

Upsurge

SARAH NUTTALL



Struggles to give an event or an epoch a name and to assign it a meaning have always been constitutive of key political and social transformations. To name is to shape and reshape an imaginary, to frame what is at stake at a given moment, or to open, reopen or foreclose a set of possibilities. A name can be given to a set of events that have not yet happened. Such a prefigurative name calls into being, conjures up, that which does not yet exist; that which only exists in an incipient state; or that which, it is hoped, is still to come. An earlier name can also be recovered or resurrected, reanimated and given to events in the present whose structures, qualities or causes have no direct relationship with the past. Such a name is usually borrowed from an existing archive where it found its canonical place, and where its meaning is more or less sealed off. Although the historical period to which it refers is considered, at least putatively, closed, the power and energies of such a name are harnessed in the present and drawn upon to meet entirely other goals, with different protagonists, at risk at times of anachronism. Such a name operates both as a memorial and as an index of a future deferred, still to be realised. It calls for a temporal rupture, the recapture and repurposing of past possibilities in the present. We could refer to such a name as analogical.

The question of when an epoch begins and when can it be deemed closed is always open to a multiplicity of responses. So it is with South Africa, and its highly complex concatenation of

what is past; when and how to characterise the present, how to read and understand times of crisis, upsurge and turbulence. For a long time during and after ‘the event,’ naming what has happened, its momentousness, might still be an object of contention. If to name is to interpret and therefore to

assign a meaning, such a task is by definition unfinished since no account of an event or its meaning can be said to have captured everything. Every meaning is haunted by another meaning. This makes deciphering an interminable task, always subject to revision. These questions carry a particular vitality and urgency when writing of the upsurge of decolonisation debates of the last three years. What the event is and what shape it will take carries, simultaneously, a political and philosophical opacity and luminescence.

The velocity and unexpectedness of the social is such that naming it often comes afterwards, after the fact. Rarely does it precede the event. Even when a name announces the event, the latter seldom unfolds exactly as announced, and so there is always a gap between the event and its name. What we most often have before us are partial and fragmentary accounts. Every archive, whether of the past or the present, takes a set of standpoints in order to compose itself – and leaves things aside. Projects of reconciliation and revolution, which dispense with particular aspects of events, narratives or people's lives, produce remainders as they sanitise the hard facts and affective dimensions of history. What has been left aside is not disempowered: it is always the seed of undisciplined energies, energies gained from their very position of having been left aside. These energies, recaptured by new social actors, are reinvested in acts of disruption, of upsurge. This could offer us our first frame for thinking about attempts at erecting an emerging archive on the ruins of an older one. Attempts, that is, at ushering in a new time.

HISTORIES OF FEELING, EPISTEMOLOGIES OF EMOTION

A second frame, or arc of questions, opens here. It is not only incompleteness, that which is left aside, that presents itself in times of epochal change or moments of historical ignition and turning: the freeing of energies that have been contained is also a period of intense feeling and emotion. How do we archive histories of feelings and emotion? Archives are often still understood as constituted by things that can be documented. That is, as constituted by things, objects, artefacts or traces of human actions that can be collected, assembled and classified. Such traces are usually thought to be tangible, visible or material. Even when they appear intangible, such as a voice that can be sensed but not actually heard, a material artefact usually frames them. How do we document a history of emotions? What would histories of democracy and nation-building (and their antitheses) look like if they were drawn in

relation to ‘archive[s] of feelings’¹ and phenomenologies of emotion?² How might we ‘read for emotion,’ Anna Parkinson asks, in volatile political landscapes.³ We might examine, as Parkinson does in another context, ‘vital “scenes”’ of emotion,⁴ enabling us to analyse the limits and consequences of a putatively democratic subjectivity or sociality, the role it assigns to emotions and the sometimes-traumatic dimensions of what it patently disallows. We can consider affect and emotions as forces that occupy and address the subject, for example, the postapartheid subject, in a variety of ways. Reading for the multivalence of emotion, and for the dynamics of emotional reflexivity, enables us, Parkinson argues, to work with archives of feelings rather than with ‘memory’ as such.⁵

This is important in times of upsurge, as in the Rhodes Must Fall and Fees Must Fall movements in South Africa, and the concatenation of emotions that the work of discarding, destruction, reassembling and creation involves. The vital scenes that such work produces cannot be reduced to traumatic events alone. These are composed also from acts of defiance when existing norms are sometimes brutally confronted and disassembled, in which feelings are potent and capable of powering immense reservoirs of untapped energies, some of which are turned into social and political forces, producing a poetics and politics of turbulence.

