup>475</sup> Thus, she emphasised that it was only through a critical reading of all sources possible that more complex, multi-layered narratives were allowed to emerge.<sup>476</sup>

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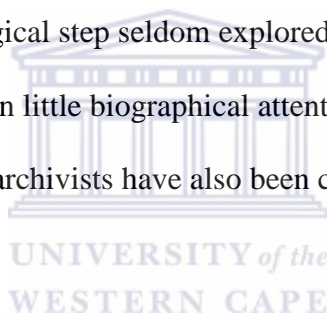
<sup>473</sup> Randolph, 'On the Biography of the Bakunin Family Archive', 213.

<sup>474</sup> Helena Pohlandt-McCormick, 'In good hands: Researching the 1976 Soweto uprising in State Archives of South Africa' in Antoinette Burton (ed), *Archive Stories: Facts, Fictions and the Writing of History* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2005), 301.

<sup>475</sup> Pohlandt-McCormick, 'In good hands', 307; Verne Harris noted that archives offer researchers a 'sliver of a sliver of a sliver'. See Verne Harris, 'The Archival Sliver: Power, Memory and Archives in South Africa', *Archival Science* 2 (2002), 65.

<sup>476</sup> Pohlandt-McCormick, 'In good hands', 313-315.

More recently, Carolyn Hamilton also added her voice to the growing call for an understanding of the ways in which the archive was produced. By following the path of the James Stuart material located at the University of KwaZulu-Natal's Killie Campbell Africana Library from their pre-archival form to the moment when they attained the status of an archive, Hamilton argued that one needed to ask by whom, for whom, when, why and how an archive was created.<sup>477</sup> Hamilton argued that, “[i]t is archival biography that allows us to discern motion, process and change in and around archives and records at the same time, as archival processes and procedures work to preserve the record for posterity.”<sup>478</sup> She further contended that the concept of archival biography was a monumental exercise but a necessary prerequisite in order to understand how the record's status and meaning had been shaped and changed over time - a methodological step seldom explored by historians.<sup>479</sup> However, it is not only historians who have given little biographical attention to the archives they work with. Despite their protestations, archivists have also been culpable.



### ***The birthplace of history and culture***

In further constructing a biography of the IDAF archival collection, it will be useful to trace the genealogy of the Mayibuye Centre for History and Culture. As a means to situate it within its contemporary setting, it will be useful to reflect on the political background in which the centre came into existence and more importantly, to understand the itineraries of thought behind the desire to establish what came to be known as the UWC Robben Island Mayibuye Archives. Located on the margins of Cape Town, and secluded alongside the ecological sanctuary that the Cape Flats Nature Reserve has offered, UWC has been an apartheid bush

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<sup>477</sup> See Carolyn Hamilton, 'Backstory, Biography and the Life of the James Stuart Archive', *History in Africa*, Vol. 38 (2011).

<sup>478</sup> Hamilton, 'Backstory, Biography and the Life of the James Stuart Archive', 333.

<sup>479</sup> Hamilton argued, "Readings and interpretations of a 'source' can shift in significant ways when considered in the light of the conditions of production of the particular record", however it is a step hardly taken by historians "until the interpretation of the record becomes a matter of debate." See Hamilton, 'Backstory, Biography and the Life of the James Stuart Archive', 320; 340.

college and the site of a radical project in higher education. More than just being alongside a sanctuary for fauna and flora, UWC also offered itself as a political and academic refuge in which students and staff could partake in political activities during the 1980s in the late stages of the struggle for liberation in South Africa. Against the background of the political ferment of mass political mobilisation and student radicalisation of the 1980s, UWC sought to reinvent itself as the ‘university of the left’. Under the leadership of then rector, Jakes Gerwel, UWC embarked on a process of applying an open admissions policy, and also started to employ more radical scholars in an attempt to reconstitute itself as the ‘university of the left’.<sup>480</sup>

As the political barometer reached critical and feverish points brought about by Botha’s reforms followed shortly by a State of Emergency in 1985, the Department of History at UWC initiated a People’s History Project in 1986 in an attempt to “institutionalise the demands of the mass-based democratic movement for people’s education.”<sup>481</sup> More importantly, as Gary Minkley and Ciraj Rassool argued, “[p]eople’s history produced a politics of history as weapon, tool, and vehicle for empowerment, as part of ‘a broad project to develop an education for a post-apartheid South Africa’.”<sup>482</sup> Working towards much of the same aims as the History Workshop at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) and the Western Cape Oral History Project at the University of Cape Town (UCT), the People’s History Project sought to teach students how to do research before sending them into their communities to write the ‘hidden’ or marginalised histories of these oppressed

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<sup>480</sup> For a historical trajectory and reflections of the shaping of UWC as an academic institution at the coalface of resistance against apartheid, see Premesh Lalu and Noeleen Murray (eds), *Becoming UWC: Reflections, pathways and unmaking apartheid’s legacy* (Cape Town: Centre for Humanities Research, 2012).

<sup>481</sup> André Odendaal, ‘Developments in popular history in the Western Cape in the 1980s’, in Joshua Brown (ed), *History from South Africa: Alternative visions and practices* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991), 366.

<sup>482</sup> Gary Minkley and Ciraj Rassool, ‘Orality, Memory and Social History in South Africa’ in Sarah Nuttall and Carli Coetzee (eds), *Negotiating the Past: The Making of Memory in South Africa* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1998), 93.



communities.<sup>483</sup> In a sense, it can be argued that the People's History Project was a forerunner to the Mayibuye Centre although, of course, there were other factors that also contributed to the creation of the Centre.

In the spring of late 1986, following a suggestion by UWC Economics professor, Lieb Loots, Loots and Gerwel had a meeting to discuss the possibility of creating an apartheid museum under the auspices of UWC. On receiving a positive response from Gerwel, Loots proceeded to formalise these ideas into a formal proposal to the rector. In this proposal, Loots outlined in detail the motivations, activities, launching strategy and financial implications for such an undertaking. Loots furthermore stated the need to establish an institution such as an apartheid museum that could “assist in the portrayal and study of apartheid in its historical and current dimensions” and for this material to be “collected under one roof and be presented in an accessible and dynamic manner.”<sup>484</sup> Given the political and social changes that were taking place and a gradual shift towards thinking of the possibilities of a post-apartheid South Africa, Loots argued that the creation of an apartheid museum was imperative as it would serve an educational, commemorative and historical purpose.

Loots' proposal was followed up by a memorandum which was submitted in November 1987 by an ad hoc committee set up by Gerwel. Their task was to investigate the establishment of an apartheid museum at UWC. The ad hoc committee consisted of Lieb Loots, André Odendaal, educationist, Brian O'Connell, literary historian, Hein Willemsse and adviser and strategist, Goolam Aboobaker. In this memorandum, the ad hoc committee made several

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<sup>483</sup> Minkley and Rassool, 'Orality, Memory and Social History in South Africa', 91-94; Odendaal, 'Developments in popular history in the Western Cape in the 1980s', 366.

<sup>484</sup> 'Proposal: Apartheid Museum under the auspices of UWC, 1 January 1987', 2, Confidential Memorandum from Lieb Loots to the Rector, University of the Western Cape, in Academic Planning Committee Working Group re Establishment of Historical and Cultural Centre including an apartheid museum at UWC, Background Documents, Volume 1, 1986-1987 (André Odendaal Papers).

recommendations regarding the steps that should be taken towards the implementation of an apartheid museum, the appropriate institutional arrangement during the initial phase of the project, the level of the university's commitment towards this project, community involvement and how the proposed museum could be employed as an instrument of the struggle. Beyond the recommendations made by the ad hoc committee, the memorandum also underlined the importance of UWC being appropriately and strategically placed to develop an apartheid museum. The ad hoc committee strongly articulated this opinion in the memorandum by saying:

The very concept of the apartheid museum had its origin in the realisation that such an institution, if borne and nurtured within a progressive ethos, and serving as a focal point for a wide range of cultural and socially creative activities, can indeed be a powerful instrument in the struggle for a non-racial and democratic society. For this to be the case, it is imperative that the apartheid museum be formed under the auspices of UWC. The ad hoc committee is of the opinion that UWC needs to respond to the challenge of forging an instrument of struggle for which it is eminently placed. As an institution of higher learning and research, as a community of intellectuals whose best contribution to the creation of a new society must be as such, and as a place where some space has been opened up for transforming cultural and social creativity, UWC has indeed got a responsibility to ensure that the concept of an apartheid museum is developed as an instrument of struggle before it is expropriated and exploited for other purposes.<sup>485</sup>

Realising the strategic importance of establishing an apartheid museum at UWC, it was decided that UWC would “embark on a project on the history of resistance in South Africa.”<sup>486</sup> André Odendaal, a lecturer from the History Department, who was also a member of the ad hoc committee that was tasked with determining the feasibility of setting up an apartheid museum, was granted sabbatical leave by UWC for the duration of 1988 to go to

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<sup>485</sup> ‘Confidential Memorandum: Apartheid Museum at the University of the Western Cape’, 5 Academic Planning Committee Working Group re Establishment of Historical and Cultural Centre including an apartheid museum at UWC in Background Documents, Volume 1, 1986-1987 (André Odendaal Papers).

<sup>486</sup> ‘Study Leave Report by Andre Odendaal, Department of History (1990)’, 1 in Fakulteit Lettere en Wysbegeerte Verslae: Studieverlof, konferensie/kongresse bygewoon (Ciraj Rassool Papers).

England for research. Odendaal was also tasked with exploring opportunities and possibilities around the collection and the preservation of the history of resistance in South Africa.

Initially, Odendaal was affiliated to the Institute of Commonwealth Studies (ICS) at the University of London and to the Centre for Research in Ethnic Relations (CER) at Warwick University where he presented papers at the seminar programmes of the respective centres.

He also attended conferences and contributed towards a photographic book, *Beyond the Barricades: Popular struggles in South Africa*. At the outset, Odendaal's journey was based on a two-pronged research agenda which was first, to build up a photographic collection and secondly, to write an illustrated overview of the history of resistance politics from the 1880s to the 1980s.<sup>487</sup>

Odendaal's research gradually took him outside the formal structures of the ICS and CER and brought him closer into the ambit of the work of the anti-apartheid movement. In his search for historical material on resistance in South Africa, Odendaal made contact with Sadie Forman who gave him access to the material on South Africa that her late husband, Lionel Forman had collected during his years as a political activist in the 1950s. Odendaal described this material as an unsorted collection on politics in the 1950s, "consisting of some 10 000 pieces, and containing the hitherto *untouched* private papers of Lionel Forman."<sup>488</sup>

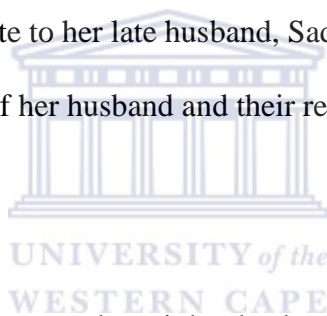
Through this seemingly promising association, Sadie Forman agreed to make available reproductions of her husband's personal papers to UWC, and Odendaal proceeded to sort

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<sup>487</sup> 'Study Leave Report by André Odendaal, Department of History (1990)', 1 (Ciraj Rassool Papers).

<sup>488</sup> My own emphasis as a way of underlining the archival imperative of organising and preserving material deemed important enough to archive. Though not meant as a critique this description of the archive also makes me think about the historian, Leopoldt von Ranke's engagement with the archive which he described as one of conquest where collections are untouched and virginal, waiting to be discovered. Although the historical profession has evolved since Ranke's days, engagements with the archive are often still characterised by the thrill of 'discovering' something untouched. See Helen Freshwater, 'The Allure of the Archive', *Poetics Today*, Vol. 24: 4 (2003), 730. Study Leave Report by André Odendaal, Department of History (1990), 2 (Ciraj Rassool Papers).

through the personal papers of Lionel Forman after which he drew up a provisional catalogue. The working relationship between Forman and Odendaal later culminated in a co-edited book, *A Trumpet from the Husetops: The Selected Writings of Lionel Forman*, which offered a selection of Forman's intellectual work and autobiographical accounts of his experiences as a member of the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA), and the later reorganised South African Communist Party (SACP).<sup>489</sup> Dedicated to preserving the life's work and memory of Lionel Forman, his widow, Sadie Forman eventually decided to deposit her husband's material at the National Heritage and Cultural Studies Centre (NAHECS) at the University of Fort Hare (UFH) in Alice where she devotedly continued to document his life, working as a volunteer at NAHECS and the University Library, until a few years before her death in 2014. As a final tribute to her late husband, Sadie Forman published her memoirs by primarily drawing on the life of her husband and their relationship, entitled, *Lionel Forman: A life too short*.<sup>490</sup>



It is unclear why Sadie Forman chose to deposit her husband's material at NAHECS as it seems that Forman and Odendaal had a good working relationship evident from their collaboration on *A Trumpet from the Husetops* and Odendaal's work on cataloguing the Forman material. Despite these positive developments, Sadie Forman chose NAHECS instead of the Mayibuye Centre leaving the latter with copies, in the form of 16 microfilm reels of the Forman papers which were microfilmed with the support of IDAF and the Ruth First Memorial Trust. It is interesting to note that when Odendaal referred to the material in the study leave report in 1990, this material was already being referred to in archival terms as the Lionel and Sadie Forman collection. It retained this name after the material was reproduced and the copies deposited at the Mayibuye Centre. It was later accessioned as the

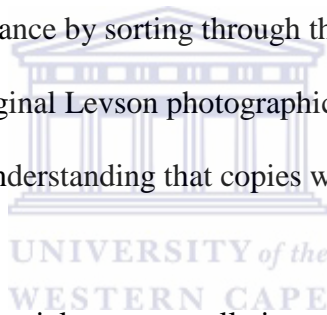
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<sup>489</sup> Sadie Forman & André Odendaal (eds), *A Trumpet from the Husetops: The selected writings of Lionel Forman* (Bellville: Mayibuye, 1992).

<sup>490</sup> Sadie Forman (ed), *Lionel Forman: A life too short* (Alice: University of Fort Hare Press, 2008).

Mayibuye Centre Historical (MCH) 21 collection and historically constituted part of one the earliest collections at the Mayibuye Centre.<sup>491</sup>

Odendaal's research eventually led him to Freda Levson, who had been a political activist, and through her work as the secretary of IDAF had developed close ties with people in the liberation movement. She was also the wife of the portrait and social documentary photographer, Leon Levson who had taken photographs between the 1940s to the 1960s, depicting African rural and urban life as well as working conditions. Freda Levson had preserved thousands of his negatives, which were of particular significance for a project that intended to establish a museum and an archive about apartheid. With the permission of Freda Levson, Odendaal provided assistance by sorting through the Levson images and created a catalogue of the material. The original Levson photographic material was then deposited at IDAF for safekeeping, with the understanding that copies would be made available to UWC.



While the Forman and Levson materials were equally important in contributing towards the project of the history of resistance, the project was fast-tracked when Odendaal approached IDAF about the possibility of reproducing some of their material. Odendaal recounted:

The response was unexpectedly generous. The trustees consented to the reproduction of virtually any material we wanted, generally offered to provide whatever help we required and expressed a wish to find formal ways of co-operating with UWC. Amongst others, IDAF offered to donate to us some 5,000 to 10, 000 photographs and several hundred videos. The cost of these materials was estimated at over R100, 000.00.<sup>492</sup>

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<sup>491</sup> Unfortunately, I could find no trace of the physical location of this collection apart from having been captured in a 'Guide to the Historical Papers' (2001) at the UWC Robben Island Mayibuye Archives. Although there are unidentified microfilms, there was no way to verify if any of the reels related to the Forman papers because of the absence of a functioning microfilm reader. After consulting the registrar who also had no knowledge as to the location and state of the microfilms of the Forman papers, I thought it best to leave this matter for future work that will definitely prove time-consuming.

<sup>492</sup> 'Study Leave Report by André Odendaal, Department of History, (1990)', 3 (Ciraj Rassool Papers).

The generosity of IDAF and further discussions with IDAF suddenly “raised new and bigger possibilities regarding the initial plans for a resistance archive.”<sup>493</sup> In a letter addressed to Jakes Gerwel a few months after his arrival in London dated 30 April 1988, Odendaal conveyed IDAF’s willingness to assist UWC in getting historical material for their project on condition that UWC sought legal advice regarding the legality of the latter receiving material from a banned organisation.<sup>494</sup> In his report, Odendaal stated that it seemed to him that with the possibility of developing a relationship with IDAF and getting large amounts of material, these might be used as a foundation on which to launch the apartheid museum.<sup>495</sup>

Extending the original concept of an apartheid museum, as proposed by Lieb Loots and Jakes Gerwel, Odendaal proposed in a brief to Gerwel that an historical archive also form part of the idea for an apartheid museum.<sup>496</sup> With a promising relationship developing between IDAF and UWC, and with IDAF’s commitment of donating 8000 photographs and approximately 250 videos to UWC for this project, Odendaal applied for further study leave in order to further the objectives of the project on the history of resistance.<sup>497</sup>

During the remainder of his study leave, from August 1988 to September 1989, Odendaal visited various universities, museums, libraries and archives in Cuba, the former Soviet Union and especially the United States of America. This enabled him to give more shape and depth in constructing the proposal for an archive through his various exchanges with

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<sup>493</sup> ‘Study Leave Report by André Odendaal, Department of History, (1990)’, 4.

<sup>494</sup> ‘Letter from André Odendaal to Jakes Gerwel dated 30 April 1988’ in Academic Planning Committee Working Group regarding establishment of Historical and Cultural Centre, including and apartheid museum at UWC, Background Documents, Vol. 2, 1988-1990 (André Odendaal Papers).

<sup>495</sup> ‘Study Leave Report by André Odendaal, Department of History, (1990)’, 4.

<sup>496</sup> ‘Briefing for Jakes, London, 4 June 1988’ in Academic Planning Committee Working Group regarding establishment of Historical and Cultural Centre, including and apartheid museum at UWC, Background Documents, Vol. 2, 1988-1990 (André Odendaal Papers).