As intense psychic energies are at work in periods of upsurge and turbulence, we can see emotion as an expression of what Parkinson calls ‘the legible social.’⁶ The quality of an era’s affective structures, long after the traumatic event, and in relation to the compromises of democratic sociality, can help us to trace the meanings of a time. Complex and self-conscious languages of affective gestures can be made to speak: emotional turbulence, political upsurge and the labour of thought burst and spill as the clock turns to a different era, especially starkly. Emotions, for Parkinson, are not only ‘expressive outward manifestations of a subject’s interiority [but] an integral “hinge” or interface’ between the artist and the production of the social at large.⁷ At the very least, this suggests and requires a different modality of archiving: an archive of feelings will be as much about remembrance and the restaging of material traces as it will and must be about the curation of ambivalence and turbulence. This is so because intense psychic energies are at work in periods of upsurge and turbulence. Tracing the meaning of a time through communities of affect enables the emergence of unconventional figures of the political. Put differently, emotions are an integral – and visceral – dimension of the grammar of the political itself.

Why would we want to write a history of emotions and of the changing tides of sentiment in the process of documenting change? Krista Tippett writes in a different context but in a manner that speaks to South Africa now: ‘We have outlived our faith in facts to tell the whole story or even to tell us the truth about the world and ourselves.’⁸ On the one hand, in what is increasingly being characterised as a post-truth world, we need facts more than ever. On the other hand, facts, as well as objects like memorials and statues, seem increasingly less able to speak to the temporalities of turbulence that this book seeks to name and understand. It is emotions and psychic energies that offer us important truths about where we are, and by extension, it would seem that an archive of these feelings must enable a more accurate account of a historical time. What kind of curation is required to attend to this kind of Real? More specifically, could we, and on what terms, think of curation as an act of care and healing? Of taking care and, in its radical sense? What form might acts of care take in performative practices of disruption, separation and tearing apart?

A POLITICS OF ACCELERATION

2012: the year of Marikana and the beginning of the end of a certain vision of the after-apartheid. The shooting of black miners resisting corporate power and their own political and economic disempowerment under a form of rule that did not deliver to them either social justice or racial reparation. The time at which, for many, perhaps paradoxically, notions of anti-blackness emerge with new conceptual and political force: the miners of Marikana would not, having been killed, been subjected to the power of the necropolitical, according to this newly visible force of critique, had they not been black. ‘Race resurges as an instigator of turbulence twenty-two years after democracy,’ Jay Pather writes.⁹ Certainly race re-emerges both as repetition – the disregard of black working life as life without immunity, notwithstanding its usefulness as a source of exploitation – and as disavowal of the strong hope and sustained practice under the historical sign of the non-racial, according to which race could no longer be taken as a criterion by which life is measured. Anti-blackness as a conceptual point of breakthrough becomes an important lens, especially after 2012, through which artists and performers, writers and poets, begin to articulate new kinds of aesthetic form, or debates about form as such. These latter attempts at forcing epochal change

through a powerful dialectics of reversal often take the form of a negative dialectics of acceleration.

The politics of acceleration is the speeding up of a system or a form, exacerbating its velocities, amplifying its contradictions, to try to implode it from within. This mode of escalation, as it has been deployed by young twenty-first-century South African university students, has drawn tactically on what Matthias Pauwels has suggestively called ‘critical philistinism’: the deliberate and explicit rejection of more mediated and so-called more complex or sublimated approaches to art.¹⁰ These more ‘apparently prudent and productive acts of cultural decolonization’ – satire, parody and revisionism, rereading, reappropriation – all ‘risk affirming the order they set out to critique.’¹¹ I am reminded of what Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe once referred to in another context as ‘wild antagonism’¹² – here, wild antagonism to the slow constitutionalism and painstaking reconciliation of the immediate postapartheid years, as well as to progressive accounts of resublimation – that is, the diversion of potent energies into more ‘acceptable’ aesthetic forms – which want to teach us to think and see better.