<sup>497</sup> ‘Letter from Barry Feinberg to André Odendaal dated 10 October 1989’ in Academic Planning Committee Working Group regarding establishment of Historical and Cultural Centre, including and apartheid museum at UWC, Background Documents, Vol. 2, 1988-1990 (André Odendaal Papers).

professional practitioners, activists and scholars. At the end of his sabbatical leave in 1989, Odendaal returned to South Africa with a substantial amount of historical material which consisted of 16 reels of microfilm of the Forman papers, photographic material from IDAF and Leon Levson as well as other publications such as the *Torch* and *Spark* newspapers from the 1930s. Having acquired invaluable, primarily visual material about the liberation struggle in South Africa that would have been previously unseen by most South Africans, this material re-energised the idea of the apartheid museum project and would later serve as the foundation on which the Mayibuye Centre for History and Culture was created. This prompted Gerwel to request that Odendaal draw up a firm proposal for him to table at a meeting of the Academic Planning Committee.<sup>498</sup>

At a meeting convened by Gerwel on 26 March 1990, Odendaal presented the draft proposal for the UWC “Mayibuye” History Project which he had drafted the year before towards the end of his sabbatical. Building upon the original concept of Loots and Gerwel, Odendaal’s proposal envisaged that the museum should include an area for historical exhibitions, an archive on the history of resistance and black social and political life in South Africa, a theatre and a space for workshops and offices for community groups, a photographic and film collection. In addition, he proposed that a distinct physical location in a building be constructed for this purpose.<sup>499</sup> In what Odendaal referred to as UWC’s “Mayibuye” History and Cultural Centre, he emphasised that the museum should function both as a repository for historical material and as a living community centre. With specific emphasis on the archival

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<sup>498</sup> ‘Letter from Jakes Gerwel to André Odendaal dated 8 February 1990’ in Academic Planning Committee Working Group regarding establishment of Historical and Cultural Centre, including and apartheid museum at UWC, Background Documents, Vol. 2, 1988-1990 (André Odendaal Papers).

<sup>499</sup> ‘Letter from André Odendaal dated 21 March 1990’ in Academic Planning Committee Working Group regarding establishment of Historical and Cultural Centre, including and apartheid museum at UWC, Background Documents, Vol. 2, 1988-1990 (André Odendaal Papers); ‘Memorandum from rector to executive committee of council, 27 March 1990’ regarding the establishment of a Historical and Cultural Centre including and apartheid museum at UWC in Academic Planning Committee Working Group regarding establishment of Historical and Cultural Centre, including and apartheid museum at UWC, Background Documents, Vol. 2, 1988-1990 (André Odendaal Papers).

component of the project, Odendaal outlined what was envisioned for the creation of a new archive on liberation at UWC. He proposed that the archive initially focused on political resistance as well as black economic life, literature, sport, religion and other general categories.<sup>500</sup>

He went on to propose that the archival component of the project be implemented in stages, starting first with the reproduction and transfer of the IDAF material which consisted of visual and audio-visual material, publications and papers. The second stage would be to set up a newspaper clippings service, followed by a third stage which would be to establish a pictorial archive. Another crucial cog in the machinery of the archival project was paper-based and primary material. This constituted a fourth stage, and would involve acquiring personal collections of individuals, becoming the official archive of sport, trade unions and political organisations and focusing on aspects of local history.

In concluding the stages for the archival component of the project, Odendaal importantly proposed the launch of a publishing unit, Mayibuye Books. Through this unit, the Mayibuye Centre would make available publications that had previously been banned, censored or unknown through three publication series. As the flagship of the Mayibuye History Project, Mayibuye Books would focus on the reprinting of series, publishing new titles and publishing popular histories and photographic books through the 'Mayibuye History and Literature series, The Mayibuye Library and The Mayibuye Centre Occasional Papers'. It was also envisaged that the Mayibuye History and Literature Series would assist in institutionalising

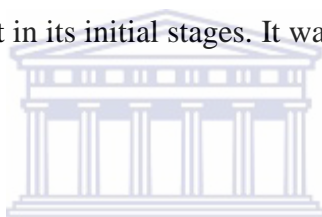
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<sup>500</sup> 'Letter from André Odendaal to Rector and others dated 21 March 1990', in Academic Planning Committee Working Group regarding establishment of Historical and Cultural Centre, including and apartheid museum at UWC, Background Documents, Vol. 2, 1988-1990 (André Odendaal Papers).



an intellectual and historical tradition, which that had not been adequately represented in South African universities.<sup>501</sup>

In an unintended, though serendipitous, turn of events with the closure of IDAF in 1991, the Mayibuye Centre's publications series became crucial to the workings of the history project as it took over from where IDAF left off. Continuing IDAF's tradition which started in the late 1960s, the Mayibuye Centre now began to publish new documentary, autobiographical and creative writing in addition to re-issuing previously banned or censored titles under the Centre's imprint.<sup>502</sup> Going beyond the parameters of a traditional archive, I would argue that the energy generated from this endeavour was significant, and contributed to the vibrancy that surrounded the history project in its initial stages. It was this energy that made the Mayibuye project come alive.



A day after Odendaal presented the proposal for establishment of UWC's Mayibuye History Project, the rector sought permission from the executive committee of council to pursue the idea of establishing a Historical and Cultural Centre on campus.<sup>503</sup> In his memorandum to the council, Gerwel explained the genesis of this idea that had been in development since 1987 when he appointed an ad hoc committee to investigate the viability of establishing an apartheid museum at UWC. In his elucidation of the project, Gerwel related the amount of research that had gone into this undertaking by emphasising that a considerable amount of visual material would serve as the foundation that the project would be built upon and that these had been donated by IDAF. According to Gerwel, a project such as this would not only

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<sup>501</sup> 'Mayibuye book launch', *Campus Bulletin*, 24 July 1991 in the Mayibuye Centre for History and Culture, First Annual Report 1992, Bellville.

<sup>502</sup> Karen Williams, 'Closed chapter for SA's book publishers', *Southside* 15 in the Mayibuye Centre for History and Culture, First Annual Report 1992, Bellville.

<sup>503</sup> 'Memorandum from rector to executive committee of council, 27 March 1990 regarding the establishment of a Historical and Cultural Centre including and apartheid museum at UWC', (André Odendaal Papers).

be attractive to potential funders but would also “enhance the image of UWC as a progressive, academically vibrant institution, and serve an important political and social function in terms of the broader community.”<sup>504</sup> Gerwel requested that the university council support the proposal for the Mayibuye History Project in order for the project to move forward.

Amidst intense political developments such as the release of political prisoners and the unbanning of political and solidarity organisations such as IDAF, the stage was set for an exciting period for the further development and implementation of the Mayibuye History Project. Also more broadly, this historic moment heralded a new political and transformative beginning for the country. UWC proceeded with their project by seconding André Odendaal from the History Department to “develop and to begin implementing plans towards a Historical/Cultural Centre at UWC.”<sup>505</sup> With Odendaal being seconded to the project, it received further assistance and administrative support in the form of the employment of five research assistants and an archivist/researcher, Albert ‘Bertie’ Fritz, who was also a former UWC History student and actively involved in the People’s History Project.

### ***Mayibuye i Afrika! (Let it return to Africa!)***

While the Mayibuye History Project was moving forward at UWC, the political reverberations of South Africa could also be felt elsewhere in the world, as exiled and underground liberation organisations were unbanned in 1990. In light of their unbanning and the changing political situation in South Africa, and after many discussions with the ANC and various other institutions, as well as after extensive exploratory visits to South Africa,

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<sup>504</sup> ‘Memorandum from rector to executive committee of council, 27 March 1990 regarding the establishment of a Historical and Cultural Centre including and apartheid museum at UWC’, (André Odendaal Papers).

<sup>505</sup> ‘Progress report from Working Group re UWC Historical and Cultural Centre to Academic Planning Committee, 4 March 1991’, (André Odendaal Papers).

IDAF decided to close down its operations in London. The niggling issue which needed to be resolved was the question of the material that they had accumulated during the course of their work and how their work could be continued through other emerging organisations in South Africa. Having already established a relationship with UWC through their representative, André Odendaal, during his sabbatical in London which saw IDAF donating a substantial amount of visual material to the fledgling Mayibuye Centre, UWC had put forward a strong proposal for the relocation of the entire IDAF archive.

With the impending closure of IDAF in mind, it was decided that Barry Feinberg and Gordon Metz should undertake a fact-finding mission to South Africa in order to assess issues relating to the relocation of the film, video, audio and photographic archive and to the development and continuation of the work of the publications and audio-visual departments of IDAF. After a whirlwind trip to South Africa in November 1990 which included meetings with the ANC, COSATU, SACP, SAHA, the History Workshop at Wits, UWC and other organisations, it was recommended that the film, video, photographic and audio material be relocated to the Mayibuye Centre for History and Culture.<sup>506</sup> The legal and welfare archival material would, eventually, join the rest of the material as soon as it was deemed appropriate.<sup>507</sup>

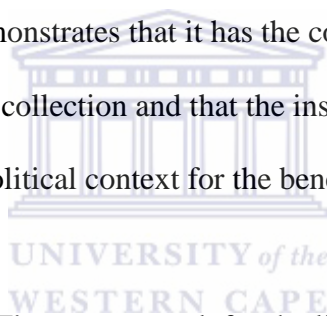
In the Publications and Audio-visual Department's report on their trip to South Africa, they recommended that the proposed UWC Museum of Liberation and Cultural Centre would be the most appropriate institution to receive the IDAF archives in their entirety subject to the

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<sup>506</sup> 'IDAF Publications and Audio-Visual Department Report on trip to South Africa', 26 November- 3 December 1990 in Barry Feinberg collection, MCH 89, Box 19, Historical Papers (UWC Robben Island Mayibuye Archives, Bellville).

<sup>507</sup> Feinberg, *Time to Tell*, 126.

fulfilment of certain conditions.<sup>508</sup> According to the report, “[i]t [was] proposed that the archive remain intact for historical reasons and the practical purposes of centralised distribution and be located in one institution, identified specifically as the IDAF collection, ...”<sup>509</sup> subject to certain conditions. The first condition that IDAF stipulated was “that the institution in question has an on-going working relationship with the liberation movement.” The second condition was “that there [should] be an accountable and representative structure in place to ensure that the aims and objectives of the relocation of the resources are implemented.” The last conditions specifically spoke to the responsibilities of the institution as it stipulated that “[t]he institution commits itself to making the resources available and accessible to the democratic movement and its related organisations inside South Africa nationally; that the institution demonstrates that it has the commitment and capability to manage, conserve and protect the collection and that the institution commits itself to activating the material within a political context for the benefit of all South Africans.”<sup>510</sup>



As an important reminder of IDAF’s support work for the liberation movement, the last two conditions that IDAF stipulated were “that the institution commits itself to continuing the basic principles with which IDAF collected and made available the material and further agrees to honour all commitments and agreements that IDAF entered into with regard to copyright, royalties and any other defined legal commitments” and “that the institution finds ways and means to ensure that IDAF’s brief of keeping the conscience of the world alive to the situation in South Africa continues to be served.”<sup>511</sup>

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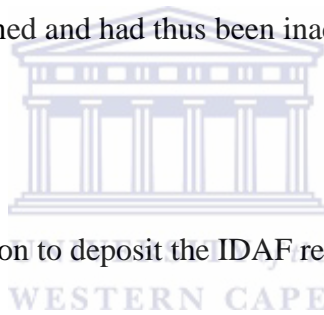
<sup>508</sup> ‘IDAF Publications and Audio-Visual Department Report on trip to South Africa’.

<sup>509</sup> ‘IDAF Publications and Audio-Visual Department Report on trip to South Africa’.

<sup>510</sup> ‘IDAF Publications and Audio-Visual Department Report on trip to South Africa’.

<sup>511</sup> ‘IDAF Publications and Audio-Visual Department Report on trip to South Africa’.

Another element that strengthened the recommendation was that UWC was one of the foremost institutions that were involved in anti-apartheid activities and enjoyed close ties with the liberation movements. The relocation of the IDAF material to UWC, which included the photographic material, audio and video recordings, books and publications as well as equipment consisting of computers, cinematographic projectors, magnetic tape sound recorders and reproducers, television monitors, viewing equipment, camera and darkroom equipment be relocated to UWC, gave the Mayibuye History project a critical advantage.<sup>512</sup> Besides providing the Centre with technical equipment that enabled them to become fully operational, it was also envisaged that the IDAF material would be reactivated and developed as a tool in the informing and educating of people about the struggle against apartheid as this material had previously been banned and had thus been inaccessible to most people in South Africa.



Reflecting on their recommendation to deposit the IDAF records at the Mayibuye Centre, Gordon Metz revealed that:

A general principle was that these documents and archives should really go to a place where (a) they could help to bolster some of these institutions that was[sic] pretty marginalised under apartheid, so for instance some of the black universities and coloured universities if you like. And you know there was no sense or expectation of trust that the institutions in the country that would normally house these archives like the national archives or the national museums that these collections would go there because they were still seen pre-1994 as apartheid institutions.<sup>513</sup>

Metz went on to say that:

And one of the key criteria which we developed and one of the reasons why we supported that the archives should go to UWC was

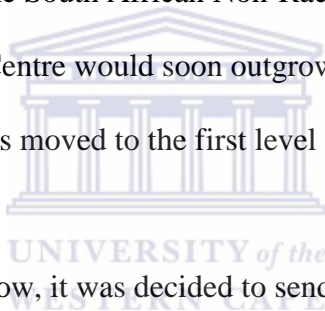
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<sup>512</sup> For a complete list of goods donated from the International Defence and Aid Fund to the Historical and Cultural Centre of UWC, see 'Draft progress report by co-ordinator', UWC Historical and Cultural Centre project, for meeting of Academic Planning Committee Working Group, Wednesday 26 June 1991, Annexure A: Appendices, (André Odendaal Papers).

<sup>513</sup> Interview with Gordon Metz by author, Cape Town (27 May 2014).

that we didn't want to see the archive go to an institution that would just then keep it for prestige and internal research purposes. That the archive's only value, one of the most important contributions that the archive could make that was to be activated when it got to South Africa and that it was made accessible to the broadest spectrum of organisations and individuals in South Africa. And we made our recommendation accordingly.<sup>514</sup>

With prospects looking favourable for the project, the History and Cultural Centre set up an office at the Old Library at the end of March 1991, where the Institute for Historical Research (IHR) was housed. However they quickly expanded their operations from two to four rooms as the project gained momentum with more material streaming in from various individuals and organisations. With the promise of even more material being donated to the Centre such as the archive of the IAAM and the South African Non-Racial Olympic Committee (SANROC) amongst others, the Centre would soon outgrow the space that was allocated for it in the IHR and eventually, it was moved to the first level of the main library.



As the collections continued to grow, it was decided to send the archivist, Albert Fritz for nine months of archival training at the Scandinavian Institute for African Studies in Uppsala, Sweden. This step was important, as none of the staff at that time were archivists by training, and it was necessary to cope with the ever-expanding growth of the collections. This was also part of the efforts to professionalise the Centre that functioned frenetically at times, almost like a continuation of the anti-apartheid struggle. While this approach was necessary in the initial stages of the Centre as it attempted to reactivate the work of IDAF through publications and exhibitions, I would argue that this approach failed to think beyond the vicissitudes of the liberation struggle.

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<sup>514</sup> Interview with Gordon Metz, 27 May 2014.

The project received a further stamp of approval from the ANC in a letter to the rector in which the organisation enthusiastically pledged their support to the project. In this letter the ANC stated:

The African National Congress warmly welcomes the new project and is happy to give the organisation's whole hearted support to it. As the oldest liberation movement on the African Continent, we have always been keenly aware of historical issues and the need to correct historical injustices in South Africa. The endeavour to preserve and document the history of all our people, and to correct the distortions of racist, apartheid-inspired "official" history, which has been forced for generations to our schoolchildren, is vital to the process of reconstruction in a non-racial, democratic South Africa.<sup>515</sup>

With the affirmation for the project from the ANC which was reinforced by a historically close relationship with the liberation movements, as well as the relocation of the IDAF archival collection, UWC's Mayibuye Historical and Cultural Centre was set to become one of the premier destinations for the collection and preservation of material of the liberation struggle. Though the Mayibuye Centre intended to become the primary repository of the liberation movement, the Centre had to contend with other emerging archival institutions such as NAHECS and SAHA and existing ones like Historical Papers at Wits that were all engaged in the purposeful pursuit of liberation struggle material.

Barry Feinberg, Gordon Metz and Norman Kaplan, all former employees of IDAF, arrived just after the IDAF material reached South Africa to take up their respective positions in the various departments of the Centre. The material was packed into two massive shipping containers and arrived at the university towards the end of 1991. Held within the shipping containers were the "residual stocks of its [IDAF's] two publishing projects, amounting to about 150 000 copies of nearly 100 titles, none of which had been openly distributed in South

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<sup>515</sup> 'Letter from the General Secretary, Alfred Nzo of the ANC to the Rector, Jakes Gerwel of UWC dated 14 May 1991' in Academic Planning Committee Working Group regarding establishment of Historical and Cultural Centre, including and apartheid museum at UWC, Background Documents, Vol. 2, 1988-1990, (André Odendaal Papers).

Africa before; a research library of books, documents and cuttings on southern Africa; a photographic library of roughly 100 000 images; and a film collection of over 800 cans of film material, including at least 1000 documentary productions together with a vast video reference library.”<sup>516</sup> As a result of the on-going political turmoil in South Africa at the time, the classified material that related to IDAF’s clandestine legal and welfare support for victims of apartheid were transferred to a security vault in London; however, they also later become part of the Centre.<sup>517</sup> In many ways, these materials constituted a ready-made archive on which the Mayibuye Centre could build its work.

Although the archive was physically opened when the shipping containers were emptied on arrival, it was realised from early on that for the archive to be reactivated and, in a sense, come alive once again, the archive also needed a metaphorical opening. This could be achieved through the deployment of the documentary and visual material by using existing publications and exhibitions and producing new ones for dissemination. According to Feinberg, their hope was that the material would “help inform people about their own history ... including, most significantly, the struggle against apartheid.”<sup>518</sup> He continued by saying that:

Publications and productions derived from the IDAF audio-visual collections, including many award-winning films and exhibitions, were reactivated while opening up the archives of footage and photos for general and professional usage. At the same time we began a process of producing new exhibitions and films for display, screening and distribution nationally. The exhibitions were also made available in portable format and as picture books in multiple copies and the films were made available in video copies.<sup>519</sup>

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<sup>516</sup> See Feinberg, *Time to Tell*, 133-4.

<sup>517</sup> Feinberg, *Time to Tell*, 128.

<sup>518</sup> Feinberg, *Time to Tell*, 134.

<sup>519</sup> Feinberg, *Time to Tell*, 134.



With the emphasis on its cultural component through the numerous activities hosted by the Centre such as conferences, workshops, film events, performances, exhibitions, publications and campus and community outreach programmes, the Mayibuye Centre intended to become a ‘living’ community-oriented resource and a space focused on recovering and re-interpreting all aspects of apartheid and resistance. “Far from being a dead archive, the multi-purpose centre host[ed] exhibitions, workshops and research programmes”, and in this way, it ensured that it was “not just trapped in the past.”<sup>520</sup> In an article in *the Sunday Tribune*, Odendaal further articulated the vision for the Centre by saying, “[w]e can’t just put history on the shelf and forget about it, it is important that we work through it. We need to look at the complexities and contradictions if we are to learn from history and not just get a new set of rulers.”<sup>521</sup> In yet another article published in *Die Suid-Afrikaan*, Odendaal poignantly emphasised this point by saying:

*Ons wil nie die verlede staties voorstel met post-koloniale spinnerakke wat oor die uitstillings hang nie – dit is hoekom ons die kulturele dimensie benadruk. Ons is nie besig met hagiografie nie – daarom kyk ons na die interaksie tussen dit wat nou gebeur en hierdie material uit die verlede. Ons wil graag ons eie boeke uitgee – kritiese manuskripte van binne en van buite die struggle.*

We are emphasising the cultural dimension because we do not want to represent the past in static terms with exhibitions covered in post-colonial cobwebs. We are not busy with hagiography, therefore we are looking at the interaction between current events and this material from the past. We really want to publish our own books, critical manuscripts from within and outside the struggle.<sup>522</sup>

Though the Mayibuye Centre’s focus was primarily on the dissemination of public history, it also embarked on a vigorous programme of conferences and workshops as a way to stimulate

<sup>520</sup> John Viljoen, ‘Legacy of apartheid’, *The Argus*, Monday, 12 October 1992, 4 in Mayibuye Centre for History and Culture First Annual Report, 1992, Bellville (André Odendaal Papers).