At the University of Cape Town (UCT) in 2016, student protesters tore down works of art from their long-established positions on the walls of the University, and burned them. Amongst the paintings burned were works of black resistance art, what we might read as ‘collateral damage’ in a furious attempt to undo what these earlier resistance works could not: the apartheid-style postapartheid order, the new old status quo.¹³ This rising wave of fire was raw, confrontational and engaged in the politics of acceleration, breaking back on the shoreline of the present in the midst of growing inequality and the failures of the left to counter the forces of a consolidating neoliberalism. It has risen on a tide of anger, including towards art itself, and it has sought to ignite what Theodor Adorno would have called a potent politics of negation, fuelled by a critique not only of capitalism and class relations, but of legacies of colonialism and racism.¹⁴ It is the *shock of the new old*, where what was taken by some to be the past is not past but *coeval* with the present.

An accelerationist politics maximises the possibilities of destruction, repurposing the current order’s infrastructures against itself. Recent articulations of accelerationism have tried to jam capitalist logics by, for example, abducting their abstract systems and logics and turning them towards social justice-inspired ends. In the case of student protesters in South Africa in 2015 and 2016, disrupting classes and exams, vandalising university property, forcibly removing the statue

of Cecil John Rhodes at UCT and burning paintings in frustration at a culture too slow to change were intensely emotive and politicised forms of frustration and anger, rage and disappointment; forms of protest that accelerated calls for what I have elsewhere called ‘a redistributed university.’¹⁵

In 2012, South African photographer Mikhael Subotzky exhibited a series of photographs, the frames of which he smashed with a hammer. The exhibition, *Retinal Shift*, included high resolution images of the artist’s left and right retinas, self-portraits of the eye, made with the help of an optometrist. ‘I was fascinated by this encounter,’ Subotzky reflected in an interview: ‘at the moment that my retinas, my essential organs of seeing, were photographed, I was blinded by the apparatus that made the images. So it is a self-portrait of myself the photographer, at a moment that I could not see.’¹⁶

Subotzky moves from a figuration of what he could not see – implicitly, what he could not see as a white South African – to a shattering of his elegant allegorical study. He then moves on to a complete withdrawal from the practice of photography as such, conscious of ‘how fraught its history is.’¹⁷ After smashing *Retinal Shift*, he said in a 2017 interview: ‘I have come out completely from the world of making photographs. I have lost faith in photography or at least I have lost interest in practising it myself.’¹⁸ Subotzky chooses an act of what Pauwels calls ‘nonart’¹⁹; here, it is what we could perhaps call an art of the empty wall. Is an art of the empty wall – which participates in a politics of velocity and acceleration, a negative dialectics – at least in this moment of historical time, an act of radical acknowledgement, or radical defeat? Is it both at the same time?

RELATIONALITY AND NON-RELATIONALITY

In Mohau Modisakeng’s performed self-portrait, a four-minute video entitled *Inzilo*, thickened ash forms a kind of second skin, a crumbling layer that Modisakeng slowly flicks and peels from his hands and feet. From the opening moment of the work, until almost half way into it, his arms are spread wide, preceding an act of self-propulsion as he rises from his chair. The velocity of the propulsion is productive, perhaps, of a subjectivity that is a becoming open to its own future. The nakedness of the artist’s torso is suggestive of the price, vulnerability and exposure of this process, igniting an emergent subjectivity for a changed era.

Modisakeng wears a billowing skirt and it is into this skirt – or at least it appears to be so – that the second skin, shed from his limbs, is deposited and eventually

discarded. Ghostly black dust rises and falls in clouds as Modisakeng, in a series of slow, seated ritualistic movements, suddenly stands and lifts up his skirt, casting off its contents. *Inzilo*, an isiZulu word for ‘mourning’ or ‘fasting,’ is described as a work in which the artist’s body:

occupies centre stage ... [and] enacts a mourning ritual by sitting, standing, and rotating slightly, all the while throwing a burnt ashy substance into the air ... [Modisakeng] performs an elaborate rite of passage in which [he] seems to draw the material for his transition from within his own body. In the absolute purity and focus of the moment, Modisakeng is turned inwards but gesturing outwards, undergoing a mysterious transformation that is at once a private ceremony and a public declaration.²⁰

The fine coal dust hanging in the air surrounding the body gives visual form in an extraordinarily suggestive way to the artist’s psychic residues and archives of feeling, released from their internment in interiority, let out and allowed to breathe, in the world outside; a visualisation of the labours of thought and feeling. ‘My work has always presented a channel for me to engage my mind and my spirit in something reflective and introspective,’ Modisakeng has said.²¹ But introspection is also a social and collective process for him, recalling the idea explored above that the life of emotions is not only an expressive outward manifestation of a subject’s interiority but part of the grammar of the political.