<sup>521</sup> Carolyn McGibbon, ‘Lest we forget: Apartheid museum to revive the horrors of the past’ *Sunday Tribune*, 24 February 1991 in Mayibuye Centre for History and Culture First Annual Report, Bellville, 1992, (André Odendaal Papers).

<sup>522</sup> Linda Vergnani, ‘Mayibuye vir...n Verlede vol gate’, *Die Suid Afrikaan*, October/November 1992 in Mayibuye Centre for History and Culture First Annual Report, 1992, Bellville (André Odendaal Papers).

critical debate and produce knowledge. In that way, I would argue they contributed much to the post-liberation discussions in South Africa by serving as a platform for much of these debates inside and outside the university framework of academic work. As some of the Centre's staff also became involved in the national debates around the transformation of museums and heritage institutions through their respective appointments to serve on the Arts and Culture Task Group (ACTAG) and the Western Province Task Group (WESTAG), the Centre became even more integral as "a catalyst for change in the historical and cultural spheres in South Africa."<sup>523</sup> Reiterating this point, Gordon Metz noted in his interview that, "the Mayibuye Centre became a point of reference, a reference point for so-called critical and progressive thinking around archival and museum practice."<sup>524</sup>

Taking this point further in his brief exploration of the early beginnings of the Mayibuye Centre, Ciraj Rassool argued that the Centre became one of the central institutions that mediated the production of public history in the imagining of a new nation in South Africa in the early nineties.<sup>525</sup> More than this, Rassool asserted:

[T]he Mayibuye Centre was a key and influential agency of historical production in South Africa and an 'active shaping force' for the production of memory. It was central in both the creation and management of historical images and narratives. The histories produced took shape in different mediums, each seeking to recover hidden pasts and resistance histories for the new nation. The Mayibuye Centre was not merely a conduit for the reversal of amnesia. Instead it was a 'theatre of memory' with its own 'patterns of constructing and forgetting', through which history was revised and revisioned.<sup>526</sup>

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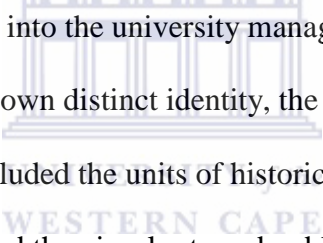
<sup>523</sup> The Mayibuye Centre played an active role in the national debates on history and culture through the respective appointments of the Centre's director to ACTAG and Gordon Metz's appointment as the vice-chair of WESTAG in 1994. See Mayibuye Centre for History and Culture Third Annual Report, Bellville (1994), 2.

<sup>524</sup> Interview with Gordon Metz, 27 May 2014.

<sup>525</sup> Rassool, 'The Individual, Auto/Biography and History in South Africa', 201.

<sup>526</sup> Rassool, 'The Individual, Auto/Biography and History in South Africa', 201.

Publicised as the ‘birthplace for culture’ in Cape Town and ‘a resting place of history’ in the early nineties, which was in contrast to their intention to become a living museum, the Mayibuye Centre quickly became the centrepiece of UWC.<sup>527</sup> Echoing the significance of the Centre during the formal launch of the new Mayibuye History and Literature Series on 27 July 1991, Pallo Jordan described the opening of the Centre as an “act through which the people of this country are re-appropriating their past and through that re-appropriation also staking their claim on the future.”<sup>528</sup> This sentiment was later reiterated by Albie Sachs when he exclaimed, “[w]hat a thrill it is to see these memorials of our years of struggle safe and sound in a dignified house. And what a pleasure it is to be able to refer film-makers and journalists and historians to the source!”<sup>529</sup>



After it was formally incorporated into the university management structures as a component of the IHR in 1992, albeit with its own distinct identity, the Mayibuye Centre consisted of five units or departments. This included the units of historical papers, photographic, film and video, and oral history archives, and the visual arts and publishing unit whose activities and resources fed into the projects and programmes of the Centre. Its expanding archival holdings consisted of collections such the Eli Weinberg photographic collection, the documentary material of activists such as Brian Bunting, Wolfie Kodesh, Desmond Tutu, Kader and Louise Asmal, Albie Sachs and Ahmed Kathrada, amongst some of the more prominent collections. In addition, it held the archival records of the anti-apartheid movements and other solidarity organisations. The Mayibuye Centre was “positioned as a magnet in order to draw the interest of other individuals and organisations in locating their archives at the Mayibuye Centre.”<sup>530</sup> Through its activist work in the historical and the cultural fields, the Mayibuye

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<sup>527</sup> ADA magazine quoted in the Mayibuye Centre for History and Culture, Second Annual Report 1993.

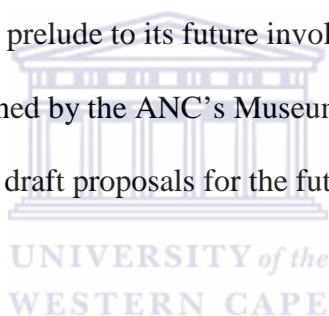
<sup>528</sup> Pallo Jordan quoted in Feinberg, *Time to Tell*, 134.

<sup>529</sup> Albie Sachs quoted in the Mayibuye Centre for History and Culture, First Annual Report 1992.

<sup>530</sup> Interview with Gordon Metz, 27 May 2014.

Centre became a progressive and vibrant manifestation of what was envisaged for a post-apartheid South Africa.

According to Rassool, “[m]uch of this heritage practice culminated in the Centre’s initiatives in planning for a showcase national museum on Robben Island that began with the exhibition *Esiqithini*, produced in conjunction with the South African Museum.”<sup>531</sup> This was a very significant exhibition because for the first time, the personal possessions that were carried in apple boxes by political prisoners from the island upon their release were displayed. These personal possessions had been donated to the Mayibuye Centre and became known as the Apple-box archive. The *Esiqithini* exhibition opened in May 1993 amidst critical acclaim for the curation of these objects. As a prelude to its future involvement with Robben Island, the Mayibuye Centre was commissioned by the ANC’s Museum, Monuments and Heraldry Commission (CMMH) in 1993 to draft proposals for the future development and management of Robben Island.



Against a background of euphoria brought about by the first democratic national elections in April 1994, the Mayibuye Centre found itself at the coalface of the transformation of museum and heritage policies and legislation through ACTAG and various other committees. The political developments and intensive transformation process which followed allowed for a proverbial ‘clearing in the bush’ with the new museums being constructed and old museums being reconstructed.<sup>532</sup> The early 1990s saw a flowering of new heritage institutions that made their appearance in the face of the fossilised colonial museum structure that was inherited. These developments saw the emergence of various post-apartheid institutions such

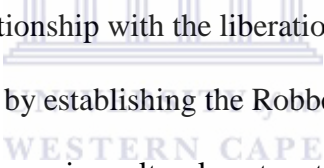
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<sup>531</sup> Rassool, ‘The Individual, Auto/Biography and History in South Africa’, 201; Also see Annie E. Coombes, *History after Apartheid: Visual Culture and Public Memory in a Democratic South Africa* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2003), 60-64.

<sup>532</sup> Leslie Witz, ‘Transforming Museums on Postapartheid Tourist Routes’ in Ivan Karp et al (eds), *Museum Frictions: Public Cultures/ Global Transformations* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2006), 108.

as community museums like the District Six Museum and the Lwandle Migrant Labour Museum, and national museums such as Robben Island Museum, the Nelson Mandela Museum and Freedom Park.<sup>533</sup>

It is within this framework that the Cabinet of the Government of National Unity established the Future of Robben Island Committee in August 1995 to decide on the future of Robben Island. With Ahmed Kathrada as the chairperson, the Future of Robben Island Committee received over two hundred public submissions which ranged from proposals of a holiday resort on the island to housing a casino. After some deliberations, the committee decided that the site should be developed into a national museum that would serve as a symbolic reminder of the struggle against apartheid and emblematic of understanding and reconciliation.<sup>534</sup>



Having cultivated an intimate relationship with the liberation movements in the past and having continued this relationship by establishing the Robben Island Gateway, a Section 21 Company whose aim was to build a major cultural centre at the Victoria and Alfred Waterfront in Cape Town in 1994,<sup>535</sup> the Mayibuye Centre, submitted a proposal to Cabinet in 1996 along with the other public submissions on the proposed uses for the island. In the ‘Suggested Robben Island Action Plan for the Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology’ which was prepared by André Odendaal, dated 4 March 1996, it was envisaged that:

The island should become a lasting memorial to the struggle for freedom and democracy in South Africa. It should be developed as a

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<sup>533</sup> Ciraj Rassool, ‘Memory and the Politics of History in the District Six Museum’ in Noeleen Murray, Nick Shepherd and Martin Hall (eds), *Desire Lines: Space, Memory and Identity in the Post-Apartheid City* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007), 113; Also see Ciraj Rassool, ‘Community Museums, Memory Politics and Social Transformation in South Africa: Histories, Possibilities and Limits’ in Ivan Karp et al (eds), *Museum Frictions: Public Cultures/ Global Transformations* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2006), 288.

<sup>534</sup> See ‘Robben Island Business Plan’ in Box 35, Robben Island Gateway (UWC Archives), Bellville.

<sup>535</sup> ‘Director’s Annual Report 1995’ (Executive Summary) in File ‘Mayibuye Centre’, Box 258 (UWC Robben Island Archives, Bellville).

dynamic ‘living’ heritage project, which can inspire and unite people in the process of nation building in South Africa, helping also to highlight the role of the Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology in the broader process of reconstruction in this country. This development should be based on a holistic and sustainable development and management plan involving the widest possible range of interest groups. The universal symbolism of Robben Island must be retained, inter alia by it becoming an internationally trend-setting historical and cultural heritage project for the 21st century from South Africa.<sup>536</sup>

Odendaal further suggested that Robben Island be declared a National Monument, that an application be made to the United Nations Education, Science and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) for Robben Island to be declared a World Heritage Site and that Robben Island also be declared a national museum.<sup>537</sup> Having already reached consensus regarding the future use of the island, the Future of Robben Island Committee recommended that Robben Island be transformed into a ‘Museum of Resistance’. In this vein, the South African Cabinet announced on 4 September 1996 that Robben Island would be developed as a National Monument, World Heritage Site and National Museum. In a seminal moment in the history of the Mayibuye Centre that would irrevocably change its future course, Cabinet also recommended that the Mayibuye Centre’s collections and other components be incorporated into the newly formed Robben Island Museum.<sup>538</sup> The Robben Island Museum opened on 1 January 1997 as a related institution of the Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology (DACST) and was later formally launched by then president Nelson Mandela on 26 September 1997.

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<sup>536</sup> André Odendaal, ‘Suggested Robben Island Action Plan for the Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology’, 4 March 1996’, in Mayibuye Centre, Box 258 (UWC Archives, Bellville).

<sup>537</sup> Odendaal, ‘Suggested Robben Island Action Plan’.

<sup>538</sup> ‘Media Statement by the Minister of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology, Mr. Lionel Mtshali dated 4 September 1996 regarding the Future Management and Development of Robben Island’ in Robben Island and Gateway, Box 35 (UWC Archives, Bellville).

### *Growing pains*

However, amidst these exciting developments that were taking place, the Centre had to move from dream to reality. Having realised the dream of becoming a centre focused on highlighting issues of apartheid and resistance through workshops, publications and exhibitions, amongst others, the Mayibuye Centre now also had to contend with other issues such as the realities of institutional competition on campus, inadequate infrastructure and resources. Alluding to some of the challenges faced by the Mayibuye Centre, Odendaal noted:

Again whenever you think of Mayibuye Centre being set up, it could only have happened through an exceptional energy and initiative because the university bureaucracy, the scarcity of resources, the slowness with which things work, the way that people don't drive and create stuff unnecessarily besides their intellectual work just wouldn't have made something like that possible and it was a very complex process to actually set it up because you just don't set up a Centre for History and Culture in South Africa when there is a *Instituut vir Historiese Navorsing* (Institute for Historical Research) that has been sitting there already with vested interests in that it has been given privilege because of its age. And so it was through the IHR structures and bureaucracies that the notions of the Mayibuye Centre were developed. And that was sometimes painfully pedantic.<sup>539</sup>

As a component of the IHR, a functional working relationship came to exist between the IHR and the Mayibuye Centre. Apart from physically sharing the same space in the Old Library building which could also have been a source of tension because of space constraints, the Mayibuye Centre quickly became the cultural showcase of the university as they played host to various exhibitions, workshops and conferences. In addition, the Centre also played a prominent role in the shaping of policies and legislation in the museum and heritage sector and also operated a vibrant publications department. Although they complemented each other in certain ways, the objectives of the two institutions were sometimes at odds with each other

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<sup>539</sup> Interview with André Odendaal, 28 May 2014.

and where their interests overlapped, this sometimes caused tension. While Odendaal alluded to this tension in the excerpt from his interview above, the tension between the two institutions became more pronounced, as was apparent from various discussions that started from as early as 1996 around the future of the Mayibuye Centre and its recommended incorporation into the newly formed Robben Island Museum.

Briefly exploring this apparent tension between the Mayibuye Centre and the IHR in his doctoral dissertation, Olusegun Morakinyo expanded on this when he discussed some of the debates around the future possibilities of the Mayibuye Centre and its involvement with RIM.<sup>540</sup> Morakinyo drew on a range of founding documents as a means to interrogate the historical genesis of the African Programme in Museum and Heritage Studies (APMHS), a graduate programme offered at UWC in partnership with RIM. However, he emphasised one document in particular that located the origin of the diploma course within the convergence of the History Department at UWC, the IHR, the Mayibuye Centre and the Robben Island Museum partnership.<sup>541</sup>

The Discussion Document on Future Possibilities for the Mayibuye Centre had been prepared by Odendaal, and it was followed by a responding counter-proposal by Henry Bredekamp, then director of the IHR. In his study, Morakinyo significantly underscored the complex conditions that existed between these two institutions. In Odendaal's discussion document, he argued that:

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<sup>540</sup> Olusegun Morakinyo, 'A Historical and Conceptual Analysis of the African Programme in Museum and Heritage Studies (APMHS), 1997 – 2009', Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation (University of the Western Cape, Bellville, 2011), 65-68.

<sup>541</sup> Morakinyo, 'A Historical and Conceptual Analysis of the African Programme in Museum and Heritage Studies, 69; Also see 'Discussion Document on Future Possibilities for Mayibuye Centre, The Institute for Historical Research (IHR), and the University of the Western Cape in Relation to the Development of the Robben Island Museum', 9 June 1997' in Box 258, Mayibue Centre (UWC Archives, Bellville).



UWC merges the collections of the Mayibuye Centre and the Institute for Historical Research and donates this on permanent loan to RIM (with the exception of only the University archives themselves). To facilitate this arrangement, a change in the legal status of the IHR and its component part is proposed: the IHR and Mayibuye Centre are formally dissolved as UWC entities, their staff are taken up into the RIM, and only the name of the Centre remains under the new arrangement with RIM (because of the established brand and linkage with UWC). RIM jointly sponsors a Chair in Public History in the History Department at UWC for 5 years. RIM sponsors the 'Robben Island Research Project' run in conjunction with the department, providing for 3 doctoral students per year to study at the University (from different departments if necessary), as well as joint annual conference/Activity.<sup>542</sup>

While Bredekamp agreed, in principle, with Odendaal's 'Discussion Document', he responded with a draft discussion document of his own in which he outlined a few key pre-conditions for the incorporation of the IHR along with the Mayibuye Centre into RIM. Primarily concerned with a hierarchical order between the IHR and the Mayibuye Centre, in the 'Discussion Document' of the IHR, it was clearly stated that "the Director of the IHR is respectfully recognised as the overall head of both components, the IHR and the Mayibuye Centre; and that in terms of the Constitution of the IHR, the Mayibuye Centre and the IHR constitute one single department within the Faculty of Arts."<sup>543</sup> Subsequent to these discussions which underlined the tensions between the two institutions, the IHR retained its independence, and only aspects of the Mayibuye Centre were taken into the Robben Island Museum structure.

However, institutional rivalry was not the only challenge faced by the Mayibuye Centre. From the earliest conceptualisations of the apartheid museum, there seemed to have been challenges already around securing a suitable site for the centre, as summed up in a progress report of the coordinator of the Mayibuye Centre to the Academic Planning Committee

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<sup>542</sup> 'Discussion Document on Future Possibilities for Mayibuye Centre', 9 June 1997.

<sup>543</sup> 'Discussion Document on the future of the IHR in Relation to the Development of the Robben Island Museum' dated 10 June 1997 in Box 258, Mayibuye Centre (UWC Archives, Bellville).

Working Group in 1991. Although a suitable site was identified on the UWC campus that could potentially be the location of a multi-purpose historical and cultural centre, which would have been to the left of the present main entrance road, this idea was later abandoned due to lack of funding. In his progress report Odendaal wrote, “[t]he Vice Rector has made it clear that the university has no funds to contribute to a building – and indeed, the Centre would not feature on UWC’s building priority list for at least seven years .... This is our biggest challenge: how do we get the money to build a major building complex, when the university cannot or will not contribute and when funders are extremely reluctant to support building projects generally?”<sup>544</sup>

Although the Centre was dependent on a slight grant from the university, the university itself also experienced ongoing financial difficulties. The Centre thus had to look for financial support from other local and international funders such as the Swedish International Development Authority (SIDA), the Norwegian Foreign Ministry, the Ford Foundation and the Equal Opportunities Foundation, amongst others, by the end of 1992.<sup>545</sup> A part of this funding also came from the Mayibuye Centre’s own income which was generated from the publications it produced and the usage of photographic, film and audio material for commercial purposes. Despite the difficulty in securing a space to house this vision for a multi-purpose historical and cultural complex and the challenges of financial support, the Mayibuye Centre still managed to raise funds of over R1 million and in this way, they could sustain themselves for the period between 1991 and 1992.

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<sup>544</sup> ‘Draft Progress Report by the Coordinator, UWC Historical and Cultural Centre project, for meeting of Academic Planning Committee Working Group’ dated 26 June 1991 (André Odendaal Papers).

<sup>545</sup> ‘Finances section’ in the Mayibuye Centre for History and Culture, First Annual Report 1992 (André Odendaal Papers).

According to Odendaal, resources or rather the lack thereof, are crucial in understanding where the Mayibuye Centre went and where it ended up. In an interview, he revealed that from 1991 to 1999, “SIDA put in about 9 million rand in. And that is money we raised through SIDA. The University put very little in terms of making it an institution .... But in terms of resources, they paid my salary [and] they paid for a few student assistants. And that was more or less it. And how do you run a dynamic cultural institution without resources?”<sup>546</sup> Odendaal went on to say that, “[y]ou can’t create an institution without the institutional capacity in terms of funding and staff. So we were kind of a community project on campus ... that didn’t always work according to formal university patterns ....”<sup>547</sup>

While being regarded as a community project might have had its benefits, a cursory glance at the finances of the centre, as illustrated in the Annual Reports from 1992 to 1999, suggests that there was a definite tension between securing the institutional capacity and running a dynamic centre. Amid the challenges of securing a suitable site at the university, at the university, the Centre’s collections expanded rapidly, with more material streaming in from various organisations and individuals, so that the issue of infrastructure and human resources soon became a matter of great concern. The Centre had a small permanent staff structure and thus depended substantially on a handful of visiting fellows, student assistants, volunteers and trainees. The latter came through the Gender and Affirmative Action programme “through which the Centre sought to offer further study and career-focused opportunities to promising post-graduate students.”<sup>548</sup>

Although the Centre’s small staff component still managed to produce countless exhibitions, publications, workshops and conferences and made progress with rapidly expanding archival

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<sup>546</sup> Interview with André Odendaal, 28 May 2014.

<sup>547</sup> Interview with André Odendaal, 28 May 2014.

<sup>548</sup> ‘Mayibuye Centre for History and Culture Fourth Annual Report’, 1995, 8 (André Odendaal Papers).

collections within the different departments of the Centre, making this material accessible was a cause of concern. This situation of understaffing was exacerbated by a lack of space, access control and adverse environmental factors such as climate control that began to affect the historical material. These concerns raised in the 1993 Annual Report have continued to be issues of concern for the Centre.

Undeterred by these challenges, the Mayibuye Centre moved ahead with limited resources which often translated into a feverish, proactive style of working and conducting projects. Framed against the backdrop of the transition to a democratic dispensation in South Africa, the remainder of the IDAF records arrived in 1995 for use by the TRC. The TRC was established in 1995 by the government to assist the country in dealing with the rehabilitation of victims of apartheid, making recommendations for reparations for such victims as well as recommending the granting of amnesty to perpetrators. The remaining IDAF records that joined the rest of the archive consisted of the legal and the welfare records that had been stored in a secured vault in London until it was appropriate for them to join the rest of the material that had already been relocated to the Mayibuye Centre in 1991.

Seemingly, the transfer of the legal and the welfare records to the Mayibuye Centre was not without its share of drama, as evident from an exchange of correspondence between William Frankel (who was the legal consultant for IDAF since 1966), André Odendaal and Prof. Kader Asmal, then minister of Water Affairs and Forestry. Frankel advocated for the legal and welfare records to be temporarily housed at Wits in order for the records to be used by the TRC. However, he also candidly stated in a letter to Kader Asmal that these records did not necessarily need to be at the same place as the other visual, publication and research

records of IDAF.<sup>549</sup> Reminding Frankel of the ‘umbilical cord’ between the Mayibuye Centre and the work of IDAF, Asmal emphatically expressed the importance of depositing the remainder of the IDAF material at the Mayibuye Centre. In his letter, he emphasised this by saying:

In view of ... certain vague assurances concerning the legal and welfare files, it was expected that when released the rest of the IDAF material would be deposited at the Centre. I feel it would be contrary to the spirit if not letter of co-operation if the papers went to another institution. I therefore earnestly request that they are sent to UWC. This would have the added benefit of ensuring that the IDAF collection is not fragmented.<sup>550</sup>

Asmal further stated the importance of helping historically disadvantaged universities with capacity and institution building and emphasised that if the IDAF records should be sent to Wits, that would only “reinforce old power relations and imbalances.”<sup>551</sup>

Echoing Asmal’s appeal for the consolidation of the IDAF records at the Mayibuye Centre, Odendaal requested for the remainder of the IDAF collection to be sent directly to the Mayibuye Centre instead of to Wits in order for the material to be prepared for use in the work of the TRC and subsequently to join the rest of the IDAF archives.<sup>552</sup> In his letter of appeal, Odendaal raised a few pertinent concerns around the movement and the temporary storage of the IDAF records. Despite these concerns, the “bulk of the IDAF archives were transported to the Wartenweiler Library at Wits for temporary storage” based on an

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<sup>549</sup> ‘Letter from William Frankel to Kader Asmal regarding the Transfer of IDAF Archives to South Africa’ dated 21 July 1995 in Barry Feinberg collection, MCH 89, Box 18, Folder ‘IDAF’, Historical Papers (UWC Robben Island Mayibuye Archives, Bellville).

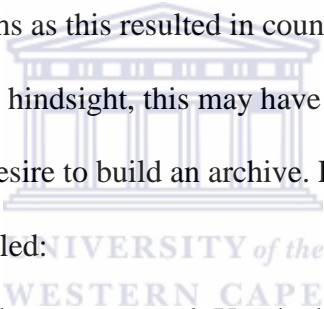
<sup>550</sup> ‘Letter from Kader Asmal to William Frankel regarding Transfer of IDAF Archives to South Africa’ dated 20 June 1995 in Barry Feinberg collection, MCH 89, Box 18, Folder ‘IDAF’, (UWC Robben Island Mayibuye Archives, Bellville).

<sup>551</sup> ‘Letter from Kader Asmal to William Frankel’ dated 20 June 1995.

<sup>552</sup> ‘Letter from André Odendaal to Dullah Omar regarding the IDAF Archives’ dated 24 July 1995 in Barry Feinberg collection, MCH 89, Box 18, Folder ‘IDAF’, (UWC Robben Island Mayibuye Archives, Bellville).

agreement reached between the TRC, the Mayibuye Centre and IDAF.<sup>553</sup> SAHA was tasked with the responsibility to assess and make recommendations with regard to which material, in the IDAF records, might contain relevant information and could be used for the work of the TRC. Although archival procedures were followed, this process raises concerns about the integrity of the collection as the movement and handling of these records might have compromised the collection.

Within a rapidly changing political landscape, and despite a frenetic workload which was compounded by inadequate funding and resources, the Mayibuye Centre navigated through the murkiness of financial and organisational difficulties. While this energetic approach might have been one of its strengths as this resulted in countless exhibitions, film projects and publications, I would argue that in hindsight, this may have also been one of the Centre's organisational weaknesses in its desire to build an archive. Explaining the way in which the Centre functioned, Odendaal recalled:



We would work the other way around. You had a vision, you did what you to do in terms of writing, you were really energetic and full of energy and then there was some documentation that came out of it in the end rather than the other way around. I think that was part of its effectiveness but in the end also part of its, I wouldn't say a weakness but at a certain stage when you get to certain size like being an archive, what are your archival policies, what are your archival procedures. And obviously we did it back to front in that way. We didn't have the capacity, we didn't have the staff, we didn't have the resources to be archivists in a classical Michigan State University way or South African Library way. And that was both our distinctiveness and where organisational weaknesses even perhaps came in.<sup>554</sup>

Although this was the distinctiveness of the Centre at that time in its drive to 'make things happen', this style of working left an indelible impression on the future work of the

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<sup>553</sup> Assessment Report, Guide to the International Defence and Aid Fund (IDAF) Archive, Catalogue No. 2, (UWC Robben Island Mayibuye Archives Bellville).

<sup>554</sup> Interview with André Odendaal, 28 May 2014.

Mayibuye Centre, particularly when it was taken into RIM and became formally inscribed as an archive of the struggle against apartheid.

### *Showcasing the new nation*

The latter part of the 1990s was a time of considerable shift in the ways the Mayibuye Centre functioned. In addition to the organisational difficulties that the Centre continued to experience, the mid-1990s were also characterised by limited funding for projects of NGOs as funding was channelled to infrastructure and other developmental programmes. While there were various developments that contributed to this shift, I would argue that the recommendation from Cabinet for the Mayibuye Centre to be incorporated into RIM in 1996 was critical in understanding the subsequent trajectory of the Centre.

This recommendation resulted in an extensive process of negotiations between the university, RIM and the Mayibuye Centre. A joint UWC/RIM Working Group was established in this regard on 10 June 1998 which was mandated to ascertain the feasibility of this recommendation from Cabinet and to explore possible ways for its implementation. The Working Group consisted of Henry Bredenkamp, Colin Johnson, Gary Minkley, Ben Martins, Carolyn Hamilton and Andre Odendaal. Following intensive and exhaustive discussions, the Working Group recommended that the Mayibuye Centre should be incorporated into RIM in a way that would be beneficial to both institutions and that the incorporation of the Mayibuye centre should be accompanied by a long term co-operation and partnership agreement between UWC and RIM.<sup>555</sup> According to Odendaal:

The goal was always going to make sure that this incredible archive that we collected was preserved properly and that the project could get security and the way for that, besides the idea of the apartheid

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<sup>555</sup> See 'Discussion document of the Joint UWC/RIM Working Group re Proposals for a co-operation agreement between the University of the Western Cape and Robben Island Museum relating to the Mayibuye Centre and other joint arrangements dated 8 July 1998' in Box 32 (UWC Archives, Bellville).

museum, after 1991, Robben Island being the logical space for it. It was also logical in terms of conceptualising the project of the apartheid museum ... that it was, had always had a kind of national ... conceived of something being national. Once Robben Island became a space that was going to change that became the obvious place for a museum of that kind. So that the two things would integrate, so that the resources would be protected and add to the energy of what was happening at the Mayibuye Centre in a bigger space and on a national level. So, I think that was the origins of the Centre and what it is today, is another ....<sup>556</sup>

As the Mayibuye Centre was considering its incorporation into RIM, the Centre also embarked on its own process of introspection. While this recommendation for its incorporation into the Robben Island Museum might have seemed like a fitting and well-timed opportunity, for the first time since their inception, there was a decline in the number of exhibitions and public activities. According to the fifth Annual Report of the Mayibuye Centre in 1996, the process of looking inward meant that the Centre had to start planning its future around Robben Island and to consolidate its archival collections and administration for incorporation into the Museum.<sup>557</sup> This resulted in an improvement of the historical papers archive and closer attention being paid to issues of conservation in the archive.<sup>558</sup> From this process of planning and consolidation around the archive, it is apparent that the Mayibuye Centre gradually shifted from the pioneering activist axis it occupied through its public activities to becoming a passive repository of inactive, silenced material as it became embedded in a process of memorialisation.

The Mayibuye Centre intrepidly trudged along despite the secondment of Gordon Metz to DACST, in which he was tasked with the responsibility to oversee the restructuring of 18 national museums in 1996, followed by Odendaal's secondment to act as administrator and

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<sup>556</sup> Interview with André Odendaal, 28 May 2014.

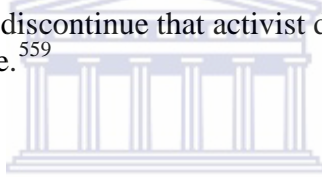
<sup>557</sup> 'Mayibuye Centre for History and Culture, Fifth Annual Report', 1996, 1 (André Odendaal papers).

<sup>558</sup> 'Mayibuye Centre for History and Culture, Fifth Annual Report', 1.



head of the Interim Management of RIM in 1997. Norman Kaplan and Metz who had made up part of the original IDAF staff who joined the Centre both left, leaving Barry Feinberg who assumed the leadership role at the Mayibuye Centre when Odendaal was appointed as the Chief Director of the Robben Island Museum in 1998. After the Centre's incorporation into RIM, Feinberg also left. The symbolic link of continuity to the work of IDAF was effectively severed with the departure of the original IDAF members from the Mayibuye project in order to pursue other prospects. According to Gordon Metz it was not only the link of continuity that was severed as he noted in his interview:

People who put the IDAF collection together, who then relocated to the Mayibuye Centre knew that the collection was developed through activism. In other words, it was the action of organising publications, exhibitions, colloquia and symposiums. They were the catalysts by which this documentation came to be in the first place. And it was recognised that if you discontinue that activist dynamic, the collection would fossilise and die.<sup>559</sup>



Throughout all these changes which were compounded by the uncertainties of the future of the Mayibuye Centre, the work of the Centre continued. Initially, the Centre's incorporation into RIM was earmarked for 1998, and when this did not transpire, it only intensified the uncertainty about the future of the Mayibuye Centre. According to Barry Feinberg:

1998 proved to be a critical and complex year for the Centre due to an increasing focus on fulfilling Government cabinet's recommendation that the Centre be incorporated into the Robben Island Museum. ... When it became clear ... that it would not be possible for the merger to take place at the end of 1998 ... urgent steps were taken to secure extended support from our main funders to cover staff and operational needs for a further year. In this climate of uncertainty it is not surprising that some staff began to consider alternative employment options which by the end of the year resulted in 4 resignations. Despite the above problems ... the Centre's work continued at all its established levels of engagement but especially in the crucial sphere of building capacity to conserve and access our collection to international standards.<sup>560</sup>

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<sup>559</sup> Interview with Gordon Metz, 27 May 2014.

<sup>560</sup> 'Mayibuye Centre for History and Culture, Seventh Annual Report', 1998 (André Odendaal papers).

The Centre's work continued, but the focus shifted to the development of RIM which inevitably started to overshadow some of the Centre's very important activities such as outreach and publications. The significance of the Centre's public and outreach activities was succinctly summarised in the 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Report of the Mayibuye Centre by Feinberg when he said, "[w]hile our archival collections are the most significant feature of the Centre, its national profile owes much to its outreach activities including its books, exhibitions, videos and conferences which not only help to disseminate knowledge and understanding of the apartheid period but also facilitate cultural creativity and expression. These programmes also generate income which helps to cover much of the operational costs."<sup>561</sup>

Although much of its reputation was owed to its activist work through the deployment of archival material, the Centre notably shifted its focus from public activities such as conferences, workshops, and producing publications and exhibitions as it almost became fixated with the management of archival collections and the archive. As a result of the close working relationship that was being cultivated between the Mayibuye Centre and RIM, the Mayibuye Centre agreed to act as the collections manager for the museum in 1998.<sup>562</sup> By agreeing to act as consultants to RIM, the Mayibuye Centre was tasked with developing a collections management system, establishing a resource centre and establishing an institutional archive amongst the objectives, as outlined in the project agreement between the Mayibuye Centre and RIM.<sup>563</sup>

After a few years of fostering a close working relationship and engaging in joint projects with RIM, the recommendations of the joint UWC/RIM Working Group were eventually

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<sup>561</sup> 'Mayibuye Centre for History and Culture, Seventh Annual Report', 1998.

<sup>562</sup> See 'Project Agreement between the Mayibuye Centre and the Robben Island Museum' in Mayibuye Centre, MCH 253, Box 26 (UWC Robben Island Mayibuye Archives, Bellville).

<sup>563</sup> 'Project Agreement between the Mayibuye Centre and the Robben Island Museum'.

formalised into a legal agreement between UWC and RIM, which stipulated the terms and conditions on which the co-operation and partnership would rest. According to the Memorandum of Agreement, the incorporation of the Mayibuye Centre into RIM entailed a ninety-nine year agreement by which UWC agreed to the long term loan of the IDAF/Mayibuye Collection to RIM. The Centre's incorporation also meant that RIM had to incorporate the staff of the Mayibuye Centre into its structure and take responsibility for the management and conservation of the collections.<sup>564</sup> Underlining the co-operation aspect of the agreement, it was stipulated that UWC and RIM should establish the new archives in a suitable facility on the UWC Campus through joint fundraising, working together on projects “to advance research and scholarship” and to “facilitate exhibitions and displays.”<sup>565</sup> It was also stipulated that a joint Working Group should be established in order to review the agreement on a regular basis and also to “facilitate joint projects in respect of the archives.”<sup>566</sup>



One of the reasons for the final shape of this Agreement was because of a belated intervention by younger members of the History Department, who had been concerned about the loss of the collections to the university and the potential dangers involved in removing them from an academic environment. Similar concerns had been expressed from within the Robben Island Museum council. In the end the ambiguities contained in the agreement ensured that UWC would retain a significant stake in the collection through its ownership, and that the collection would continue to be housed at the university and not be removed to Robben Island or to the Waterfront.<sup>567</sup>

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<sup>564</sup> ‘Memorandum of Agreement between RIM and UWC in respect of The UWC Robben Island Museum Mayibuye Archives’, 4, in Box 32 (UWC Archives, Bellville).

<sup>565</sup> ‘Memorandum of Agreement’, 4.

<sup>566</sup> ‘Memorandum of Agreement’, 7.

<sup>567</sup> Ciraj Rassool, personal communication, 9 November 2015.

After the long process of negotiation which was interspersed with many uncertainties for the staff of the Mayibuye Centre, an agreement for the incorporation was finally reached in December 1999 whereby the Centre and its staff would be incorporated into the Robben Island Museum on 1 April 2000.<sup>568</sup> The uncertainty experienced by the Mayibuye staff was expressed in an unsigned letter dated 11 September 1998 which was delivered to Ahmed Kathrada, who was the chairman of the Robben Island Museum Council. In his responding letter, he acknowledged their concern around the ambiguity of Mayibuye Centre's incorporation into RIM but stressed that a decision has not been reached regarding the future of the Mayibuye Centre.<sup>569</sup> In practice, this agreement increasingly gave rise to a set of complex and ambiguous issues around questions of responsibilities, ownership and management between UWC and RIM. The Mayibuye Centre was formally and ceremoniously taken into RIM at the launch of the 'new' UWC Robben Island Mayibuye Archives which was opened by then deputy president Jacob Zuma on 13 June 2001. This moment inaugurated both a new beginning yet also a very different future from what was envisaged for the Mayibuye Centre when it first started its pioneering work in the early 1990s.

### ***Resting place of history***

It has been argued by Ciraj Rassool and Leslie Witz that "the Robben Island Museum, 'cultural showcase of the new South Africa', can be seen as the culmination of the cultural work of the Mayibuye Centre and its antecedent institutions such as IDAF and even the

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<sup>568</sup> See 'Mayibuye Centre for History and Culture, Seventh Annual Report' for an account of the uncertainties which was caused by the impending incorporation or rather absorption of the Mayibuye Centre into the Robben Island Museum. The impending incorporation of the Mayibuye Centre into RIM and the ambiguity around it seemed to have only exacerbated an already discontented relationship between staff and management regarding long-term contracts and salary discrepancies as was suggested by a memorandum in which the staff noted their dissatisfaction with their working conditions at the Mayibuye Centre. See 'Memorandum: Working Conditions' dated 19 January 1996 to the Director in Barry Feinberg collection, MCH 89, Box 6 (UWC Robben Island Mayibuye Archives, Bellville).

<sup>569</sup> 'Letter from Ahmed Kathrada to Mayibuye Centre staff' dated 14 September 1998 in Barry Feinberg collection, MCH 19, Box 8 (UWC Robben Island Mayibuye Archives, Bellville).