The black skirt that billows, and the peeling off of outer layers, offers us room to think outside of the straightjackets of hypermasculinity and the encasing of bodies in gender identities with their accompanying tightnesses, limitations and violence. Reimagining gender identity, releasing it from obsolete meanings, has been a profound part of forcing a new future by South Africa’s rising generation. The presence of the chair in which Modisakeng is seated for all but the final scene of the performance is a marker not only of movement – from a position of rest to an ambiguous but powerful form of activity – but also, perhaps, a marker of an outward and expansive upsurge of emotion, both private and political.

Shannon Walsh and Jon Soske, noting that the artist is alone in this image, as he is in most of his works, suggest that the image captures a representation of ‘a relation of non-relation – the desire and the impossibility at once.’²² In their introduction to *Ties that Bind: Race and the Politics of Friendship in South*



Africa, on the cover of which is a photograph of Modisakeng standing as the ash-like air around him rises, Walsh and Soske argue that thinking about white supremacy and anti-blackness requires that we ‘confront a relationality that exceeds the language of relation.’²³ This is because ‘the constitutive violence of settler civil society works to render full, ethical reciprocity between white and black ... impossible in advance.’²⁴ The poetics of non-relation comes back to the problematic of reasserting, while also letting go of, race. The multivalencies of Modisakeng’s work and practice exceed the framings that the book can perhaps offer. The title of the book itself suggests the binds and bondages of entangled lives, dramatising the desire, and impossibility, of cutting ties; a politics of refusal



Figure 2.1. Mohau Modisakeng, *Inzilo*, 2013.
Courtesy the artist, Ron Mandos and WHATIFTHEWORLD.

that stands open to the unthought as a personal process of black reinvention and consciousness drawn to a conversation with the self; an opening of an empty space free of interlocutors, interpreters or anyone else who wants to do the work of *seeing better* than the self itself.

In a related work, *Ukukhumula* ('Unclothing'), 13 performers re-enact the gestures of *Inzilo*. The ash in *Ukukhumula* is refigured as a white powder or chalk, and the idea of a shedding of the self (or a part of the self) is extended and multiplied. *Ukukhumula* refers to 'the final stage of the cleansing ceremony performed as the symbolic closing of an extended period of mourning in some African traditional practices.'²⁵ As described in the 2014 Live Art Festival programme: 'The peeling



off of “dead skin” or moulting in particular becomes an emotive element in the performance ... Removing the seemingly charred layer of “skin” reveals the new delicate skin of each of the performers, evoking both a literal and metaphoric shedding.²⁶

STANDING IN FOR THE REAL

Dean Hutton’s work *Fuck White People* has, amongst other iterations, taken the form of an installation and a public performance intervention. In making the work, Hutton also foregrounds their genderqueer identity, describing it as ‘not particularly male or female ... I identify across different intersections ... It’s a constant state of war with patriarchy and the way in which we are all made to pay these massive debts to capitalism, and the way in which we’re asked to violate others.’²⁷

As an installation, *Fuck White People* formed part of the 2016 Iziko South African National Gallery (ISANG) exhibition titled *The Art of Disruptions* and featured a large poster, a chair and the jacket from Hutton’s three-piece bodysuit, all covered in the words ‘Fuck’, ‘White’ and ‘People.’ They intended it, says Hutton, as ‘a catalyst to start everyday conversations around white supremacy, racism and privilege.’²⁸

Hutton explains: ‘This is my artwork. But these are not my words. [In 2016] I photographed a student, Zama Mthunzi, wearing a T-shirt with the words “F**k White People” smeared in black pain(t). He was threatened with expulsion and a case at the Human Rights Commission. None of the complainants said anything about the front of the T-shirt which read “Being Black is Shit.”’²⁹

In an interview with Gabriella Pinto, subtitled ‘on using love to disrupt, starting with the self,’ Hutton makes a series of statements that I draw together below as a word installation.