Treason Trial Defence Fund of the 1950s.”<sup>570</sup> While it was intended that the incorporation of the Centre into a national museum of resistance would further enhance and stimulate the work of the Centre, I would argue that the pioneering and activist work which marked the efforts of IDAF and the Mayibuye Centre were gradually displaced by a more intense focus on developing Robben Island as a site of reconciliation and triumphalism. Whereas before, the Mayibuye Centre pulsed with activities such as exhibitions, conferences, outreach work and publications in which its leadership and staff contributed much towards the production of knowledge, these activities showed signs of slowing down in the latter part of the 1990s as the future of the Mayibuye Centre was being weighed up.

Eventually the publications, outreach work and the production of exhibitions came to a halt partly because of shifting political sensibilities, financial considerations and the changed focus of the Centre on collections management. In many ways these were the very components of the Mayibuye’s Centre’s work that were transferred to and formalised within RIM, leaving only an archival collection to be managed. Inaugurated as the collections unit under the heritage division in RIM, charged with the responsibility to manage and preserve the archival collections of the museum, I would argue that this exclusive focus on collections management left the once vibrant cultural and historical centre devoid of cultural work which had been integral in making the Centre come alive.

In his autobiography, *Time to Tell*, Barry Feinberg, a former employee of IDAF who had joined the Mayibuye Centre in 1991, exclaimed that “the Mayibuye Centre was reduced to an archive of political and cultural materials.”<sup>571</sup> Feinberg’s evocation of the diminishing of the

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<sup>570</sup> Ciraj Rassool and Leslie Witz, ‘Transforming Heritage education in South Africa: A Partnership between the Academy and the Museum’, SAMP 2001: Strengthening the Network: A meeting of African Museums of the Swedish African Museum Programme, 22-27 August 1999.

<sup>571</sup> Feinberg, *Time to Tell*, 150.

Centre into an archive hints at his nostalgic yearning for what the Mayibuye Centre once espoused. More than just being nostalgic, I would argue that Feinberg's words constituted a mourning of the loss of the cultural and activist work which was buried in the process of becoming immersed within the organisational structures of RIM. With his statement, Feinberg passionately expressed the hope that RIM would reactivate the spirit of social justice and activism which previously had marked the support work of IDAF, and that had been the hope for the Mayibuye Centre. But this was not to be. Instead of reactivating this 'living archive', these records were relegated to the obscure recesses of memory and history.

Finding resonance with my own argument, I would suggest that Feinberg's emphatic and evocative outcry should serve as a provocation to think through the processes through which the Mayibuye Centre had been reduced to the status of the remnants of political and cultural materials. By exploring the trajectory and the challenges of the UWC Robben Island Mayibuye Archives after its absorption into RIM to become an archive "focusing on all aspects of apartheid and the anti-apartheid struggle,"<sup>572</sup> the next chapter will show that instead of continuing this important activist cultural and historical work started by IDAF, and briefly carried on by the Mayibuye Centre, this work was sacrificed and laid to rest. As it became part of a larger project on monumentalising certain aspects of liberation history in South Africa, this work was largely forgotten.

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<sup>572</sup> Information Brochure about the UWC Robben Island Mayibuye Archives.

## CHAPTER SIX

### THE ARCHIVE AS MONUMENT

Far from standing as enduring monuments to the past, archives instead appear somewhat fragile, eternally subject to the judgement of the society in which they exist. Neither atemporal nor absolute, the meaning they convey may be manipulated, misinterpreted, or suppressed.... [T]he archives of the past are also the mutable creations of the present.<sup>573</sup>

Having examined the cultural history and the political life of the IDAF materials about its administrative, informational and support work through the different stages of its making into an archival collection in the previous two chapters, this chapter will explore the process through which the support work of IDAF came to stand as a largely forgotten and passive memorial to the liberation struggle. In an attempt to understand the process through which the UWC Robben Island Mayibuye Archives has, seemingly, been reduced to a burial ground of cultural and political material especially after its incorporation into the Robben Island Museum (RIM), I will argue that this archive's incorporation into the museum gave rise to a problematic set of challenges which have continued to haunt the archive well into the present. The creation of the Mayibuye Archives out of its absorption into RIM saw the collection become a passive repository of apartheid and liberation material. I also want to argue that this moment significantly highlighted the fragility of the archive as it became precariously suspended in a fraught relationship between RIM and UWC that has suffered from a lack of diplomatic work.

As a way of drawing out the challenges, tensions and contestations facing the Mayibuye Archives, which in some part has contributed to the metaphorical burial of the archive, it is

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<sup>573</sup> Judith M. Panitch, 'Liberty, Equality, Posterity? Some Archival Lessons from the Case of the French Revolution', *The American Archivist* 59: 1 (1996), 47.

important to sketch the development of RIM and its relationship to the archives that it acquired. The Mayibuye Centre was inserted into a national museum project of commemoration and nation-building, particularly focused on the monumentalisation of Robben Island as a site of resistance, survival and triumph. As a consequence, the archives became incorporated into a project of triumphalism while it became buried underneath the weight of ongoing political, financial and organisational challenges of the museum as a whole. The archives also became buried as RIM also had the pressure of attending to the status of Robben Island as a World Heritage Site.

Where once this independent, community-orientated structure was discernible for its activist work and contribution to knowledge production through its publications, exhibitions and other outreach functions, this chapter argues that the pioneering work of the Mayibuye Centre was laid to rest and consigned to the silences and the amnesic labyrinths of the archive. The consequence of the larger concerns of a national project of reconciliation and nation-building which sought to monumentalise certain aspects of the past was the inadvertent marginalisation of other voices and histories. Here, I want to make an argument for the reconstitution and reactivation of the Mayibuye archives along the lines of the work it did before its incorporation.

Archives, as I have argued, are haunted by epistemic and political uncertainty and increasingly find themselves on shifting ground as a result of a failure to understand and appreciate their significance in society. Framed by the larger crisis that has engulfed the national archival system, I would argue that an activation or resurrection of the archives will encourage a wider understanding of the historical and social significance of archives in society. More importantly, these challenges present the opportunity for the Mayibuye



archives to reimagine itself and to think itself out of its predicaments of irrelevance and obscurity. As a means of understanding the process through which the Mayibuye Archives have become submerged within RIM, I will chart RIM's emergence in becoming the first national museum commemorating the liberation struggle in the new South Africa. By exploring the history of Robben Island through its different appropriations as a site of banishment, isolation and incarceration to being transformed into a national museum and symbol of resistance and triumph, I will attempt to explain the complexities, contestations and challenges that marked the emergence of RIM, that also later brought about the burial of the Mayibuye Archives.

### *'The Island of Exiles'*

Robben Island lies a few kilometres off the coast of Cape Town, surrounded by the sometimes unforgiving natural elements of the icy cold waters of the Atlantic Ocean and subject to the unpredictable weather conditions synonymous with the 'Cape of Storms'. These have left a destructive trail of many shipwrecks around the coastal regions of the Cape peninsula. Isolated and battered by the forces of nature, the barren somewhat rocky expanse of the island has seemingly offered only temporary occupation and shelter in the way it was deployed from 1488 onwards.<sup>574</sup>

According to Harriet Deacon, who has written substantially about its history, "Robben Island was used as a pantry to feed sailors on passing ships, as a post box for their letters and, occasionally, as a prison for miscreant sailors"<sup>575</sup> during the period of the Dutch rule at the Cape. While the island first served as a refreshment station for European ships on expeditions

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<sup>574</sup> For a chronological history of Robben Island and the way in which the island was appropriated see Harriet Deacon, *The Island* (Bellville: Mayibuye Books, 1996); Barbara Hutton, *Robben Island: Symbol of Resistance* (Bellville: Mayibue Books, 1996) and also Charlene Smith, *Robben Island* (Bellville: Mayibuye Books, 1997).

<sup>575</sup> Deacon, *The Island*, 2.

to the east during the seventeenth century, the disciplinary potential of the island was already realised through its use as place of detention and punishment. Although the island continued to be exploited for its food resources, the focus shifted, and the island became increasingly used as a place of detention for criminals and people who were regarded as political opponents of the Dutch East India Company in the eighteenth century.<sup>576</sup>

When the British annexed the Cape in 1795, the image of Robben Island as a place of banishment was further inscribed through its continued use as a prison. However, many people also realised the potential recuperative and healing qualities of the island in promoting and restoring health. Underlining the long contested history over the use of Robben Island, Deacon argued that this debate can be traced back to as early as 1820 when the island was associated with restoring health.<sup>577</sup> As way of countering the sombre image of the island as a place of banishment, a hospital for people with leprosy and another for those with mental illness was established. Deacon argued that despite these efforts, “[t]he image of the island as a healthy place, suitable for curing the sick and the mad, struggled against the weight of its image as a place to which the incurable and dangerous (both patients and prisoners) could be banished.”<sup>578</sup>

Moreover, the running costs of the medical institutions became increasingly high, partly as a result of its isolation from the mainland, and therefore, it was decided to close down the hospitals on the island. Preceding the closure of the hospital for people with leprosy, the *Cape Times* advertised in 1930 that Robben Island was available for purchase “to whoever

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<sup>576</sup> Deacon, *The Island*, 2.

<sup>577</sup> Harriet Deacon, ‘Remembering tragedy, constructing modernity: Robben Island as a national monument’ in Sarah Nuttall and Carli Coetzee (eds), *Negotiating the Past: The Making of Memory in South Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 167.

<sup>578</sup> Deacon, ‘Remembering tragedy, constructing modernity’, 162.

makes the most attractive offer for it to the Lands Department.”<sup>579</sup> According to research conducted by Barbara Hutton, suggestions for the future use of the island included: serving as first prize in a state lottery, a reformatory, a government farm colony for alcoholics, a home for orphans, a health resort, a training ground for the defence force and a municipal amusement park.<sup>580</sup>

Following the removal of the last medical patients in 1931, there was, again, some debate regarding the future use of the island as some felt the island should be used as a recreational space. Others, on the other hand, felt that the dark history of the island would overshadow any development of a health resort, which could have included a hotel and recreational facilities.<sup>581</sup> However, these proposals were abandoned with the outbreak of the Second World War as the island was designated to be used as a fortified military installation in 1939. For a brief period, Robben Island became a beacon in the service of protecting South Africa against foreign threats in contrast to the foreboding image that it had projected since the seventeenth century as a place of desolation and exile.

Perceived as the “hell-hole of Table Bay, South Africa’s Alcatraz, an impregnable place of banishment,”<sup>582</sup> Robben Island became perhaps best known for its use as a maximum security prison from the 1960s onwards. Following the departure of the military from Robben Island, it was handed over to the Prisons Department. In 1961, the island was once again transformed into a site of imprisonment, only this time, it was intended for common law prisoners and opponents of the apartheid government. Partly because of its long historical association of being used as a penal colony and because of its remoteness and isolation, Robben Island

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<sup>579</sup> *Cape Times*, 1930 cited in Hutton, *Robben Island*, 33.

<sup>580</sup> *Cape Times*, 1930 cited in Hutton, *Robben Island*, 33.

<sup>581</sup> Deacon, ‘Remembering tragedy, constructing modernity’, 167.

<sup>582</sup> Deacon, ‘Remembering tragedy, constructing modernity’, 161.

became seen as an ideal site for the imprisonment and repression of political prisoners during the apartheid era.

Thus from 1962, Robben Island became synonymous with the incarceration and isolation of political prisoners which continued until the release of the last political prisoners in 1991. With the banning of political organisations and in the absence of a tangible opposition, with some political opponents having been banished or forced into exile, the island prison became the focal point of the resistance struggle, especially as it became home to some of the more prominent leaders in the liberation struggle such as Govan Mbeki, Nelson Mandela, Ahmed Kathrada and Walter Sisulu.

More than just representing a place of suffering, isolation and imprisonment, Robben Island came to stand as “an important site of continued resistance, organisation and defiance in South Africa during the period 1963-1976.”<sup>583</sup> Writing about their prison experiences, Ahmed Kathrada, Govan Mbeki and Nelson Mandela amongst others have reflected on the ways political prisoners offered resistance primarily by using education as a tool. Some of the ways of resistance were the development of people and the development of political consciousness through academic and political education. In developing people “as persons and political beings,”<sup>584</sup> prisoners were able to establish a “complete underground organisational machinery.”<sup>585</sup> Another form of resistance was that political prisoners started challenging prison authorities over their living conditions through hunger strikes. These were only some of the strategies used as means to improve their conditions on the island.

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<sup>583</sup> Deacon, *The Island*, 130.

<sup>584</sup> Deacon, *The Island*, 130-131.

<sup>585</sup> Govan Mbeki interviewed by Colin Bundy in Govan Mbeki, *Learning from Robben Island: The Prison Writings of Govan Mbeki* (London: James Currey, 1991), xx; See also Ahmed Kathrada, *Letters from Robben Island: A Selection of Ahmed Kathrada's prison correspondence, 1964-1989* (Cape Town: Zebra Press, 2000), 44-53.

Although geographically isolated, and in spite of the efforts of the apartheid government to locate it outside the ambit of the everyday lives of people both in a symbolic and physical sense, Robben Island still became firmly ingrained in the popular imagination of people as a symbol of the struggle against apartheid. Rather than the island becoming a distant thought in the consciousness of people, the increased popular resistance and growing international pressure of the turbulent 1980s only intensified the focus on the island. Following a period of negotiations initiated in 1986 between Mandela and the apartheid government, the newly installed president of South Africa, F.W. de Klerk and his cabinet started to realise in 1989 that “political reform was a necessary precondition to any attempt at economic recovery.”<sup>586</sup>

In a dramatic moment, during his opening address to Parliament in 1990, De Klerk announced the unbanning of 34 organisations such as the SACP, ANC, PAC and other organisations. Amongst the unbanned was IDAF. Also announced was the release of political prisoners and a moratorium on executions. ANC activists such as Walter Sisulu, Oscar Mpetsha, Raymond Mhlaba and Ahmed Kathrada had been granted early release in 1989. A single PAC political prisoner, Jeff Masemola who had spent more than 20 years on Robben Island, had also been granted early release. Amidst renewed hope for a democratic South Africa, Nelson Mandela was released from the Victor Verster prison on 11 February 1990 after having been incarcerated for 27 years. Following Mandela’s release, after months of uncertainty and enormous stress for the remaining prisoners, the last of the political prisoners were moved from Robben Island in May 1991, some of whom were released, but with others transferred to prisons on the mainland.<sup>587</sup> These political prisoners were at last physically free

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<sup>586</sup> Nigel Worden, *The Making of modern South Africa* (London: Blackwell, 2000), 156; For an interesting discussion of the negotiations during the latter part of the 1980s which was initiated between the ANC in exile and a selected few representatives of the National Party (NP) see Willie Esterhuysen, *Endgame: Secret Talks and the End of Apartheid* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 2012).

<sup>587</sup> Due to the bureaucratic ineptness involved in releasing political prisoners, a series of protests ensued as gradual disillusionment set in, replacing the elation that was palpable in 1990. These included the sit-in on the

from the confines of prison. However, they also had to re-enter an uncertain world filled with hope for a democratic future, carrying the twin burdens of the emotional scars of their prison experiences and the social responsibility to contribute towards making a democratic dispensation.

### ***Monumentalised as a symbol of resistance and triumph***

In the early 1990s, with negotiations under way, opening the road towards a new democratic dispensation in South Africa, the future of the island, once again, became the subject of a much contested and time-worn debate.<sup>588</sup> Robben Island was poised to be reinvented again.

While the future of Robben Island was still undecided, in his opening address at the *Esiqithini* exhibition in May 1993, Ahmed Kathrada expressed, in no uncertain terms, the liberation movement's vision for Robben Island. Kathrada stated:

We think it is fairly generally accepted that one of the main features of any plan for Robben Island will be a museum which, amongst other things, will accumulate, preserve and exhibit material relating to the prison. This in our opinion, is how it should be. Looked at objectively, there can be little doubt that Robben Island's place in our history will be primarily based on its having been a prison for political prisoners and a place of banishment for political exiles. ... We in the Liberation Movement, and ex-prisoners may not as yet have finalised our ideas about what exactly we want done on Robben Island, but I believe we have a fairly good idea about what we do *not* want. ... We will do all in our power to stop the type of blatant opportunism ... in order to attract tourists to vulgar commercial enterprises such as casinos, multi-star hotels and nightclubs. While we would welcome efforts of environmentalists and conservationists in the direction of fauna and flora, and historic buildings and shipwrecks, I can foresee uneasiness about activities that might

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Robben Island ferry staged by the ANC Women's League and hunger strikes by prisoners as a way of speeding up their release. See Fran Buntman for further discussion on the release of political prisoners from Robben Island in Fran Buntman, *Robben Island and Prisoner Resistance to apartheid* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 44.

<sup>588</sup> According to Deacon, the debate regarding the different uses or futures of the island re-emerged during the 1970s and the 1980s already, as the apartheid government sought to mitigate the negative image of Robben Island as 'apartheid's Alcatraz'. This debate over the use of the island even resulted in the appointment of a government committee that was tasked to explore different uses for the island ranging from a nature reserve to a holiday resort. See Deacon for a discussion on the proposed uses of the island in Deacon, 'Remembering tragedy, constructing modernity', 168-171.

adversely detract from the main focus of the Island as a monument to political prisoners and the struggle for democracy in South Africa.<sup>589</sup>

Following an intense period of contested discussions regarding the future of the island within which the Mayibuye Centre also played a significant part, Robben Island was proclaimed a national monument in January 1996. With this declaration, Robben Island came under the jurisdiction of Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology (DACST). After centuries of being used as a site of banishment, repression and imprisonment, the island prison finally closed its gates in 1996 in anticipation of being developed into the first national museum of a new democratic South Africa.

As argued by Deacon, “[l]ike the death camps of the Holocaust, the island prison, a site of repression built by its inmates, [was] to be the first monument to the death of apartheid.”<sup>590</sup>

Although Robben Island was envisioned as a place of commemoration, the general consensus among the leaders of the liberation movement was that it should be represented as a site of resistance and ‘a symbol of the triumph of the human spirit over adversity’ rather than as a site of suffering and repression. This concern over the way in which Robben Island should be commemorated was emphasised by Kathrada in his concluding comments at the launch of

*Esiqithini*:

While we will not forget the brutality of apartheid we will not want Robben Island to be a monument of our hardship and suffering. We would want it to be a monument reflecting the triumph of the human spirit against the forces of evil, a triumph of freedom and human dignity over repression and humiliation ... a triumph of courage and determination over human frailty and weakness; a triumph of non-racialism over bigotry and intolerance; a triumph of the new South Africa over the old.<sup>591</sup>

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<sup>589</sup> Ahmed Kathrada, ‘Opening Address’, *The Robben Island Exhibition: Esiqithini* (Bellville: Mayibuye Books, 1996), 6-9 (emphasis in the original).

<sup>590</sup> Deacon, ‘Remembering tragedy, constructing modernity’, 164.

<sup>591</sup> Kathrada, ‘Opening Address’, *The Robben Island Exhibition*, 10-11.

With the establishment of RIM in January 1997, the museum became the first and foremost intervention of the Legacy Project Programme, which was constituted in 1996.<sup>592</sup> With the museum focused on fostering reconciliation and nation building by transforming the representation of the island into positive and universal terms, Nelson Mandela fittingly opened RIM on Heritage Day in September 1997. Emphasising government's commitment to the project of restructuring and developing heritage institutions, Mandela stated:

It is a great joy for me that we can all come as free South Africans - with our friends - to Robben Island; and even more that we are gathered to celebrate our joint heritage as a nation, to acknowledge this heritage in the context of our commitment to Democracy, Tolerance and Human Rights. In affirming a joint heritage, in this place, we are reminded that our noble ideals were spurred on even more by their long denial, that today's unity is a triumph over yesterday's division and conflict. ... With democracy, we have the opportunity to ensure that our institutions reflect history in a way that respects the heritage of all our citizens. Government has taken up the challenge. Our museums and the heritage sector as a whole are being restructured. Community consultation, effective use of limited resources, and accessibility are our guiding principles as we seek to redress the imbalances. The recently established Legacy Project will promote a fuller representation of our nation's heritage, through new monuments and heritage sites. This will ensure that we have national monuments that live in our people's hearts. When our museums and monuments preserve the whole of our diverse heritage, when they are inviting to the public and interact with the changes all around them, then they will strengthen our attachment to human rights, mutual respect and democracy, and help prevent these ever again being violated.<sup>593</sup>

Also reiterating Kathrada's earlier view regarding the way in which Robben Island should be commemorated, Mandela continued to state in the same opening address that:

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<sup>592</sup> The Legacy Project was a memorial project mandated to commemorate leaders, cultures and historic places that had been neglected in the past. See Khwezi ka Mpumlwana, Gerard Corsane, Juanita Pastor-Makhurane and Ciraj Rassool. 'Inclusion and the Power of Representation: South African Museums and the Cultural Politics of Social Transformation' in Richard Sandell (ed), *Museums, Society, Inequality* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2002), 250; Also see Heather Hughes, 'Rainbow, Renaissance, Tribes and Townships: Tourism and Heritage in South Africa since 1994' in S. Buhlungu, J. Daniel, R. Southall & J. Lutchman (eds), *State of the Nation: South Africa 2007* (Pretoria: HSRC Press, 2007), 277 .

<sup>593</sup> Address by Nelson Mandela on Heritage Day, 24 September 1997, Robben Island, Available at <http://www.anc.org.za/show.php?id=4215>, Accessed on 31 August 2015.



Robben Island is a vital part of South Africa's collective heritage. Siqithini - the Island - a place of pain and banishment for centuries and now of triumph - presents us with the rich challenge of heritage, Its future has been the subject of intense and wide-ranging debate. How do we look at the histories of different people who lived here, through various ages: lepers, prisoners, jailers all together; leaders of resistance not only from South Africa but from as far afield as Namibia and the Indonesian Archipelago? How do we give expression to these diverse histories as a collective heritage? ... I am confident that we will together find a way to combine the many dimensions of the Island, and that we will do so in a manner that recognises above all its pre-eminent character as a symbol of the victory of the human spirit over political oppression; and of reconciliation over enforced division. In this way we will help strengthen the ethos of heritage as a binding force, rather than a divisive one; as a force for truth rather than an artificial construct to satisfy all and sundry.<sup>594</sup>

Amidst political pressure and driven by the interests of developing the tourism industry, the establishment of RIM was fast-tracked, and it became operational within a very short space of time despite little strategic planning and a lack of visitor facilities on the island.<sup>595</sup> The seeming haste with which RIM opened to a burgeoning tourism industry was compounded by the conflict between public and private business interests in capitalising on Robben Island. Pressured by the demands of being a sacred site and a tourist destination, and placing the Island into the frame of heritage only served to create a very contentious environment which has continued to haunt the museum.<sup>596</sup> This contestation was further exacerbated by fierce debates about the role of ex-political prisoners in the development of the museum.<sup>597</sup>

Despite the raging debates about the ownership over Robben Island's history, between the interests of commercial tourism and the demands of memorialism, and the tensions between

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<sup>594</sup> Address by Nelson Mandela on Heritage Day, 24 September 1997.

<sup>595</sup> Myra Shackley, 'Potential Futures for Robben Island: Shrine, Museum or Theme Park?', *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 7:4 (2001), 356; See also Annie E. Coombes, *History after Apartheid: Visual Culture and Public Memory in a Democratic South Africa* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2003), 64-69.

<sup>596</sup> Hughes, 'Rainbow, Renaissance, Tribes and Townships', 276; Also see Coombes, *History after Apartheid*, 69.

<sup>597</sup> Deacon, 'Remembering tragedy, constructing modernity', 170-171.

public and individual interest in Robben Island's future, the Island attained World Heritage status in December 1999. Strengthening its iconic and universal status, Robben Island was declared a World Heritage site as a result of its long historical association with imprisonment and banishment. Following its inscription on the World Heritage list, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) wrote that:

The symbolic value of Robben Island lies in its sombre history, as a prison and a hospital for unfortunates who were sequestered as being socially undesirable. This came to an end in the 1990s when the inhuman Apartheid regime was rejected by the South African people and the political prisoners who had been incarcerated on the Island received their freedom after many years.<sup>598</sup>

With its inscription as a World Heritage site, Robben Island was recognised as a 'place of outstanding universal value' by meeting at least two of the ten selected criteria as set out by the guidelines of UNESCO for inclusion on the World Heritage List. These criteria related to the buildings of Robben Island which bore eloquent witness to its sombre history and that Robben Island and its prison buildings symbolise the triumph of the human spirit, of freedom and of democracy over adversity.<sup>599</sup> Guided by an Integrated Conservation Management Plan (ICMP), which was later developed to preserve the status of Robben Island as a World Heritage site in line with the requirements of UNESCO, the primary objective of this conservation management plan was to "provide a framework to conserve both the cultural as well as the natural heritage (assets) of the site and to ensure the protection of its significance."<sup>600</sup>

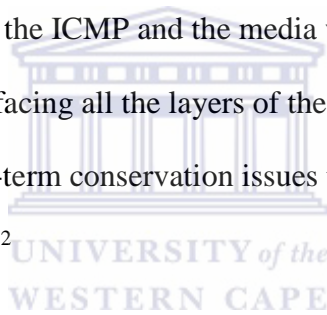
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<sup>598</sup> Inscription of Robben Island as World Heritage Site, UNESCO World Heritage List, Available at <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/916> Accessed on 31 August 2015.

<sup>599</sup> Inscription of Robben Island as World Heritage Site.

<sup>600</sup> Robben Island Museum Integrated Conservation Management Plan (2007-2012), Robben Island Museum, Cape Town (2007), 9.

According to the ICMP (2007-2012), while “this includes the protection and enhancement of the Island’s landscape and its natural setting, the built heritage, the places of memories, the intangible heritage associated with the site ... including the contemporary archival materials,” its efforts would primarily be focused on the “political imprisonment landscape.”<sup>601</sup> The purpose of focusing on the political landscape of Robben Island as a prison was in keeping with retaining its outstanding universal significance as a World Heritage site, driven by the logics of heritage site conservation and its disciplines such as architecture and archaeology. This almost singular preoccupation focusing on the political landscape of the island resulted in a myriad of challenges in the failure of the first ICMP to address the different layers of the island’s history. Although this was an area of concern, as noted in the first ICMP, something akin to a disclaimer was issued in the ICMP and the media which stated that “the ICMP cannot address all the challenges facing all the layers of the site at once; and therefore, the current ICMP had identified long-term conservation issues that may be addressed in subsequent management plans.”<sup>602</sup>



Especially pertinent for the collections of the Mayibuye Archives was the failure of the ICMP to address collection management issues although it did “call for the development of a framework to supplement the Collections Management Policy already in place and currently under review.”<sup>603</sup> While the ICMP recognised a number of challenges in the management of collections such as acknowledging the need “for a new building for the Mayibuye Centre”, the “review and implementation of the agreement between RIM and UWC” and

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<sup>601</sup> Robben Island Museum Integrated Conservation Management Plan (2007-2012), 9.

<sup>602</sup> Robben Island Museum Integrated Conservation Management Plan (2007-2012), 4; Also see John Yeld, ‘Robben Island as ‘political space’’, Independent Online (6 May 2008), Available at <http://www.iol.co.za/news/south-africa/robben-island-as-political-space-1.399111>, Accessed on 1 September 2015.

<sup>603</sup> Robben Island Museum Integrated Conservation Management Plan (2007-2012), 71.

“transforming the archive into a fully-fledged unit,”<sup>604</sup> it did very little to address the collections management issues of the museum. The work of collections management and of the museum itself got buried under the logics and chosen responsibilities of world heritage site conservation.

In the midst of the emerging tensions between managing and conserving Robben Island as a World Heritage site and the work of building a national museum, RIM also had to face battles on other fronts. As the museum positioned itself as part of a nation-building project fostering reconciliation and promoting a shared sense of identity through the production of a national heritage, tensions ultimately arose, especially within political circles about the way in which liberation history was constructed and interpreted. These tensions were expressed even before the establishment of the museum and have since continued, with some critics charging that the “ANC had hijacked the island narrative as *the* narrative of the struggle.”<sup>605</sup> In fact, as Noel Solani argued, “[w]hen the Robben Island Museum was opened in 1997, it perpetuated the Mandela myth.”<sup>606</sup> This focus on Mandela, or the ‘Mandelaisation’ of Robben Island can, in part, be understood given his centrality in brokering a relatively peaceful transition from apartheid to democracy and in answering the demands of an international tourism market that desired to participate in South Africa’s liberation story as epitomised through the figure of Mandela.<sup>607</sup>

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<sup>604</sup> Robben Island Museum Integrated Conservation Management Plan (2007-2012), 71.

<sup>605</sup> Coombes, *Visual Culture*, 99 (emphasis in the original).

<sup>606</sup> For a further discussion on the Mandela myth see Noel Solani’s article about the construction of the Mandela myth in which Solani explored the making of Mandela through autobiographical accounts, the media and the museum. Through a careful consideration of the various constructions of Mandela, Solani attempted to unsettle the Mandela myth. In Noel Solani, ‘The Saint of the Struggle’, *Kronos* 26 (August 2000), 51; Also see Ciraj Rassool, ‘The Rise of Heritage and the Reconstitution of History in South Africa’, *Kronos* 26 (August 2000), 17.

<sup>607</sup> Coombes, *Visual Culture*, 95.

Although attempts have been made to address this criticism through exhibitions like the *Cell Stories Exhibition and Archive*, launched in 1999 as a way to critically engage with “the tendency for history in the public domain to be narrated mainly through ‘great lives of resistance and reconciliation’,”<sup>608</sup> the museum has been slow to “expose what is perceived to be politically uncomfortable.”<sup>609</sup> Another attempt at addressing the issue of producing diverse narratives was the inclusion of the Sobukwe house on the bus tour of the island. The site where Robert Sobukwe, leader of the PAC, had been kept in isolation away from other prisoners was prepared as ‘Sobukwe house’, as a visitable site on the Island. Nevertheless, most of these efforts have been reactive rather than being part of the overall strategic plan of the museum in which to develop diverse narratives. Writing about the tensions between heritage and tourism, Heather Hughes argued that this situation “was partially resolved with the employment of ex-prisoners as guides, which allowed different narratives to be told about the struggle and its goals, depending on which of the once-outlawed political organisations the guide belonged to.”<sup>610</sup> While the employment of ex-political prisoners as guides on the island allowed for different narratives, their accounts have also been highly subjective. This, in turn, gave rise to skewed representations of the liberation struggle.

Though research has suggested that tensions existed between prisoners and that the “years between 1977 to 1980 were fraught with tension, distrust, name calling, fights, agitation,”<sup>611</sup> these tensions have been considerably downplayed in the official narrative of the museum. Another bone of contention has been the omission and exclusion of the crucial part that

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<sup>608</sup> Although the exhibition ran its course, *Cell Stories* was an innovative and poignant exhibition that made use of oral history and personal artefacts from ex-prisoners. For a further discussion on the significance of *Cell Stories* see Rassool, ‘The Rise of Heritage’, 18; Solani, ‘The Saint of the Struggle’, 54.

<sup>609</sup> Solani, ‘The Saint of the Struggle’, 53.

<sup>610</sup> Hughes, ‘Rainbow, Renaissance, Tribes and Townships’, 276.

<sup>611</sup> Solani, ‘The Saint of the Struggle’, 53.

women performed in the liberation struggle.<sup>612</sup> This is an area that the museum has largely been silent on except for the occasional events such as the *Women's Exhibition* in 1999 and a National Woman's Day celebration in 2010 dedicated to celebrating wives and family members of ex-political prisoners.<sup>613</sup>

Despite these contentious debates that have plagued the museum since its establishment, Robben Island has become one of South Africa's premier cultural tourist destinations with high volumes of visitors flocking to the island each year. According to Rassool and reiterated later by Hughes, this was in line with the new government's efforts of "constructing, packaging, and transmitting images and representations of the 'new' society and its past to a perceived growing audience of international visitors"<sup>614</sup> in post-apartheid South Africa "in the service of nation building, social justice and economic advancement."<sup>615</sup> Marketed as a site of resistance and a symbol of the "indomitable nature of the human spirit"<sup>616</sup> and its triumph over adversity, RIM has offered its visitors the opportunity to share in the 'South African miracle' through a narrative of peace and reconciliation. Commemorated as one of the primary sites that deploy the healing logic of restorative justice in South Africa, Robben Island has drawn universal appeal, primarily because of the way in which its dark past has been reshaped into a story of victory over oppression.<sup>617</sup>

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<sup>612</sup> See Coombes for a discussion on the exclusion of women from the liberation narrative on Robben Island. This became a particularly contentious issue with the absence of wives and family members of ex-political prisoners at the Robben Island Reunion in 1995. This omission of women was bitterly deplored by Thandi Modise in a speech to former political prisoners. See Coombes, *Visual Culture*, 100-105.

<sup>613</sup> I attended such an event in August 2010 over two days on Robben Island in my capacity as a staff member of RIM, which was to mark the contribution of women in the struggle. Inevitably, it turned more into a focus of the role that their husbands played in the struggle.

<sup>614</sup> Rassool, 'The Rise of Heritage', 5.

<sup>615</sup> Hughes, 'Rainbow, Renaissance, Tribes and Townships', 276.

<sup>616</sup> Robben Island Museum Nomination File: World Heritage Site Status, (1999) Cape Town, Robben Island Museum.

<sup>617</sup> Desmond Tutu, *No Future Without Forgiveness* (London: Rider, 1999), 33-36; Veronique Riouful, 'Behind Telling: Post-apartheid Representations of Robben Island's Past', *Kronos*, No. 26 (August 2000), 24.

Although the narrative of triumphalism is the dominant mode of telling the story of Robben Island, and despite the deliberate attempt to focus on the victory against apartheid instead of human suffering, sites like Robben Island which have become infamous for its penal history might inevitably also become the focus of ‘dark tourism’ or ‘thanotourism’.<sup>618</sup> Driven by an almost voyeuristic curiosity of experiencing sites identified with the macabre and of human suffering juxtaposed with the perceived sacredness of the site, this can become very problematic to manage when attempting to meet the demands of the tourist industry and addressing the needs of the holistic well-being and preservation of Robben Island as a site of enduring historical significance.

In attempting to negotiate the tensions between public and private interests, there is the fear that the demands of tourism have started to overshadow the significance and sacredness of the site. Though tourism is often a necessary evil for the growth and sustainability of heritage sites, it “presents a great challenge to the island’s managers faced with the complex task of managing high visitor volumes, retaining the ‘spirit of place’ and generating income.”<sup>619</sup> This complex task of managing the island was exemplified in a letter of response from the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Sibongiseni Mkhize of RIM to a tour operator who complained about the tourism experience offered by RIM.<sup>620</sup> In his response to the concerns raised by the tourism industry, Mkhize stressed the museum’s commitment to improve its customer service through the introduction of a new business model. However, he also emphasised that “the core business of the museum is the conservation of a unique, multi-layered historical and

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<sup>618</sup> Shackley, ‘Potential Futures for Robben Island’, 361.

<sup>619</sup> Shackley, ‘Potential Futures for Robben Island’, 359.

<sup>620</sup> Complaints from tourists and the tourism industry came in the wake of the decommissioning of the museum’s main ferry, Sikhululekile in 2013 following acts of ‘sabotage’ and the ferry being permanently damaged as a result. According to an underwater study conducted by the Council of Geosciences, it emerged that the rocky outcrop underneath the water at Robben Island’s Murray Bay harbour caused the damage to the ferry’s hull.

heritage landscape.”<sup>621</sup> While the RIM management highlighted the importance of preserving the cultural and natural heritage of the island, Mkhize’s reassurance that the visitors’ experience would be improved revealed the way in which cultural tourist destinations such as Robben Island have had to navigate between addressing the needs of a heritage site whilst offering a professional and streamlined visitor experience.

In an article which explored the potential futures of Robben Island, Myra Shackley argued that as the museum was attempting to meet the challenges of the tourism industry and increase its revenue, it was faced, at times, with an overcrowded prison as visitors hurriedly made their way through the space.<sup>622</sup> According to Shackley, this may lead to the degradation of the environment and remove “some of the atmosphere of desolation that forms part of the experience”.<sup>623</sup> Shackley further complained that “[RIM] speak[s] of the triumph of the human spirit over adversity, all of which supports the concept of the visit as pilgrimage and RIM as shrine. However, unlike other pilgrimage destinations, RIM has almost no repeat business.”<sup>624</sup>

While tourism was integral to the making of Robben Island as a heritage site, Shackley’s critique of the level of commodification of the island in which she also underlined the fine balance between tourism and heritage, alerts us to the danger of denigrating and trivialising the significance of Robben Island in the pursuit of financial interests. Ironically, in the rushed scramble to become one of the premier tourist destinations in South Africa, this has resulted

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<sup>621</sup> Letter of response from Sibogiseni Mkhize, CEO, Robben Island Museum, ‘Robben Island- hopeful improvement on the horizon’ (14 January 2014), Available at <http://ilanga.co.za/product-update/robben-island-hopeful-improvement-horizon/>, Accessed on 3 September 2015.

<sup>622</sup> Shackley, ‘Potential Futures for Robben Island’, 363.

<sup>623</sup> Shackley, ‘Potential Futures for Robben Island’, 363.

<sup>624</sup> Shackley, ‘Potential Futures for Robben Island’, 361.



in a situation where “history is [repeatedly] rammed against commerce.”<sup>625</sup> As noted earlier, the development of Robben Island as a heritage site has been characterised by contestation which even preceded its establishment as a museum.