You cannot go roughly into the world anymore. People are going to call you out... I also have deep discomfort with call out culture. But fuck it, it makes

Figure 2.2. and 2.3. Mohau Modisakeng, *Ukukhumula*, 2014.
Courtesy Institute for Creative Arts.
Photograph by Ashley Walters.

people work harder to be better human beings ... that is what the world that is coming demands of you. We've seen the limits of what legal rights give you ... You have to remain thinking ... and it's exhausting, but it's really exhausting being violated all the time too ... I'm asking for a translation of one thing into another pain ... It's asking you to translate the possible feeling of what it feels like and to not cause that ... Because we're rushed in the way we have to live and survive capitalism ... human kindness ... take[s] time and ask[s] more of us as individuals ... You just think about all the little communities that you belong to and about making those spaces a little safer for some people ... I still feel like I am a work in progress. There [are] these holes of not understanding in all of us ... Because of the way that hyperlinked reality works, the way that you just discover and stumble and have access to such wide, weird things ... This useless information is all in my head but the way in which it eventually functioned was to teach me better ways of being human ... It's about unlocking words to explain my feelings about things.³⁰

In this word installation, echoing while also elaborating on Hutton's own word installation – the black and white text 'Fuck White People' all over their own bodysuit – we can follow a clear and forceful line of thinking that is also an archive of feeling. Hutton's first invocation is of 'a world that is coming.' They focus on the need to 'work harder,' especially white people, to respond to one's time and place, to rethink thinking – work that involves an act of translation from the 'possible feeling of what it feels like' [to experience racism, sexism] into 'another pain,' and the refusal to inflict such pain. The work and thought of translation requires a taking back of time, *contra* capitalism's attempt to extract more and more of the self as exchange value, the possibility of profit(ing). What is the aim of taking time to work through, to think? It is to make spaces – 'the little communities you belong to' – safer for other people, those who have been excluded and hurt by racism, sexism and other forms of violence to the self. Finally, the notion of working on the self, to produce a self for the world that is coming, is to understand and construct the self as a work in progress, to self-installate, as Hutton does in *Fuck White People*. To be a work in progress is to know that there are 'holes of not-understanding' in our understanding of the world. It is a compelling grammar of the political, of political whiteness; a deeply thought and felt self-in(ter)vention. 'How do you live as a conscious being in a world that constantly asks you to take, to profit and to be unthinking and distracted?' Hutton



Figure 2.4. Dean Hutton, *Plan B, A Gathering of Strangers (or) This Is Not Working*, 2018.
Courtesy Institute for Creative Arts.
Photograph by Xolani Tulumani.

asks. 'Even just in the basic way we speak to people who occupy the same spaces as us. It's really hard work.'³¹ Hutton offers a process of what Rosi Braidotti has called 'thinking about thinking' in a highly visceral way.³²

Using the mediums of video, photography, performance and social media, they find a way to name and call out both underground and expressed structures of anger, anxiety, shame and turbulence. This includes resentful white subjects, envious of the actual victims of a time and place, attempting their own chance at victimhood and absolution from history's assessment of who they have been. The idea of self-installation is a powerful articulation of the politics Hutton espouses. They make every instant (the) work itself: every time they put on the suit, breathe, move, walk or enter social space, they interrupt it. Hutton says about the suit: 'There is a rumour that I wear it all the time. And I wish I could actually because it needs to be said in every part of every day.'³³

They place themselves as both subject and object at the same time, covered in a suit, not confined to the gallery space and a logic of self and other, but walking around in the city, in space, out in the world at large. Many white people who encounter the walking, sitting, talking installation are outraged – outraged by the interruption Hutton inserts into the world; the supposed shared space which is not in fact shared. Recently, Hutton has had to rethink the wearing of the suit in public because of threats of violence. This only makes their statement that 'even though I am saying "fuck white people," my practice is fundamentally about love' even more radical.³⁴