Further contributing to this contestation regarding the use and interpretation of the island, the museum has been besieged and nearly crippled by scandals of corruption, mismanagement, theft, incompetence, labour disputes, resignations, suspensions and dismissals almost since its establishment.<sup>626</sup> Compounding these challenges of managing a site like Robben Island, the museum also had to bear the brunt of a multitude of operational difficulties and institutional shortcomings which has made its operations very difficult. Faced with a high turnover of senior management, vacancies in key positions and under-trained staff, amongst some of the institutional shortcomings listed, the consequence has been a failure to implement the first ICMP due to a lack of leadership and institutional capacity.<sup>627</sup> In addition to these shortcomings facing the museum, the Operational Management Plan also underlined a number of other operational threats which potentially undermined the integrity of Robben Island as a site of sacredness and reflection. These operational issues spoke to questions of the interpretation of the landscape of the island, lack of archival research, budget constraints and the failure to review the collections management plans. These institutional shortcomings and operational difficulties consequently both tainted the public image of the museum and severely impacted on the management of the heritage site.

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<sup>625</sup> S. Murray cited in Hughes, ‘Rainbow, Renaissance, Tribes and Townships’, 285.

<sup>626</sup> The history of RIM has been punctuated with intermittent scandals of corruption, mismanagement, and the consecutive resignations of executive management following labour disputes or charges of corruption. Rocked by near disasters such as a ferry getting lost in the fog and the alleged sabotage of the boats or the siphoning of fuel, the museum has been at the centre of controversy for much of its existence. Most of which have been reported in the media. For example see ‘Reimagining Robben Island’ in *Weekend Argus* (24 April 2015), Available at

<http://www.iol.co.za/weekend-argus/reimagining-robben-island-1.1850327#.VfFc7ZehvEY>, Accessed on 5 September 2015; Also see ‘Fresh corruption scandal taints Mandela’s prison museum’ in *The Guardian* (3 August 2008), Available at

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/aug/03/southafrica.nelsonmandela>, Accessed on 5 September 2015.

<sup>627</sup> Operational Management Plan Draft (16 January 2013), Robben Island Museum, Cape Town, 28.

Although the Operational Management Plan identified a number of institutional and operational weaknesses which have impeded the management of the museum, the document located the primary challenge of RIM in its failure of having a defined, diversified tourism product which might have prevented the “deterioration of OUV due to a lack of diversification of visitor experience.”<sup>628</sup> According to the Operational Management Plan:

Problems experienced were enhanced by operational issues, such as a lack of staff motivation and insufficient staff knowledge and training about the multi-layered nature of the Island’s heritage, and how to create linkages with the natural environment. When combined with the limited tourism product, operational and logistical shortcomings related to the ferry and tourism infrastructure, the identified weaknesses result in an overall reduction of visitor experience, making it difficult to reach the emotional and other learning objectives of the Interpretation Plan. These shortcomings lead to the erosion of the Island’s Outstanding Universal Value (OUV). It also contributes to the neglect of certain heritage layers and the erosion of the tangible and intangible heritage that underpins the OUV of the Island. These factors collectively conspire to reduce the financial viability of the Island as a business operation, and ultimately its ability to fulfil the country’s obligations to protect the Island as a WHS.<sup>629</sup>



While institutional and operational shortcomings, and a number of qualified audits made it necessary for RIM to adopt an institutional turn-around strategy, this was helped along by the negative visitor experiences and problems of transportation to the island.<sup>630</sup> Having recognised the fissures and the challenges of implementing the first ICMP, the document was subsequently revised, giving rise to a second ICMP (2013-2018). Bearing much resemblance to the first ICMP, since the purpose of the document was to sustain and conserve the Outstanding Universal Value of the World Heritage Site status of Robben Island, the second ICMP “in particular, focuses its attention on the core value of the Island as per the Nomination Dossier, namely *‘the triumph of the human spirit over enormous hardship and*

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<sup>628</sup> Operational Management Plan Draft (16 January 2013), 29.

<sup>629</sup> Operational Management Plan Draft (16 January 2013), 30.

<sup>630</sup> ‘Robben Island Museum audit outcomes and turnaround strategy’, Minutes of the meeting of the Arts and Culture Committee, 12 February 2013.

*adversity*’.”<sup>631</sup> The second ICMP further emphasised that “the conservation, interpretation and communication of the tangible and intangible heritage of Robben Island, inclusive of its natural heritage, is the core business of the RIM.”<sup>632</sup>

It has repeatedly been emphasised throughout the ICMP, and even articulated as one of the strategic objectives of the ICMP, that the approach was to “develop an improved holistic and integrated understanding and interpretation of the Robben Island World Heritage Status (RIWHS) as an integrated and layered cultural and natural landscape, including previously neglected heritage elements.”<sup>633</sup> However, I would argue that the second ICMP failed to adequately address the collection management issues faced by the museum’s collections.

While the necessity of an overarching collections management policy has been acknowledged, which will encompass the built environment, movable objects, archaeological sites and other collections on the island and the collections at the Mayibuye Archives on the mainland, the general emphasis of the ICMP has, to a large extent, remained focused on the development of Robben Island as a cultural tourist destination which is supported by the richly layered cultural and natural heritage of the island.

The difficulty herein is that failure to address collection management issues has partly contributed to the neglect and the deterioration of the museum’s tangible and intangible heritage, all of which are crucial for the sustainability of Robben Island as World Heritage site and its growth as a tourist destination. Emphasising the importance which intangible heritage, in particular, held for the museum, Mpumlwana et al argued:

When Robben Island Museum was established, there was no collection in the traditional museological sense of the word, except perhaps for objects and furniture left behind by the prison authorities.

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<sup>631</sup> Operational Management Plan Draft (16 January 2013), 1 (emphasis in the original).

<sup>632</sup> Operational Management Plan Draft (16 January 2013), 37.

<sup>633</sup> Operational Management Plan Draft (16 January 2013), 35.

This gap was considered an advantage because it provided an opportunity to explore a new collecting strategy that would attempt to raise awareness among the public .... The new strategy also helps to challenge the notion that a museum must have a permanent collection based primarily around tangible and movable material. It recognises the equal importance in the documentation of intangible heritage sources like individual testimonies and public memories, as well as the value of borrowing 'collectables' from individuals and communities.<sup>634</sup>

Although the museum initially adopted a people-centred approach in which it collected, preserved and curated the memories and oral histories of people,<sup>635</sup> it eventually moved from this approach when it acquired tangible collections with the incorporation of the Mayibuye collections. While the intention of the incorporation of the Mayibuye collections into a national museum was to reactivate the cultural and historical materials and also importantly, to provide the museum with an archival collection, it seems that this impetus for the Mayibuye Centre's incorporation into RIM became lost in the mists of time. This has interfered with the full extent of the work that the museum was entrusted with as one of the first interventions of the Legacy Project, of commemorating Robben Island as one of the foremost sites of resistance, hope and victory over adversity.

In commemorating a narrative of heroism and triumph, Veronique Riouful argued that Robben Island came to be celebrated as a 'monument to the new South Africa' which was representative of one of the ways through which the new government could foster reconciliation, democracy and nation building.<sup>636</sup> In her analysis, Riouful drew on an argument of Arthur Danto in which he made a distinction between two forms of commemoration, between monuments and memorials.<sup>637</sup> Danto had poignantly argued:

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<sup>634</sup> Mpumlwana et al, 'Inclusion and the Power of Representation', 251.

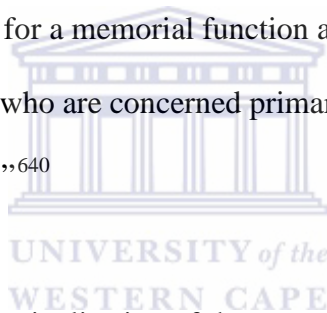
<sup>635</sup> Mpumlwana et al, 'Inclusion and the Power of Representation', 258.

<sup>636</sup> Riouful, 'Behind Telling', 34.

<sup>637</sup> Riouful, 'Behind Telling', 34.

We erect monuments so that we shall always remember, and build memorials so that we shall never forget ... Monuments commemorate the memorable and embody the myths of beginnings. Memorials ritualise remembrance and mark the reality of ends ... Monuments make heroes and triumphs, victories and conquests, perpetually present and part of life. The memorial is a special precinct, extruded from life, a separated enclave where we commemorate the dead. With monuments we honour ourselves.<sup>638</sup>

However, in the commemoration of Robben Island as a monument to the new South Africa in which it came to stand as a celebratory, forward-looking symbol of a future promoting reconciliation and unity, Riouful argued that the monumentalisation of Robben Island both tamed and marginalised “painful and divisive aspects of the past.”<sup>639</sup> According to Riouful, this monumentalisation of the Island’s past into positive and triumphant terms has consequently left very little space for a memorial function as “the voices of those who are marked by loss and suffering and who are concerned primarily with mourning rather than with celebration are marginalised.”<sup>640</sup>



Riouful further argued that the marginalisation of the memorial function enabled the silencing and the forgetting of certain aspects of the past and more than that, “reflects the broader marginalisation of mourning in the new South Africa.”<sup>641</sup> For Riouful, the process of mourning was an integral part of a “comprehensive knowledge and remembrance of the past, including painful and problematic memories”<sup>642</sup> which was being inhibited by the monumentalisation of Robben Island. Whilst agreeing with Riouful’s argument, I would push this argument further by arguing that the contentious and painful aspects of the past have not only been marginalised by the monumentalisation of Robben Island, they have also been buried.

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<sup>638</sup> Arthur Danto cited in Riouful, ‘Behind Telling’, 34.

<sup>639</sup> Riouful, ‘Behind Telling’, 26.

<sup>640</sup> Riouful, ‘Behind Telling’, 35.

<sup>641</sup> Riouful, ‘Behind Telling’, 35.

<sup>642</sup> Riouful, ‘Behind Telling’, 35.

Having traced the way in which Robben Island became a monument to the new South Africa, one can better understand the subsequent trajectory through which the support work of IDAF, and the Mayibuye Archives came to stand as a largely forgotten and passive memorial to the liberation struggle. Writing about commemorative sites, Martin Murray argued that “despite the commemorative rhetoric ... memorials and monuments typically have relatively short lifespans after which their overt meaning and relevance diminishes, and they become anonymous landmarks or background ornamentation.”<sup>643</sup> He further argued that, “[w]ith the passage of time and without careful attention, they tend to fall into a state of suspended animation, neither fully alive as active signs of collective memory nor completely dead as sites of difference.”<sup>644</sup>

In thinking about the specificities of the Mayibuye Archives, I would argue that the insights offered by Murray may be useful in trying to understand the marginalisation or as I would argue, the interment of the archive in a monumentalisation project focused on celebrating the death of apartheid through a narrative of triumphalism and reconciliation. However, in order to understand the interment of the archive, one also needs to appreciate the materiality of the archive through the physical space it occupies and the way in which “this entanglement of building and documents” is tied up with the status and power of the archive.<sup>645</sup>

### ***Interment***

Almost hidden away in the basement of the UWC Library, in an allocated space made available through an increasingly contested Memorandum of Agreement between RIM and UWC, one can find the present home of the Mayibuye Archives. Internally, the building is

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<sup>643</sup> Martin Murray, *Commemorating and Forgetting: Challenges for the New South Africa* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 20.

<sup>644</sup> Murray, *Commemorating and Forgetting*, 20.

<sup>645</sup> Achille Mbembe, ‘The Power of the Archive and its Limits’ in Carolyn Hamilton et al (eds), *Refiguring the Archive* (Cape Town: David Philip, 2002), 19.

designed in a circular shape, consisting of fourteen floors which culminate in a large pyramid-like skylight at the apex, the focal point of the spiralled levels. The *rotunda* allows for natural light but as the levels descend, the winding walkway becomes increasingly shadowed, leaving it only to be lit by artificial light. It is in this part of the library where the half-light and the shadow dances, that the Mayibuye Archives is located.<sup>646</sup> On the second floor and sharing an increasingly limited and congested space with the University Archives and the Library's Donations and Archival Collections unit, one can find the Historical Papers archive with its rows of uniform shelving packed tightly with Metrofile boxes. This constitutes the storage area of the Historical Papers. Enclosed by mostly glass panels, this area also serves as the processing and working office space of the Historical Papers' staff.

Through an inter-leading door, one can find a small lounge area with some of the finding aids displayed on a coffee table, while the white wall demarcating the boundary of Historical Papers from the outside world is punctuated by a few prints of some of the art work housed at the Mayibuye Archives. Leading from the lounge area is the reading room, the special book collections library and a small office overlooking the angled research tables which have been placed accordingly as to increase supervision and visibility of researchers. Another means of increased panoptic surveillance and control was the installation of cameras with their lenses firmly fixed on the movement of people and material as a way of regulating researchers and encouraging discipline.

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<sup>646</sup> This physical and metaphorical discussion of the archive is drawn in part from a paper co-presented at the International Conference on Liberation Archives, East London, 31 October-2 November 2012. The same paper was later presented at the South African Contemporary History and Humanities Seminar at the CHR, UWC on 12 February 2013. See Geraldine Frieslaar & Olusegun Morakinyo, 'The UWC-Robben Island Museum Mayibuye Archives and the African Programme in Museum and Heritage Studies (APMHS) in the nexus of Public Historical Scholarship', Unpublished paper presented at South African Contemporary History and Humanities Seminar at the CHR, UWC, Bellville, 12 February 2013.

Further down from the Historical Papers and occupying a section of the first floor of the library which it shares with the library auditorium, the other part of the Mayibuye Archives consists of a reception area, boardroom, exhibition space, offices and archival storage spaces for the storage of the photographic, film, sound and oral history materials. With its entrance located on the opposite side of the library, one descends down a set of stairs before entering the archives where these collections rest at the bottom of the library. In a way, the almost subterranean location of the Mayibuye Archives in the basin of the library is reminiscent of Achille Mbembe's prosaic description of the archive as "a type of sepulchre" through which fragments of the past are interred.<sup>647</sup>

Leading from the reception area and bathed in ambient spotlights, the wide corridor plays host to temporary, often thematic exhibitions based on commemorative days within the South African calendar and a permanent exhibition about the history of apartheid and the liberation struggle. Drawing on the architectural description and the physical locality of the archive, I cannot help but to think of Mbembe's allegorical reflections of the archive as a burial ground which inters the remains of the past. According to Mbembe, the notion of burial is inherent in the architectural dimensions of archives. Writing about the status and power of the archive through its entanglement with the materiality of the archive, and drawing inspiration from Derrida's argument of the exteriority of the archive, Mbembe argued:

The archive has neither status nor power without an architectural dimension, which encompasses the physical space of the site of the building, its motifs and columns, the arrangement of the rooms, the organisation of the files, the labyrinth of corridors, and that degree of discipline, half-light and austerity that gives the place something of the nature of a temple and a cemetery: a religious space because a set of rituals is constantly taking place there, rituals ... of a quasi-magical nature, and a cemetery in the sense that fragments of lives and pieces of time are interred there, their shadows and footprints inscribed on

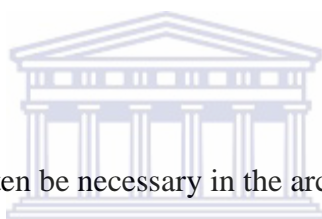
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<sup>647</sup> Mbembe, 'The Power of the Archive and its Limits', 22.



paper and preserved like so many relics. And so we arrive at the inescapable materiality of the archive ....<sup>648</sup>

For Mbembe, “[a]rchiving is kind of interment, laying something in a coffin, if not to rest, then at least to consign elements of that life which could not be destroyed purely and simply. These elements, removed from time and from life, are assigned to a place and sepulchre that is perfectly recognisable because it is consecrated: the archives. Assigning them to this place makes it possible ... to tame the violence and cruelty of which the ‘remains’ are capable ....”<sup>649</sup> By consigning these remains to a space confined between life and death through the regimented practices of the archive, I would argue that this system of coding, classifying and bringing order to the remains would inadvertently render the remains or fragments of the past inert and silent.



Although the act of burial may often be necessary in the archival process as a way of disciplining fragments of the past at least for a while, I would further argue that archival records acquire meanings through a process of cultivation.<sup>650</sup> Whereas the Mayibuye Centre was created as a reminder to the past, it has, in fact, been forgotten and has become a part of the past in the absence of being cultivated. Rendered in this way, archival records become lifeless, silent, memorialised and forgotten. Ironically, as Martin Murray argued, “[i]n erecting formal reminders or replicas of events or persons who ought to be remembered, one risks slipping into forgetfulness. By making symbols or remnants stand for the whole, one can easily succumb to an illusion.”<sup>651</sup>

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<sup>648</sup> Mbembe, ‘The Power of the Archive and its Limits’, 19.

<sup>649</sup> Mbembe, ‘The Power of the Archive and its Limits’, 22.

<sup>650</sup> Eric Ketelaar, ‘Cultivating Archives’, *Archival Science* 12 (2012), 13.

<sup>651</sup> Murray, *Commemorating and Forgetting*, 21.

However, even in the absence of being cultivated or in an attempt to silence the remains of the past through burial, the buried remains still contain traces of life in which it is possible to create disorder. Containing elements of life that flicker intermittently, these traces have a performative quality especially “in the universe of the senses: a tactile universe because the document can be touched, a visual universe because it can be seen, a cognitive universe because it can be read and decoded.”<sup>652</sup> This is the consummate paradox of the archive. Caught up in the struggle between life and death, the paradox of the archive rests on its desire between assembling and destroying and of remembering and forgetting. And when thinking about the present locus of the Mayibuye Archives, one cannot help to think about how effectively its location draws on the metaphors of interment and the accompanying process of mourning.



The collection has become uncertainly suspended within the larger concerns of an ambiguous and complex relationship between RIM and UWC and subject to the institutional bureaucracies of being a small cog in the operation of a national museum, which gives priority to heritage site conservation. It is further framed by the greater crisis of the national archival system and the seeming ignorance around the significance of archives. This confluence of events would suggest that the cultural and historical work once performed by the Mayibuye Archives has been buried, or worse, has been abandoned. Although various issues contributed towards its interment, I would argue that another more recent event further inscribed and consigned the archive to a deeper level of interment.

In compliance with state regulatory measures, RIM was audited in terms of a directive of the National Treasury’s Generally Regulated Accounting Practice (GRAP 103). This process

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<sup>652</sup> Mbembe, ‘The Power of the Archive and its Limits’, 20.

lasted for a period of just a little over two years during which time RIM employed a large number of interns on a contract basis to complete this work. The objectives of GRAP 103 were twofold and have been summarised as follows: according to the Standard of Generally Regulated Accounting Practice, “A heritage asset shall be recognised as an asset if, and only if it is probable that future economic benefits or service potential associated with the asset will flow to the entity, and [if] the cost or fair value of the asset can be measured reliably.”<sup>653</sup>

Although GRAP 103 had its benefits for the museum,<sup>654</sup> it was also meant as an exercise in which to account and reflect all of the heritage assets of South Africa. Seen in this light, I would argue that difficulties inevitably emerged as GRAP 103 is an accounting measure where heritage objects are seen as financial assets and reflected as such in financial statements, which stands in contrast to the perception of the social value of heritage objects as representative of history and memory. More than just being an accounting application, I would argue that GRAP 103 has significantly altered the face of the archive and has consequently placed it into a precarious state in which objects will be scrutinised in the future for their economic value. I would further suggest that this will inevitably render them devoid and detached of their content and their meaning. While this is but one effect of applying accounting standards to archival practices, I would suggest that we have not even begun to fully comprehend the enormity of what is at stake. However, that is a debate that needs to be taken up in more detail somewhere else as I only attempted to underline the perilous state of the Mayibuye Archives in its struggle between life and death.

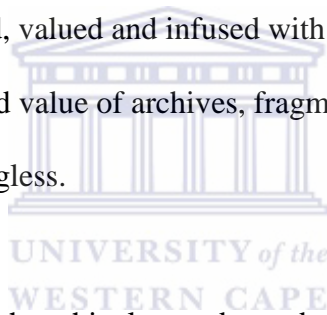
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<sup>653</sup> Standard of Generally Regulated Accounting Practice, Heritage Assets, Accounting Standards Board, Lynnwood Ridge (2008), 8.

<sup>654</sup> Some of these benefits have been summarised by Stephen Anderson in his study of the challenges of digitising collections at the Mayibuye Archives. According to his study, GRAP 103 was used as a means to digitise some collections. See Stephen Anderson, ‘The Challenges of Digitising Heritage Collections in South Africa: A Case Study’, Unpublished Masters Dissertation, Information Studies, (University of the Western Cape, Bellville, 2013), 73.

## *Resurrection*

While the location of the archives at the base of the library represents its metaphorical burial, I would argue that the subterranean location of the archives could also be suggestive in thinking of the archive as the bedrock of knowledge through which it has the possibility to resurrect and reassemble interred pieces of time and fragments. However, archives as “[m]emory sites ... only stay alive as long as people consider it worthwhile to argue about their meaning.”<sup>655</sup> Emphasising this point, Murray argued that if “[s]eparated from substantive histories and sentiments inserted them into public consciousness, commemorative sites become easily stranded in a present that has no commemorative use for them.”<sup>656</sup> Put another way, in order for archives to retain their significance, archives need to be activated, cultivated, cognitively understood, valued and infused with meaning.<sup>657</sup> Without understanding the significance and value of archives, fragments of the past might be subject to disregard and rendered meaningless.



In an article about the way in which archival records can be instrumentalised by archivists in particular, Hugh Taylor once wrote:

Our documents have, in one way or another, made an impact on the lives of people to whom they were directed. They become powerful ‘signs’ in a semiotic sense, and they can move us if we can only enter fully into the context of their creation, which we endeavour to do as part of our profession. Our records are more than a source for research, a means of ensuring accountability or as evidence in contradistinction to information without context. They are an extension of ourselves.<sup>658</sup>

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<sup>655</sup> Ann Rigney, ‘The Dynamics of Remembrance: Texts between Monumentality and Morphing’ in E. Nünning (ed), *A Companion of Cultural Memory Studies* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010), 346.

<sup>656</sup> Murray, *Commemorating and Forgetting*, 20.

<sup>657</sup> Ketelaar, ‘Cultivating Archives’, 13.

<sup>658</sup> Hugh Taylor, ‘Heritage Revisited: Documents as Artifacts in the Context of Museums and Material Culture’, *Archivaria* 40 (1995), 10.

Echoing Taylor, I would argue the Mayibuye Archives can only be instrumentalised again if the material is cultivated through research, cultural and activist work as one of the ways in which to conscientise, educate and encourage debate among people regarding the significance of archives within society. However, in the absence of a political will, hampered by chronic under-funding, a lack of resources, apathy and caught between the two realms of RIM and UWC, the Mayibuye Archives will continue to remain submerged because it signifies the remnants of a painful and divisive past, a past that, at this point in time, has no place in post-apartheid South Africa.

Riouful noted that, “[with] the commemoration of Robben Island, and the celebration of the death of apartheid in the new South Africa, [it was] signif[ied] that the past is dead and done away with and that the transformation to the new South Africa had been achieved.”<sup>659</sup>

However, as others have suggested before me, I would argue that we should not believe that the transformation to post-apartheid South Africa has been completed or has even happened. The effects of apartheid and colonialism continue to reverberate in post-apartheid South Africa. Cast within this light, it becomes even more pertinent that archives are urgently reimagined and reconstituted as projects for the future.

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<sup>659</sup> Riouful, ‘Behind Telling’, 36.

## CONCLUSION

[T]he archive of a society, a culture, or a civilization cannot be described exhaustively; or even, no doubt, the archive of a whole period. On the other hand, it is not possible for us to describe our own archive, since it is from within these rules that we speak, since it is that which gives to what we can say – and to itself, the object of our discourse – its modes of appearance.<sup>660</sup>

Michel Foucault argued that it is not possible for us to describe our own archive as it is from these rules that we speak. It probably becomes even more difficult to describe one's own archive because of the impossibility to stand outside the archive. Both as an archivist and as a researcher working on the IDAF archival collection, I am deeply engaged in almost every process of the archive's making and meaning. I am entangled in and caught between the energies of the archive in its material manifestation and as an expression of its internal psyche. Metaphorically describing the experience of working in the archive, Arlette Farge has described working in the archive "as a dive, a submersion, perhaps even a drowning ... you feel immersed in something vast, oceanic."<sup>661</sup> Rather than regarding this condition as a limitation, I would argue that it has assisted greatly in the writing of a dissertation on the making and the remaking of an archival collection, from which I do not claim to stand outside.

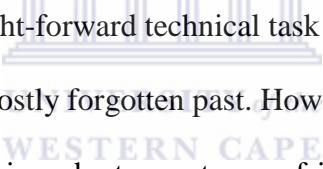
I did not train as an archivist although I think, we are all archivists in some or other ways in our everyday lives. I have been schooled in the techniques of research through my graduate studies in International Relations at the University of Stellenbosch which was later followed by my post-graduate education in museum studies and visual history at UWC. During the course of pursuing a master's degree in Public and Visual History at UWC, I was employed

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<sup>660</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge and The Discourse on Language*, translated by A.M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), 130.

<sup>661</sup> Arlette Farge, *The Allure of the Archives*, translated by T. Scott-Railton (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2013), 4.

as a researcher at the District Six Museum. Coincidentally, the District Six Museum is also the home of the Van Kalker photographic collection of a studio photographer, J.G. Van Kalker, which was the focus of my master's thesis. I worked between the spaces of the exhibitions and the archival components of the museum where my primary task was pictorial and documentary archival research and the documentation thereof. Later, I was contracted by Horst Kleinschmidt and Bill Frankel (who were part of the executive committee of IDAF at the time of its closure and who remained engaged with the management of the collection in an honorary capacity) to do archival and research work on the IDAF collection. From this engagement, I later gained employment at RIM as an archivist at the UWC Robben Island Mayibuye Archives. This is when I set out on my archival odyssey in which I was required to bring order to the IDAF collection through a system of arrangement and cataloguing.



Initially, this seemed to be a straight-forward technical task of almost mechanically bringing archival order to fragments of a mostly forgotten past. However, this methodological task of gleaning information from objects in order to create user-friendly finding aids swiftly evolved into an archival endeavour of exploration, interrogation and learning. Drawing on my academic background and informed by the research skills that I have acquired through my studies and work experience, I could not help but be intrigued and drawn in by the potency that these remnants offered. As I was describing objects, I kept finding myself reading the documents with fascination and sometimes straining my eyes as I was trying to decipher faded handwriting or meanings of annotations. More than this, I realised that I was extremely interested in the history of how these records were made into an archival collection.

With this realisation, I embarked on an intellectual journey to understand the process through which the IDAF archival collection was made and is still being remade. In a sense, my

journey was like a wandering and an odyssey at the same time. In thinking about my undertaking of attempting to study the cultural history and political life of the IDAF archival collection, I am reminded of Verne Harris' conception of the archival endeavour in which he found it more productive to think of the archival journey as one of adventure rather than an odyssey.<sup>662</sup> Harris argued:

'Odyssey' describes journey. But not any journey. In its shape and its modalities, it carries very particular attributes. This is not an open-ended journey, one from 'A' to wherever whim or vicissitude will take the traveller. It is a journey with determinable beginning and ending. There is an itinerary, an 'A' to 'B'. Yet this is no linear journey, and the 'B' is not 'B', but 'A'. For odyssey, in its classical form, is circular. Odysseus journeys *from* home and returns *to* home.<sup>663</sup>

Harris went on to argue that the archival endeavour should instead encompass the notion of adventure, one which is "informed by the unpredictability of an 'advent'" and "destiny without destination."<sup>664</sup> Differing slightly from Harris, I would argue that conceiving the archival endeavour as both an odyssey and an adventure suggests a process of intellectual enrichment, exploration and a re-awakening of the self which the writing of this dissertation required and enabled me to do. In charting my way through the questions of my work as an archivist and as researcher, part of my archival odyssey and exploration has been to find the self or to reaffirm some sense of a lost self through a process of searching for something in the past.

Scholars such as Jacques Derrida, Carolyn Steedman, Helen Freshwater and Harriet Bradley have in various ways described this as a "process of historical identification" marked by the

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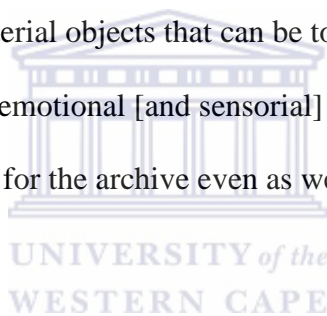
<sup>662</sup> Verne Harris, 'On (Archival) Odyssey(s)', *Archivaria* 51 (2001),13.

<sup>663</sup> Harris, 'On (Archival) Odyssey(s)', 8.

<sup>664</sup> Harris, 'On (Archival) Odyssey(s)', 13.



desire and the nostalgic yearning to find the self through the residues of the past.<sup>665</sup> Even as we succumb to the lure of the archive in our desire to lay claim to a forgotten past, or to grab onto something tangible or to make it visible, the archive is filled with illusory promises, because time lost, can never become time regained. Here, in this ‘place of dreams,’<sup>666</sup> we continue to be obsessed by the archive because it offers sanctuary and respite, even if it is illusive and only for the briefest of moments. Beyond the confines of “the stereotypical cultural graveyard of the museum and archive,”<sup>667</sup> archival objects take on even more poignancy because they are encounters with death.<sup>668</sup> According to Farge, because the archival object is an encounter with death, “it calls both for emotional engagement and reflection.”<sup>669</sup> Moreover, because archival objects demand a physical engagement with the body through their tactility as material objects that can be touched, smelled and seen, they can become “the focus of intense emotional [and sensorial] engagement.”<sup>670</sup> This in turn, deepens the fever and the passion for the archive even as we question its credibility as it reveals as much as it conceals.



As archives do not necessarily tell the truth but they tell *of* the truth,<sup>671</sup> according to Foucault, it is necessary to look deeper, beyond the apparent meanings that they offer. In order to interpret the archives, Farge argued that “[b]eneath the archives lies an organized topography. You need only know how to read it, and to recognize that meaning can be found at the very

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<sup>665</sup> Carolyn Steedman, *Dust: The Archive and Cultural History* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 77.

<sup>666</sup> Steedman, *Dust: The Archive and Cultural History*, 69.

<sup>667</sup> Elizabeth Edwards, *Raw Histories: Photographs, Anthropology and Museums* (Oxford: Berg, 2001), 14.

<sup>668</sup> Farge, *The Allure of the Archives*, 8.

<sup>669</sup> Farge, *The Allure of the Archives*, 8.

<sup>670</sup> Within a similar vein as Edwards, Mbembe argued that “the material nature of the archive- at least before digitalisation- means that it is inscribed in the universe of the senses: a tactile universe because the document can be touched, a visual universe because it can be seen, a cognitive universe because it can be read and decoded.” See Achille Mbembe, ‘The Power of the Archive and its Limits’ in Carolyn Hamilton et al (eds), *Refiguring the Archive* (Cape Town: David Philip, 2002), 20; Also see Elizabeth Edwards, ‘Photographs, Orality and History’ in Elizabeth Edwards and Kaushik Bhaumik (eds), *Visual Sense* (New York: Berg, 2008), 241.

<sup>671</sup> Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*.

spot where lives have involuntarily collided with authority.”<sup>672</sup> Farge further argued that, “[t]he reality of the archive lies not only in the clues it contains, but also in the sequences of different representations of reality. The archive always preserves an infinite number of relations to reality.”<sup>673</sup> In tracing the cultural history and political life of the IDAF collection, I have argued that a study of the history of archives is crucial in understanding the underlying topography of the archive. This, in turn has the potential to lay bare a number of different textured narrations of past lives that can challenge a largely homogenised version of the past. However, as I argued throughout the dissertation this can only happen when both archivists and scholars comb through the archive, by reading along the grain and against the grain for its inclusions, exclusions, silences and discord.

In arguing for a reimagining of the Mayibuye Archives through a deeper philosophical engagement with the archive, I have argued that because the archive “is battleground of meaning and significance [and] a space of complex and ever-shifting power plays,”<sup>674</sup> it has become crucial for archivists to become researchers. Writing on power and the relationship of archivists to archives, Joan Schwartz and Terry Cook remarked that, “[t]he point is for archivists to (re)search thoroughly for the missing voices, for the complexity of the human or organisational functional activities under study during appraisal, description, or outreach activities, so that archives can acquire and reflect multiple voices, and not by default, only the voices of the powerful.”<sup>675</sup>

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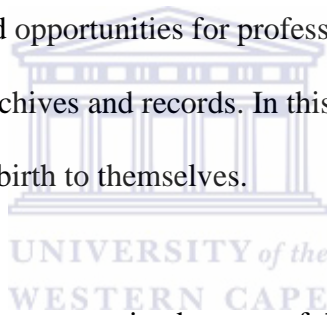
<sup>672</sup> Farge, *The Allure of the Archives*, 30.

<sup>673</sup> Farge, *The Allure of the Archives*, 30.

<sup>674</sup> Verne Harris, ‘The Archival Sliver: Power, Memory and Archives in South Africa’, *Archival Science* 2 (2002), 85.

<sup>675</sup> Joan M. Schwartz and Terry Cook, ‘Archives, Records and Power: The Making of Modern Memory’, *Archival Science* 2 (2002), 17.

Despite the mediations of the archivist and the scholar in the archive, the dissertation has argued that there are also other dimensions of power at play in archives. Framed within a rapidly evolving situation of political discord, socio-economic uncertainty, and escalating levels of general discontent which engulf South Africa, there has never been a more prudent time to acknowledge that the ‘archive can never be a quiet retreat for archivists and scholars.’<sup>676</sup> During the early 1990s, the vision for the future of archives held much promise because it was marked by invigorating debates and national dialogues as a means to contribute to the shaping of a new policy framework and a reimagining of the South African archival system. However, more than two decades later, archives have become perpetually haunted by the anxieties of an uncertain future brought about by inadequate resources, underfunding, limited training and opportunities for professional development and challenges with processing and preserving archives and records. In this way, archives in South Africa have also been struggling to give birth to themselves.



In particular, liberation archives were conceived as one of the ways in which to redress “apartheid-fashioned gaps in social memory,”<sup>677</sup> and were about “bringing the hidden, the marginalised, the exiled, the ‘other’ archive, into the ‘mainstream’”<sup>678</sup> in order to challenge the colonial and apartheid archive. However, as this dissertation has argued, the past was never quite unlocked and the veils of secrecy were not lifted. Instead, we have seen occurrences where some liberation archives have been relegated to the shadowy edges of liberation history because they pose challenges for the “monolithic nostalgic legacy”<sup>679</sup> that

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<sup>676</sup> Verne Harris, ‘Freedom of Information in South Africa and Archives for Justice’ Transactions of Public Culture Workshop, University of the Western Cape, Cape Town, January (2003), 11.

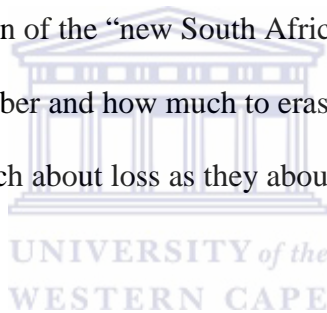
<sup>677</sup> Verne Harris, *Exploring Archives: An Introduction to the Archival Ideas and Practice in South Africa*, (Pretoria: National Archives of South Africa, 2000), 11.

<sup>678</sup> Harris, *Exploring Archives*, 11.

<sup>679</sup> Michelle Pickover, ‘Patrimony, Power and Politics: Selecting, Constructing and Preserving Digital Heritage Content in South Africa and Africa’, Conference paper presented at IFLA, Lyon (2014), 7.

has been cultivated by the state and that is focused on promoting a particular version of liberation history.

Drawn into political discourses and reflected as figures on financial statements, archives have come to be refigured through the notions of memorialisation and heritage tourism as “[t]he archival space is being amalgamated into the commemoration space of monuments, rituals and museums.”<sup>680</sup> As a way of addressing this issue, I have worked towards a rethinking or reimagining of archives by arguing for a deeper philosophical understanding of archives as a system of knowledge fraught with deeply contested meanings and as a reflection of internal consciousness. As Neville Alexander reminded us, “[t]he dilemma – at once ethical and practical – confronting the creation of the “new South Africa” has revolved around how much of the past to preserve and remember and how much to erase and forget.”<sup>681</sup> Still, archives are important because they are as much about loss as they about finding ourselves in the surviving debris.



Albie Sachs once said:

We all know where South Africa is, but we do not yet know what it is. Ours is the privileged generation that will make that discovery, if the apertures in our eyes are wide enough. The problem is whether we have sufficient cultural imagination to grasp the rich texture of the free and united South Africa that we have done so much to bring about; can we say that we have begun to grasp the full dimensions of the new country that is struggling to give birth to itself, or are we still trapped in the multiple ghettos of the apartheid imagination?<sup>682</sup>

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<sup>680</sup> Michelle Pickover, ‘Patrimony, Power and Politics’, 7.

<sup>681</sup> Neville Alexander, *An Ordinary Country: Issues in the Transition from Apartheid to Democracy in South Africa* (Durban: University of Natal Press, 2002), 81-110.

<sup>682</sup> Albie Sachs, ‘Preparing Ourselves for Freedom: Culture and the ANC Constitutional Guidelines’ in *TDR* Vol 35: 1 (1999), 187.

Similarly, the “archive is like a forest without clearings, but by inhabiting it for a long time, your eyes become accustomed to the dark, and you can make out the outlines of the trees.”<sup>683</sup> Thinking about Sachs’ provocation in which South Africa is still in the process of transformation and Farge’s cautionary note about archives, this dissertation has argued for the activation and the cultivation of the Mayibuye Archives as a site of knowledge, debate and contestation. This calls for a deeper philosophical engagement with archives so that the notion of ‘liberation archives’ is unsettled and more importantly so that archivists may become scholars of the collections they are preserving.



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<sup>683</sup> Farge, *The Allure of the Archives*, 69.

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