In 2017, *Fuck White People* was found by the Equality Court in Cape Town to be an expression of art as opposed to hate speech. This, after men wearing Cape Party T-shirts defaced the installation in the ISANG exhibition with a large sticker reading 'Love Thy Neighbour',³⁵ and lodged a complaint with the South African Human Rights Commission that the work amounted to hate speech.³⁶ In the view of Chief Magistrate DM Thulare, 'if there was one thing the work had achieved it was "to draw South Africans to a moment of self-reflection."³⁷ In his view, the words 'fuck white people,' properly contextualised and understood, conveyed the message: "Reject, confront and dismantle structures, systems, knowledge, skills and attitudes of power that keep white people racist."³⁸ He 'found that the words "white" and "people" were not directed at all whites but rather to a system of oppression inherent in "white domination."³⁹

The judgment is laudable and the legal explanation obviously correct. What is notable, and of interest to my argument, however, is that the legal explanation drains the installation of its radical affective charges. People publicly expressed their hatred of the work, felt frightened by it and ridiculed it, most often invoking Hutton's weight, race and sexuality – in that order. While the judgment invokes 'structures [and] systems,' what makes the work striking and troubling to people is its radical affect. 'The court was asked to strip it of affect and pronounce on its proper denotative meaning, even though the work is clearly intervening at the level of deep affect and emotion. Its affective charge is way in excess of its juridical meaning, even though the juridical interpretation is clearly not incorrect,' writes Daniel Roux.⁴⁰ The affect in this work is, in fact, excessive to every available frame (to the extent that Hutton was forced to provide the frames for interpretation of the work in order to avoid legal sanction). So the judgment 'does not redeem the artwork; rather we have a logic of affect and naming that speaks to the limitations of legal or factual understanding,' that evokes an inchoate future category that is technically supported in law but one that is not yet available as a legitimate form of socially legible feeling, an affective foundation to a recognisable form of politics and naming.⁴¹

Hutton's radical attempt at intervening in the air we breathe – listening closely also to black South African students' repeated phrase 'I can't breathe,' politically, ideologically, historically – seeks to vaporise the very basis of the category of whiteness as it likes to think of itself, taking the world at large as its exhibition space. In this sense, Hutton attempts to stand in for the very place of the *Real*.⁴²

CONCLUSION

Periods of upsurge attempt to harness the power to name in the production of political time. Breaking and unmaking, they nevertheless remain entangled in the aftermaths of what came before. They address the radical incompleteness of the archive of the present, forcing open its aporias, and letting live and breathe its neglected and marginalised undersides. The harnessing of self-propulsion to the rise of an expressive turn in South African culture and politics is a process of coming alive from numbness. An ethics of propulsion fired through the final years of Jacob Zuma's theatrical and disturbing reign, powered by generational dissonance and disruption of the order that had settled into the postapartheid

status quo. Much of its propulsive energies were driven by a young intellectual class, from inside of universities themselves.

In Sethembile Msezane's striking *Chapungu – The Day Rhodes Fell*, a performance piece referred to by several authors in this collection, the heavy weight of the Rhodes statue is lifted from its plinth while Msezane rises as a living sculpture in the form of a prosthetically enhanced Zimbabwean bird. In Msezane's invocation of what Anthony Reed has called the performative 'black fantastic,'⁴³ live art takes the form of 'wearable sculptures' in a vivid synecdoche for an era's zero time.⁴⁴ Calls to and from the ancestral, from the dead as that 'originary scene of radical equality,'⁴⁵ can come from many places, as political time is remade, and the incompleteness of the archive is drawn towards a fuller history of what has transpired.

The work of inscribing 'disavowed subjectivities' into a radically incomplete archive,⁴⁶ often by listening to and writing histories of feeling and emotion, parses the fault lines that propel a new and renewed confrontation between the love and hatred of art; entanglement and the politics of refusal; non-racialism and anti-blackness; the shock of the new and the repurposing of the old. Tracing these fault lines reveals the terms on which artists evoke interior and exterior worlds, private and public histories of feeling, their transparencies and opacities, and the shifting registers of each in contemporary performance art.

What, then, is an archive of care? Is it, as some have argued, a form of curatorial practice in which practices linked to traditional understandings of curating as 'caring for objects' are 'reconstituted in relation to (re)acknowledged subjectivities'?⁴⁷ Perhaps an archive of care relates in some iterations to Anthony Bogues's observation that: 'while political action and practice are always vital, the formations of new ways of life emerge from the ground of humans acting, working, through politics, *to get somewhere else*.'⁴⁸ Is an ethical practice of curatorial care, particularly during times of turbulence – as Pather suggests in this collection – constituted by a form of curatorial disappearance, a disavowal of the curator who directs, translates, convenes and interprets, enabling, now, the work alone to speak?

What, too, of other kinds of conceptual care, a form of listening for, and to, moments when the terms of critique we rely on in the present reach their own limits and propel, in turn, their own practices of marginalisation? When, for instance, as Paul Gilroy has put it, anti-blackness critique dissolves some of 'the sticky engagements with particular histories and local ecologies of belonging,' or deploys too generic a raced identity in a world in which 'racism assembles racial

actors in over-determined circumstances’?⁴⁹ How will we know how best, and with care, to both critique and listen for histories now hidden by new articulations of time and politics, hauntings perhaps, by archives in their turn marginalised in the struggle for the overthrow of racial orders and the building of worlds to come? Epistemologies of critique, practice and care to which selves, and history, may turn again, for purposes as yet unthought.

Editors’ note: We want to acknowledge news reports that implicated artist Mohau Modisakeng in an act of verbal abuse of his partner, Nomonde Mdebuka. We also want to acknowledge the public statements by both Mdebuka and Modisakeng refuting these reports and asking that this be considered a personal matter. In consultation with writer Sarah Nuttall and Wits University Press, we have proceeded with the essay in its original form.

-
1. Ann Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feeling: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003).
 2. See Anna M. Parkinson, *An Emotional State: The Politics of Emotion in Postwar West German Culture* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2015). She writes how ‘strong and often extremely negative emotions were an integral component of postwar phenomenology.’ Parkinson, *An Emotional State*, 1.
 3. Parkinson, *An Emotional State*, 1.
 4. Parkinson, *An Emotional State*, 2.
 5. Parkinson, *An Emotional State*, 4.
 6. Parkinson, *An Emotional State*, 5.
 7. Parkinson, *An Emotional State*, 11.
 8. Krista Tippett, *Becoming Wise: An Inquiry into the Mystery and Art of Living* (New York: Penguin, 2016), 9.
 9. Jay Pather, ‘Negotiating the Postcolonial Black Body as a Site of Paradox,’ *Theater Journal* 47, no. 1 (2017): 158, accessed 10 November 2017, doi: 10.1215/01610775-3710477.
 10. Matthias Pauwels, ‘In Defense of Decolonial Philistinism: Jameson, Adorno and the Redemption of the Hatred of Art,’ *Cultural Politics* 13, no. 3 (2017): 333.
 11. Pauwels, ‘In Defense of Decolonial Philistinism,’ 335.
 12. Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (London: Verso, 1985), 171.
 13. Pauwels, ‘In Defense of Decolonial Philistinism,’ 329.

14. Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E.B. Ashton (London: Routledge, 2004).
15. Sarah Nuttall, 'The Redistributed University,' lecture presented at the European Graduate School, Malta on 15 October 2017.
16. 'Retinal Shift – Self-Portraits,' Mikhael Subotzky Archive, accessed 1 September 2017, <http://www.subotzkystudio.com/works/retinal-shift-works/>.
17. Mikhael Subotzky quoted in Joost Bosland, 'A Hermeneutics of Empathy: The Artist Interview in South Africa,' Master's diss., WiSER, Wits University, 2018, Appendix, 17–21.
18. Subotzky quoted in Bosland, 'A Hermeneutics of Empathy.'
19. Pauwels, 'In Defense of Decolonial Philistinism,' 337.
20. 'Statement on *Inzilo* for the South Africa Pavilion, Venice Biennale, 2015,' Mohau Modisakeng Studio, accessed 25 October 2017, <http://www.mohaumodisakengstudio.com/inzilo/ixxwsk0w8csflze62a0ocal1xx4ikn>.
21. Anne Taylor, 'Mohau Modisakeng, Standard Bank Young Artist Award Winner for Visual Art,' National Arts Festival, 28 October 2015, accessed 25 October 2017, <https://www.nationalartsfestival.co.za/news/modisakeng-sbya16-art/>.
22. Shannon Walsh and Jon Soske, *Ties that Bind: Race and the Politics of Friendship in South Africa*, eds. Shannon Walsh and Jon Soske (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2016), 308.
23. Walsh and Soske, 'Thinking About Race and Friendship in South Africa,' in *Ties that Bind*, 18.
24. Walsh and Soske, 'Thinking About Race and Friendship in South Africa,' in *Ties that Bind*, 18.
25. GIPCA, *Live Art Festival 2014 Programme* (Cape Town: GIPCA Live Art Festival, August–September 2014), 44.
26. GIPCA, *Live Art Festival 2014 Programme*, 44.
27. Gabriella Pinto, 'Creative Womxn: Dean Hutton on Using Love to Disrupt, Starting with the Self,' *Between10and5*, 18 August 2016, accessed 3 November 2017, <http://10and5.com/2016/08/18/creative-womxn-dean-hutton-on-using-love-to-disrupt-starting-with-the-self/>.
28. Dean Hutton, 'This is What Dean Hutton, Creator of "F**ckWhitePeople" Art, Has to Say About its Vandalism,' *Huffington Post South Africa*, 18 January 2017, accessed 3 November 2017, www.huffingtonpost.co.za/2017/01/18/this-is-what-dean-hutton-creator-of-f-ckwhitepeople-has-to_a_21657586/.
29. Hutton, 'This is What Dean Hutton, Creator of "F**ckWhitePeople" Art, Has to Say About its Vandalism.'
30. Pinto, 'Creative Womxn.'
31. Pinto, 'Creative Womxn.'
32. Rosi Braidotti, 'Posthuman, All Too Human,' Tanner Lectures on Human Values, presented at Yale University, 1–2 March 2017.

33. Pinto, 'Creative Womxn.'
34. Pinto, 'Creative Womxn.'
35. The Cape Party is a political party that aims to bring about the secession of the Western Cape from South Africa.
36. Petru Saal, "'F-k White People' Exhibition is Art, Not Hate Speech – Court,' *Times Live*, 5 July 2017, accessed 3 November 2017, <https://www.timeslive.co.za/news/south-africa/2017-07-05-warning-explicit-language-f-k-white-people-exhibition-is-art-not-hate-speech-court/>.
37. Saal, "'F-k White People' Exhibition is Art.'
38. Saal, "'F-k White People' Exhibition is Art.'
39. Saal, "'F-k White People' Exhibition is Art.'
40. Daniel Roux, e-mail message to author, 24 November 2017.
41. Roux, e-mail message to author.
42. I am grateful to Penny Siopis for her discussion with me on this point.
43. Anthony Reed, 'African Space Programs: Spaces and Times of the Black Fantastic,' *Souls* 16, no. 3–4 (2014): 351–371, accessed 2 April 2018, doi: 10.1080/10999949.2014.968951.
44. Bankole Oluwafemi, 'Standing for Art and Truth: A Chat with Sethembile Msezane,' TED Blog, 18 September 2017, accessed 10 April 2018, <https://blog.ted.com/standing-for-art-and-truth-a-chat-with-sethembile-msezane/>.
45. Achille Mbembe in conversation with Sarah Nuttall, 'A Questionnaire on Monuments,' *October* 165 (2018): 111.
46. Leora Farber and Renée Mussai, 'Curatorial Care, Humanising Practices: Past Presences as Present Encounters,' *Curatorial Care, Humanising Practices Programme* (Johannesburg: University of Johannesburg, 11–13 April 2018).
47. Farber and Mussai, 'Curatorial Care.'
48. Anthony Bogues, 'And What about the Human? Freedom, Human Emancipation, and the Radical Imagination,' *boundary 2* 39, no. 3 (2012): 41 (emphasis mine), accessed 10 April 2017, doi:10.1215/01903659-1730608.
49. Simon van Schalkwyk, "'Imagination is Everything": Paul Gilroy Chats to the JRB about Race, Land and South Africa's Role in Overthrowing the Racial Order,' *Johannesburg Review of Books*, 4 April 2018, accessed 10 April 2018, <https://johannesburgreviewofbooks.com/2018/04/04>.